International School of London

Languages Policy

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August 2025

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August 2026

Introduction

The International School of London ("ISL"), located in west London, is part of a multicultural and multilingual city, which offers broad opportunities for the school community. Students at ISL London bring a range of linguistic and cultural resources to the school, from both personal and educational experiences. Languages are woven into the fabric of the school, evidenced in the offering of a language programme, currently catering for 23 languages, a choice of language acquisition courses and a well-resourced ELL programme. The population of the school is relatively transient compared to many UK national schools and the language programmes of the school enable students to transition into and out of the school.

ISL mission statement

Since 1972, we have established a welcoming and inclusive community. Our diverse cultures and languages drive all our learning experiences. We nurture creativity and curiosity to stimulate deep thinking. We foster insight, compassion and resilience to enable us to play a meaningful part in a changing world.

ISL vision statement

We celebrate our stories, our worth and our purpose to make a difference in a shared world.

At the International School of London, we believe in:

- Empowering students to maximise their learning opportunities and to fulfil their potential.
- Actively integrating cultural diversity in the curriculum.
- Creating inclusive, vibrant and innovative learning communities.
- Offering a diverse and extensive international programme that supports personal, social and professional growth.

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Policy details

Policy	Languages
Owner	Head of Multilingualism
Version	3
Application	Whole school
Approval date	September 2025
Review cycle	2-year
Related policies	Teaching and Learning Inclusion and Admissions Assessment Reporting Departmental Agreements
Compliance	CIS - Council of International Schools IBO - International Baccalaureate Organisation Ofsted - Office for Standards in Education The Bell Foundation

1. **Our core values**
    a. Diversity is embracing and learning from each other—our many cultures, languages, experiences, beliefs and backgrounds, and our varied perspectives—in order to expand our minds, foster creativity and lead in innovation. I succeed.
    b. Understanding is the compassion, learning, commitment, respect, and trust needed to understand ourselves and others to thrive in a complex world. I understand.
    c. Identity is the nurturing of the individual within a multicultural context, providing a platform for self-expression and awareness as empowered international citizens. I belong.
    d. Passion is the driver of the schools' love for learning and growing, whether in the classroom, on the playing fields, in after school activities or in our contribution to better our communities and futures. I dream.

2. **Purpose of this policy**
    The purpose of the Languages Policy is to demonstrate:
    a. How the International School of London ("ISL") provides for a rigorous, rich and varied environment for the development of students' multilingualism, literacy and multicultural awareness, in line with the school's mission, vision and core values.

    b. How students' and families' cultural backgrounds and linguistic needs are protected and formed as they progress along their educational journey, and the steps made to onboard families and to allow for a smooth transition into the school's operating language and to future destinations, academic or geographical.

    c. How ISL complies with the statutory framework requirements within our provision for languages.

    d. How languages and multilingualism are interwoven with other aspects of the school experience.

3. Process of this policy

The policy is updated every two years to ensure alignment with current research as well as compliance with ISL's accrediting/inspection bodies' criteria & ethical codes and is reviewed by a committee made up of language leaders, teachers and members of the senior leadership team (SLT).

4. Our vision for languages, multilingualism, and multiculturalism

- Languages, literacy, and identity are dynamic and central to teaching and learning. Multilingualism is a fact and a right. To honour this right,
    - the school supports student agency, multilingual inquiry, and confidence in diverse identities.
    - Celebrating languages, identity, and heritage should be accessible and considerate of all communities.
    - All languages, accents, and dialects are valued and respected.
    - Languages are key for self-expression, literacy, and identity.
    - All teachers and leaders are responsible for language education.
    - English is the working language, with provisions for all to engage with the curriculum.
    - Tuition in students' native languages will be included in the school schedule.
    - All students will study at least two languages.
    - Teachers support access to the working language and leverage linguistic diversity in learning.

5. Languages Onboarding

Following completion of the admissions onboarding process, families have the opportunity to meet with the Head of Multilingualism for an onboarding interview, where language options are allocated. A languages profile is established for the family, which is then shared with teachers and other staff members involved in providing support to the family.

6. Our languages provision

Primary Languages Options (PYP)		
Block 1	**Block 2**	**Out of Block**
Home Language / Language & Literature *There is an additional fee for groups of 4 or less, subject to teacher availability* ***Or*** **Language acquisition** **French** **Spanish** (2h40~)	**English Literacy** ***And / Or*** **English Language Learning** (emergent) *(pull-out)* *(allocation decided by PYP ELL team)*	***Optionally*** After-school lessons for a second mother tongue – time, availability, financing to be arranged separately Additional fee – calculated pro-rata

Secondary Languages Options (MYP):			
Block 1	**Block 2**	**Block 3**	
Home Language Language & Literature *There is an additional fee for groups of 4 or less, subject to teacher availability, though we will always endeavour to source a teacher for any and every language and implore parents to elect Home Languages whenever possible. We currently offer 24 languages.* ***Or*** **Communications** for Native/near-native CEFR C2/C1+ Speakers of English (2h20~)	**English Language Acquisition 1 (LA1)** *Conversational ability or lower - A1 to B1 CEFR* ***Or*** **English Language Acquisition 2 (LA2)** *More able students and advanced - B2+ CEFR* ***Or*** **English language and literature** *for Native speakers or students at Phase 6 language acquisition* (2h40~)	**Additional English Academic Support 1** *A1 to A2 CEFR* ***Or*** **Additional English Academic Support 2** *B1 CEFR* ***Or*** **Language acquisition:** **French** **Spanish** **Mandarin** *If students at English B2+ CEFR* (2h20)~	***Optionally*** After-school lessons for a second mother tongue – time, availability, financing to be arranged separately Additional fee – calculated pro-rata

Diploma Languages Options (DP) English must feature as either Lang A or Lang B within the choices. This chart must be read together with Paragraph 9 of this policy.		
Block 1	**Block 2**	
Language A **Language & Literature** **(SL or HL)** *Lang A is available in any language offered by the IBO, subject to a fee for classes under 5 & subject to teacher availability.*	**Another** **Language & Literature** **(Language A) (SL or HL)** ***Or*** **Language Acquisition** **(Language B) (SL or HL)** *(Spanish, Mandarin, French, English, Others available upon request* *Ab initio available, subject to a fee for classes under 5 for subjects outside of Sp/Fr/Ch)*	***Optionally*** **An additional Language Acquisition** **(Language B)** ***And/Or*** **Intensive English** As decided by Lead for Language B with parental agreement

7. Purpose

Language A / Home Language **Language & Literature / Literacy**	**Language B / Language Acquisition / Ab Initio / Third Language**
• develop literacy and the art of language, laying the foundations for academic language (CALP) and learning through language • learn about language and develop the skills of analysis and evaluation • develop and extend their strongest language(s) • read fluently, with reading ages at or above actual age • develop an appreciation of diverse viewpoints through collaboration within the school as a learning community • affirm personal ethnolinguistic identity	• learn a new language by focussing on discrete skills, with a balance of focus on-form and a focus-on-meaning • be curious about new language structures and view new language structures • as puzzles to decipher • have opportunities to draw on their existing language repertoires • engage in authentic communicative experiences

English Language Learning / English Acquisition / English B	**PYP ELL Pull-out** **MYP/DP Additional English**
• learn language so as to communicate and express their ideas in English (BICS) • learn through language and develop skills of knowledge building, in order to lay the foundations for academic language (CALP) • use existing skills of analysis and evaluation from their other languages to scaffold language learning, in particular when reading literature	• design their own learning path • explicitly learn about and practise ATL skills • practise the language skills they want to develop • be exposed to the language they will need in order to access learning in other subjects

8. Subject progression into DP from MYP

MYP Course	DP Course	Notes
No previous study	Ab initio	The audience for DP language ab initio are those students with no, or very limited previous exposure to the target language.
Phase 1	Ab initio	
Phase 2	Language B SL	Exceptionally, students may be entered for Ab Initio, in rare cases, in line with IBO guidelines
Phase 3	Language B SL	
Phase 4	Language B SL or HL	
Phase 5	Language B SL or HL or Language A Literature SL or Language A Language & Literature SL	
Phase 6	Language A: Literature SL/HL or Language A: Language & Literature SL/HL	

9. Curriculum

At ISL, the language and literature curriculum and language acquisition as well as associated English language learning curricula embody a comprehensive approach designed to engage students deeply with languages in a way that is both progressive and context-sensitive, across the entire school.

For Language and Literature, ISL aims to cultivate a profound appreciation and understanding of literary forms and expressions across different cultures and time periods. This is achieved through a robust curriculum that includes diverse literary genres, enabling students to develop critical thinking and analytical skills. We encourage cross-cultural connection through use of works in translation where appropriate within the curriculum's themes.

Language Acquisition (including ELL) at ISL enables students to gain proficiency in additional languages while appreciating their own and other cultures' linguistic and cultural heritages. From the PYP through to the DP, the curriculum supports the development of communication skills essential for further language learning and understanding. This includes fostering multiliteracy and intercultural understanding through inquiry-based and student-centred learning approaches that integrate linguistic, cultural, and social components. The MYP emphasises developing skills in listening, speaking, reading, and writing with equal weighting, aligned with exploring key concepts such as communication, connections, creativity, and culture in global contexts.

Assessment follows the International Baccalaureate (IB) framework in MYP courses, which mandates the use of comprehensive assessment strategies to ensure students achieve a deep understanding of language and its applications.

10. Provision for students with SEND and for those who are Gifted & Talented

The school employs strategies such as differentiated instruction to meet diverse learning needs within the classroom and this is possible due to the flexible design of classes and the curriculum as a whole. This approach ensures that teaching methods, materials, and assessments are adapted to cater to the varied learning profiles of SEND students.

For gifted and talented students, the ISL curriculum offers numerous opportunities for extension and enrichment. These students are encouraged to delve deeper into subject matter through advanced study options and exploration of complex topics that go beyond the standard curriculum. The curriculum is designed to challenge these students intellectually and creatively, fostering higher-order thinking skills and independent learning.

11. Resourcing

ISL provides a wide range of physical and digital resources to support multilingual learning across all phases. The school library and digital platforms offer materials in over twenty languages, reflecting our student body's linguistic diversity. Classrooms include multilingual signage and displays, promoting visibility of all languages.

12. Safeguarding

At ISL London, Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children is everyone's responsibility. Everyone who comes into contact with children and their families has a role to play. In order to fulfil this responsibility effectively, all practitioners should make sure their approach is child-centred. This means that they should consider, at all times, what is in the best interests of the child.

12. Rights and Responsibilities in Upholding Multilingualism and Good Practice

All members of the ISL community share responsibility for upholding the principles of multilingualism outlined in this policy. Teachers and leaders ensure that students can access the working language while their linguistic identities are valued and maintained. The Head of Multilingualism monitors implementation, provides staff training, and supports alignment with best practice. Families are partners in sustaining linguistic development, receiving communication in their preferred language where possible.