ROTTERDAM INTERNATIONAL SECONDARY SCHOOL

Language Policy

Rotterdam International Secondary School

First Approved April 2022 Revision February 2025 Errata October 2026 Next Revision June 2028

" A language policy is an action statement … it is concerned less with where the students in a school are going and more with how they are going to get there." Language Policy in Schools, Corosn, (1999).

"To learn a language is to have one more window from which to look at the world." Chinese proverb

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RISS Mission, Vision and Core Values:

"Educating for self-awareness, curiosity, and integrity in a changing world" is our mission and our vision is for every student to enjoy their youth.

RISS Language Policy is central to the identity of the school. It drives the school forward and the development of the students' heritage language(s), English and English Additional Language learning is essential to RISS. The school curriculum develops students' ability to read, write, listen, and speak (both production and reproduction) for a wide range of purposes by using language to learn, critically think, explore, conceptualize, and organize. All teachers have an important role to play in the development of the language of instruction (English as the learning language at RISS) which will enable students to move towards a key goal of RISS, which is an understanding of the importance of language, the culture (s) associated with it and its role in learning.

Global Citizenship, Internationalism and Multilingualism:

In today's world of globalization, global citizenship and cultural openness, multilingualism is at the forefront as an important aspect of student learning. It is the act of learning, using, and promoting multiple languages by individuals and their communities. This is aligned with the RISS definition of internationalism and interculturalism which can be found in the school's handbook. More importantly, we aim to empower our students to assume an active role in their learning, especially when learning a new language and the cultures associated with said languages. We believe that this makes our students more tolerant and understanding (inclusive) of the world around them, through the knowledge gained by learning languages at the RISS.

Aims

"Learning another language is not only learning different words for the same things but learning another way to think about things." ***Flora Lewis***

The aims of this policy document are to:

- Support students' learning in all subjects taught in English, new languages and heritage languages by supporting teachers in the ways their work with students contributes to the development of students' communication skills.

- Develop a shared understanding amongst staff of the role of language in students' learning and how work in different subjects can contribute to, and benefit from, the development of students' ability to communicate effectively in their heritage language and the language of instruction in the school, i.e., English.

- Encouraging multilingualism, which is imperative. RISS recognizes it must meet the diversity of language needs of our students in terms of developing their heritage languages while concomitantly encouraging the acquisition of other languages (and

particularly the learning language of the school, English) to prepare our students for a diverse and globalized world.

- Raise students' own expectations of their achievements.
- Develop students' confidence in using English and subsequently their self-expression and communication in a language other than their heritage language.
- Promote knowledge and understanding of our students' speaking, listening, reading, and writing skills, and identify areas of strengths and weaknesses in English, the heritage language, and any other new languages the student is developing. Implicit in this, is the knowledge and understanding of the diverse cultures using these languages, thus reinforcing our students' understanding of cultural diversity in an international context and adding translanguaging.

Principles of Language and Learning: ***"One language sets you in a corridor for life. Two languages open every door along the way."*** ***Frank Smith***

BICS and CALPS

RISS incorporates the principles of BICS (Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills) and CALPS (Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency) as a platform for providing language support. Equally important is the incorporation of the International Baccalaureate's Approaches to Teaching (ATT) as a means of delivering the support to all language students:

1. based on **inquiry**
2. focused on **conceptual understanding**
3. developed in local and global **contexts**
4. focused on effective teamwork and **collaboration**
5. **differentiated** to meet the needs of all learners
6. informed by **assessment** (formative and summative)

In terms of language policy at RISS, these pedagogical principles are aligned with BICS and CALP, to provide the connections, consistency, and implementation tools to implement language learning across all RISS programs. These are applied with the learning goals of the IBO's ATL for both teachers and students.

The alignment of the IBO Approaches to teaching and learning (ATL) with BICS and CALP at RISS:

ATL	Description	BICS applied	CALP applied
Thinking skills	Developing student metacognition, reflection, and critical thinking skills.		X
Communication skills	Ability to communicate in written and oral comprehension (both productive and reproductive).	X	X
	Ability to listen to, understand various spoken messages in a variety of circumstances and to speak concisely and clearly.	X	X
	Ability to read and understand different texts, adopting strategies to access various reading and writing purposes.		X
	Ability to write different types of texts for various purposes enhancing expression of concepts and critical thinking.		X
	Ability to formulate arguments (reproductive and productive) and be able to process other viewpoints whether orally or written.		X
	Ability to use technology ethically.	X	X

Social Skills	A fundamentally active social process with a focus on collaboration as a crucial way of constructing understanding meaning. To promote appreciation and respect of individual differences, cultural and language diversity.	X X	X X
Self-management skills	Organization skills, managing time and tasks, goal setting. Affective skills in terms of managing motivation, resilience, mindfulness. This will enable students to gain some control over their motivation and ability to deal effectively with setbacks and difficulties which are prevalent with language acquisition.	X X X	X X
Research skills	To encourage students to become responsible for their own learning and involved in the planning and evaluation of their instruction. Use their life experiences as resources for learning; focus on problem centered rather than content-oriented research. Understand the importance of their learning.		X X X

Consistency of Implementation Across the RISS Curricula:

It is important all students have consistency of access with support of their English Language learning across the curricula. The following are consistently implemented across the curricula at RISS:

Access to	Foundation Course	IGCSE (Middle Years)	IB DP/CP
Assessment for Gap analysis (Off2Class)	X	X	X
EAL support	X	X	X
Differentiation of individual language skills	X	X	X
Benchmarking and tracking of language skills acquisition	X	X	X
Continuous assessment of language skills acquisition	X	X	X
Extra time for exams regarding language skills	X	IGCSE examination procedures in place	IB examination procedures in place
Use of dictionaries during exams except for language exams	X	X	X
All classroom teachers trained in "Optimus Training" program to support language learning in the classroom	X	X	X
Access to heritage language development where viable within subjects offered in the programs	X	X	X

Curriculum Implementation:

"That is what learning is like. You suddenly understand something you've understood all your life, but in a different way." Doris Lessing

Language of instruction:

At RISS the learning language of all lessons (except for modern language acquisition and development) is English. Subsequently, support for English language acquisition is pivotal to the success of students in the school. The school offers a strong and consistent program from Grades 6-12 for those students identified as requiring support in their language acquisition of English.

The RISS perspective is that all teachers are to some degree language teachers, and it is inherent within our Professional Development Program that all teachers be formally trained to support EAL learners in the classroom.

Host Country Language:

RISS considers it paramount for students at RISS to be able to navigate and benefit from the cultural heritage of the Netherlands. To this end, students in the Foundation Years (FY) study Dutch either as a heritage or foreign language. RISS has its own Dutch curriculum with modes of certification for its students for Dutch at a foreign level. For Dutch first language students, the “Language One'' curriculum is used.

- Dutch: the language of the host country is offered for native speakers in each grade from 6-12.
- Dutch language learning is compulsory up to the age of 16 (Grade 10) but optional as a choice for the IB years (Grade 11-12)
- Students generally stay in the Dutch Beginners stream for one year only.
- Dutch is offered for non-native speakers, in Grades 6-12, with varying proficiency levels.
- Dutch is taught at both a B language HL/SL level, ab initio level, as well as Dutch A Language and Literature HL/SL in the IB. The option is available for both IBCP and IBDP students.

Heritage and Modern Languages Acquisition:

“A different language is a different vision of life.” Federico Fellini

Students are encouraged to not only continue with their heritage language(s) but to also acquire further modern languages while at the RISS. This is in keeping with RISS’ vision of internationalism and multilingualism.

There is a robust offering of modern languages as well as school supported self-taught language programmes at both the IGCSE and IBDP.

Admissions:

Where deemed necessary by Admissions, students will be given a Gap analysis assessment to inform RISS of students’ strengths and areas of development (in line with CEFR) in English language acquisition.

Student Profiles:

We use Gap Analysis assessment bi-annually to assess a student’s English language skills. A student’s profile is individually generated and assists EAL teachers in identifying areas of strengths and weaknesses. The profile supports both students and teachers in the differentiated needs of each student in the program. The EAL team meets after each assessment to discuss progress and areas where they can continue or raise the challenge of

their language acquisition in English. The Gap Analysis assessment thus becomes a benchmark for each individual student and tracks their progress while in the program.

Foundation Years: English Additional Language Support & Modern Language Learning

"To learn another language is to possess a second soul." Charlemagne

As stated at point of admissions, individual students are assessed on their English language skills based on their past experiences and discussion with the student, parents, Head of Sections, and the Curriculum Leader. Students who are deemed requiring support are given the Gap Analysis assessment to determine their strength, weaknesses and level of support required.

In the Foundation Years, the EAL program is determined as follows:

Grade	Beginners	Intermediate	Upper Intermediate	English as a first language	Number of lessons per week
Grade 6	x	x	x	x	Beginners receive 4 lessons per week. All other levels receive 2 lessons per week.
Grade 7	x	x	x	x	Beginners receive 4 lessons per week. All other levels receive 2 lessons per week.
Grade 8	x	x	x	x	Beginners receive 4 lessons per week. All other levels receive 2 lessons per week.

In March of every year, Grade 8 EAL learners are assessed again with the Gap Analysis to help support English language choices for the IGCSE.

Please note that all EAL Beginners in Foundation Years do NOT get grades in Magister at the end of each term. The school's ethos is that we want students who are learning the language of instruction to focus on their English language learning and not worry about grades in other subjects.

Modern Languages Learning in the FY for all students:

Grade	French	Spanish	German	Chinese	Number of lessons per week
6	x	x	x	x	2
7	x	x	x	x	2
8	x	x	x	x	2

All students, including EAL students, may choose two of the above languages in addition to Dutch. Individual cases will be assessed by the Head of Foundation and the Curriculum Leader for Languages.

Grade 7 students arriving at the RISS after the first term may not take Chinese unless they have had Chinese in their former school.

Grade 8 students coming into the RISS may not take Chinese if they have not had exposure to the language in their previous school.

Starting in the school year 2023/2024, RISS offers a Heritage Language Self study course (HLS) for students in Grade 7. This course will now continue into Grade 8 in the school year 2024/2025. The course provides students with the opportunity to study their heritage language in a classroom setting, supported by required private language study with a tutor outside of school. This private language study is to be arranged and paid for by the parents. HLSS is offered on the timetable alongside foreign languages.

Students in Grade 7 and 8 whose heritage language is either German, French, Spanish or Chinese, are strongly advised to take HLS and not these languages as a Foreign Language. The HLS pathway supports students to then take their heritage language as an IGCSE first language (if offered) or continue private language study which forms a continuing pathway to select SSST in the IB programs.

Dutch Lessons in the Foundation Years:

Grade	Dutch Foreign Beginner	Dutch Foreign Intermediate	Dutch Foreign Advanced	Dutch First Language	Number of Lessons per week
6	x	x	x	x	2
7	x	x	x	x	2
8	x	x	x	x	2

All FY students will take Dutch based on evaluation of their experiences and assessment results.

In Grade 8, all students studying French, Spanish, German and Chinese are offered the opportunity to sit CEFR accredited examinations in the proficiency of these languages.*

On-going EAL Assessment:

Students in the Foundation Years EAL programme are assessed twice a year to identify their strengths and weaknesses. This information is used to offer differentiation for individual students as well as building a database on everyone to monitor their progress within the program. This is also a means for determining the level of English the student should opt for in the IGCSE.

Middle Years (IGCSE): English Additional Language Support & Modern Language Learning

"You can never understand one language until you understand at least two." Geoffrey Williams

Throughout the school, the official language of learning is English except for the modern language subjects. To accommodate differentiation of learning and experiences of learning in the English language, the IGCSE program offers different approaches to English acquisition.

Students of ESL/EAL and modern languages are formally assessed using external frameworks in Grade 8 to determine the levels of study in the IGCSE: English First Language or English Second Language (ESL/EAL). For new admissions, the determination of a student opting for ESL/EAL or First Language English is based on CEFR assessments.

The following English Language courses are offered in the IGCSE (Middle Years). Which specific language levels to be taken is on a case-by-case basis for each student. This will involve life experiences, assessments, and interviews. It is compulsory for all students to take either First Language English and World Literature OR English Second Language and EAL

Grade	First Language English: Number of lessons per week	World Literature: Number of lessons per week	IGCSE English Second Language: Number of lessons per week	RISS EAL: Number of lessons per week
9	3	3	3	2
10	3	3	3	2

For modern languages, admission is determined by previous experience and interviews. Cambridge International recommends that learners starting an IGCSE foreign language course should have studied the language during lower secondary schooling.

The following Modern Languages are offered in the IGCSE (Middle Years):

Grade	French: Number of lessons per week	Spanish: Number of lessons per week	German: Number of lessons per week	Chinese: Number of lessons per week	Private mother-tongue language study: Number of lessons per year
9	3	3	3	3	130 recommended
10	3	3	3	3	130 recommended

Students must have some experience in the above modern languages in order to take the course.

Dutch Language Lessons in the Middle Years:

Dutch language study is compulsory in Grade 9 and 10, following a school-based curriculum and external assessments. Students receive three periods of Dutch each week, at beginners, intermediate, advance or first level.

Languages in the International Baccalaureate Diploma Program IBDP at RISS:

"If we spoke a different language, we would perceive a somewhat different world." Ludwig Wittgenstein.

The IB offers a substantial number of options for the Group 1 and Group 2 language selections which fulfill the requirements of the IB diploma programme while concomitantly reinforcing RISS' mission and vision of internationalism and multilingualism. Front and center is the continued support of the acquisition of the learning language of the school, English, while continuing to develop the individual student's heritage language(s) and offer them the opportunity to acquire more languages to further establish their multilingualism.

Students transitioning from IGCSE into IB English A or English B

Students taking ESL in IGCSE who want to take English A HL in the IB, must pass their IGCSE exams with an A or higher. Students taking ESL in IGCSE who want to take English A SL, must pass their IGCSE exams with a B or higher. Students taking ESL in IGCSE who pass their IGCSE exams with a C must take English B. Students who took English as an A language in IGCSE, must take English as an A language in the IB.

English Language Learning: Group 1

At the heart of the language policy in the IBDP is the recognition for differentiation of language skills, while concomitantly challenging the students to acquire the necessary vocabulary, grammar, syntax and writing skills demanded in the IBDP in terms of critical thinking and reflection. To that end, RISS offers the following English A language courses:

Subject	Level	Number of hours per week
English Literature	HL	5
English Literature	SL	3
English Language & Literature	HL	5
English Language & Literature	SL	3

English Language Acquisition: Group 2

Since English is the language of instruction at the school, it is imperative we support our students who have learned in another language prior to their admission to RISS. The School offers solely English B HL as a way to support continued language acquisition in terms of vocabulary, grammar, syntax, oral and writing skills, and literature.

Subject	Level	Number of hours per week
English B	HL	5

Preparatory year:

The IBDP is a rigorous programme where all subjects are taught in English with the exception of modern languages. RISS recognizes that this is problematic for students who have learned almost exclusively their heritage language and now find themselves in a new country for a myriad of reasons.

Our perspective is that these students need to be supported in their new language while recognizing that they bring a plethora of experiences to our school which are beneficial to the school community. Through interviews, assessments and discussions of the student's experiences, it may be recommended that a student do a "preparatory year" to focus on honing their English language skills.

During this prep year, students will study their subject choices at SL to support the specific language and terminology required for their studies as well as studying English B. It is expected that they work diligently on their language acquisition and strive to rise to the challenges of the overall program. The students will be monitored and the EAL program adjusted to their individual needs through the gap analysis of the "Off2class" which is assessed twice during the school year.

Modern Languages in the IBDP and IBCP:

At RISS, the fundamental mission and vision of our students being multilingual is reflected in the innumerable combination of heritage languages and acquisition languages on offer.

Modern Languages offered at RISS for the IBDP and IBCP:

RISS offers an extensive number of languages for our students to study at both the Group 1 Studies in Language and Literature) and Group 2 (Language Acquisition) level:

Group 1: Studies in Language and Literature	Level	Number of hours per week
English Literature	HL	5
English Literature	SL	3
English Language and Literature	HL	5
English Language and Literature	SL	3
SSST own language	SL only	3
Dutch Language and Literature	HL	5
Dutch Language and Literature	SL	3

Group 2: Language Acquisition*	Level	Number of hours per week
English B	HL	5
Dutch B	HL	5
Dutch B	SL	3
Dutch ab initio	SL only	3
French B	HL	5
French B	SL	3
French ab initio	SL only	3
Spanish B	HL	5
Spanish B	SL	3
Spanish ab initio	SL only	3
German B	SL only	3

* Please note that while all languages could be offered: due to timetabling and financial reasons RISS cannot guarantee that a class with fewer than five students opting for the course can be offered.

Dutch Language: Heritage and Acquisition Languages:

While Dutch is not compulsory for every student at the IBDP or IBCP, students who have Dutch are offered the possibility to further develop their language skills through Group 1 Dutch Language and Literature at both the HL and SL levels. Students who have taken Dutch First in the middle years, can only opt for Dutch A SL or HL in the IB, not Dutch B.
Students who hold a Dutch Nationality only are obliged by Dutch Law to take a Dutch Language exam.*

Dutch B at Both HL and SL are offered for students acquiring the language skills for Dutch. Additionally, Dutch ab initio is available by the IBO to allow new students to the Netherlands to learn Dutch as part of their IB subject package:

Dutch Language Offer*	Level	Number of hours per week
Group 1 Dutch Language and Literature	HL	5
Group 1 Dutch Language and Literature	SL	3
Group 2 Dutch B	HL	5
Group 2 Dutch B	SL	3
Group 2 Dutch ab initio	SL only	3

Please note that while all languages could be offered, due to timetabling and financial reasons, a class cannot be run when fewer than 5 students opt for the course. This does not apply to Dutch Language classes.

Ab Initio Languages:

"Language ab initio is a language acquisition course designed for students with no prior experience of the target language, or for those students with very limited previous exposure." (International Baccalaureate, IB Diploma, *Language ab initio guide (First assessment 2020))*

For example, if a student wants to learn French and has had limited recent exposure in the past, they are allowed to take French Ab Initio (after consultation with the Curriculum Leader for Languages, Heritage and Culture). However, if a student has had recent and/or significant exposure to French as a subject in the past, they can only take French as a B language. This applies to all languages offered at Ab Initio and Language B levels at RISS.

Language B:

"Language B is a language acquisition course designed for students with some previous experience of the target language." (International Baccalaureate, IB Diploma, *Language B guide (First assessment 2020)).*

For example, if a student wants to continue learning French, then that student should have recent and/or significant exposure to French in order to take it as a B language (after consultation with the Head of Section and the Curriculum Leader for Languages, Heritage and Culture).

Heritage Language Support in the IBDP and IBCP:

RISS takes pride in the options available for IBDP and IBCP students to continue their heritage language development and/or acquire new languages. There are numerous pathways by which this can be achieved:

Group 1: School supported self-taught Lit A: *"If you talk to a man in a language he understands, that goes to his head. If you talk to him in his own language, that goes to his heart." Nelson Mandela*

For over fifteen years RISS has been running the school supported self-taught Literature A SL (only allowed by the IBO) to encourage students to continue the development of their heritage language(s) as part of their IB studies. This is quintessential to RISS' mission and vision of internationalism and multilingualism by preparing our students for the globalization of the twenty-first century.

Students taking this subject have been very successful in the IBDP and reinforces the importance of one's heritage language(s). Here is an example of the languages taught over the past five years in own language literature (SSST) for Group1:

Albanian	Lithuanian
Arabic	Nepalese
Bosnian	Norwegian
Chinese	Persian
Croatian	Portuguese
Dutch	Polish
Finnish	Romanian
French	Russian
German	Spanish
Hungarian	Serbian
Icelandic	Swedish
Japanese	Thai
Korean	Turkish

Additionally, we have students study Group 1 Japanese Lit A HL with an outside tutor who works closely with the IBDP Coordinator to ensure the integrity and ethics of the program implemented.

The SSST Alexa Nijpels Endowment Award:
In 2019, RISS established the RISS SSST Endowment Award for the most outstanding student in their heritage language. This award is named after Ms Alexa Nijpels, who launched and spearheaded the Heritage Language and ESL Programmes at RISS.

Languages in the International Baccalaureate Career-Related Program (IBCP) at RISS:

RISS started welcoming students into the IBCP programme in 2022/2023 as part of a more comprehensive IB programme. All students are required to take two IBDP language subjects.

Language subjects offered in IB CP

- Studies in Language and Literature: English Literature OR English Language and Literature SL/HL OR English B HL*
- A Language Ab initio or Language B

Furthermore, IB CP students are required by the IB to complete a Language Development element portfolio with students required to undertake 50hr of learning across the two years of study (11/12). The Language Development requirement will be fulfilled by having students undertake a Language B or Ab initio course. This means in practice that IBCP students need to take at least one Language B or ab initio language as a language option.

As part of the language development course IBCP students are required to maintain and complete a language portfolio to document their learning activities and provide evidence of language engagement and development.

Pamoja:
On the rare occasion where parents would prefer their son/daughter focus on acquiring a foreign language not offered by RISS, the school uses Pamoja (to be paid by the parents separately from school tuition). This is an online service (accredited by the IBO) where students are scheduled three hours a week to pursue language acquisition online. The use of Pamoja ensures students can follow language acquisition where it is not possible within the RISS IB schedule. Only some IB languages are offered via this platform.

Professional Development for Teaching Staff in Language Acquisition and Development:

“With languages you are at home anywhere.” Edmund de Waal

At RISS, it is expected that all teaching staff have the following training:

1. Optimus training in ESL in the Mainstream.
2. Guided Inquiry
3. Accredited language specific training for their area of the curriculum

4. Use of consistent pedagogical methodologies and terminology which link to the IBO's ATL and RISS' literacy program using BICS/CALP
5. Differentiation in language teaching and learning
6. Pastoral/learning support to implement language learning in the school.

Policy – Sources of Information

This policy has been informed by the following official documents:

- "Academic Integrity in the IB Educational Context". IBO, 2014, 2016
- "Handbook of procedures of the Diploma Programme 2017", IBO, 2016, 2017 d.
- "Diploma Programme Assessment Procedures", IBO, 2018, 2019
- "IB Assessment Principles and Practices", IBO, 2014, 2019
- "DP Language courses: overview and placement guidance", IB, 2021
- IBO's Mission statement and Philosophy.
- IB Learner profile and RISS IB Learner Profile Plus
- RISS Vision, Mission and Values
- RISS Teaching and Learning Policy
- Learning a Language in the IB, IBO, 2020
- RISS Privacy Policy
- RISS Data Protection Policy

The current policy is associated with the RISS Admissions Policy, the RISS Assessment Policy, the RISS Language Policy, RISS Learning Diversity Policy, Staff Code of Conduct, Wolfert Student Charter, Council of International Schools (CIS) and The New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC).

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* Errata October 2026

P.9 - ‘Dutch’ (removed).

P. 14 - ‘While Dutch is not compulsory for every student (added) at the IBDP or IBCP, students who have Dutch are offered the possibility to further develop their language skills through Group 1 Dutch Language and Literature at both the HL and SL levels. Students who have taken Dutch First in the middle years, can only opt for Dutch A SL or HL in the IB, not Dutch B. Students who hold a Dutch Nationality only are obliged by Dutch Law to take a Dutch Language exam.’ (added)

- *Please note that while all languages could be offered, due to timetabling and financial reasons, a class cannot be run when fewer than 5 students opt for the course. This does not apply to Dutch Language classes. This does not apply to Dutch Language classes.’ (added)

P.16 - **Language subjects offered in IB CP**

- Studies in Language and Literature: English Literature OR English Language and Literature SL/HL OR EnglishB HL. (added)