



Language Policy at Island School

Purpose of this document:

- To outline our beliefs about language development
- To clarify current practice for students, teachers, parents and visitors to the school

This document was put together in 2015-6 by Julian Reed, Chris Binge, Beth Hall, Andrea Walsh, Yamin Ma, in consultation with students, teachers, parents and the school council.

It was approved by the Island School Council in June 2016.

The document follows the [IB guidelines for developing a language policy](#) and will be reviewed annually.

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Admission of New Students

Island School follows the admissions policy of the ESF, a full version of which is at <http://www.esf.edu.hk/policy2013>.

Under this policy:

- The ESF Ordinance, CAP 1117 states that the object of the foundation is to offer ‘a modern liberal education through the medium of the English language to boys and girls who are able to benefit from such an education.’
- Schools offer an all-ability education and must be satisfied that students entering are able to engage with an English-medium curriculum.
- Applicants must demonstrate through interview and assessment that they are capable of engaging with an English medium curriculum.

Current practice

- All students are given an English test upon entry, which involves reading comprehension, speaking and writing.
- Assessment is made by the EAL department using a pass/borderline/fail system. Borderline students are admitted if we can be sure we can put in place the appropriate support.

English language throughout the curriculum

Our beliefs

- Language is at the heart of the curriculum and language is acquired in every activity that students take part in.
- It is fundamental to assure that every student is supported to access the curriculum and culture of the school through the medium of English.
- All teachers are language literacy teachers within their disciplines - developing students' literacy *of* their subject and literacy *through* their subject.

Current practice

- Baseline data is collected using the CEM ability tests MidYis (Year 7) and INSIGHT (Year 10). This data is used by subject teachers and guidance staff to group students and to monitor and support progress.
- Language plays a major part in the Communication section of the school's recently developed [Skills Framework](#), articulated thus:

Interpreting text

I can identify ideas expressed
I can understand the purpose and how it is achieved
I can understand the features that make it suitable for its audience
I can understand how the form helps to convey meaning

Creating text

I can select appropriate media tools for audience and purpose
I can create a text that achieves its purpose
I can create a text for a specific audience
I can use a suitable form to help convey meaning

- Students and teachers use the skills framework for formative assessment.
- Each year faculties collaborate on aspects of the Skills Framework. Communication skills will be one focus in 2016-18.

Language development in the English curriculum

Our beliefs

- Language is at the heart of the curriculum and language is acquired in every activity that students take part in.
- All teachers are language literacy teachers within their disciplines - developing students' literacy *of* their subject and literacy *through* their subject.
- Literacy skills are at the core of the English curriculum.

Current practice

- English lessons at Island School deliver core literacy skills in reading, writing, speaking and listening.

Courses

- Y7-9 - combined language and literature courses
- Y10-11 - Combined CIE First Language English and CIE World Literature
- Y12-13 - IB A English Literature, IB A English Language and Literature, IB Literature in Performance
- In the study of English A language and literature, students engage in the study of the language in a cultural context and language and mass communication.

Teaching Groups

- Most students are taught in mixed ability groups in all years.
- In some year groups, smaller groups of low ability students are team taught by the English and IN department. EA support is also provided to some English classes.
- See separate section of this policy to see how EAL students are supported.

Year 7 and 8

- Library lessons students use SRA reading boxes. These are designed to allow students to work at their own pace and to improve and develop their levels of reading literacy.
- All Y7-8 students have one library lesson per fortnight, this lesson is supported by staff from the IN department who work with individual students or small groups of students to support their literacy.
- Students use the English Skills Builder book. This contains reading and writing literacy activities.

Support for EAL students

Our beliefs

- It is fundamental to assure that students are supported to access the curriculum and culture of the school through the medium of English.
- We admit students to the school whose level of English is such that they can access the curriculum but recognise that some students need additional support.

Current practice

- During the school's decant period EAL support is evaluated and updated annually, the aim being to best support a dynamic, changing cohort. This support may include parallel teaching, co-teaching, push in or pull out lessons or an alternative Pathway.
- Currently, the Language Centre provides in-class support with EA's, or small group work in separate classes with EAL teachers as needed.
- Separate classes currently run as follows:
 - o Year 7-9: Two EAL classes run parallel to the mainstream English curriculum, one on each side of the timetable blocks. Students access a differentiated English first language curriculum. This may develop into Phase 4-5 MYP units of work.
 - o Year 9: One EAL class (one period per week) may be offered in the same block as the 2nd foreign language at the discretion of the EAL Co-ordinator and Curriculum Leader for Languages.
 - o Year 9-11: An English enrichment course is offered as part of the Elements programme (3 periods per week).
 - o Year 10-11: an alternative pathway to first language English may be offered to students who may not cope with the demands of Language and Literature. These students will be offered the opportunity to sit IGCSE ESL although this is not mandated.
 - o Year 12-13: English B higher level course is offered as part of the IB Diploma; standard level may be offered but only at the discretion of the EAL Co-ordinator. The EAL Co-ordinator will follow the guidelines in the Language B Guide introductory section 'Placement of students in Group 2 language courses': *Coordinators, in conjunction with teachers, are responsible for the placement of students. The most important consideration is that the course should be a challenging educational experience for the student.*
 - o October of Year 12: IGCSE ESL exam preparation classes may run for those taking this exam in the Autumn term.
 - o Small group EAL support may be offered at any year level on a short term as needs basis.
 - o The EAL department monitors its own Teaching and Learning [with this framework](#) using section C3 Criteria from the [DP Standards and Practices \(2014, p.25\)](#).

The Chinese curriculum

Our beliefs

- As it is the national language of PR China, every student should have the opportunity to study Mandarin Chinese.
- Facility at Chinese lies on a continuum from complete beginner to native speaker and our structures should be flexible to accommodate this.
- Immersion experiences beyond the classroom are important to ensure optimum progress.
- We value and celebrate the host culture of Hong Kong and Mainland China.
- We recognise that for many of our students, facility in Chinese is important for employability in this region.

Current Practice

Courses

- In Year 7, students choose one language - Chinese, French or Spanish (2 periods per week). Most students choose Chinese.
- In Years 8-9, most students of Chinese choose to concentrate on just this language and therefore learn Chinese 3 periods per week. However it is possible to spend the 3rd period learning Japanese, Spanish or French. The faculty advises students and parents about the choice which will give them the best set of options as they move up through the years. All 'first language' Chinese students take a different language in the 3rd period so as to give them the experience of learning a truly 'foreign' language.
- In Years 10-11, most students study for IGCSE in Chinese, French, Spanish or Japanese. Chinese is offered at one of three levels:
 - o IGCSE First language – for native speakers
 - o IGCSE Second Language – a language exam targeting those who are semi-native speakers; in practice this is an exam for Cantonese speakers
 - o IGCSE Foreign Language

- In Years 12-13, most students of Chinese continue with this language as part of the IB Diploma, or as an IB Certificate if they are following the Applied Learning Pathway. However, they may study another language, currently Spanish or Japanese, at beginner level (Ab Initio).
- IB Diploma courses are offered at different levels so as to provide the opportunity for sufficient challenge:
 - Language A Literature and Language (for native speakers, leading to the award of a Bilingual IB Diploma, which may be advantageous for entry into further studies or employment in Hong Kong and China)
 - Language B (foreign language) Higher Level
 - Language B (foreign language) Standard Level.
- All courses are in Mandarin Chinese but some students may opt to take their IB Diploma Language A oral exam in Cantonese.

Level of challenge

- Upon entry to the school in Year 7, students undertake a short placement test to allocate them a set. Students who have studied Chinese in ESF primary schools will have sat a benchmark test in Year 6 and will have studied in a certain 'pathway'. This information is taken into account alongside the placement test. Students are assessed regularly and move sets according to progress.
- In Years 12-13 students are given some choice as to which level they take but the school follows the IB Language B Guide for first examinations 2015, which states:
 - *It is essential that Diploma Programme coordinators and teachers ensure that students are following the course that is best suited to their present and future needs and that will provide them with an appropriate academic challenge. The degree to which students are already competent in the language and the degree of proficiency they wish to attain by the end of the period of study are the most important factors in identifying the appropriate course. Coordinators, in conjunction with teachers, are responsible for the placement of students. The most important consideration is that the course should be a challenging educational experience for the student.*

Methodology

- All courses develop listening, speaking, reading and writing skills but the balance of these depends on the student's age and level of Chinese.
- Near-native speakers in set 1 will study a balance of language and literature.
- Students use traditional characters but allow for transition from simplified as students enter the school.

The Foreign Languages curriculum

Our beliefs

- The learning of foreign languages is important for intercultural understanding, the overall language development of the child, and cognitive development in general.
- All students should have the opportunity to learn a foreign language.

Current Practice

- In Y7, students choose one language - Chinese, French or Spanish (2 periods per week).
- In Y8-9, students are invited to try French, Spanish or Japanese to their first choice in Year 7, for an additional 1 period per week. However, many students of Chinese choose to concentrate on just this language and therefore learn Chinese 3 periods per week. The faculty advises students and parents about the choice which will give them the best set of choices as they move up through the years.
- In Y10-11, most students take a GCSE/IGCSE in one of the languages that they have already studied. Japanese is offered at GCSE, and French or Spanish at IGCSE. Students may also study French or Spanish as part of the 'Elements' programme. This is guided independent study for students at any level.
- In Years 12-13 students will study a foreign language as part of their IB Diploma or as an IB Certificate if they are following the Applied Learning Pathway. The following courses are offered:
 - o French B Higher/Standard
 - o Spanish B Higher/Standard and Ab Initio Standard
 - o Japanese B Higher/Standard and Ab Initio Standard
 - o If there is a group of at least 3 students wanting to study a particular language because of their family background or future needs, we will help to organize this but tuition will be parent-funded.

Mother Tongue development

Our beliefs

- The development and maintenance of students' mother tongue literacy is central to their cognitive development and their understanding of self and culture.
- As IBO World School teachers we strive to support multilingualism as essential to increasing intercultural understanding and international mindedness. We strive to demonstrate and facilitate the learner profile attributes.
- Mother tongue development supports students who may return to their home countries or to widen employment opportunities.
- We should provide support for mother tongue development for any language as far as this is possible

Current Practice

Assessment

- All students learning languages use the Common European Framework in its variety of forms, as their benchmark. This framework subsumes a range of assessment tools such as DP language B levels, MYP phases, IELTS bands, HSK levels.
- Language teachers aim to move their students 2 sub-levels a year along this continuum.

Programmes

In Years 7-8

- Near-native Chinese speakers follow a specific literature/language programme (see above).
- Near-native speakers of French, Spanish and Japanese can study those languages but they will share a class with foreign language learners and follow a differentiated programme of study, depending on their needs. In Japanese lessons, where there are more near-native speakers, the class is often split into two groups, supported by an Educational Assistant.
- There is no formal curriculum for mother tongue development. However, several students have opted to work with a tutor in their mother tongue (parent funded) when other students are learning a foreign language.

In Years 9-11

- Near-native speakers of Chinese follow a programme which leads to an IGCSE in First Language Chinese.
- Near-native speakers of Japanese, French, Spanish, German and Korean may opt to study for a First Language IGCSE exam : ESF Language Centre, after normal school hours.
- Japanese students may also study for first language GCSE in school alongside their foreign language counterparts.
- The [Independent Language Centre](#) is a course run as part of the Elements programme. Students are in charge of negotiating their own programme with the teacher, parents, and perhaps tutors depending on their level.

In Years 12-13

- First language Chinese is offered as Language A (standard and higher level) as part of the IB Diploma.
- School-Supported Self-Taught Language is offered as part of the IB Diploma. This is run by the EAL department in conjunction with the ESF Languages Centre and private tutors. All Literature A standard level languages can be catered for with advance notice.
- These courses will lead to the award of a Bilingual IB Diploma, which may be advantageous for entry into further studies or employment in the country.

Glossary of terms and acronyms

CEM	Centre for Evaluation and Monitoring (UK)
Core literacy skills	Listening, speaking, reading, writing
DP	IB Diploma Programme
EA	Educational Assistant
EAL	English as an Additional Language
ESL	English as a Second Language
Guidance team	Senior Heads of House, Heads of House, form tutors
HSK	Hanyu Shuiping Kaoshi Chinese proficiency test
IGCSE	International General Certificate of Secondary Education
IB	International Baccalaureate
IELTS	International English Language Test System
IN	Individual Needs
MYP	IB Middle Years Programme
Skills Framework	A framework drawn up by Island School to support the overall development of the student, built around the 'five C's': Capacity to Learn, Communication, Creative & Critical Thinking, Collaboration and Conscience.