



Language Policy

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 reviewed by: MYP Coordinator, DP Coordinator and CP Coordinator, and Head of LOTE

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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.
- We foster an inclusive environment for students from diverse linguistic and cultural background.
- We value multilingualism as an important part of students overall cognitive development.

Current practice

- Baseline data is collected using the MYP Phases level, CEF, CEM ability tests MidYis (Year 7), YELLIS (Year 10) and ALIS (Year 13). This data is used by subject teachers and guidance staff to groups students and to monitor and support progress.
- Language plays a major part in the Communication section of the school's ATL chart and Deep Learning.

Language development in the English curriculum

Our beliefs

- Literacy skills are at the core of the English curriculum.
- English is the primary language of instruction at Island School. We recognise English is an international language and the fact that there are many forms of English spoken in the international community.

Current practice

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

Courses

- Y7-8 - combined language and literature courses with the MYP Curriculum Framework beginning August 2018 for year 7 and Y8 in August 2019.
- Y9 - pre-GCSE year
- Y10-11 - Combined CIE First Language English and CIE World Literature
- Y12-13 - IBDP A English Literature, IBDP 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. See separate section of this policy to see how EAL students are supported.

Year 7 and 8

- Library lessons students use an online platform, Literacy Planet. This is designed to allow students to work at their own pace and to improve and develop their levels of reading and written literacy.
- All Y7-8 students have one library lesson per fortnight, this lesson is usually supported by staff from the IN department who work with individual students or small groups of students to support their literacy.

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.
 - o Phase 4 MYP Language Acquisition is offered during the second Language Acquisition block.
 - o Students exit MYP LA at phase 5 and/or based on assessments and classroom evidence based professional judgement
 - 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 World 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 and 8 students study two languages: Chinese and one other from French, Japanese or Spanish (five periods of each over a two-week period). The MYP is being rolled out in year 7 from August 2018
- Students exit MYP LA at phase 5 and/or based on assessments and classroom evidence based professional judgement
- In Years 9, 10 and 11 students concentrate on one language, either Chinese, French, Japanese or Spanish (seven periods over a two-week period), working towards an IGCSE in the language studied, normally at the end of Year 11.
- In Years 10-11, most students study for IGCSE in Chinese, French, Spanish or Japanese. Chinese is offered at two levels:
 - 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 Courses 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 phase. 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 when placing them in an MYP phase. Students are assessed regularly and move phases 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 phase 5/6 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 Language Acquisition curriculum

Our beliefs

- The acquiring of 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 Year 7 and 8 students study two languages: Chinese and one other from French, Japanese or Spanish (five periods of each over a two-week period) under the MYP Curriculum Framework.
- In Years 9, 10 and 11 students concentrate on one language, either Chinese, French, Japanese or Spanish (seven periods over a two-week period), working towards an IGCSE in the language studied, normally at the end of Year 11.
- 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
 - 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

The term mother tongue 'denote[s] the language learned first; the language identified with as a 'native' speaker; the language known best; the language used most' (Learning in a language other than mother tongue in IB programmes, 2008).

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.

The provision for MYP language learning

Language and Literature

- All students study English Language and Literature for 9 periods per fortnight (360 minutes).
- Students study in mixed ability groups except for a smaller class that study similar units of inquiry but with more specific support for Language Acquisition students.
- Some students study Chinese Language and Literature instead of Chinese Language Acquisition if this is a more suitable challenge for them.

Language Acquisition

- Classes are organised by phase as described in the IBO publications. The Language Acquisition faculty and EAL department are responsible for using these criteria to ensure students are placed in a programme offering suitable challenge for each student.
- In Year 7-8 there are two Language Acquisition blocks. Each block is over 5 periods per fortnight (200 minutes).
 - Block A - all students study Chinese. Different classes are for Phase 1, Phase 2, Phase 3-4, and Language and Literature.

- Block B - the following options are available:
 - French Phase 1-2
 - Spanish Phase 1-2
 - Japanese Phase 1-4
 - English Phase 3-4
 - Literacy support (not an MYP language acquisition class)
- Students and parents are given a choice of foreign language before commencing the school year. However, initial literacy assessments lead to subsequent recommendations that some students take English language acquisition or literacy support classes instead.
- If students opt to study another language as a Mother Tongue, the school can make arrangements for a partnership with a parent-funded tutor in lieu of the block B language.

Phases of language acquisition and pathways

The table below shows typical pathways. Students will be guided on a case-by-case basis to ensure that they are given suitable level of challenge for any language at any level. There is the possibility of moving between pathways provided that the school is satisfied that the level of challenge is adequate.

Y7-8 (IB MYP) ⇒	Y9-11 (IGCSE and Elements courses) ⇒	Y12-13 (IB Diploma) options
<p>Phase 1-2</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chinese, Japanese, French, Spanish in taught classes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> IGCSE foreign language (Chinese, Japanese, French, Spanish) in one language Elements language centre course for those wanting to study any language independently 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Language B standard level Language B higher level (for students with very high IGCSE foreign language level) Ab Initio (in a subject not studied at IGCSE or equivalent)
<p>Phase 3-4</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> English and Chinese in taught classes. Japanese in same class as Phase 1-2 (Educational Assistant team teaching). Mother tongue acquisition available as supervised study in conjunction with a parent-funded tutor 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> IGCSE foreign or 2nd language Chinese IGCSE 2nd language English GCSE Japanese (no 1st language exam available in summer sessions) Elements language centre course for those wanting to study any language independently 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Language B higher level (Chinese, Japanese, French, Spanish, English) Language A (Language and Literature) standard or higher level Chinese School-supported self-taught Language A in languages other than Chinese
<p>Phase 5-6</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No English/Chinese phase 5-6 students as a Language Acquisition subject. These students study Language and Literature. Japanese in same class as Phase 1-4 (Educational Assistant team teaching). Mother tongue acquisition available as supervised study in conjunction with a parent-funded tutor 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> IGCSE ESL and 1st Language English IGCSE 1st Language Chinese Elements language centre course for those wanting to study any language independently 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Language A (Language and Literature) standard or higher level Chinese School-supported self-taught Language A in languages other than Chinese

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.

