

POLICY NAME	PYP Language Policy
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SCHOOL	ISAWHIS
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ISAWHIS Language Policy – PYP

Reviewed April 2026

ISAWHIS International Education Group Mission Statement

Nurture Leading Talents and Pioneers for the Future

ISAWHIS International School Vision

Build a Multi-Cultural Ecosystem of International Education

- Students will achieve highly, trying their best in everything and making the most of the opportunities in life.
- Students will make a significantly positive contribution to the society and community to which they belong.
- Students will become compassionate leaders and effective collaborators, making the world a better place for all to live happily and harmoniously.

Values: Positive, caring, responsible, communicative, team-orientated, self-reflective, adaptive, creative, innovative, and resilient.

ISAWHIS Language Philosophy

ISAWHIS believes that **language is the vehicle for inquiry** and that **all teachers are teachers of language**. Our students *learn language, learn through language, and learn about language*. We believe that language should be taught in context as much as possible to foster interest and purpose.

Language is at the center of the cognitive processes that shape learning. It is inextricably linked to an individual's personal, social, and cultural identity.

We actively acknowledge the importance of **Mother Tongue** as integral to the ability to acquire additional languages and develop a deep sense of personal identity and emotional well-being. All learners come with an individual experience of language from their home environment, and this must be the starting point for future language learning.

All students learn an additional language. This enables our learning community to develop their **international mindedness** as they grow their interest in and knowledge of other cultures and languages. This multilingualism enriches our students' lives as they strive to live the IB learner profile and fulfill the mission of the International Baccalaureate programmes.

Purpose

This language policy is a working document developed by staff and administration from the PYP. The policy is consistent with the stipulated principles and practices of the IB. This document outlines our school's linguistic and academic goals in the Early Years and Primary Years and defines the programme designed to help our students attain these goals. This policy is intended to provide an overview and guiding principles for language learning at ISAWHIS which permeates the entire school curriculum through authentic contexts in a culturally rich and diverse environment.

The goal of the language policy is to promote an understanding of the variety and richness of language. In addition to fostering cognitive development, language is essential for preserving cultural identity and emotional stability.

Rationale

ISAWHIS recognises that language acquisition and proficiency are instrumental to the success of our students. In accordance with our Mission Statement, language development addresses each student's social, emotional, and intellectual needs to prepare them for life in a multilingual and multicultural world. **English being the medium of instruction, teaching and learning language is inherent in all subject areas, and all teachers are language teachers**, regardless of discipline or year level. ISAWHIS supports the development of mother tongue and additional languages.

ISAWHIS recognizes the importance of language learning throughout the IB PYP continuum as contributing to:

- Communication skills (in English, an additional language, and Mother Tongue)
- Developing learning skills applicable across the curriculum and life outside school
- Enhancing cultural awareness and appreciation

Therefore, all students in the PYP have access to language learning in English and Chinese, with additional language exposure as appropriate.

As language is integrated into all areas of the curriculum, every teacher within the school is considered a language teacher. ISAWHIS aims to foster in students the ability to think and express themselves with precision, clarity, confidence, and imagination in at least two languages (English and Chinese).

ISAWHIS strives to address the challenges of those students who are learning in a language other than their mother tongue by providing English as an Additional Language (ELA) programme.

Shared Understandings of Language Teaching

- ISAWHIS aims to equip all students with the knowledge of, and the ability to use, two or more languages.
- The acquisition of languages is seen as a continuum along which each individual student progresses at their own speed.
- ISAWHIS understands that students come to the school with many different language backgrounds and will progress at varied speeds.

- **All ISAWHIS teachers are language teachers.**
- **Translanguaging as a pedagogical strategy** is encouraged where appropriate. Teachers are encouraged to support students using their mother tongue in mainstream classes to aid comprehension, build conceptual understanding, and allow students to share cultural and cognitive ideas. Teachers use professional judgment to determine when mother tongue use supports learning without replacing the target language of instruction.
- ISAWHIS teaches language through context and relates new information to existing knowledge. Differentiated instruction accommodates learning diversity through personalized learning tailored to individual needs.
- The role of the school library is to maintain a significant collection of books in English, Chinese, and other languages. Magazines and newspapers are available in English and selected languages.

Language Courses

Early Years Stage: Language acquisition courses are offered in English, French, Japanese, and Chinese. EY1 and EY2 lessons are 30 minutes each; EY3 and EY4 lessons are 45 minutes each. English courses are 30 minutes for EY1 and EY2, and 45 minutes for EY3 and EY4.

Primary Years (G1–G5):

- English: 72 minutes daily (8 × 45-minute periods per week)
- Chinese: 45 minutes daily (5 × 45-minute periods per week)
- Language acquisition courses offered: English, French, Japanese, Chinese

English as the Language of Instruction

The main aim of English language development in the PYP is to develop **Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP)** alongside social language.

Teachers ensure they meet the needs of English Language Acquisition (ELA) and English Language and Literature (ELL) students through structured phases, providing opportunities to develop academic English proficiency in the major skill areas: viewing, reading, writing, speaking, and listening.

ISAWHIS is committed to providing appropriate professional development so that teachers can competently teach English, and in English, to all students.

Departments are required to plan effectively to ensure there are resources in the library and in classrooms, particularly fiction books, to support teaching and learning.

Curriculum documentation is kept in English. Where additional Language and Literature courses are offered, documentation may be kept in English and the language of the class.

Library Support of Languages

The EY–12 library offers a range of professional supports and materials for our students' needs. The librarian works with both teachers and students on research skills, use of databases, and approaches to selecting reading material by both ability and interest. Books, magazines, and periodicals are available in all languages offered and are coded by Lexile. Additionally, librarians acquire books in languages of students that are not offered in our formal programme to ensure we are inclusive and internationally minded. In the PYP, the library actively supports mother tongue development by providing access to books in students' home languages.

Language Learning in the Primary School (PYP Only)

Early Years (EY) and Primary Years Programme (PYP)

Languages offered in Primary:

Programme	Mother Tongue / Language A	Language Acquisition / Language B
PYP (EY1–G5)	Chinese, English, French, Japanese	Chinese, English, French, Japanese

English Language Teaching – Early Years Overview

Throughout the Early Years, students develop the basic language skills necessary to access the curriculum. At ISA WHIS, Early Years classes follow the **PYP Language Scope and Sequence**, the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) descriptors, and **Read Write Inc. (RWI)** to develop the necessary skills.

- **EY1–EY3:** Four units of inquiry each year foster competencies in listening, speaking, pre-reading, pre-writing, and presenting. The main focus is constructive play-based language.
- **EY4:** Five units of inquiry, following the PYP scope and sequence in combination with KS1 curriculum descriptors.

Primary Years Overview

The **PYP Language Scope and Sequence** and **England's National Curriculum (Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2)** are used to guide teachers at every stage of the language teaching and learning process. All classes have language focus blocks of time where teaching and learning comprise reading, writing, speaking, listening, viewing, and presenting.

Each language strand is acknowledged separately, although in practice they are interactive and interrelated elements idELAlly taught as part of a well-planned **transdisciplinary Programme of Inquiry**. G1–G5 have six units of inquiry each year.

The components of a scheduled language focus block are explicitly planned and assessed. When a language unit is not fully integrated within the Programme of Inquiry, stand-alone planning and preparation occurs. Teachers balance the amount of narrative, poetic, and non-fiction texts read and written in order to provide a rich language environment with opportunities for the widest range of learning and expression.

ELA Teaching Overview – G1–G5

ELA support in the Primary Years is for students who come from a background where English is not their mother tongue. This programme is designed to nurture early development in foundational English language skills and takes into account the diverse needs of each student. It recognises that language is learned through stages and encompasses the four strands of language learning in the PYP Scope and Sequence as a guide.

The process of language learning for ELA students is consistent with the PYP beliefs about language learning.

All language teaching in EY–PYP is undertaken in the homeroom, but it is understood that all teachers in the school are language teachers. From G1–G5, there is a combination of withdrawal and in-class support sessions for beginner ELA learners.

Beginner (Flexible Grouping Withdrawal)

Every year level from G1–G5 has an ELA teacher who works collaboratively with the homeroom teacher to support the needs of beginners. Flexible grouping withdrawal of ELA students occurs with:

- Small groups of students supported with basic language acquisition
- A focus on developing basic speaking, listening, reading, and writing skills

Supported (In-Class Support in the Homeroom)

For Primary, the ELA teacher works with beginner students, and the amount of time spent is based on individual needs. This support is usually part of the homeroom language programme and follows the current focus strands of the homeroom. In-class support can also occur in other learning areas (e.g., language in mathematics, within the unit of inquiry, as part of contextual learning, or by providing assistance when reading for meaning). It can appear as:

- An individual and/or group focus
- The development of language skills to support class integration across the curriculum

Monitoring (Student Support Services Monitoring)

In the final stage of support, the ELA teacher and Student Support Services Coordinator will provide regular check-ins to monitor the student's progress. Analysis of data collected from formative and summative assessments, as well as teacher observation, informs any further support required.

Mother Tongue and Additional Languages

Entry Requirements in the Primary Mother Tongue Programme:

English Language/English Language and Literature (EL/ELL) and Chinese Language/Chinese Language and Literature (CL/CLL)

ISAWHIS will enroll students who:

- Are coming directly from their home country
- Have attended a national school (e.g., French school, Japanese school)
- Use their mother tongue outside school with their family

(See Language Placement Assessment and Process for full details.)

Students with basic proficiency and no support at home will not be considered for the Mother Tongue language programme in the Primary School. These students will attend English as an Additional Language (ELA/ELA) or Chinese as an Additional Language (CAL/CLA) classes.

CLL Entry Requirements in Primary

Students need to at least pass the assessment for the previous year level to be admitted to the next year level's CLL. If a student passes the Listening and Speaking session but fails the Reading and Writing session, parents will be contacted and offered two options:

1. The student will join CLA to gain more practice in Reading and Writing.
2. The student may join CLL but will require extra homework and home support.

Early Years Chinese

EY1–EY4 students attend regular Chinese classes which follow the Central Idea of every unit of inquiry through a series of learning activities such as story-reading, games, singing, and craft-making. The play-based Chinese learning in the Early Years enables children to know and inquire through the host country language and culture.

Mother Tongue Philosophy

Students from EY1 to Grade 5 attend regular language classes. The language programme within the ISAWHIS Primary School supports the IB philosophy that **students should continue the development of their first language**, which will enhance their overall language development and progress.

If a student's first language is not offered as a Mother Tongue language, ISAWHIS provides beginner and intermediate Chinese language classes called Chinese as an Additional Language (CAL) in the Primary School. The learning of an additional language helps to build intercultural awareness and tolerance as well as play a key role in the holistic development of the student.

Collaboration Between Homeroom and Language Teachers

Homeroom teachers and Mother Tongue language teachers collaborate and build language-rich transdisciplinary learning engagements throughout selected units of inquiry.

Host Country Language – Chinese

The teaching of Chinese has a special place in the school's curriculum. ISAWHIS believes in providing a high-quality host country language programme and places an emphasis on integrating Chinese culture into the curriculum.

The EY1 to Grade 5 Chinese programme at ISAWHIS is grouped into **Mother Tongue** and **Chinese as an Additional Language (CAL)**. Placement within Mother Tongue classes is not streamed, and there is continuous flexible grouping depending on each student's progress, using both formative and summative assessments. Students attending CAL classes may be placed in beginner or intermediate groups, largely dependent on the number of students and the needs of each year level.

Primary Language Learning Placement

Upon joining ISAWHIS, students will undergo a placement test to determine their level of English (and Chinese for Early Years). These results, coupled with teacher observation, inform the decision about placement in ELA or ELL classes.

Students in ELA classes are continually monitored and assessed for their ability to access the ELL curriculum. It is an aspiration that all ELA students will eventually transition into the ELL programme.

Transition Process from ELA to ELL

1. A student's written, reading, and oral language proficiency is assessed.
2. If results indicate that the student is able to access the ELL curriculum with reasonable accommodation from the ELL teacher, the ELA teacher consults with the ELL teacher to confirm whether learning in the ELL class can be appropriately accessed by the learner.
3. A recommendation for movement is then proposed to the Literacy Coordinator and Principal.
4. If approved, the recommendation is sent to the Head of School for final approval, and the student's parents are notified.

Additionally, consideration should be given to:

- The emotional and social wellbeing of the student
- Any implications regarding the proposed class placement (e.g., students with SEN needs)
- Any interventions the student has received and their impact, including differentiation, support programmes, and/or counselling

If it is determined that a move is the best fit for the student, the Head of School is informed and will make the final decision.

Translanguaging and Classroom Strategies

Translanguaging as a concept is intentionally supported in the PYP classroom where necessary. While English (except during mother tongue classes) should be used as the primary language of instruction, teachers recognize that allowing students to briefly access their full

linguistic repertoire can deepen conceptual understanding, support inclusion, and affirm cultural identity.

Strategies that teachers in the PYP use to support language development include:

- Keyword lists and visual vocabulary walls
- Use of pictures, rELAia, and graphic organisers
- Teacher modelling and think-alouds
- Peer support and talk partners
- Writing frames for specific genres
- Reading small chunks of text and highlighting unfamiliar words
- Working out word meanings from context
- Sentence starters and language scaffolds
- Using post-it notes to build phrases before writing full sentences
- Punctuation and vocabulary pyramids as visual support tools

Review of the Language Policy

This policy will be reviewed again in April 2027 and every April of each academic year thereafter, if needed, following the recommendation of the PYP Coordinator.

References

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