

LANGUAGE POLICY

Our mission: Oeiras International School is committed to promoting a respectful community of independent and passionate lifelong learners who are aware of their roles and responsibilities in an ever-changing world. To this end we offer a variety of learning experiences within a supportive and challenging environment of rigorous academic programmes.

Our vision: Quality international education throughout the school.

Values

- Awareness of an ever changing world, encompassing local and global issues.
- Respect for one another, irrespective of beliefs and creeds, the depth and reach of personal interests and contributing actively towards a better society.
- Celebration of excellence and commitment, recognising that the risk of failure is an integral and necessary part of the path to success.
- Growth of each student's responsibility over his/her own learning process.

Our language policy is commensurate with our mission, vision and values. We believe that language is central to teaching and learning and that all teachers are language teachers.

Guiding principles:

Language is vital for social, emotional and cognitive development. Because of its power and scope, language is the medium through which all other subjects are studied.

The responsible use of language demands both accuracy and honesty, so students must also learn to consider the ethics of communication. Students live in a world where obscenities abound. They live in a world where politicians use sixty-second sound bites to destroy integrity. They live in a world where clichés substitute for reason. To make their way in this world, students must learn to distinguish between deceit and authenticity in language. People need to write with clarity, read and listen with understanding, speak effectively, compute accurately, and appreciate the communicative capabilities of the arts. Education means helping students understand that language in all its forms is a powerful and sacred trust (adapted from Boyer, 1981:5).

To this end we are committed to supporting our students to develop clear communication skills that adhere to these principles throughout and beyond their school life.

Language profile:

The majority of our students are bilingual in Portuguese and English, and many of our staff are fluent in several languages. In order to support students in their languages and their learning, we document their language profile on entry to the school, with reference to previous school records and through conversations with parents and students.

Languages at OIS:

Language A refers to the student's mother tongue or preferred spoken, written, reading and understood language. Language B is the student's second (and third) language. By studying an additional language they develop lifelong learning skills, an awareness and understanding of the perspectives of people from other cultures, realizing that there are various ways of behaving and viewing the world, including those from the country where they are now living. Language B in the MYP course is "designed to equip the student with a skills base to facilitate further language learning." (IB, MYP Language B guide 2012). In fact, the process of learning a language highly contributes to the holistic development of the student, making him/her a competent communicator in the global contexts of the 21st century.

In each year, students are placed in different phases (from 1 to 6), according to their ability. They represent a developmental continuum, which is not age-based. It means that each student may enter at any phase and exit at any phase. When they reach the last phase, they will be able to move to Language A. Please contact your child's teacher should you have any questions regarding this matter.

In Language B classes, students develop a solid base of communication skills. For them to progress, they will need to meet what is expected for each phase (oral communication, visual interpretation, reading comprehension and writing).

English is the language of instruction in all classes, apart from the non-English Language B classes. We endeavour to adapt our offerings to suit our student population, while ensuring that each student consistently follows at least two languages as a minimum at DP and MYP level.

Languages A at MYP and DP level comprise Portuguese, French, Dutch, Swedish, Mandarin and English. Portuguese, English, French and Spanish are offered as Languages B in MYP; English B, Portuguese B, Swedish B, Mandarin B and Spanish B and beginners (*ab initio*), German beginners (*ab initio*) and Mandarin beginners (*ab initio*), are currently offered at DP level. DP *ab initio* subjects are for those who have not studied the language or who have had very limited exposure to it.

Students who are not proficient in English are required to attend additional lessons in this language at school. Some students may also want to reinforce their English after school; these lessons are organized by OIS, and are at parents' expense.

Students who do not have as their mother tongue any of the Languages A offered by the school will be assisted in finding a suitable mother tongue teacher from amongst our staff or the community, and we will provide the space and facilities for this teaching to take place.

Our library shows a preponderance of books from other cultures, and our supporting material in class is focused on developing internationally-minded students.

OIS provides a rich language environment. When planning for teaching and learning, teachers identify specific ways in which they support language learning both directly and indirectly. All students keep a portfolio of their best work, and their community and service activity reflections. Younger students are given open-ended questions to stimulate reflection on their learning, while students in years 10 and 11 are encouraged to complete their reflections freely. Students may use their mother tongue for their reflections, until they are proficient in English.

We encourage students to use language carefully, to be aware of the effect of their words on others and to take a creative approach to understanding through language. We welcome a diversity of mother tongues as adding to the richness of our school community.

Professional development

On a rotating basis, teachers will remain updated concerning developments in language learning and developing a language policy by attending relevant IB training. They will then share any information with their colleagues. Our school professional development library contains books on language learning that are available to all teachers.

References

- Boyer, Ernest L. (1981). *A Quest for Common Learning: The Aims of General Education*.
Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching.
- International Baccalaureate (April 2008), *Guidelines for developing a school language policy*
- International Baccalaureate (April 2006), *Learning in a language other than mother tongue in IB programmes*.

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