

## Language Policy

St Dominic's International School (SDIS) is an inclusive International Baccalaureate (IB) continuum school that offers a holistic education from the ages of 3-18 for international students and Portuguese students who wish to study in the English language.

The mission of SDIS is to nurture people and cultivate international mindedness to develop the intellectual, social, physical, emotional, moral and spiritual characteristics inherent in each person. We aim to support all individuals to develop the necessary skills in order to make a meaningful contribution to create a better world.

### 1. Philosophy

At St. Dominic's school, we believe that communication, both oral and written, is the key to educational progress, to social integration and to personal development and happiness. Language is both rich and diverse, constantly evolving, enabling us to express ideas, feelings, emotions and opinions. It informs and reflects the culture and society in which we live.

Language is fluid and constantly changing, and as such, we recognise that our language programme and outcomes should be regularly reviewed, assessed and modified in order to meet the ongoing needs of the students and the community. It underpins all areas of the curriculum, facilitating understanding and the acquisition of knowledge.

We want students to experience a wide range of both spoken and written English. Students with a learning support requirement and those with English as an Additional Language will be given support to enable them to access the curriculum. EAL students' expertise in their first language will also be valued and respected. The school supports multilingualism and translanguaging.

We believe that all teachers are teachers of language and that we have a shared responsibility to support all our students and their diverse language needs.

### 2. Purpose

- To develop our students' ability to communicate in and comprehend English and their other languages, whether these are home languages or newly acquired ones, and to equip them with the language skills necessary for academic success.
- To respect and promote every student's home language in the belief that all languages enrich intellectual and social growth.
- To value all languages and their cultural contexts and encourage all our students to become bilingual or multilingual.

- To encourage engagement with the language, history, culture and society of the host community of Lisbon and Portugal.
- To ensure language teaching and learning meet the needs of each individual student and build on their previous knowledge and skills.
- To consult with parents, students and teachers on entry and with continued monitoring, review language development on a regular basis.
- To provide a safe and positive language learning environment which is stimulating and well resourced.
- To instil in our teachers and students that language is best taught in authentic situations and to provide the resources and opportunities for this to happen.
- To integrate the language curriculum into all transdisciplinary and interdisciplinary subjects across the PYP, MYP and DP, recognising that language cannot be isolated and should be embedded in all subject areas.
- To enable students to grow in self-esteem and self-confidence through the learning of languages.
- To recognise that ability to communicate effectively can come before grammatical accuracy, while ensuring that students have the opportunity to acquire and develop a thorough knowledge of the internal structures/workings of a language.
- To provide adequate resources in both Junior and Senior School and for all teachers and departments to support both discrete and cross-curricular language learning.

### **3. Language programmes**

The school maintains the strict expectation that students will be engaged in language programmes that involve real challenge and intellectual development. Our language programmes consist of EAL, Language Acquisition and Language and Literature. Students will progress from one level to the next when they are proficient.

All programmes are designed to give students the maximum range of options leading to the IB Diploma, taking starting levels into account.

### **4. Home Language**

The school acknowledges the vital importance of maintenance and development of language and literacy skills in the student's home language. It recognizes that this development is important in acquiring a second language, thus contributing to additive bilingualism. At the same time, the school sees this as an opportunity to increase intercultural awareness and foster cultural understanding for both the students, peers, teachers and other members in the school community.

Where the school cannot offer direct instruction in a language, it will seek to support students and their families in home language maintenance, where possible, by such mechanisms as:

- Contact with embassies and other agencies which may be able to offer or promote support
- Recognise and support learning in community language centres

## SDIS Language Policy (2024-25)

- Facilitate home language classes within the school premises
- Developing library resources in a range of languages used by students.
- Promote opportunities to celebrate the various home languages and cultural traditions within the school
- Make available guides and other documents necessary to align (when appropriate) the home language curriculum with the International Baccalaureate

Management in these matters is part of the responsibilities of the Heads of Languages.

### 5. Host Country Language

From Grade 1 up and including Grade 8, the school has a commitment to embrace teaching Portuguese Language and Culture to all students. Portuguese Culture is taught not only through Portuguese Language lessons, but also in other subjects. The host country's traditions and celebrations are supported by the school community.

*This document will be reviewed and revised by June 2025.*

*Updated: August 2024*

## Appendix – Procedures

### A. PYP

1. English is the language of instruction in the Junior School, from Nursery to Grade 5. Portuguese Language is taught from Grade 1 to Grade 5.
2. All students experience success in reading, speaking, listening, writing, presenting and viewing.
3. Learning language, learning through language and learning about language is taught throughout the curriculum.
4. Language will be taught through all curriculum areas, including explicit language instruction in English and Portuguese language lessons.
5. Differentiated learning is provided for students based on their learning needs.
6. The school's curriculum documents outline language expectations.
7. Parents are informed about all aspects of language learning through meetings, online communication and parent- student-teacher conferences.

### B. Middle Years Programme

In the Senior School, languages are divided into Language Acquisition and Language and Literature. Students have the opportunity to take three languages but at least one of them should be Language and Literature, if possible. **To be eligible for the full certificate, students must complete two Language and Literature Courses or one Language and Literature and one Language Acquisition course.**

However, students take only two languages if they need extra support due to special learning difficulties or if they do not have adequate English language skills to access the curriculum (EAL students).

#### Language and literature (Language A)

The following Language and Literature courses are offered at SDIS subject to sufficient student numbers: English, Portuguese, Mandarin, Spanish and French.

#### Language acquisition (Language B)

Students are expected to progress through the language acquisition phases as indicated in the following table:

|    | Portuguese |           |            | French    |           | Spanish   |          | English |         |            |
|----|------------|-----------|------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|----------|---------|---------|------------|
| 6  | Emergent   | Capable   |            | Phase 1   |           | Phase 1   |          | EAL     | Capable |            |
| 7  | Phase 1*   | Phase 2   | Capable    | Phase 2   |           | Phase 2   | Phase 1* | EAL     | Capable |            |
| 8  | Phase 1*   | Phase 3   | Proficient | Phase 3   | Phase 1*  | Phase 3   | Phase 2  | EAL     | Capable | Proficient |
| 9  | Phase 1*   | Phase 3-4 | Proficient | Phase 3-4 | Phase 2   | Phase 3-4 | Phase 1* | EAL     | Capable | Proficient |
| 10 | Phase 1*   | Phase 4   | Proficient | Phase 4   | Phase 2-3 | Phase 4   | Phase 2  | EAL     | Capable | Proficient |

\*Available only for new students to the language (this also includes students exiting EAL at the start of the year).

New students arriving in grade 10 without prior knowledge of Spanish/French will have extra support for English, Portuguese and MYP skills.

English as an Additional Language (EAL)

- EAL beginners do not take English A/B, Humanities nor French/Spanish
- EAL Pre-intermediate do not take English A/B nor French/Spanish
- EAL Intermediate do not take English A/B

There may be variations on the above based on assessment of individual language needs.

A diagnostic in-class test is done when the student first starts a Language Acquisition class, in order to establish the phase that best fits the student.

Depending on their prior additional learning experiences, students may commence their language acquisition course in any phase on the continuum and may exit from any phase on the continuum.

### C. Diploma

#### Grades 11 and 12 (IBDP)

| 1 <sup>st</sup> Language<br>Literature and Language   | 2 <sup>nd</sup> Language<br>Language Acquisition | 3 <sup>rd</sup> Language        |
|---|--|---------------------------------|
| English Literature or Language and Literature   | English B  | <i>Spanish <b>ab initio</b></i> |
| Portuguese Literature or Language and Literature  | Portuguese B                                     |                                 |
| Mandarin Language and Literature  | French B   |                                 |
| Self-taught Language (only SL level): school supports the study of a student's first language if not offered at the school. Arrangements are made by parents and the HOD of Language A guides the tutor throughout the programme. | Spanish B  |                                 |
|   | <i>French <b>ab initio</b></i>                   |                                 |

#### 4. EAL Junior School

The English as an Additional Language (EAL) programme in St. Dominic's Junior School provides students with language acquisition support in order to ensure that our pupils can access, understand and interact with the PYP curriculum.

The Junior School offers EAL support starting in Grade 1 through to Grade 5. For each grade level we offer two EAL courses:

- **EAL Beginners:** Students with very little to no command of the English language are placed in this group. They are withdrawn from their mainstream classes for 8 class periods throughout the school week. When necessary, students are supported first in their acquisition of survival English. These language skills will ensure a smoother transition to the school's English-speaking environment.

Students placed in EAL Beginners will receive differentiated support from our specialist staff in order to develop and consolidate the acquisition of Basic Interpersonal Communicative Skills. This is the type of context-dependent language that students need in order to effectively communicate with other members of the school community in English. Availability pending, students may also receive in-class support by our EAL staff. Throughout the year, students' acquisition of English is closely monitored in order to determine and re-evaluate what linguistic needs must be met in order for pupils to advance to EAL Intermediate.

- EAL Intermediate: Students who have a relatively strong command of the English language, but who may still require specialist support in acquiring academic English will be placed in this group. Students at the Intermediate level are withdrawn from their mainstream classes for 3 periods a week. Our specialist staff design' the course with students' specific linguistic needs in mind with a view to developing and consolidating their Cognitive/Academic Language Proficiency. This involves the acquisition of more advanced aspects of language which will underpin student achievement. Throughout the year, students' acquisition of English is closely monitored in order to determine if it is appropriate for a pupil to be exited out of the EAL Programme.

#### Entering EAL

All incoming students, regardless of their linguistic background, are administered an English language assessment in order to determine whether or not language support is necessary. This assessment takes place during the first few days of school, during which time the EAL specialist staff begin to determine the linguistic profile of the different grade levels. As EAL support begins in Grade 1, all students from this grade level are assessed, regardless of their personal language profiles. After determining which pupils will be enrolled in the EAL programme, teachers and parents are informed.

#### Exiting EAL

A student may be exited out of the EAL programme following an exit assessment which is carried out by an EAL specialist. This assessment is designed to determine if a student has acquired an appropriate amount of academic English in order to no longer necessitate specialist support. Students' acquisition of English is monitored throughout the school year in order to determine if an exit assessment should be administered. If the EAL specialist and Head of EAL determine that a pupil should be exited, the decision to cease EAL support is considered irreversible. Once a student exits the EAL programme, he or she may not be admitted again. For this reason, careful consideration goes into determining when exiting is appropriate and beneficial for the student.

### **5. EAL Senior School**

St Dominic's Senior School EAL programme assists students whose home language is not English to participate actively in the mainstream social and academic life of the school recognising that a student's language is central to their sense of identity.

The EAL programme aims:

- To develop students' ability to communicate effectively in English in a wide range of social, cultural and learning contexts.
- To develop students' skills in reading, writing, listening and speaking thus giving them access to the curriculum in all areas.
- To build on the students' linguistic and cultural identities and backgrounds.
- To ensure that students' feel comfortable, confident and eager to learn in a healthy learning environment.
- To assist mainstream teachers to best deliver their programmes to suit the needs of EAL language learners as all teachers in international school's work with non-English speaking students.

Programme

organisation:

Students entering the Senior School whose home language is not English sit an EAL placement test to assess their linguistic ability. This is the basis for selecting appropriate EAL programmes to cater for individual language needs. The rate at which students acquire language varies. To enable effective language learning, EAL classes are small, thus offering individual support and encouragement to each student.

From grade 6 to grade 8 beginner EAL students are withdrawn from mainstream Humanities, English B and Language Acquisition lessons (Spanish/French). They follow an EAL programme designed to suit their language needs.

In grades 9 and 10 non-English speaking students who are beginners are withdrawn from mainstream Humanities, English B and Language Acquisition (Spanish/French), while Intermediate students are withdrawn only from Language Acquisition.

Students in grades 10, 11 and 12 may receive extra English language support at any time from the EAL language centre- room 14. Where timetabling allows, this room is staffed by an EAL teacher during the school day and also at lunch times and some afternoons after school.

The language needs of students in the IB Diploma programme grades 11 and 12, are catered for by the EAL department for up to 2 lessons a week. Each student has two timetabled EAL support lessons a week. From grade 6 to 10 in-class EAL language support is also offered across mainstream subject classes. This will be determined by individual student needs and staffing.

Liaison with mainstream teachers and the EAL coordinator to discuss students' language progress takes place regularly. Each EAL student's language progress is assessed termly and some may enter mainstream subjects with EAL in-class support where available. EAL beginner students do not receive an achievement grade in their term 1 reports.

When timetabling and/or staff availability allow, the EAL classroom is staffed during lunchtime so that students may receive extra support.

### Exiting EAL

A student may exit the EAL programme if it is determined that they have acquired an appropriate level of academic English to access the full curriculum of the school. This decision is made following the administration of an EAL exit test, which usually takes place at the end of the term in question. The test is administered by the Senior School EAL department and consists of both a reading and writing paper, followed by a speaking assessment. The reading and writing component is completed on paper in the EAL classroom and students have one hour to complete it. Students are monitored on a continuous basis and decisions to test students are informed by their performance in classwork and progress tests throughout the year. Once a student has exited the EAL programme, this decision is final and students may not re-enter the EAL programme.

## **6. Language Levels on Entry**

A full educational history, including information regarding language acquisition and SEN, is requested for all students entering SDIS. In addition, where it is clear that a student has not come from a school where the language medium is English, or where they are not English native language speakers, students entering Senior School are required to take an EAL test. The information gleaned from this is then used to place students in the appropriate English classes.

Students entering from Grade 11 who have limited English acquisition will be accepted only where the school feels he or she will be able to access the IB Curriculum.  
(See separate appendix for Language Acquisition options letter)

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