

IST Primary Language Policy

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Rationale

International School Twente Primary (IST) is committed to providing a supportive and inclusive environment where all students can thrive academically, socially, and emotionally.

IST recognized that all students, regardless of their origin and circumstances, are primarily language learners, and that it is through the development of language that students not only communicate, but build their understanding of the world. We recognise the importance of language development for our students, and we strive to create a language policy that supports their linguistic and cultural diversity.

IST also recognises the role of language in International Mindedness, both as a means of affirming cultural identity, but also as a vehicle for building authentic relationships across cultures. It is for this reason that IST promotes multiculturalism in the form of the learning of the Dutch language, and by the support and celebration of students' mother tongues.

Intent of our Language Policy

The intent of this policy is to give a clear view of IST's understanding of its students as language learners, and to detail the ways in which this identity is nurtured and supported at IST.

English

English is the primary language of instruction at IST. Our goal is to provide students with a strong foundation in English language skills, including reading, writing, speaking, and listening. However, the school makes the distinction that it is a school for the learning of English, and not a school where learning is English. We recognize that all students, regardless of origin, are English language learners with skills in each of these areas to be developed. As a result, all teachers (regardless of subject or year group) at IST play a role as a teacher of English to students. Our curriculum is designed to promote literacy development through a range of activities, including phonics instruction, shared reading, independent reading, and writing practice.

English as an Additional Language (EAL)

We also provide additional support for students who are learning English as an additional language, including bilingual support and English language classes.

In accordance with our approach to all students as language learners, learners who do not yet have the levels of English required to follow the curriculum are placed in the age-appropriate mainstream classroom with the other students. In this way they are encouraged to work with peers and participate in learning activities. Teachers differentiate their instruction to support individual learners in their language development. All teachers have experience teaching EAL students. In addition, students with needs identified by the school are supported through specialised EAL instruction

The EAL teacher assesses student needs on a regular basis in consultation with the classroom teachers. They scaffold, using students' prior knowledge and experience of English to enhance their learning. The EAL specialist teacher works in partnership with staff to develop a programme for the student. Students may be taught individually or in small groups, using a variety of games and resources when developing a language programme. Learning sessions may take place in or out of the class, depending on student needs. The specialist EAL teacher and class teacher evaluate EAL students' progress on a regular basis.

Dutch Language and Culture

All students at International School Twente study the language of our host country, Dutch. This helps them maintain their own language and/or integrate into the local community and to develop their understanding of Dutch culture. Dutch is offered twice per week as a language of study from Year 0/Reception onwards, with lessons designed to provide children with an enjoyable introduction to Dutch language and culture. Students learn the basic language necessary for simple day-to-day communications. Differentiation is employed to support students who are more advanced Dutch speakers. Where appropriate, Dutch lessons are tied in with the school's curriculum and Units of Inquiry.

Mother tongues

IST recognizes that language skills, particularly literacy skills, are transferable from language to language, and that positive development of languages spoken at home (mother tongues) plays a supporting role in the time it takes students to learn new languages such as English. We encourage and support the use of students' mother tongues in the classroom and provide opportunities for students to share their languages and cultures with their peers. IST welcomes parent support and contributions to a learning environment that promotes the value of mother tongues.

Roles and Responsibilities

Class teachers are responsible for:

- Keeping a record of student language proficiency.
- Assessing students' level of skill in the English language, according to the IST language curriculum.
- Providing age- and stage appropriate learning experiences for students to develop their use of English.
- Coordinating with specialists to identify and plan appropriate interventions for EAL learners.
- Where possible, making use of students' mother tongues as an asset to further learning, and facilitate intercultural understanding and international mindedness.
- Modelling language acquisition skills and practices.

EAL teachers are responsible for:

- Assessing students' level of skill in the English language, according to the IST EAL curriculum.
- Keeping record of student language proficiency.
- Providing age- and stage appropriate learning experiences for students to develop their use of english.
- Coordinating with classroom teachers to identify and plan appropriate interventions for EAL learners.
- Modelling language acquisition skills and practices.

Parents are responsible for:

- Supporting their child at home in the development of their mother tongue, by modelling the language.
- Providing support, with guidance and consultation from the school, in giving their child support in developing English.
- Facilitating their child's understanding of Dutch language and culture through exposure to the local context, and acting as a role model.

Conclusion:

Our language policy aims to create a supportive and inclusive environment where all students can develop their language skills and thrive academically and socially. We recognize that language is an essential tool for communication, learning, and personal growth, and we strive to provide our students with the skills and resources they need to succeed in a multilingual world. We are committed to supporting our students' linguistic and cultural diversity.