



Language Philosophy and Policy

The IB Diploma Programme

January 2021
Next review: January 2023

Philosophy

Being an IB World School our language policy is based on the following declaration by the International Baccalaureate Organisation:

The International Baccalaureate (IB) is committed to supporting multilingualism as a fundamental part of increasing intercultural understanding and international-mindedness, and is equally committed to extending access to an IB education for students from a variety of cultural and linguistic backgrounds. With these aims in mind, the IB has instituted its language policy to provide a framework that will ensure that the IB's values and aims in relation to access and multilingualism are reflected in the organization's activities.

The aim of the school is to build a truly international environment in general and for the IB students in particular. In this language naturally is essential and we emphasize that the students must be open-minded towards different linguistic and cultural backgrounds and different varieties and accents, and to see this diversity as one of the strengths of the programme. We cherish the linguistic and cultural diversity of our students and teaching staff and at the same time recognize that English is the global language that you need to master at as high a level as possible if you want to be a citizen of the world and if you want to do well in further education.

VK staff and faculty believe that

- Mastering more than one language is essential as part of discovering and learning about the world and other cultures
- The acquisition of language is a central component of growth, intellectually and personally
- Language is an expression of culture and identity and mastering two or more languages with a high proficiency is a gift
- Developing your first language is critical to maintaining your cultural identity
- Being proficient in one language aids the student in acquiring more languages

Our Aims

- Helping students to grow as persons and learners through mastering two or more languages at high levels of proficiency
- Enabling students to learn and use language efficiently and with confidence
- Enabling students to use accurate and subject-specific vocabulary and argumentation
- Developing the students' oral and written skills and proficiency
- Encouraging the appreciation and understanding of literature and the role of language and style in text analysis in language and literature subjects

School context and general information

Viborg Katedralskole is a large, Danish state school (“gymnasium”) and the IB Diploma Programme forms a relatively small part of the school as a whole. The students in the IB come from a variety of national, cultural and linguistic backgrounds, but the great majority has a connection to Denmark, with family members in the country. Therefore, a large group of the IB students have Danish as either first or second language and a smaller group speak no or little Danish when they begin. The vast majority of those who do not have Danish as their first language choose the language acquisition courses of Danish ab initio or Danish B in the programme. The school supports this ambition of learning Danish and is willing to open very small classes in these subjects, if necessary (typically 5 students is the limit). In line with the philosophy above, we regard it as beneficial for the students to be able to understand and take part in the general school community and the local community and in order to have the choice of continuing in a Danish-speaking further education course. It is not a requirement to learn Danish, however, and if students instead wish to maintain or further develop another first language, they will be supported in choosing a self-taught language (if available) in the IB. Similarly, if students with no Danish choose another language B than Danish, they are free to do so.

One of the entry requirements for the IB Diploma programme is that the student is very good at English already (cf. Admissions Policy). In light of the fact that very, very few of our applicants through the years have wanted English B, the only English level currently on offer is English A Language and Literature (HL/SL). For the many students who wish to keep the doors open to a Danish-speaking further education in Denmark it is a requirement that they have either Danish A HL/SL or Danish B HL as well.

The alternative for those without Danish is to choose one of the many international programmes in Danish further education. (see these here: <https://www.ug.dk/programmes>).

Languages on offer

Language A

It is an IB requirement that all students must choose at least two languages. These can either be two languages from the Language and Literature group (also known as ‘group 1’) or one from this group and one from the Language acquisition group (also known as ‘group 2’).

In the Language and Literature group, we offer Danish A Literature and English A language and literature, both as Higher Level and Standard Level courses, and Self-Taught Language (Standard Level only). For the Higher Level courses a high level of proficiency and fluency or near-fluency is required.

Before students choose a self-taught language we inform them carefully about the requirements and the level of independence necessary to succeed in such a course. It is required that the student is very proficient in the language, and has it as a first language or a very good second language. Furthermore, it is required that the student is truly interested in the literature and culture in question, and has the necessary maturity to tackle the requirements of self-management and

planning that the course entails. Students or parents cannot demand that a self-taught subject is offered to the student, and the school reserves the right to decide whether to go ahead with a self-taught subject or not. As the school offers Danish and Spanish ab initio, there are alternatives to a self-taught language.

The self-taught students will always be allocated an SSST supervisor, if possible one mastering the language in question who will be able to give feedback on written and oral work. If we have a group of self-taught students, these are supervised and guided through the programme in timetabled lessons. In years with 1-2 self-taught students, supervision will be given on an individual basis. In both cases a calendar of deadlines for the self-taught components will be put in place. If no such teachers are in the school, it is required that the school helps find a qualified tutor in the language in question. Apart from English, the modern languages taught in the school at large are currently: Spanish, German, Italian, Chinese and French. The teachers of these languages will be able to provide support for self-taught students.

Language B

In the Language acquisition group we currently offer German B (HL/SL), Danish B (HL/SL), Spanish ab initio (SL) and Danish ab initio (SL). For the B languages, the requirement is 2-5 years of experience with the language and for the ab initio languages no experience is required. It is always the matter of an individual assessment what level the student will be placed in.

Expectations and assistance

All written communication to the IB students about classes, homework, events, timetable changes and the like is in English. All other information about arrangements in the school will be translated when relevant to the Internationals students. All messages from student societies and clubs on school platform and social media is to be either translated or summarised in English. The same goes for school assemblies for the school at large. At the boarding school, a great deal of information is transmitted in English or otherwise translated with the help of the students themselves.

The teachers

All IB teachers are also teachers of English in a general sense, and must secure that the students are able to use both general English and the subject command terms and subject terminology correctly. The teachers must be careful with language when giving written instructions and written feedback, but there is no requirement that the teachers are absolutely fluent speakers of English or that they are native speakers. Similarly, it is not expected that teachers (except for the English teachers) give detailed feedback on grammatical and linguistic errors of a non-essential kind. It is, however, an absolute requirement that the teachers speak English well, that they are able to convey their subjects in a precise, clear and varied manner and that they are capable of supervising students within the subjects, through cross-curricular work and in the EE supervision process. We value teachers who are experienced, engaged in their subjects and the students and

able to communicate on all levels, formal and informal. Several of our teachers have international or English-speaking work experience behind them, are fluent or near-fluent users of English and internationally oriented and experienced professionals. A number of the teachers have English as their second subject, meaning that they have a university degree in English and teach the subject. The school is continuously looking to expand the teaching staff with teachers with an international background and has successfully done so in the course of the first five years of offering the programme.

All staff meetings concerning the PreIB and IB are conducted in English, and internal, written communication about IB matters between IB coordinator and teachers is carried out in English.

Language support needs

If students are challenged by dyslexia or other reading difficulties, the school has a well-organised set up to assist with this (cf. Student support policy). Furthermore, the IB will grant the use of electronic reading and writing aids and extra time for the exams if there is a documented need for this. Currently, the software used is IntoWords.

Library

The school library has reference works, magazines and journals in English, and students can gain access to a wide range of other materials through school web-access licenses and the library in Viborg. There is also access to bibliotek.dk, through which you can order books from all Danish libraries. This is especially useful when working with the Extended Essay where special knowledge is needed. The designated EE librarian, currently an IB history teacher, will be available to assist in how to use these systems and in finding relevant material for the larger assignments.

Review of the policy

This policy will be reviewed according to the date on the front page. The review will be initiated by the IB coordinator and involve IB teachers and students.