

## **Deledda International Language Policy (2017)**

“At DIS, we believe that language is crucial for all members of the school community to develop a global mindset, allowing access to a greater range of experiences in an ever-more international world.”

Source: Original DIS Mission Statement 2002

This document represents the DIS school-wide language policy. The DIS Language Policy is a set of principles which connects the IB continuum and our school community. The document is updated regularly, based on our students' evolving needs and the latest IBO requirements.

### **The School**

Deledda International School is situated in the city of Genova. We have a very low student turnover with nearly all of our students spending more than 4 years with us. This gives us the chance to create a school where our students can learn together, taking academic steps in unison.

### **The Elementary School**

Formed in September 2016 with two sections of 5<sup>th</sup> grade Elementary students, the Elementary School operates as most Italian state schools do but with an added emphasis on the use of the English language. However, we aim to keep the teaching of key subjects in Italian so that students do not miss out on vital content. English is used often, but not exclusively, as we work in Italian for most of the morning lessons. Foreign students, not proficient in Italian should consider this carefully.

After lunch, we try to incorporate English into more activity-based lessons, meaning that access to English is encouraged but not at the expense of Italian. The IB highly encourages students to pursue the study of their mother-tongue which is especially important at this age.

In September of 2017 the school grew, adding a single section of 4<sup>th</sup> grade Elementary students to the two sections of 5<sup>th</sup>. The division of year groups into sections depends on the class linguistic profile and classroom dynamics that arise in a particular year. Since we cannot forecast the number of applicants in coming years, we do not exclude the use of some form of entrance testing, if applications exceed capacity.

Our main aim is to create an environment that emphasises the importance of learning in a calm atmosphere, inviting good behaviour and focussing on key aspects of the IB Learner Profile.

### **English as the Language of Instruction:**

#### **MYP Starting Points**

Students who join the school in MYP1 might be streamed or placed in sections, based on English comprehension, depending on the linguistic profile of that year's intake.

In some class groups, the starting level might be high enough to allow English to be used as the language of communication from day 1. This allows the school to enrol international students with no knowledge of Italian. In other groups, teachers can use a mixture of Italian and English until the students' level of English allows them to study almost totally in English, normally by the end of MYP2.

As the IB recommends language acquisition lessons are taught with students of a similar phase or level. In some year groups, especially the younger classes, where there is a stark difference between levels, we normally use these class divisions as the basis for all of the other subjects too, since English is the language of instruction.

As the students progress, the difference in ability between the proficient and emergent communicators generally reduces, allowing us to consider the use of other criteria for placing students. Once these differences in comprehension are less relevant to learning, as they normally become by MYP3, we can use other classroom-dynamic based criteria such as deciding whether to separate twins, the ratio between boys and girls or new students and old etc. This can only be done as long as the difference between a student's English phase within their Language Acquisition class is a maximum of 2 phases per class section, following MYP guidelines.

Since levels change continuously, students can be moved from one section to another during the year, or after the annual September class-setting meetings, drawing on previous years' grades, formative assessment and placement tests after the long summer holiday.

## **Italian**

- Practically all of our students speak Italian as their mother-tongue. For the teaching of Italian up to MYP3 (3° Media), we follow national standards but use IB principles and practices. In MYP3, in order to prepare our students for the national Italian 3° Media exams in all subjects, much of the content taught and materials can be in Italian. The choice of language should be based on the particular needs of the exam.  
This aligns with IB policy on the importance of maintaining a student's mother-tongue.

## **English**

English is classed as a foreign language for practically all of our students until the end of MYP4 and is taught following the IB phases system. "Phase Placement is informed by knowledge of the student's language profile. This will help to know and understand the language background, the language experience and the language needs of the student". ([www.ibo.org](http://www.ibo.org))

By MYP 5, many of our students achieve a linguistic level that allows them to study English as Language A (Language & Literature). This enables the school to offer a wider choice of subjects to be offered in the Diploma Programme.

From MYP4 onwards the language of instruction for all subjects, apart from Italian and foreign languages, is 100% English, whereas in the earlier years Italian is sometimes needed to facilitate

comprehension. By the end of MYP 4 we expect all of our students to have achieved MYP Phase 5 or 6 in ability in English.

### **Admissions and related levels of English**

To help families hoping to enter DIS, we often use CEFR levels to describe our work. By the end of MYP3, students must show a B2 level of English in order to proceed to MYP4 (decided at Consiglio d'Istituto June 14<sup>th</sup> 2017).

For those students entering our school at different stages in the process, we have minimum standards of achievement, corresponding to the CEFR system, to help us decide if a student can follow courses comfortably. These are detailed in the table below. By using the international CEFR system, we allow potential students to see what would be expected of them, if they were to enter our school. Years of experience allows the school to expect the following **minimum** levels of English, as of 2017.

End of MYP1 CEFR A2

End of MYP 2 CEFR B1

End of MYP 3 CEFR B2

MYP4 starting point is B2 (As agreed at 14<sup>th</sup> June 2017: Verbale: Consiglio d'istituto)

NB: For the above-reasons, we currently use KET-style tests for MYP1 admissions and First Certificate for MYP4.

### **MYP 4 and 5:**

Many students, having worked at Phase 5 or 6 of English as Language Acquisition in MYP 4 and/or 5, may now study English as Language A (Language & Literature), allowing a wider choice of DP options the following year. In these classes, English is considered a Language A and “these courses are designed for students whose best language for academic work is English. A student registered for one of these courses will have no trouble with studying in English.” (Source: IBO website).

### **Younger Language-A English Students in the MYP**

Those students whose mother-tongue is English are known as Language A English speakers. Their teachers should set them specific tasks and evaluate them using Language A criteria, even if they are in classes MYP1 to 4, when the majority of their classmates are not native English speakers nor at such a proficient level. Some students will achieve proficiency in English earlier than others and may be considered “Language A English speakers” earlier than MYP 5, when many students, from our experience, achieve this level of ability. These students too could have their work graded using language A criteria, as deemed necessary by their teachers.

### **The Non-Italian Community**

Those students arriving from abroad or with non-Italian family backgrounds, could have difficulty understanding some parts of some lessons, meetings or communications delivered in Italian so we encourage them all to learn Italian.

There is a diversity of language needs in the school and students with a different mother tongue, not Italian or English, have the option to continue studying it at DIS, as the IBO suggests. So, when the need arises, provision in other languages can be made (Portuguese, Swedish, Farsi, Japanese etc. are just some of the languages DIS students have studied in the past as Language A).

### **Teachers**

It is an IB principle that all teachers are, in practice, language teachers with responsibilities in facilitating communication. A maths teacher can pre-teach vocabulary in English before facing a topic in maths, if it helps. All teachers aiming for full-time permanent contracts, must achieve a C1 level of English (CEFR), unless they teach Italian or foreign languages. All staff should have a B1/B2 level of English/Italian in order to understand school-wide communications, which are often in English and/or Italian.

### **Parents**

DIS families are offered advice, through parent evenings, newsletters, individual parent-teacher conferences on how to help their children progress in language acquisition. We advise them to provide access to the English language at home via subtitled DVDs, original version films, books from our library and internet content etc.

### **Materials**

The majority of our books are in English, with the exception of those that are necessary for the preparation of the Terza Media Italian State Exams (MYP3).

### **MYP Language Acquisition Policy (not English/Italian)**

All of our students study a 3rd Language: Language B. This is also taught in phases and new students entering the school after the starting point in MYP1 must be able to enter the class at the same phase, or one phase above or below, as the year group they are entering. If their level is not adequate, they would be expected to study before being accepted, or choose another language. We currently offer French, Spanish, German and Chinese. This selection depends on demand and can change from year to year.

Post Script

Exceptions:

Since the world is ever-more international, every year we find students with complex language profiles. We try our best to accommodate them.

## **Diploma Programme**

### **School community**

Most of our students enrol in MYP1 or 4, and therefore the school community is often very similar in MYP and DP, with most students following the continuum. Very few students join our classes in DP1, after a selection process designed to assess their language profile. The mother tongue of most of our students is Italian, but by DP1 our students reach a level of English which enables them to study DP subjects in English.

### **Language philosophy**

“Teaching and learning demonstrates that all teachers are responsible for language development of students” (IB, C3, Practice 8)

A thorough knowledge of one’s mother tongue is essential to access knowledge in other subjects and learn new languages. Conversely, all teaching entails language and the teaching of language reflecting the DP holistic approach. The study of language promotes self-expression and understanding of communication as essential lifelong skills to master complex phenomena through different approaches, perspectives and subjects both during the students’ IB experience and in the future. In an increasingly global and interconnected world, the study of languages promotes cultural understanding and international mindedness. The IBO and DIS believe that both the study of one’s mother tongue and the study of foreign languages are key in the development of “inquiring, knowledgeable and caring young people who help to create a better and more peaceful world through intercultural understanding and respect [... and] encourage students across the world to become active, compassionate and lifelong learners who understand that other people, with their differences, can also be right.” (Language B Guide)

### **Organization of Group 1 and Group 2 Subjects**

At DIS, the DP is designed as a continuum with the MYP programme. The school offers Group 1: Italian and English A (High Level: five hours a week, Standard Level: three hours a week) as well as several languages taught as third language within Group 2: Chinese Ab Initio, English, French, German, Italian and Spanish B (Ab Initio: five hours a week, Standard: three hours a week and Higher Level: five hours a week). Other languages may be available on demand. All students must study a Language A. The level of language proficiency allows some of our students to undertake two Language A courses (Italian and English). All DIS students take a Language B during MYP and can choose to continue in the Diploma Programme depending on their study plan. Students’ placement in DP courses occurs in the second part of MYP5.

To be recognized by the Italian Ministry of Education, the school offers three different tracks: linguistic, humanistic and scientific. Introductory meetings are held in MYP 4, MYP5 and DP1 to explain the nature of the programme. The school has a placement policy that allows student movement in relation to students’ progression along the continuum. Students put together a programme of study in MYP 5. The school reviews the track and course of study chosen to ensure

the requirements are met. The school sometimes recommends or discourages some choices based on the students' language profile, needs and results. These recommendations are not mandatory.

At DIS, professional development is an ongoing process in which qualified teachers participate in regular workshops, work on collaborative planning, address vertical and horizontal implementation of the programme, discuss assessment criteria and work on standardization. The above activities are used as a basis to provide for the learning needs and development of students. The subject guides are the foundation of the syllabus, which is updated on a yearly basis and is available on the school website. Some choices in syllabus content are the result of discussion among colleagues and with students. Language teaching and learning allows for and encourages the use of different media and stimuli which accommodate different students' needs, learning styles and personal preferences. The nature and curriculum of the subjects in Groups 1 and 2 promote the development of awareness of local and global issues and respect of diversity and individuality.

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