



Bishkek International School

Language Policy

Reviewed by the Management Board: August 2022

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Preface

Mission, Policies, Handbooks and Regulations

The Mission of Bishkek International School is to enable our students to:

- Develop their intellectual curiosity and achieve their academic, sporting and creative potential;
- Be confident in their abilities and respectful of others;
- Learn about local and global issues and prepare to tackle common challenges.

In a school which:

- Delivers and celebrates excellent teaching for internationally accredited education;
- Values and demonstrates diversity and inclusivity;
- Promotes the well-being of the whole school community;
- Contributes positively to the development of the Kyrgyz Republic.

This policy is one of several policies, procedures and related documents that guide operations at Bishkek International School (BIS) and help to facilitate the achievement of our mission. The full list of relevant documents, prepared by the Management Board and approved by the Governing Board, comprises:

Policies:

1. Vision, Mission and Development Policy
2. Admissions Policy
3. Learning Diversity and Inclusion Policy
4. Counselling Policy
5. Language Policy
6. Academic Honesty Policy
7. Assessment Policy
8. Health & Safety Policy
9. Child Protection Policy
10. Educational Visits Policy
11. Ethics Policy
12. Environmental Policy
13. Accounting Policy

Handbooks:

1. Staff Handbook
2. Parents & Guardian Handbook
3. Student Handbook

All Governing Board members and all staff must be aware of each of these documents and their contents. All policy documents and handbooks are available to students and parents/guardians via the BIS website or provided in PDF form to parents/guardians on request. All policy documents and handbooks are reviewed and revised by the Management Board every year, normally in April/May for approval by the Governing Board in June for the following academic year. All students, parents and staff are invited to send comments and suggest any changes to the Management Board at any time before the end of April each year for consideration for policies/handbooks for the next academic year.

Overall Governance of BIS is guided by the legal charter and various internal regulations. These are:

1. Legal Charter of 'Bishkek International School'
2. Regulations of the Governing Board
3. Regulations of the Parents Association
4. Regulations of the Advisory Council

International Baccalaureate

BIS is an International Baccalaureate World School, offering the International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme (DP), the Middle Years Programme (MYP), and the Primary Years Programme (PYP). IB World Schools share a common philosophy and commitment to high quality, challenging, international education that BIS believes is important for our students. For further information about International Baccalaureate, see www.ibo.org

International Baccalaureate mission statement

“The International Baccalaureate aims to develop inquiring, knowledgeable and caring young people who help to create a better and more peaceful world through intercultural understanding and respect. To this end the organization works with schools, governments and international organizations to develop challenging programmes of international education and rigorous assessment. These programmes encourage students across the world to become active, compassionate and lifelong learners who understand that other people, with their differences, can also be right”

International Baccalaureate Learner Profile

The aim of all IB programmes is to develop internationally minded people who, recognizing their common humanity and shared guardianship of the planet, help to create a better and more peaceful world.

The IB learner profile represents 10 attributes valued by IB World Schools. We believe these attributes, and others like them, can help individuals and groups become responsible members of local, national and global communities.

1. **Inquirers:** Develop a natural curiosity that allows them to become lifelong learners.
2. **Knowledgeable:** They explore ideas of importance and dig deep into its meaning creating a balance of their learning.
3. **Thinkers:** They apply thinking skills that allow them to tackle complex problems in creative ways.
4. **Communicators:** They understand and can articulate information in confident, creative ways, including a second language.
5. **Principled:** Students are honest, fair, just and full of integrity. They strive to solve their own problems and to take responsibility for their own actions.
6. **Open-minded:** Students understand and embrace other cultures. They recognize and celebrate their own backgrounds and learn tolerance for others.
7. **Caring:** Students actively care about others and participate in active service.
8. **Risk-Takers:** Students are brave in the face of new challenges. They strive to take on new roles and to defend their own beliefs.
9. **Balanced:** Students understand the need to be emotionally, physically and mentally balanced. They strive for this in themselves and others.
10. **Reflective:** Students reflect on their own learning. They are able to adjust for weaknesses and strengths.

Contents

1.	Introduction	2
2.	Approach to Language Learning	2
	2.1. Overview	2
	2.2. English as the main language of instruction	2
	2.3. Host country languages	2
	2.4. Languages spoken at home	3
	2.5. Learning additional languages	3
	2.6. Information Resources for Language Learning	3
3.	Language Education in Practice	3
	3.1. Individual language profiles	3
	3.2. A wide range of “languages spoken at home”	3
	3.3. Languages of communication	3
	3.4. Legal requirements for language teaching in the Kyrgyz Republic	4
	3.5. Languages of teaching and learning	4
	3.6. English Language Acquisition (ELA)	6
	3.7. Language resources and staff training	7
4.	Responsibilities for Language Education and Learning	7
	4.1. Director of Studies Responsibilities	7
	4.2. Head of Language Acquisition Responsibilities	8
	4.3. IB Diploma Coordinator Responsibilities	8
	4.4. All BIS Teaching Staff Responsibilities	8
	4.5. Student Responsibilities	8
	4.6. Parents/Guardians Responsibilities	9

1 Introduction

The Language Policy follows the International Baccalaureate Organisation “*Guidelines for developing a school language policy*” (IBO, April 2008). The aim of this policy is to provide an overview and guiding principles for teaching and learning languages and to clarify the responsibilities of staff and students. The policy has been developed through a collaborative process and is reviewed and revised annually.

Note that any language requirements at the time of admission to BIS are covered by the Admissions Policy and that any issues related to language during assessments are covered by the Assessment Policy.

2 Approach to Language Learning

2.1 Overview

As language is used throughout education, all teachers are effectively language teachers regardless of their specific subject area. Likewise, all students are language learners as they acquire social skills, values, knowledge, and the ability to think and to learn through the use of language.

BIS supports the development of each student’s ‘language spoken at home’ as part of their cultural identity within our multicultural community, to facilitate cross-cultural understanding. We are committed to providing as much diversity of language instruction as possible, to broaden students’ understanding and to provide multiple perspectives.

All learning at BIS, including language learning, is inquiry based and trans-disciplinary. We aim for a consistent approach to teaching and learning languages with standards set by this policy, best practice shared between educators and both the Heads of Language Acquisition and the relevant section Principal providing oversight. Language learning is incorporated throughout the education programme and covers skills in listening, speaking, reading, and writing.

BIS is committed to equity of access to our main education programme taught in English, including for students who are learning in a language other than their own language. Our English communication aspires to use language which is clear and concise and we provide a comprehensive ELA (English Language Acquisition) programme for English learners.

2.2 English as the main language of instruction

BIS is a multilingual school with English as the main language of instruction except for the modern language classes, History and Geography of Kyrgyzstan and Host country studies. English Language Acquisition (ELA) support is offered to students.

Students enter BIS with wide variation in their English language skills, from complete fluency for their year level, to no English language at all. As English is the main language of instruction at BIS and additional English language support is given to learners, all graduates from BIS are expected to be fluent in English provided they have been with BIS for ten years or more. Students who join BIS for a shorter period will also achieve good English skills because of the support offered to all students who are learning English; however, the level achieved will also be related to their ability to learn languages, their commitment to learning, and time in the school.

2.3 Host country languages

Kyrgyz and Russian, the national and state languages of the Kyrgyz Republic, are part of the curriculum for students who are Kyrgyz citizens in Grades 1-12. Kyrgyz and Russian are also offered for non-native speakers with varying proficiency levels.

2.4 Languages spoken at home

'Languages spoken at home' include any language where a student has one parent who is a native speaker of a language and this language is spoken in the home with that parent.

2.5 Learning additional languages

Learning different languages not only broadens the communication options for our students, it also broadens cultural understanding and respect for others, since the values of society are reflected in the use of language. Given the broad benefits from learning languages, BIS supports all students to be proficient in at least two languages. Language proficiency when leaving BIS inevitably varies depending on language skills when entering BIS and individual capacity for language acquisition. Some students will achieve functional proficiency in a second language while others will be highly proficient and knowledgeable in two or more languages.

2.6 Information Resources for Language Learning

Language fluency and information literacy form the basis for lifelong learning as a common foundation for all disciplines, all learning environments, and all levels of education. They enable learners to master content, extend investigations, assume control over their own learning, determine which information might be needed, access this information effectively and efficiently, and to evaluate information critically. BIS therefore gives high priority to making information available in all languages of instruction, through constant development of library facilities and helping students and staff to access these resources.

3 Language Education in Practice

3.1 Individual language profiles

At entry to BIS, parents/guardians provide information on the languages used by their child. This record is kept together with all enrolment documents in online folders with limited access, and is also included with other key information on the enrolment lists, which are accessible to all staff.

Class lists of students' language choices and class placements are compiled at the beginning of each academic year and updated throughout the year as necessary; these are shared with all staff.

3.2 A wide range of "languages spoken at home"

BIS students have a wide range of 'languages spoken at home'. The most common are English, Kyrgyz, Russian, and German, with many others represented at different levels, including: Mandarin, French, Japanese, Italian, Dutch, Spanish, Korean, Urdu, Kazakh, Uzbek, Mongolian, Greek, Ukrainian, Danish, Polish, Armenian, Estonian, Turkish and Portuguese. Teaching for English, Kyrgyz, and Russian is available within the school curriculum. For other students, BIS provides support to parents in continuing the language development of their children in their 'languages spoken at home' and provides advice on language programs available in Bishkek. Well established language teaching is available for children in Bishkek for Japanese, Korean, Mandarin, French, Kyrgyz and Russian.

3.3 Languages of communication

English is the common language used by staff and the Governing Board for all collaborations, planning meetings and communications within the school.

Written information to parents/guardians is normally provided in both English and Russian to facilitate communication for those who use either English or Russian as their first language or first foreign language. Russian/English interpretation is normally provided for all open meetings with parents except in cases where no interpretation is required. For individual parent meetings, staff members also provide interpretation Kyrgyz/English, Russian/English, Japanese/English, Mandarin/English, and other options as required,

provided staff have the appropriate language skills.

The school website is available in English and Russian.

During class periods, students are encouraged to use the main language of instruction, which is English for all subjects except for language teaching, when use of the language being learnt is encouraged.

During break times and when socialising, students are encouraged to use any language that they wish to use, provided language is used in a way to include, not exclude, other students.

3.4 Legal requirements for language teaching in the Kyrgyz Republic

The *Law of the Kyrgyz Republic on the State (Kyrgyz) Language (2004, amended 2013)*, Chapter 5, Article 18, requires that Kyrgyz language is taught at all levels in all schools (including Preschool) according to regulations set by the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic. The *Law of the Kyrgyz Republic on the Official (Russian) Language (2000, amended 2013)* Article 13, requires that Russian language is taught in schools, according to regulations set by the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic. These requirements apply to all schools regardless of ownership and source of funding.

In accordance with the *'Regulation on Educational Institutions' (1997)* Article 35, the language used for education in a school is decided by the Charter of the institution, hence BIS an international school teaches primarily in the English language. Article 27 of this Regulation also requires teaching of both Kyrgyz and Russian and one 'foreign language' at Middle & High school level. In the context of BIS, English qualifies as a 'foreign language'.

The regulation which defines the requirements for teaching Kyrgyz and Russian is the *"Framework Curriculum for Educational Institutions" (2016)*. This regulation does not address the needs of international schools but requires that schools with Russian as the main language of instruction, provide minimum 3 hours/week of Kyrgyz language teaching for all school students, and that schools with Kyrgyz as the main language of instruction provide 3 hours/week of Russian language teaching for all primary students and 2 hours/week for Middle and High School students. For preschool, the Ministry of Education requires a minimum 1 hour/week of Kyrgyz language teaching as part of the Preschool licence requirement, with no defined requirement for Russian. The specific requirements can vary every year but the information given below is based on the most recent *'Framework'*.

Based on these legal requirements, BIS provides Kyrgyz and Russian language education for students who are Kyrgyz citizens in accordance to the Kyrgyz Republic Ministry of Education requirements, which includes Kyrgyz and Russian language lessons every school day from 16.30 to 17.30 for students in Grades 1-5 as part of the school curriculum. For other grades, the Kyrgyz and Russian teaching requirements are met within the curriculum before 15:30.

In addition to the legal requirements for Kyrgyz and Russian, students may also study either Kyrgyz or Russian as their additional language option in the school curriculum, as described below for language learning at BIS.

3.5 Languages of teaching and learning

English is the main language of instruction except for language teaching when the language being taught is the main language used, and for Kyrgyz history and geography. Preschool and Primary classes have both a Teacher and Co-Teacher with at least one of these teachers fluent in other languages in addition to English. Student guidance is sometimes provided by the Teacher or Co-Teacher in another language to assist English learners in understanding the concepts being explained and to develop their English language skills. Students may also help each other by providing explanations in a common language with another student who has recently joined BIS and has limited English.

Other languages taught in the curriculum at BIS are Kyrgyz, Russian, Mandarin, French, Japanese, Spanish and German, as described below. Students are placed in the appropriate group based on assessment of their language profile and professional judgement of the relevant subject teacher. Further assessments are made during and at the end of courses, in line with the Assessment Policy.

Languages in the Curriculum

- 1. Primary school:** All students study Russian for two 45-minute lessons each week and French or Mandarin or Spanish for two 45-minute lessons, if not taking courses in 'English Language Acquisition'. All students also have 15 minutes of Kyrgyz language at the start of the day so that they are familiar with the national language. For Grades 1-5, additional Kyrgyz and Russian lessons are provided for local students at the end of the school day to meet the national curriculum requirements. Students may also choose to take an alternative language option in consultation with the school. We are able to respond to students with other language needs on an individual basis.
- 2. MYP 1-3:** MYP students take courses in both Language and Literature and Language Acquisition. All students study English Language and Literature and some students also study Russian Language and Literature. Non-native speakers of Russian may study Russian as a Language Acquisition course for four 45-minute periods each week and students wishing to complete local exams in the future are offered Kyrgyz language lessons. Language Acquisition courses are also offered in Mandarin, Spanish or French for three 45-minute periods a week. On the basis of pre-enrolment language assessment and teachers' professional judgement, students may be assigned to one of two English Language Acquisition groups instead of studying French, Spanish or Mandarin, in order to support their development of the school's language of instruction. Students may also choose to take an alternative language option in consultation with the school. We are able to respond to students with other language needs on an individual basis.
- 3. Grades 9-10:** All students must choose at least one language subject in addition to English. Options offered include Mandarin, Russian, French, German and Spanish. Different levels of study are normally available for first language users, second language users and language learners depending on staff specialisation. At the beginning of the IGCSE course, students' choice will be subject to consideration by the Head of Middle/High School Language Acquisition and the IGCSE Coordinator, to ensure they are pursuing a course which is academically realistic or academically challenging. Students' choice of a language at IGCSE level may be further discussed by the Head of Middle/High School Language Acquisition and IGCSE coordinator in individual cases, in order to guide choices as necessary. The cases of students joining BIS during the IGCSE course will be considered individually by the Head of Middle/High School Language Acquisition and the IGCSE Coordinator, and only ratified when both are satisfied that current staffing and language group configurations can adequately support language development to a fair grade at the end of the course.
- 4. Grades 11-12: In the full IB Diploma Programme,** In Subject Group 1, "*Studies in Language and Literature*", BIS offers 'English A Language and Literature' and 'Russian A Language and Literature' at both Standard Level (SL) and Higher Level (HL). Self-taught options for a different language will also be supported where the language is offered under the IB Diploma Programme. In Subject Group 2, "*Language Acquisition*", BIS offers English, Russian, Spanish, German, Mandarin and French. A student can obtain a "bilingual diploma" by either completion of two Group 1 courses with the award of a grade 3 or higher in both languages, or completion of one Group 3 or Group 4 course in a language that is not the same as the candidate's nominated language in Group 1. Kyrgyz language is also provided in the first year of the Diploma Programme, enabling local students to complete the local Grade 11 examinations at the end of the first Diploma year.

The IB statements for DP Language selection are as below:

Language A

All courses in studies in language and literature are designed for students from a wide variety of linguistic and cultural backgrounds, who have experience of using the language of the course in an educational context. The focus of the study developed in each of the subjects varies depending on their individual characteristics.

The language profile of students taking these courses will vary, but their receptive, productive and interactive skills should be strong and the expectation is that the course will consolidate them further.

Language B

Students enter language acquisition courses with varying degrees of exposure to the target language(s). It is, therefore, important that students are placed into a course that is most suited to their language development needs and that will provide them with an appropriate academic challenge. Further placement guidance can be drawn from the study Benchmarking Selected IB Diploma Programme Language Courses to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages. This study suggests that students already at CEFR A2 or B1 in the target language can comfortably take language B SL. Students already at CEFR B1 or B2 can comfortably take language B HL.

Language ab initio

Language ab initio is a language acquisition course designed for students with no prior experience of the target language, or for those students with very limited previous exposure. Because of the inherent difficulty of defining what constitutes “very limited exposure” to a language, it is not possible to list specific conditions such as the number of hours or the nature of previous language instruction; however, it is important to note that any student who is already able to understand and respond to spoken and written language on a range of common topics is not to be placed in language ab initio as this would not provide an appropriate academic challenge, nor is it fair for those students who are genuine beginners of the language.

In the interests of academic honesty and appropriate challenge, students' appropriateness for Language A, B or ab-initio in the IB Diploma Programme may be discussed with the student and their parents/guardians upon course selection.

Languages as part of Extra-Curricular Activity

Languages are sometimes provided as extra-curricular activity lessons, with the selection of languages decided on a term-by-term basis according to demand and teaching capacity. Languages taught in this way in the past include German, Spanish and Korean at different levels.

3.6 English Language Acquisition (ELA)

Many students join Preschool without any English language but as teaching and play is led in English, students develop their English skills through immersion in the language. Some learn quickly, others more slowly, just as some younger children learn to speak earlier than others. Many of our Co-Teachers in Preschool also speak both Kyrgyz and Russian, so they may also use these languages as appropriate when students are new to the school if required to comfort a student or to ensure student safety.

Grade 0-1 students who speak a language other than, or in addition to, English at home will be given the WIDA MODEL English proficiency test within two weeks of starting their study at BIS.

Grade 2-5 students who speak a language other than, or in addition to, English at home will be given the WIDA MODEL Online English proficiency test prior to beginning their studies at BIS. Additional ELA payment is required for any student joining BIS in Grade 4 or 5 with a WIDA MODEL overall composite proficiency level lower than 5.5 and/or an oral language proficiency level lower than 4.

The WIDA MODEL Online English proficiency test identifies speaking, listening, reading, and writing levels in English. Students must obtain an overall composite proficiency level of 5.5 or higher with a minimum oral

language proficiency level of 4 in order to be exempt from, or to graduate from, English Language Acquisition (ELA) lessons. The test is repeated for all Grade 0-5 ELA students in Term 3 to determine their level and if continued ELA support is needed or not. Exceptions to the graduation requirement may be made if the homeroom teacher, ELA teacher, PYP ELA Coordinator, and parents agree it is in the best interest of the student.

Students joining BIS in Grades 6-12 should have sufficient level of English to access the learning program without additional ELA support. Where this is not the case prior to entry, students will take an online English examination to assess their level of English and may then be enrolled at the discretion of the relevant section Principal to ensure that appropriate ELA support is available, subject to payment of additional fee for English tuition. The additional fee continues until the student no longer needs additional English support, as decided by the relevant section Principal.

All students are re-assessed at least once a year to track their progress and decide on graduation from the ELA Programme.

An individual ELA programme may require a student to miss regular classes and extracurricular activities in order to take special ELA classes until the student can fully participate in the regular educational programme. For some students, the ELA programme will mean focusing solely on English language for an initial period which may mean special ELA classes instead of a 'second-language option' while following their initial ELA programme.

BIS allows additional examination time for ELA students in the MYP and in the first year of the IGCSE and IBDP. The time allowed is based on an international standard for supporting ELA students of 15 minutes per hour of examination time, to allow ELA students additional time to:

- use a translating dictionary
- develop the technical language specific to different subjects
- develop their skills in processing from their best language to/from the English language.

3.7 Language resources and staff training

The BIS Library is a work in progress with the aim to promote and facilitate information literacy across all curricula for all students and staff. The library has access to databases of professional material and scholarly articles in various languages, in addition to the hard copy catalogue available in the library.

The Librarian organises workshops at least once a year for all students and staff (differentiated by level in the school) to introduce the resources available, appropriate methods to use the information resources and research skills. A weekly designated 'drop-in' session is available to provide updates on library resources and to answer any questions from students and staff. Special information sessions may also be requested by teaching staff.

All teaching staff take part in a working session around the Language Policy during preparation for the Academic Year. As all teachers are effectively language teachers, on-going training focused on integrated language instruction is provided to teaching staff throughout the year. The Heads of Language Acquisition and the relevant section Principal ensure that staff receive ongoing professional development opportunities and monitor that strategies are successfully implemented.

4 Responsibilities for Language Education and Learning

4.1 Deputy Head of School - Academics Responsibilities

The Deputy Head of School - Academics is responsible for:

- Annual review and revision of the Language Policy every April/May (in partnership with other educators) to improve language teaching and learning in BIS in the next academic year.

- Ensuring that the Language Policy is consistent with other BIS policies.

4.2 Primary Head of Language Acquisition, and Middle/High Head of Language Acquisition, Responsibilities

Both are responsible for:

- Oversight of all language learning and ensuring compliance with the Language Policy.
- Monitoring the effectiveness of differentiation strategies for learners with specific language learning needs.
- Contributing to the annual review and revision of this policy.

4.3 IB Diploma Coordinator Responsibilities

The IB Diploma Coordinator is responsible for the application of the Language Policy in relation to the Diploma Programme, including:

- Cultivating a culture that leads to effective language learning.
- Assisting students in selection of Group 1 and Group 2 courses in cooperation with the Head of Language Acquisition.
- Maintaining the Language Profile for each student in the Diploma Programme.
- Contributing to the annual review and revision of this policy.

4.4 All BIS Teaching Staff Responsibilities

All BIS teaching staff are responsible for:

- Understanding and implementing this policy.
- Collaborating effectively with other teachers by sharing ideas and effective practice.
- Contributing to the annual review and revision of this policy.

4.5 Student Responsibilities

All students are responsible for their own language learning by:

- Always striving to achieve the characteristics of the IB Learner Profile given in the p–reface to this document.
- Developing study skills and time management skills to maximise potential for their success.
- Being proactive in seeking help, monitoring their own progress and reflecting on the strengths and weaknesses revealed through class assignments and assessments.

4.6 Parents/Guardians Responsibilities

Parents and guardians are responsible to support students in language learning by:

- Encouraging continued development of their own languages by using them in home and social environments.
- Encouraging the acquisition of new languages and providing opportunities for their children to practise acquired languages.

Parents also often contribute more widely to language learning by their voluntary involvement as teachers, providing resources for their own language programmes, and providing support to the ELA programmes.