



Bishkek International School

Language Policy

Reviewed by the Management Board: September 2024

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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 Integrity 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 for approval by the Governing Board 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 May 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 (IB) 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 more information about IB 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. As IB learners we strive to be:

1. **Knowledgeable:** *We love learning new things. We explore concepts, ideas, and issues that have local and global significance. In doing so, we acquire in-depth knowledge and develop understanding across a broad and balanced range of disciplines.*
2. **Thinkers:** *We think about everything and make good decisions. We exercise initiative in applying thinking skills critically and creatively to recognize and approach complex problems, and make reasoned, ethical decisions.*
3. **Inquirers:** *We like to find out how things work and why they work this way. We develop our natural curiosity. We acquire the skills necessary to conduct inquiry and research and show independence in learning. We actively enjoy learning and this love of learning will be sustained throughout our lives.*
4. **Caring:** *We care about other people and want to make them feel good. We show empathy, compassion, and respect towards the needs and feelings of others. We have a personal commitment to service, and act to make a positive difference to the lives of others and to the environment.*
5. **Principled:** *We are responsible for our own actions. We always try to do what is right. We act with integrity and honesty, with a strong sense of fairness, justice and respect for the dignity of the individual, groups, and communities. We take responsibility for our own actions and the consequences that accompany them.*
6. **Reflective:** *We think about what we have learnt and what we have done, to be better in future. We give thoughtful consideration to our own learning and experience. We are able to assess and understand our strengths and limitations in order to support our learning and personal development.*
7. **Balanced:** *We have a balanced life with lots of learning, lots of activity, and lots of friends. We understand the importance of intellectual, physical, and emotional balance to achieve personal well-being for ourselves and others.*
8. **Risk-Takers:** *We are not afraid of trying new things, and we are brave. We approach unfamiliar situations and uncertainty with courage and forethought, and have the independence of spirit to explore new roles, ideas and strategies.*
9. **Open-minded:** *We understand different cultures and different ways of doing things. We understand and appreciate our own cultures and personal history, and we are open to the perspectives, values, and traditions of other individuals and communities. I am accustomed to seeking and evaluating a range of points of view, and am willing to grow from the experience.*
10. **Communicators:** *We can speak in more than one language. We are good at working with others. We understand and express ideas and information confidently and creatively in more than one language and in a variety of modes of communication. We work effectively in collaboration with others.*

In BIS we also have an additional profile, which is essential for wellbeing and success:

11. **Resilient:** *The path may be difficult, but we will succeed. We are resilient and capable of overcoming any challenge that comes our way. We have the inner strength and determination to navigate through difficult times and emerge stronger than before.*

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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, the Head of Language Acquisition, the English Language Acquisition Coordinator and the relevant Programme Coordinator 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 English Language Acquisition (ELA) 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, and History and Geography of Kyrgyzstan. 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 1-11. 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, Ukrainian, Danish, Polish, and Turkish. 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.

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, Korean/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 17, 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 as 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 Primary and Middle school students, 4-5 hours/week for High 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 15-20 minutes per week of Kyrgyz language teaching for 4-5 year old students, 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 with the Kyrgyz Republic Ministry of Education requirements. In Grades 1-5, this provision includes one Kyrgyz language lesson during ECA time (15:30-16:30) on Mondays and one Russian language lesson during ECA time on Tuesdays as a part of the school curriculum. For all 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, 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 - Grade 0-5

In Grades 0-5, all students take English Language and Literature, or English Language Acquisition.

In Grades 0-5, all students have 15 minutes of fun Kyrgyz language after morning snack, so that they are all familiar with the national language. Students taking the national curriculum in Grades 1-5 also have two 35 minute periods of Kyrgyz language within the timetable before 15:30 and one Kyrgyz language lesson from 15:30 to 16:30 each week.

For Grade 1, students taking the national curriculum have three 45 minute periods of Russian Language during the normal school day, and one Russian language lesson a week from 15:30 - 16:30. Students not taking the national curriculum have three 45 minute periods a week of taster foreign language lessons, with one term of Russian language acquisition, one term of Mandarin language acquisition, one term of French language acquisition and one term of Spanish language acquisition, so that they can choose their preferred language in Grade 2 and beyond.

For Grades 2-5, students taking the national curriculum have three 45 minute periods of Russian Language during the normal school day, and one Russian language lesson a week from 15:30 - 16:30. Students not taking the national curriculum have three 45 minute periods a week of either Russian language acquisition, or Mandarin language acquisition, or French language acquisition or Spanish language acquisition.

Students from Grades 1 - 5 who score below 3.0 on the WIDA test will have extra ELA classes in Semester 1. In Semester 2, students choose between ELA or the Russian National Curriculum. Students who are not in the national curriculum continue with ELA instead of an additional language until they graduate from ELA.

We are able to respond to students with other language needs on an individual basis.

2. Middle School - Grade 6-8

All students study English Language and Literature, or English Language Acquisition (ELA). Students taking the national curriculum also have Russian Language and Literature and Kyrgyz language. Others can choose either Kyrgyz Language Acquisition OR Russian Language Acquisition for four 45-minute periods each week. All students who are not in ELA also choose either Mandarin, Spanish, French or German language acquisition, 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 Mandarin, Spanish, French, or German, in order to support their development of the school's language of instruction.

We are able to respond to students with other language needs on an individual basis.

3. High School - Grade 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 Language Acquisition and the IGCSE Coordinator, to ensure they are pursuing a course which is academically realistic and challenging. The cases of students joining BIS during the IGCSE course will be considered individually by the Head of 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. High School - Grade 11-12 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, French, German, Mandarin and Spanish. 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 Grade 11 for students following the national curriculum with final examination at the end of Grade 11.

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, Japanese, Korean, Mandarin and Spanish 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 0-5 students who speak a language other than, or in addition to, English at home will be given the WIDA MODEL English proficiency test either prior to joining BIS, or shortly after joining. Grade 6-11 students will be given either a WIDA test or the online Oxford Placement Test either prior to joining or shortly after joining if they do not have fluent English. The WIDA MODEL English proficiency test identifies speaking, listening, reading, and writing levels in English. At higher levels, the online Oxford Placement Test is often used for assessment instead of WIDA.

Students must obtain an overall composite proficiency level equal to or higher than specified in this table in order to be exempt from, or to graduate from, English Language Acquisition (ELA) lessons.

For students in ELA, tests are repeated in Term 3 to determine 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.

Additional ELA payment is required for any student joining BIS in Grade 4 or above if they have a WIDA or OPT score lower than the score given in the table above. The additional fee continues until the student no longer needs additional English support, as decided by the relevant Assistant Principal.

ELA programmes 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.

Additional time for subject examination assessment

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 in subjects, except Languages.
- 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 promotes and facilitates 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 Head 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 Head of School Responsibilities

The Head of School is responsible for:

- Annual review and revision of the Language Policy (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 Head of Language Acquisition and ELA Coordinators - Responsibilities

The Head of Language Acquisition and ELA Coordinators 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 DP Coordinator Responsibilities

The DP 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.
- Helping all students to develop their English language skills whenever they are teaching in English.
- 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 preface 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 either in the home or with independent support as recommended by the relevant Coordinator or Principal.

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.