



## Vasa International School of Stockholm

### Language Policy

#### **Our vision**

Vasa International School of Stockholm is a small, friendly, multicultural IB World school that strives to foster a challenging, internationally- minded and inclusive environment for its students.

Our vision is to acknowledge every student's potential and build upon their strengths and interests in learning. We aim to be caring and inspiring teachers, ambitious and principled students, and informed and engaged parents.

#### **Our mission**

Our mission is to stimulate student voice, choice and curiosity through inquiry and encourage respectful relationships between all members of the school. As a community, we constantly seek to empower all students to express themselves individually and collaboratively, preparing them for the challenges of the future and encouraging them to become lifelong learners and active global citizens.

#### **Our philosophy**

As an IB World school, we are committed to the IB vision for the creation of a collaborative, diverse community united by a mission to make the world a better place through meaningful education.

At Vasa International School of Stockholm, we promote and develop the learning of different languages and the understanding of different cultures. Our students, their families and our staff are internationally-minded and as a community we embrace and promote all of those different identities and cultures.

By aiming to instill the IB values into the hearts of all community members we encourage our students, teachers and parents to embrace the Learner Profile attributes and become inquirers, knowledgeable, thinkers, communicators, principled, open-minded, caring, courageous, balanced and reflective.

As a school, we promote collaboration, encourage learners to have an active role in their learning and we inspire each other to ask questions and learn through mindful inquiry.

We also value reflection as a means to deepen our understanding and to improve teaching and learning.

As an IB school, we recognize the importance of taking action as a means of connecting our learning to real-life situations and as a means to improve ourselves and the world around us.

## Our language philosophy

At Vasa International School of Stockholm, language is seen as *the vehicle for inquiry* and a *medium for learning across the curriculum*. Language learning is not the sole responsibility of the language teacher but is instead integrated into all learning. At our school *every teacher is a language teacher*. In this way, we aim for students to express themselves effectively, in diverse ways and in different settings.

Language is taught at Vasa International within the framework of *inquiry-based and concept-based learning*. Furthermore, language teaching in our school is to *promote intercultural awareness and international-mindedness*. We approach language learning in an open and inclusive manner that affirms each learner's identity and encourages critical thinking. Therefore, we believe that the *recognition of the mother tongue* and the culture associated with it increases the individual's self-esteem and general sense of well-being.

Vasa International School of Stockholm promotes the development of students' mother tongue, both as a tool for thinking and learning but also as a pathway to learning more languages. The school aims for all students to learn Swedish, the language of the host country and *to support students* who are not proficient in the language of instruction, which can be either Swedish and/or English.

Language teaching at Vasa International strives to enable students to operate on different levels and in different contexts. Educators at our school encourage students to be *courageous in language learning* and use techniques that support students during the communication process.

As an institution, our language philosophy aligns with our mission and the mission of the IB, which is to promote international mindedness through inquiry-based learning. We align ourselves with the IB's language philosophy by recognizing that language is the vehicle to inquiry and by supporting the languages of instruction, host country, mother-tongue, as well as by providing exposure to multiple languages.

Our policy implementation is based on the new Programme Standard and Practices (2020) and particularly on Standard 0301, Practice 4 and 6 (see table 1 in Appendix), which define the guidelines for the creation of a school culture that acknowledges and celebrates inclusion.

Our language policy is intended to represent all the stakeholders in our community. All teachers, staff, board, students, parents and members of the larger community, such as the Swedish Agency of Education have a share in this document. This is a document for public view and is included on the Vasa International website and readily accessible to all the above stakeholders. It is to be reviewed yearly according to our Policy Review Cycle.

## **Rights and responsibilities**

At Vasa International, we believe it is the shared responsibility of all members of the community (learners and their families, educators and other staff) to promote language instruction in our school and to ensure that the below rights are protected.

### **The right to multilingualism and international mindedness.**

- ❖ **The school** should promote a culture that values diversity and ensures that multicultural and multilingual perspectives are incorporated into all aspects of school life.
- ❖ **The school** should adequately communicate the language pathways to new families and students, and take their choices into consideration when designing the language programs and classes.
- ❖ **The school** should ensure that accurate data is collected, so that statistical information about the school population and the languages they speak can be collated, which in turn will be used to create the language profile of the school.
- ❖ **Educators** should take into account the information from the school language profile statistics and use it in a way that is relevant to their teaching and learning.
- ❖ **Educators in PYP** should support students in creating their individual learning portraits and create a display of all the languages in their classroom.
- ❖ **Educators and other staff** should ensure that multicultural perspectives are incorporated in all aspects of the classroom social and learning environments, as multilingualism is a valuable resource for learning.

### **The right to receive quality language instruction.**

- ❖ **The school** should provide opportunities for staff professional development to ensure educators are aware of the latest information about second language acquisition methodology and resources.
- ❖ **The school** should ensure that curriculum policies require that multicultural perspectives are incorporated in all learning areas.
- ❖ **The guardians** should communicate directly with the educators regarding their child's language level and development.
- ❖ **The guardians** should go through the information received about their child's language pathways offered at Vasa International, as well as mother tongue learning possibilities..
- ❖ **The learners and their guardians** should be involved in choosing modern languages between French and Spanish for their child to pursue in MYP.

### **The right for new language learners to get support in the beginning stages of the learning.**

- ❖ **The school** should provide resource information for teachers in the areas of second language acquisition, EAL teaching methodology, classroom organization, and selection of suitable materials and resources for EAL learners and Swedish B learners.
- ❖ **The school and educators** should pre-assess, identify and address the needs of those learning in a language other than their mother tongue.
- ❖ **The school** should monitor the effectiveness of differentiation strategies for learners with specific language learning needs
- ❖ **The educator and the Special Education teacher** identify language needs and implement intervention programs pertinent to the needs of the student.
- ❖ **Educators** with extra support minutes in their working hours offer support to groups of students or individual students that need support in language acquisition, in pull-out or push-in sessions.

## **Links with other policies**

### **Language and Academic Integrity**

Academic integrity is taught throughout all grade levels with Modern Language Association (MLA) and Harvard styles being used from PYP6 onwards. Referencing skills such as paraphrasing and citing are taught in conjunction with source criticism and internet research in order to encourage high-quality academic research and contextual criticism. Students learn to understand language in context and both analyse and evaluate the various purposes, values and limitations of a text.

### **Language and Assessment**

Like all subject areas at our school, assessment in language is carried out in accordance with the school's assessment policy guidelines. These guidelines follow the principles of the IB Primary Years and Middle Years Programmes, as well as the Swedish curriculum guidelines Lgr11.

Language assessment is a continuous process and should take place every lesson by asking specific questions which challenge students' knowledge. Students are provided with constructive and specific feedback from teachers and peers. This feedback is best provided to the student immediately after the task and could be given verbally or in written form.

Students are prepared to use different strategies of learning a language and are encouraged to apply them appropriately. Time is given to revise their work and reflect on their learning. Rubrics are also used to ensure that students are aware of their assessment criteria and specific language use requirements..

During the development talks, which are conducted in all PYP & MYP classes midterm autumn and spring, the students' language development is addressed with parents and students.

Assessment criteria used within the school have been adapted so that student/parent-friendly criteria are available for all subject areas.

Detailed information about assessment can be found in the Vasa International Assessment Policy.

### **Language and Inclusion**

By law (Swedish Education Act, 2010:800), the school must accept the children of parents who reside in Sweden. This means that there is no consideration placed upon the student's level of competency in Swedish or English, although it is recommended that students have at least some basic knowledge of English in the International Programme or Swedish in the Bilingual Programme.

One of our more important goals is to support language development in all students, especially the ones with special educational and learning needs. Our Language Policy is aligned with our policy for meeting special needs. Detailed information about this can be found in the Vasa International Inclusion Policy.

### **Language and Admissions**

Vasa International School of Stockholm is open to all students who apply and the only two priority criteria for admission are sibling priority and proximity to the school. However, given that we cultivate an international environment, we recommend that students have some basic knowledge of English, although that is not a prerequisite for their admission.

## **Language and the Learner Profile**

- ★ **Communicators:** We express ourselves confidently and creatively in more than one language and in many ways.
- ★ **Reflective:** We thoughtfully consider the world and our own ideas and experience. We work to understand our strengths and weaknesses in order to support our language learning and personal development.
- ★ **Courageous/Risk-takers:** We approach uncertainty with forethought and determination; we work independently and cooperatively to improve our language learning. We are resourceful and resilient in the face of challenges and change.

## Our school language profile

### Language profile summary

According to our language profile survey, more than half of the students at Vasa international have *Swedish* or *English* as their first language. About 26% speak Swedish as a first language and about 23% speak English as a first language.

The rest of our students speak a total of **36 different languages** at home. The next most predominant mother tongue at Vasa International is *Hindi*. Other student mother tongue languages include: *Russian, Spanish, Telugu, Dutch, Chinese, Cantonese, Mandarin, Italian, Tamil, Ukrainian, French, Turkish, Bengali, Polish, Urdu, Arabic and Marathi*.

Most students are bilingual, using more than one language at school and at home.

In PYP about one quarter of the students have English as their mother tongue and another quarter has Swedish as a mother tongue. Hindi accounts for about 9% of the population in PYP. Data indicates that in MYP, 17% have English as a mother tongue and about 36% have Swedish as a mother tongue, which means that in recent years we have increased our international population.

There are two streams with parallel classes at Vasa International: the **English stream** and the **Bilingual stream**.

#### In PYP:

□ **86,3%** of the students in the English classes speak **English** at school. The rest speak both languages.

□ **49.5%** of the students in the Bilingual stream speak **both Swedish and English** at school.

□ **34.3%** of the student in the Bilingual classes say they prefer to speak **Swedish** and **16.2%** say they prefer to speak **English**.

This shows that our Bilingual classes favor the use of both languages instead of one.

#### In MYP:

□ **61.8%** of the students speak both **Swedish and English** at school.

□ **15.9%** of the students speak only **English** at school.

□ **13.5%** speak **English, Swedish and Spanish** at school.

□ **4.7%** speak only **Swedish** at school.

□ **4.1%** speak **English, Swedish and French** at school.

Our teachers and staff speak **more than 15 different languages**.

□ **24%** have **English** as their mother tongue.

□ **20%** have **Swedish** as their mother tongue.

Around two thirds of lessons are taught in English and one third in Swedish. In After School Care (PYP 1-4) most of the activities are instructed in English. One third of teachers and staff have English as a mother tongue and 20% have Swedish as a Mother Tongue, which account for about 45% of the staff. The rest of the teachers have different mother tongues, the most common being Greek, Spanish and Polish.

Other languages among our staff include:

*Bulgarian, Croatian/ Arabic, English/Ilocano/Tuali, Spanish, Bahasa (Malaysian), Afrikaans, French, English/Konkani, Bisaya, Russian, Ukrainian, English/Irish, English/Kiwiana.*

The majority of our staff speak both English and Swedish at school, while **41.3%** speak **only English**.

For the complete Vasa International language profile please visit this link:

 [Language profile 2021-2022](#)

## Language of Instruction and Language Use

Swedish and English are the languages of instruction, and thus compulsory at Vasa International. In our Bilingual classes, Swedish is taught as Language A and English as language B. In our English classes, English is Language A and Swedish is Language B.

Language A is taught in a way appropriate for students who:

- have the language as their mother tongue
- have the language as one of their mother tongues
- have reached native or near native competence in the language

Language B is taught in a way appropriate for students who:

- do not have the language as their mother tongue
- have not yet reached native or near native competence in the language

Swedish is the language of instruction for:

- Language A in the PYP & MYP bilingual programmes
- Language B in the PYP & MYP English programmes
- Mathematics in the PYP & MYP bilingual programmes
- Humanities in the PYP & MYP bilingual programmes
- Science in the PYP & MYP bilingual programmes
- Design (Textiles) in the PYP & MYP bilingual programmes

English is the language of instruction for:

- Language A in the PYP & MYP English programmes
- Language B in the PYP & MYP bilingual programmes
- Mathematics in the PYP & MYP English programmes

- Humanities in the PYP & MYP English programmes
- Science in the PYP & MYP English programmes
- Physical and Health Education in the PYP (PSPE) & MYP programmes
- Music in the PYP & MYP programmes
- Arts in the PYP & MYP programmes
- Design (Woodwork & Textile) in the PYP & MYP bilingual programmes
- Design in the PYP and MYP English programme

In the Middle Years Programme, all students have the opportunity, and are encouraged, to learn a modern language taught as an Additional Language. The school currently offers French and Spanish.

### **Mother tongue**

At Vasa International, all students are offered the opportunity to study their mother tongue. Mother tongue teaching takes place after school hours, but teachers are encouraged to recognise students' mother tongues and home cultures in teaching and during school life. There are currently **36 mother tongue languages** spoken by students at school including smaller minority languages. Mother tongue lessons are offered to all Bilingual classes students for free on request. A group of at least 5 students needs to be created for a mother tongue to be taught. Students in the English classes need to pay a fee to join the mother tongue lessons. There are currently 15 mother tongue languages taught at Vasa International.

The school's library also provides books and other online materials in different languages on request. In addition, parents are encouraged to support their children's mother tongue skills in the home environment.

This emphasis on mother tongue is in accordance with research and best practice, and with the Swedish curriculum for the compulsory school system (Lgr11). The development of one's mother tongue has proven to be central to all cognitive skills, and individuals with good mother tongue skills also develop good skills in the learning of other languages.

### **Forms of Language**

Exposure to the language and culture of different countries is an intrinsic part of the student experience at Vasa International. Therefore, not one form of English, Spanish and French is considered standard. Students, in particular at MYP level, are encouraged to compare different forms of language, for example British and American English. The dominant form of language in the classroom is likely to depend on the teacher's background. However, the teacher is expected to point out differences in expression or spelling, as well as provide support to those students who use alternative forms of the language.



## Language across the Curriculum

In the Primary Years Programme (PYP), language is linked to all aspects of the curriculum and is steered by the class teacher. The Language B teacher (English/Swedish) works in close association with the class teacher so as to provide a framework of the basics of the language. Language B lessons revolve around the Units of Inquiry, as much as possible.

In the PYP we base our language scope and sequence documents on the three language strands:

- Oral language :

*Speaking involves recognizing and using certain types of language according to the audience and purposes.*

*Listening involves more than just hearing sounds. It requires active and conscious attention in order to make sense of what is heard.*

- Visual language :

*Involves understanding the ways in which images and language interact to convey ideas, values and beliefs. Visual language involves opportunities that invite students to explore the function and construction of images. They also facilitate the process of critically analysing a range of visual texts.*

- Written language

*Reading is a developmental process that involves constructing meaning from text. The process is interactive and involves the reader's purpose for reading, the reader's prior knowledge and experience, and the text itself.*

*Writing: Children learn to write by writing. Acquiring a set of isolated skills will not turn them into writers. It is only in the process of sharing their ideas in written form that skills are developed, applied and refined to produce increasingly effective written communication.*

These three strands are interconnected and learned across and throughout the curriculum, with each strand being an integral component of language learning. These strands are considered as inseparable from each other and are combined to strengthen language skills both in individual lessons and between subjects. Each strand has been considered from both the receptive aspect i.e receiving and constructing meaning, and expressive aspect i.e creating and sharing meaning.

The curriculum for Swedish and English at Vasa International is guided by the IB's *Language Scope and Sequence* document in PYP and *From Principles Into Practice* in the MYP, as well as in subject guides. In our bilingual classes the curriculum is guided by *Scope and Sequence, From Principles into Practice*, the IB subject guides, as well as the Swedish curriculum documents Lgr11. As a result, the school fulfills both Swedish state and IB aims and objectives.

The key to success in other subjects lies in student competency in English and Swedish. Teachers of these languages have an obvious role to play in reinforcing language skills needed

in other mainstream subjects. Likewise, subject teachers play a key role in students' language learning by promoting language skills related to particular subject area(s).

Students learn a language through a balanced program of literacy instruction including oral, written and visual literacy. Through inquiry-based teaching they are given opportunities to engage into language learning through relevant, authentic, meaningful and interesting language and literacy resources. Furthermore, all members of the school community are encouraged to develop a love of language and literature from a variety of social, linguistic and cultural perspectives.

### **Content Area Language**

The IB Programme and the Swedish curriculum (LGR11) require the correct use of terminology and vocabulary related to each subject. At Vasa International School of Stockholm vocabulary lies at the heart of all content learning.

We teach specific language terminology for different subjects such as Design, Art, Music, PE etc. All teachers, regardless of what they teach, are language teachers. Each subject demands the acquisition of specific terminology, requiring students to use terminology correctly across all subjects.

Special effort is given, when language learning can occur, between two or more subject areas. Focus is given to areas of overlap between subject areas; for instance, when two subjects share terms and/or vocabulary, it is important that students are aware of all the areas where the meaning of specific vocabulary is identical, or dissimilar.

### **Testing and language profiling of new students**

Teachers evaluate and assess new students at the beginning of the year and upon admission, and yearly from that point, to determine the level of language instruction (beginners/advanced) and whether they will need additional language support. The goal is for the same assessments to be used across the grade levels in order to assure steady progress through the school.

This preliminary, diagnostic and standardized testing can give us a first understanding of where the students are in terms of language acquisition but regular and ongoing assessment in all its forms (self-assessment, peer-assessment etc) offers us a better overview of the student's language abilities and needs.

In the PYP, teachers share resources and ideas regarding best practices for language teaching and have moderation sessions on language assessment. In the MYP, teachers meet at least once a year to discuss student writing samples and gain a better understanding of the expectations at the various grade levels and we seek to maximize opportunities to standardize assessment in collaboration with teachers from other schools by fostering connections with the IB community in Sweden.

At present in the PYP we are reviewing a range of diagnostic tests so as to choose a common assessment tool which will be able to show and ensure student progress and language growth throughout the grade levels. It will also help identify students that need extra support in a language and allow for a more tailored and differentiated basis of learning for the particular students.

### **Additional language acquisition**

Students are offered language support with pull-out and push-in sessions after an evaluation of the students' language needs. Students are more likely to need individual support in the lower grades of PYP, as for many of them, one of our two languages of instruction might be new. In a few instances, students that speak neither of the two languages of instruction are introduced in the school. In that case, language support takes place more intensively in pull-out sessions with an additional language teacher, until the student is able to slowly integrate the class environment completely. Instruction at Vasa International is differentiated according to the needs of each individual student and thus students that are new to a language, can assimilate easily after a period of time.

### **Additional Language Resources**

The library acts as a hub for information and literature, encouraging literacy through all stages, reading for pleasure (both at school and at home) and life-long learning. The teacher librarian is available as a resource for the whole school to facilitate literacy learning, academic honesty skills and research skills. We do not currently use reading lists but accommodate library times for all classes with a semi-fixed schedule. The librarian selects titles for units on request and supports student research. The library also houses guided reading programs to support literacy in PYP.

### **Continuing professional development**

All teachers are encouraged to share effective practices and resources on the teaching and learning of language and the school offers regular and ongoing professional development on language teaching. The Language Committee is also responsible to plan opportunities for reflection and exchange of ideas on language teaching.

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## **Appendix**

Table 1

<b>IB Standards and Practices for Language</b>
<b>Standard: Culture through policy implementation (0301)</b>
<b>Practices:</b>
<b>Culture 4: The school implements, communicates and regularly reviews a language</b>

**policy that helps to foster intercultural understanding through communicating in a variety of ways in more than one language (0301-04)**

Culture 4.1: The school implements and reviews a language policy that is aligned with IB language policy guidelines. (0301-04-0100)

Culture 4.2: The school describes in its language policy the way that the school recognizes multilingualism as a fact, a right and a resource for learning. (0301-04-0200)

Culture 4.3: The school identifies in its language policy a variety of physical and virtual resources used to facilitate language development. (0301-04-0300)

Culture 4.4: The school clearly describes in its language policy the rights and responsibilities of all members of the school community and what constitutes good practice within the school context. (0301-04-0400)

PYP 1: The school ensures that students learn a language in addition to the language of instruction (at least from the age of seven). Multilingual programmes, where students are learning in at least two languages, can but are not required to offer additional languages. (0301-04-0411)

**Culture 6: The school implements, communicates, and regularly reviews its IB mandated policies to ensure they are cohesive and reflect IB philosophy. (0301-06)**

Culture 6.1: The school implements processes with consideration of the relationship between its IB mandated policies. (0301-06-0100)

Culture 6.2: The school documents its IB-mandated policies and communicates them to the school community. (0301-06-0200)

Culture 6.3: The school considers physical and virtual spaces in all of its IB-mandated policies. (0301-06-0300)

Culture 6.4: The school articulates a planned integration of human, natural, built, or virtual resources in all of its IB-mandated policies. (0301-06-0400)

Culture 6.5: The school considers the learner profile in all of its IB-mandated policies. (0301-06-0500)

Culture 6.6: The school considers international-mindedness in all of its IB-mandated policies. (0301-06-0600)

Culture 6.7: The pedagogical leadership team uses the school's IB-mandated policies in decision-making and curriculum development. (0301-06-0700)