

# Language Policy

PLATON WORLD SCHOOL



## **Language policy statement**

The purpose of the Language Policy is to outline the school's philosophy on language teaching and learning. It states our main beliefs of how we view language in our school community. It states how language should be used in our school and also explains how the teaching and learning of languages is organized. It also shows how students are organized into the most appropriate pathways to develop their language learning.

The school's Middle Years Programme includes:

- Language and Literature – Modern Greek and English
- Language acquisition – English, German, French.

### **Language and Literature – Modern Greek**

Priority of the department is the setting and teaching of the curriculum following the instructions of the Greek Ministry of Education and Life-long Learning, the authority for the application of educational programmes related to the teaching of the mother tongue. This policy is addressed to the entirety of the students in our school whose mother tongue is Greek.

Moreover Platon IB World School is responsible for developing and structuring MYP language and literature courses that provide opportunities for students to meet the aims and objectives of the programme. Besides, national curriculum requirements determine the organization of language and literature within the school.

### **Language and Literature aims**

The aim of teaching Modern Greek Language is linguistic proficiency and the development of the student's ability to effectively communicate in a social context. The concept permeating our policy is that everything the students learn in the context of language teaching at school has to find an application field outside the school as well. Thus, language teaching has to evolve for the student into the ability for critical thought, expression and creativity in all fields.

For the development of communication ability, that is to say the ability to use language in the appropriate context and in specific communication circumstances, it is imperative that the students comprehend and have sufficient knowledge of language as a system governed by grammatical and syntactical rules as well as by particular principles allowing for the unencumbered creation of numerous sentences and texts.

In the undertaking of mastering the mother tongue, the department of Language and Literature Teachers deems the involvement of other disciplines (Mathematics, Physics, Geography, etc) as a necessary requirement for the successful teaching of the linguistic module. All MYP teachers are language teachers, therefore in collaboration with the coordinators of other departments we seek to contribute to the overcoming of difficulties pertaining, for example, to the comprehension of special scientific terminology or to the elucidation of instances of overcomplicated phrasing in certain parts in the books of the curriculum. We actively encourage coordinators from other departments to forward such requests to our department as the target of linguistic proficiency is considered to be vital, especially in the context of interdisciplinary assignments. The familiarization of the students with techniques of oral presentation of their projects to fellow students, parents as well as a wider public is part of this educational direction as well.

We have to note that the targets outlined above demand the creation of an appropriate framework, a favourable climate promoting fair treatment, encouragement, collaboration and the development of our students' creativity.

### **Language and Literature methodology**

The language teaching of Modern Greek is based on the so-called text-based approach in which we include every autonomous entity of oral or written discourse as text. Following this approach, we use original texts representative of various genres serving a number of communication purposes.

We choose texts from the books of Language and Literature given out to our students based on the analytical study programme issued by the Ministry of Education; we place particular emphasis on those texts which seem interesting, texts touching on current issues but also texts referring to earlier ways of life which retrospectively shed light on the current social reality. At the same time we enrich our subject with texts culled from current affairs whenever this is deemed necessary. We also take into consideration the fact that each MYP literature course must include study of a balance of language and literature, a balance of genres and a world literature component. These diverse works broaden our students' experiences and perspectives and encourage intercultural understanding through the study of a variety of cultures, historical periods and places. While the national curriculum has set a different structure of the teaching material and different evaluation criteria on the subject of Literature and Language, our school following the IB philosophy seeks to deal with the teaching material as a single entity promoting an integrated programme locating overlapping themes. Language teaching is based on an escalating procedure following the continuum outlined by the IB requirements.

### **Language and Literature objectives**

The objectives of any MYP subject state the specific targets that are set for learning in the subject. They define what the student will be able to

accomplish as a result of studying the subject. These objectives relate directly to the assessment criteria.

### **Objective A: Analysing**

In order to reach the aims of studying language and literature, students should be able to:

- i. analyse the content, context, language, structure, technique and style of text(s) and the relationships among texts
- ii. analyse the effects of the creator's choices on an audience
- iii. justify opinions and ideas, using examples, explanations and terminology
- iv. evaluate similarities and differences by connecting features across and within genres and texts.

### **Objective B: Organizing**

In order to reach the aims of studying language and literature, students should be able to:

- i. employ organizational structures that serve the context and intention
- ii. organize opinions and ideas in a sustained, coherent and logical manner
- iii. use referencing and formatting tools to create a presentation style suitable to the context and intention.

### **Objective C: Producing text**

In order to reach the aims of studying language and literature, students should be able to:

- i. produce texts that demonstrate insight, imagination and sensitivity while exploring and reflecting critically on new perspectives and ideas arising from personal engagement with the creative process
- ii. make stylistic choices in terms of linguistic, literary and visual devices, demonstrating awareness of impact on an audience
- iii. select relevant details and examples to develop ideas.

### **Objective D: Using language**

In order to reach the aims of studying language and literature, students should be able to:

- i. use appropriate and varied vocabulary, sentence structures and forms of expression
- ii. write and speak in a register and style that serve the context and intention
- iii. use correct grammar, syntax and punctuation
- iv. spell (alphabetic languages), write (character languages) and pronounce with accuracy
- v. use appropriate non-verbal communication techniques.

## **Assessment**

The MYP values the use of a variety of assessment strategies during the programme, such as: selected response, open-ended tasks, performance, process journals, essays, investigations, research e.t.c.

The communicative and text-centric approach of subject Language and Literature defines the evaluation of the student's performance to a significant degree.

During student evaluation we seek feedback on the teaching process and the detection of learning deficiencies. The aim of evaluation is not just the examination of knowledge as a result unto itself but chiefly the examination of the processes of knowledge acquisition and management. In order for the evaluation to succeed, we pay a great deal of attention to the student comprehension of the IB evaluation criteria which we try to combine with considerable success with the respective criteria of the national curriculum. Thus, what is of paramount importance is the evaluation of the students ability to produce written text in their mother tongue. The ability of the students in oral discourse, which should be dealt with on an equal footing, is also evaluated. In addition to evaluation, we also apply self-evaluation, that is to say the frequent involvement of the student in the implementation of the criteria used. We familiarize our students in a gradual but systematic manner with various self-evaluation activities.

## **Classical Greek**

It is important to underline the stress placed by our school on the teaching of Classical Greek. We seek to highlight the historical continuity of our language through the teaching of Classical Greek. More specifically, we are highlighting the historical continuity of our language through the imparting of etymological knowledge, translating and adapting ancient texts in Modern Greek but above all through the showcasing of the cultural value of Ancient Greek: a language which has seeped through in international scientific terminology having transmitted important political and philosophical concepts to world thought, most notably the concepts of democracy and rationalism. It is important for us that our students comprehend that the Greek language is one, cohesive but also evolving, alive and open to change.

## **Language and Literature – English**

At every grade throughout MYP Years Platon School has formed bilingual classes where English is spoken and taught as a native language along with Greek. The philosophy and principles that guide teaching and learning in these classes are similar to the ones described above. Meaning in written, spoken and visual text is constructed and presented in a variety of modes, whereas, students are required to integrate a variety of literacy skills to

gradually develop an awareness of diverse linguistic and cultural contexts in which to communicate and negotiate meaning. In these groups, English is not only a linguistic system which students have to conquer but mainly a 'channel' of expression, communication and global understanding.

## **Language Acquisition**

### **Language Acquisition / English, German, French**

Our language acquisition policy follows the IB mission statement closely and includes tasks, projects and activities which ensure the cultivation of the traits dictated by the student learner profile. Current policies on language learning put forth by the Ministry of Education are in accordance with the IB mission in that they support the notion of lifelong learning as well as the need for effective communicators who will one day function as principled citizens. Our teachers aim to instill students with internal motivation rather than just external incentive for learning a second or third language and cultivate students' respect for the culture of the people whose language they study.

### **Language Acquisition aims**

Our school recognizes the need for second/third language **acquisition** and not simply language **learning**. We advocate the belief that it is necessary for students to develop communicative strategies such as the ability to negotiate message delivery, to reflect upon cultural diversity, to become autonomous, lifelong learners and effective communicators of foreign languages. We distinguish between **learning**, that is the formal, systemic method of studying often employing drills in grammar, and **acquisition**, that is acquiring the language in a more natural, native environment. More specifically, our teachers strive to create students that are capable of communicating in a variety of modes in more than one language since this is essential to the concept of an international education that promotes multilingualism and intercultural understanding, both of which are central to the IB 's mission.

To this end, students are encouraged to participate in educational trips abroad and international student exchange programmes such as the COMENIUS, which equip students with the necessary multiliteracy skills and attitudes, enabling them to communicate successfully in various global contexts and build intercultural awareness. In addition, our school involves students in the Model United Nations Conference which our school has been hosting with success every year since February 2011. This conference bring students in close contact with students of their own and other countries and gives them the opportunity to use the English language in order to debate and decide on multiple issues of global impact on international community. In this way, our school aims to develop open- minded, caring people, eager to help create a better and more peaceful world.

### **Language acquisition objectives**

#### **A Comprehending spoken and visual text**

Comprehending spoken and visual text encompasses aspects of listening and viewing, and involves the student in interpreting and constructing meaning from spoken and visual text to understand how images presented with oral text interplay to convey ideas, values and attitudes. Engaging with text requires the student to think creatively and critically about what is viewed, and to be aware of opinions, attitudes and cultural references presented in the visual text. The student might, for example, reflect on feelings and actions, imagine himself or herself in another's situation, gain new perspectives and develop empathy, based on what he or she has understood in the text.

As appropriate to the phase, the student is expected to be able to:

- Listen for specific purposes and respond to show understanding
- Interpret visual text that is presented with spoken text
- Engage with the text by supporting opinion and personal response with evidence and examples from the text.

## **B Comprehending written and visual text**

Comprehending written and visual text encompasses aspects of reading and viewing, and involves the student in constructing meaning and interpreting written and visual text to understand how images presented with written text interplay to convey ideas, values and attitudes. Engaging with text requires the student to think creatively and critically about what is read and viewed, and to be aware of opinions, attitudes and cultural references presented in the written and/or visual text. The student might, for example, reflect on feelings and actions, imagine himself or herself in another's situation, gain new perspectives and develop empathy, based on what he or she has understood in the text.

As appropriate to the phase, the student is expected to be able to:

- Read for specific purposes and respond to show understanding
- Interpret visual text that is presented with written text
- Engage with the text by supporting opinion and personal response with evidence and examples from the text.

## **C Communicating in response to spoken, written and visual text**

In the language acquisition classroom, students will have opportunities to develop their communication skills by interacting on a range of topics of personal, local and global interest and significance, and responding to spoken, written and visual text in the target language.

As appropriate to the phase, the student is expected to be able to:

- Interact and communicate in various situations
- Express thoughts, feelings, ideas, opinions and information in spoken and written form
- Speak and write for specific purposes.

## **D Using language in spoken and written form**

This objective relates to the correct and appropriate use of the spoken and written target language. It involves recognizing and using language suitable to the audience and purpose, for example, the language used at home, the language of the classroom, formal and informal exchanges, social and academic language. When speaking and writing in the target language, students apply their understanding of linguistic and literary concepts to develop a variety of structures, strategies (spelling, grammar, plot, character, punctuation, voice) and techniques with increasing skill and effectiveness.

As appropriate to the phase, the student is expected to be able to:

- Organize thoughts, feelings, ideas, opinions and information in spoken and written form
- Develop accuracy when speaking and writing in the target language.

### **Language Diversity**

Regarding the English language, Platon School has conceptualized both a bilingual and a regular programme. Both programmes commence at Pre-Kindergarten and commence through to MYP Year 5. Our school uses the language acquisition continuums in order to classify students in the appropriate phase, make explicit the specific expectations in each area of communication and set the learning targets that can support them to progress to the next phase. In the bilingual programme, apart from the studying of the English as a foreign language, English is also the language of instruction for other subjects such as Geography, PE, Music, Humanities etc. In the regular programme students are encouraged to use foreign languages to write their reports and create oral or written presentations. In addition, it is compulsory for all our students to choose a second foreign language to study, either German or French. Each language is represented with four hours of instruction for MYP year 1, and two hours per week for years 2, 3 and 4. Students are placed in groups which follow the continuum of two phases (phase 1 and 2). Extra language tuition is offered at an extra cost for students wishing to achieve a higher level in these languages and reach phase 3 in MYP Year 4.

### **Methodology/Assessment**

In planning the LA curriculum for all foreign languages offered, teachers make sure that all legal requirements resulting from government legislation are met and, at the same time, the purposes and targets of the IB Programme are implemented, too. Placement of students is informed by knowledge of their linguistic profile. The language continuums and the MYP language acquisition global proficiency table are used as tools for assessing students' progress and grouping them into the appropriate language courses. For newcomers a written test along with an interview with the student and their parents are also used in order to collect the data needed for their successful integration into the programme.

Inside the classroom, the use of target language as a means of expression is always emphasized and encouraged. Additional exposure to all foreign



languages in a natural context is also supported by viewing films in the target language, projects, research and written journals kept by students. As some of our students hope to achieve a level of proficiency in English or a high level in a third language, students division in phases produce learners with varied levels of competence. Formative assessment is an ongoing process and it is integrated into the lesson as a tool to encourage learning, develop learner confidence and inform the teacher of the students' progress. Summative assessment in all years of the programme is always criterion-related as stipulated in the LA guide, and prior to any assessment task, students are provided with explanations, guidelines and clear expectations with direct reference to these assessment criteria. Apart from in-school assessment, a lot of students also sit for formal certificates of language proficiency such as the Cambridge First Certificate (FCE) or Certificate of Proficiency (CPE).

Finally, all teachers of the school community are invited to participate in regular meetings whereupon they discuss programme effectiveness and students' overall performance and difficulties. Further assessment of learner needs is also conducted through an informal, direct discussion between students and teachers when deemed necessary.

### **FLS – Foreign Language Support**

The school has established procedures to support new students whose level of competence in foreign languages is lower than that required by level of class the student is going to attend.

In such an event the Foreign Language Department in alignment with parents formulates a programme of extra afternoon classes, either on school premises or at home, at an extra cost, ensuring that the students receive the appropriate class level.

### **Mother Tongue Support**

Our population mainly consists of students whose mother tongue in Greek. The school, however, has established procedures to support other mother tongue children.

In the event a non-greek speaking student enrolls, the Foreign Language Department in alignment with parents, formulate a programme of extra, afternoon classes either on school premises or at home, ensuring that the students receive age appropriate and proper language level learning.

### **Bilingual Admissions Policy- Language Level Requirements**

The bilingual programme of our school is offered from the pre-K and runs along with the national curriculum programme, having English as its official language. Since the majority of students are of Greek background, English language competence at this level is almost identical among students.

However, as the bilingual programme develops, students are provided with ample opportunity to broaden their knowledge and communication skills in the English language at a very quick pace.

Therefore, admission in these groups at a later stage is only allowed after the prospective student has taken an oral and written test in English and has gone through an interview session with the programme administrator and/or other teachers in the bilingual programme. Parents are made aware of these procedures and of the results of the assessment. If the newcomer student has the prerequisites to attend the bilingual class, then, they are admitted and, if necessary, support classes may be arranged until it has been decided that the student has fully adapted.

## **Resources**

The school library plays an essential role. As well as providing up-to-date and appropriate resources for both teachers and students, the school library provides opportunities for students to access material to support subject-specific and interdisciplinary units of work, and to develop information literacy skills. With regard to language and literature in particular, the library is key to providing world literature, works in translation and books in different languages. Information and communication technology are used, when appropriate, as an important means of expanding students' knowledge of the world in which they live in, gaining access to a broader range of language resources and as a new channel for developing skills. The use of iBooks created by the language teachers themselves is essential as it has enriched the teaching material in a student friendly way. All teachers have the responsibility to teach students to use electronic media critically so that students are aware of the uses and limitations of the data.

## **Professional development**

The language teachers have a university degree in the language they teach and they regularly attend IB MYP and other language related conferences and seminars as a part of their life-long professional development. In addition, they individually follow all the latest trends in language teaching.

## **Curriculum**

Subject overviews are available to the whole school community through the Managebac Platform.

## **Cross Programme Language Policy Continuum**

It is our common policy as a school that we teach our students to become citizens of the world and be able to communicate in more than one language. We value the IB learner profile as our bible and try to give all of its values to our students. We instill in them that through foreign languages they gain appreciation of other cultures. Through language teaching we promote intercultural awareness, appreciation, collaboration and communication. As a school we celebrate customs and traditions from all over the world like: Halloween, St. Patrick's Day, International Language day, Health and Nutrition Day, International Day of People with disabilities etc. By promoting these celebrations we promote the culture and traditions of the world. Additionally, we encourage our students to participate in programmes such as COMENIUS and MUNs, which promote internationalism, multi-literacy skills and attitudes, enabling them to communicate successfully in various global contexts and build intercultural awareness and English Language skills.

It is our firm belief that all teachers are language teachers and our learners are language learners in all domains. All language teachers help and train other subject area teachers in how to teach language or teach through language in their subject areas. Through language our students become lifelong learners, principled citizens and effective communicators. At our school we have a strong bilingual programme from the early years of nursery school until high school, where both Modern Greek and English are taught as mother tongues. This leads to some of our students becoming balanced bilinguals, using both English and Modern Greek at a native speaker's level and being able to follow both Modern Greek and English as a Language A in the IB Diploma years. We also try to instill in them the necessity of speaking a third language by offering French and German as a third language from the first year of elementary school. We aspire that the students become trilingual and have the capacity to follow one of these languages as a Language B in the Diploma years if there is ability and interest. Additionally to the above, we have also added the teaching of Chinese and Arabic in our afternoon classes as mother tongue support languages or additional languages.

Regardless of the fact that the main population of our school consists of students whose mother tongue is Modern Greek, we cater for students whose mother tongue is other than Greek, with the support and collaboration of the homeroom teachers, subject specific teachers, the language teachers and the family. The same policy is followed for students who have difficulties in language and speech, who are additionally supported by the school's SEN team, dealing with their individual difficulties. In the Diploma years we have the ability to offer students the possibility of following a Language A self-taught course in their own mother tongue, with the close observation and support by the school's Language A teachers. We also have the ability to offer students extra time during exams or scribes, if there is a learning difficulty that obliges us to follow this path of learning and assessing. We screen all our students, newcomers and returning, through oral interviews and written testing.

Apart from the languages mentioned, our school provides our students with the learning of Classical Greek. We do not view the teaching of this language as an obligation forced upon us by the Ministry of Education, but as an opportunity for our students to gain a deeper understanding of their Greek culture and heritage, observe the development and evolution of their language, be exposed to their own history and understand the functions and the structures of the Modern Greek Language. We believe that the acquirement of Classical Greek will aid in the attainment of international scientific, political and philosophical terminology.

Our assessment both formative and summative, places a lot of focus on self-assessment, reflection and inquiry, the development of oral and writing skills and the use of logic and imagination. Together with many other tasks, our students write stories that they present to the school community, and they go through the process of objectively analyzing, organizing and producing texts using language. Students learn how to interpret and construct meaning from spoken and visual texts, convey ideas, values and attitudes and engage in creative and critical thinking. They also learn how to comprehend written and visual text, communicate by interacting on a range of topics and responding to spoken, written and visual text in the target language. Apart from School assessment, students also sit external language based exams as IELTS, FCE, ECCE, CPE, DELF and FIT.