

# LANGUAGE POLICY

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### 1. Oakham School – philosophy of language teaching and learning

*“Because you cannot study the acquisition or use of language in an intelligent manner without having some idea about this language which is acquired or utilized.”*

(Noam Chomsky, *Responsibility and Reflections on Language in One Volume*)

Oakham School is an International Baccalaureate (IB) World School. We strive to create a challenging and motivating educational environment that takes into account the multilingual background of the diverse body of our pupils and staff. We view language as a primary tool for thought that enables us to make meaning of the world. We believe that every pupil has an individual and cultural set of experiences, skills and interests that must be further enhanced in the teaching and learning process as a whole and in language development and acquisition in particular. Our view is that multilingualism and understanding of critical literacy by pupils helps them on their pathway to become successful global citizens. We place particular importance on language learning as a means of realising our pupils’ own unique cultural identity as well as the 400-year heritage of our School and local community.



At Oakham School, as critical literacy drives the subject curriculum implementation, all teachers also become language teachers. Through the IB language programmes, we aim to develop our pupils as confident, knowledgeable, curious and reflective communicators. Language, therefore, is always taught meaningfully and in context. While these contexts may vary depending on the nature of an academic course or individual needs of our pupils, they often include the use of real-life or global scenarios, use of speakers as well as the rich heritage of the local and wider areas. Oakham School is committed to ensuring that the learning of language is facilitated by inquiry, allowing pupils to make meaningful connections and engage with the literary texts at a deeper level.

Equally, the School strongly believes that each pupil should have a range of opportunities to maintain and develop their mother tongue(s) and we work relentlessly to establish an educational environment that celebrates the many mother tongues of our pupils. We believe that acquisition of additional language as well as development of our pupils' mother tongues will allow them to further explore and reflect many different cultural perspectives as well as better understand our shared human commonality.

As an IB World School, we are committed to the following Practices:

- The School places importance on language learning, including mother tongue, host country language and other languages.
- The School utilises the resources and expertise of the community to enhance learning within the programmes.
- Collaborative planning and reflection recognises that all teachers are responsible for language development of pupils.
- Teaching and learning addresses the diversity of pupil language needs, including those for pupils learning a language(s) other than their mother tongue.
- Teaching and learning demonstrates that all teachers are responsible for language development of pupils.
- Assessment at the School aligns with the requirements of the programme(s).

Collectively, these practices give an overview of the pathways that are already in place or being implemented at Oakham School and exemplify our philosophy of achieving excellence in language learning.

## **2. The School places importance on language learning, including mother tongue, host country language and other languages**

At Oakham, languages are addressed holistically throughout the curriculum which enables pupils to attain appropriate linguistic expertise and support them in understanding their own cultures and those of others. Coherent approach to delivering language programmes helps our pupils better prepare for further education, the workplace and a lifetime of learning. We, therefore, promote investigative and inquiry-based strategies that underpin our collective view on language learning. The School employs a range of qualified, professional language



teachers for the delivery of the language of instruction and other languages (including mother tongue languages). The School encourages the use and development of the mother tongues of our pupils in order to enable them to access fully our curriculum. Oakham is committed to making appropriate provision of teaching and resources for pupils for whom English is an additional language. Through identifying their individual needs, as well as the variety of skills they bring, the School ensures that strategies are in place to support and develop their achievements.

### Screening

Pupils from a wide range of countries whose first language is not English are admitted to Oakham on the understanding that they will follow the School curriculum appropriate to their age and ability.

Initial screening takes place during the interview process to determine pupils' abilities in English for entry at the Lower or Middle School levels. Examination qualifications, together with academic reports supplied by their previous school, are also taken into account before acceptance by Oakham.

### Provision

Oakham supports EAL (English as an Additional Language) pupils where necessary to ensure that they are able to achieve their full academic potential across the curriculum. Once EAL language and learning needs are identified through further assessment, small group teaching, individual lessons and in-class support are provided as appropriate. In Forms 1, 2 and 3 support may also be offered in place of classical language study.

The language study within the School is divided into studies in English and literature (Language A) and language acquisition courses (Language B). A pupil is required to take at least three languages during Form 1, two of which have to be a language B course – currently French and Latin\*. While studying languages B in Form 1, pupils will have various opportunities to familiarise themselves not only with the appropriate level of language instruction but also rich and diverse francophone and classic cultures. The School provides a range of events to support the cultural and linguistic development of our pupils such as *Mardi Gras*, a francophone and a Latin day, a special cuisine day and opportunities to visit Italy and francophone countries. In Form 2, the pupils have an opportunity to choose a further Language B course which is currently either Spanish or German.

### **3. The School utilises the resources and expertise of the community to enhance learning within the programmes**



All language teachers are responsible for and enthusiastic about sourcing and utilising an appropriate range of resources to help pupils explore various types of literary genres as well as different text types in different languages and at different levels. Pupils also have access to a variety of dictionaries to assist them including picture dictionaries and mother tongue dictionaries. The Head of Library, working collaboratively with individual teachers, orders and catalogues books and other resources in English, Language B languages and other mother tongue languages for the library use by the pupils.

Pupils have access to various texts and resources such as newspapers and magazines that they can also subscribe to in a variety of languages which helps them become more aware of current, local and international affairs, to foster interest in reading, and to further develop confidence, fluency and comprehension in English as well as Languages B and their many mother tongues. Pupils are also encouraged to use various digital devices (iPads, PCs, laptops) to access various programmes and tools to support their language learning (such as digital dictionaries, interactive language courses, etc). There are many extra-curricular activities such as arts, music, sports and games that help pupils make meaningful connections between their language learning and the real-world context.

Our local and wider community is considered a valuable resource to support our teaching and learning in general as well as language learning in particular. Pupils often participate in numerous trips both within the local, wider and international communities. Those include (but are not limited to) visits to museums, libraries, theatres, cinemas, places of interest, as well as charitable projects. Such activities provide pupils with an opportunity to use languages in various contexts as well as to gain insights into cultural aspects associated with language learning. It is the School's practice to often invite guest speakers such as persons of interest, story tellers or representatives from various organisations. Throughout the year, pupils are exposed to numerous events and celebrations linked to the diverse cultures within our local and wider community, all with the aim to provide language learning in a meaningful context and aid the development of international mindedness as well as an appreciation of our country's and local area's cultural heritage.

#### **4. Collaborative planning and reflection recognises that all teachers are responsible for the language development of the pupils**

Since any academic learning takes place through language, we emphasise that all teachers are responsible for the language development of pupils in the School. Consequently, we are developing a programme of collaborative planning meetings for all Middle Years Programme (MYP) teachers where, among other things, they are able to explore and establish academic, procedural and also linguistic links between their subjects. Additionally, there are specific directed times where teachers can meet together as a teaching faculty. This can be in the form of whole staff meetings, departmental groups or interdisciplinary groups. During these meetings, among other things, teachers plan, reflect and debate the best practices that suit the needs of individual pupils. They also discuss implementation, standardisation (including uniform utilisation of the MYP assessment framework) and progression between



the IB programmes offered at the School. EAL and external mother tongue tutors are encouraged to collaborate with their respective pupils' subject teachers in order to develop strategies that provide pupils with a comprehensive access to our curriculum.

### **5. Teaching and learning addresses the diversity of pupil language needs, including those for pupils learning a language(s) other than their mother tongue**

Delivery of all language lessons includes suitable differentiation strategies that align with the standards and practices of the IB as well as the latest developments in pedagogy. All teachers respond appropriately to the individual pupil needs that may be in the form of differentiation strategies, one-to-one support, scaffolding of resources or individualised learning plans. Using appropriate language complexity as well as a suitable level of questioning and tasks is a priority for teachers devising differentiated strategies to address the language needs of their pupils. In addition to this, the School provides a range of specialist support directed by the Learning Support Department which, among others, include profiling, individual support plans and speech and language assessments.

All pupils' language needs are determined through initial assessment, upon joining the School and also carefully monitored by ongoing assessments throughout each academic year.

### **6. Cover Teaching and learning demonstrates that all teachers are responsible for the language development of all pupils**

One of the pedagogical foci of Oakham School is to foster further recognition and implementation of transdisciplinary nature of language learning by the teaching staff. Attributing the role of language in every academic subject is strongly encouraged and it is further enhanced by the development of an understanding of the IB objectives and pedagogical language of the programmes.

The development of subject-specific literacy as well as transdisciplinary and conceptual literacy is explicitly planned and delivered through the course of a unit by all subjects. One of the foci of the Language and Literature programme at Oakham School is to enable pupils to see language as a means of self-expression and exploration of self and others in local and global contexts. When pupils are acquiring a modern foreign language our teaching is not only informed by the ability to recognise linguistic patterns and construct meaningful grammatical forms, but also by the opportunity to provide our pupils with means for effective personal and cultural expression.

Throughout the School, there is a drive to develop an enjoyment and love of reading through a wide range of resources. Every academic department will have a collection of suitable reading material that is available to support and further extend learning in the classroom. The School's Library provides dedicated reading time to all of the pupils through timetabled



lessons or supervised study time. Reading is strongly encouraged at home and during individual prep time. This may be also done in the pupils' mother tongues.

### **7. Members Assessment at the School aligns with the requirements of the programme(s)**

Authentic and meaningful assessment is an integral part of teaching and learning process at Oakham School. The teachers of IB programmes are encouraged to use a range of strategies and forms of assessments to determine pupils' levels of knowledge, skill and understanding of language.

In the MYP, a range of formative assessment strategies are used routinely by teachers to determine what pupils already know and where they may need to improve in order to further their linguistic development. Summative assessments are used to gather evidence about a pupil's learning at the end of a unit.

All recorded assessment outcomes are internally standardised and quality assured by departments working collaboratively within their subject groups and across the subject groups.

Assessments are summarised and reported to parents in a variety of ways that include regular progress checks, end of year full MYP reports as well as parent-teacher meeting where academic progress may be discussed further.

Further information regarding assessments may be found in the School's Assessment Policy.

*\*Latin is not currently assessed by using the MYP framework*

*\*\*Elements of this policy are based on the Language Policy produced by the International School of Paris, and it is further informed by the IB publication 'Programme standards and practices (2018). It is licenced under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike licence (CC BY-NC-SA).*