

International School of Schaffhausen Language Policy

ISSH Mission Statement

Be Unique + Achieve Potential + Take Responsibility

The International School of Schaffhausen provides quality education in a nurturing and inclusive environment. We are an internationally minded community which fosters intercultural understanding and respect.

We develop responsible global citizens

- by inspiring learners to discover, unlock and develop their potential
- by providing a challenging curriculum that stimulates critical and creative thinking
- by promoting active, life-long learning
- by applying a holistic and balanced approach to all areas of school life
- by encouraging responsibility for self, others and the environment

We know that every student is unique and

“Each mind has its own method”

(Ralph Waldo Emerson)

Table of Contents

Language Philosophy	4
ISCC and ELC	6
Primary School	7
Secondary School	9

ISSH Language Philosophy

Language is central to all learning, crossing subject boundaries, and fundamental to the development of cultural identity and global understanding. At ISSH, every community member is committed to continually striving to develop and promote an understanding of, and appreciation for the power of language through the ISSH core values of achieving potential, taking responsibility and being unique.

Objectives:

Through this policy we aim to fulfill the following objectives:

At ISSH we...

1. Promote fluency in English (the instruction language of the school), the learning of additional languages (including the language of the host country) and the ongoing development of mother tongue languages.
2. Assist in the development of language as a means of communication, intellectual development and as an important part of understanding one's own culture and the culture of others including that of the host country.
3. Appreciate the role of language in developing international-mindedness and the attributes of the IB Learner Profile, and use this knowledge to inform teaching and learning throughout the school.
4. Place language development at the heart of planning, learning, assessing and reflection in all areas of the curriculum.
5. Use agreed assessment criteria based on standardized expectations to support and further students' language development.
6. Identify and promote the development of transferable knowledge, skills and dispositions needed for language learning.
7. Support the development of EAL students both within and parallel to regular classes.
8. Stay informed of current and on-going theories surrounding language development and are dedicated to sharing of good teaching practice in the field of language.
9. Ensure that language development, and its effective use to communicate knowledge and understanding is celebrated by all.

International School Child Care and Early Learning Center

Language in ISCC and ELC aims to create a supportive and inclusive learning environment, where children can develop their linguistic and emotional competencies, and build interpersonal relationships.

To achieve this goal, the following guidelines are implemented:

- **Multilingual Staff:** staff members in this section of the school are proficient in multiple languages, enabling them to communicate effectively with children, parents, and colleagues.
- **Language Learning:** German and English is embedded in the curriculum, using naturalistic language learning methods. These languages will be integrated into daily activities, such as storytelling, role-playing, music, etc. Additionally, language will be incorporated into subject-specific areas, such as science and math, to provide students with practical language skills.
- **Interpersonal Relationships:** language is used to build interpersonal relationships between staff and students. Communication takes place with children in their preferred language, promoting positive interactions and a sense of belonging.
- **Age-Appropriate Language** is used to support children in developing their literacy competence. Children are exposed to a variety of learning styles, such as speaking activities, reading and writing which support their language and communication development.
- **Emotional Expression:** Children are encouraged to follow, understand, and use language to express their feelings, emotions, and needs. Teachers value each child as an individual and provide them with opportunities to express themselves in a safe and supportive environment, fostering emotional intelligence.

Primary School

English as the language of instruction - All students have daily language instruction. It may take the form of whole class, group or individual work. Language permeates all learning experiences, whether they be in class or specialists lessons, and is the medium through which learning occurs. The PYP conceptual understandings for language form the basis of the daily teaching and learning. Most of these concepts are integrated into, and support, the units of inquiry while some of them are taught as stand alone units or through ongoing development of literacy skills. Assessment begins with what the students already know and builds on the practice of establishing criteria for what a good listener, speaker, reader, writer or visual communicator does. The teacher supports the students in reflecting on their language practices and abilities and helps them identify personal goals in order to improve their language skills.

Differentiation and Inclusive Education - The concepts of differentiation and inclusive education are deeply ingrained in the practices of the PYP and of ISSH. ISSH provides a text-rich environment that encourages a wide range of experiences in language learning and supports different learning styles and phases of development of language ability.

Students identified through the ISSH flagging system (see ISSH Inclusion Policy for details) as in need for extra learning support pertaining to language, receive additional support from the SEN coordinator, homeroom teachers and assistants. External specialists might be contacted as needed. An Individualized Learning Plan (ILP) is created to inform the teaching and learning.

English as an Additional Language (EAL) - ISSH aims to provide every student with equal access not just to the curriculum but to all the opportunities ISSH offers. In order to ensure that students who do not have English as their mother tongue are given the opportunity to achieve their full potential, we are committed to:

- developing a positive self-image in our EAL students by valuing multilingualism and nurturing their home language and promoting an awareness of the challenges faced by EAL students
- ensuring that early identification of needs is recognised. This will enable the EAL teacher to supply necessary support in selected lessons and in withdrawal, and allow class and single-subject teachers to differentiate and modify their curriculum accordingly
- setting up and maintaining accurate assessment and reporting facilities on EAL students so that their progress can be monitored and fed back as required to the students themselves, their teachers and their parents.

EAL Provision - Class teachers, single-subject teachers, teaching assistants and EAL teachers provide EAL support throughout the PYP. EAL support, on individual or small group basis, is available for all students at extra cost in and outside the homeroom. The progress of the student is reviewed on a regular basis with the EAL teacher, parents and class teacher to assess if further paid EAL provision is required.

Mother Tongue Languages - Acknowledging the importance of nurturing and maintaining mother tongue languages, students at ISSH are actively encouraged to continue to develop their proficiency in their mother tongue(s). In class, students are encouraged to make links between their mother tongue and new languages being learnt and are welcome to share resources linked to current units of study, for example, in their mother tongue(s).

Parents are encouraged to regularly read, write, and speak with their children in their native language as these skills will transfer over to their development in English. The aim is for students to maintain and develop their mother tongue. In the ISSH Parent Handbook the section on mother tongue development encourages and advises parents to continue to use mother tongue at home when discussing and sharing ideas, meet socially with families of the same nationality, celebrate the language during home country visits and different school celebrations.

German as the language of the host country - As an international school, ISSH has a special responsibility to recognise and support our students in the learning of the host country language. The acquisition of the host country language enriches the personal experience of living in the host country and allows students to communicate and socialize with their host country community. It also gives a deeper awareness of cultural values, traditions and social norms different from their own. Learning another language brings greater awareness and understanding of one's home language, culture and cultural identity.

In line with the transdisciplinary nature of the programme, German teachers incorporate the current inquiries of the different age groups into their planning and teaching as much as possible in order to support and contribute to the units of inquiry. Furthermore, links are made to English language studies being undertaken by students, when applicable, thus enabling students to make connections between languages. Students have German lessons for 160 minutes per week for Grade 2-5, and 200 minutes per week for Grade 1.

German as an Additional Language - The primary focus of the German as an additional language curriculum is to facilitate student understanding and the use of spoken German. Reading and writing in German is also taught but the emphasis of the programme is on confident, fluent oral language use.

Areas that are typically addressed include:

- learning how to use German in everyday situations, for social interactions and in leisure activities. Themes may include: making friends, shopping and money, clothes, weather, the seasons, food and eating out and leisure time activities
- learning about Switzerland and the Swiss Culture, its customs, traditions and holidays, history and geography
- learning about the German language and how it works compared to other languages
- learning through German about the personal, social and scientific worlds by supporting the units in the Programme of Inquiry.

German for mother tongue speakers - Students with German mother tongue background are traditionally one of the biggest national groups at ISSH. Sound knowledge and a good grounding in their mother tongue is vital for students whose mother tongue is not the language of instruction. We cater for the needs of German mother tongue speakers by providing a balanced curriculum that incorporates the holistic language approach of the PYP together with specific learning outcomes outlined in the official curriculum for Swiss Primary Schools, thus allowing for a smooth transition into Swiss and German education systems. The primary focus of the German for mother tongue learners curriculum is to enhance the students' confidence in expressing themselves orally and in writing and to instill a love of reading both fiction and non-fiction books in their mother tongue.

French - French is one of the official host country languages. In order to be able to cater for the needs of our local students with regards to their future integration into the Swiss system of education and training we also provide a French programme as an additional language from Grade 5. The fact that we are recognized by the local authorities as a private school delivering an equivalent education to the Swiss public schools obliges Swiss students from the age of 10 to participate in the French programme. This also benefits our expat population to improve their multilingualism experiences. Students in Grade 5 have French lessons twice per week for 45 minutes.

Secondary School

Language in the Secondary School - The ability to communicate one's learning effectively is extremely important for success in the secondary school (grades 6 to 12). On entering the Diploma Programme, students are expected to have reached an adequate standard in English, which is the school's language of instruction to enable students to fully access courses offered (see ISSH Admissions Policy for details). Communication and language considerations are explicit in curriculum planning and in assessment criteria in each subject area.

All Teachers are Language Teachers - Regardless of the learning area, language is critical for understanding and communicating in the classroom. Students bring with them a variety of subject-specific knowledge and experiences, and teachers must be able to build upon this in order for a student to progress and acquire new knowledge. Operating in a school with a common language of instruction, skills that are acquired in one learning area can be applied to another. As educators it is important to reinforce these skills so that students are more adept at transferring them from one learning area to another. In this way, there then exists a common vocabulary that transcends subject areas. Within each learning area there is a set of command terms which are used to establish learning outcomes and assessment objectives. The command terms in the secondary school are instructional verbs which indicate the level of thinking and type of performance that is required of students. Command terms may be common between various learning areas, and they make explicit a shared academic vocabulary that informs teaching and learning in the secondary programmes. In order for students to achieve success, teachers must make clear the expectations using this common vocabulary. At the same time, attention must be paid to subject specific vocabulary where a common word might have a different meaning.

The Role of Assessment in Language Development - Assessment at ISSH supports language development by checking and using the student's current knowledge to build further confidence and skill in vocabulary acquisition, grammar usage and ability to comprehend, speak and write in the language used. Decisions regarding the best possible support to maximize success as a language learner or placement are made on an individual basis and might vary from student to student.

Differentiation to Support Language Development - Differentiation is essential to developing effective secondary school communicators and every effort is made by the teachers to provide learners with a programme that challenges them at the right level for optimum growth. Differentiated support is provided in a variety of ways to suit students' needs and includes: teachers use strategies for language development and differentiation in the classroom, such as pre-teaching command terms, keywords for units and by using visual aids. Assistants collaborate with students, and additional language support is provided through EAL.

Language Learning and Inclusive Education/Special Educational Needs - In line with the ISSH Inclusion Policy, teachers flag students when there is a concern regarding learning abilities. The student is referred to the Inclusion coordinator who, in consultation with teachers, sets a course of action (e.g. referral to a specialist, formal assessment, creation of an Individual Learning Plan) that provides targeted support for the student's language development.

English as the language of instruction - As English is the school's language of instruction students are placed in different English language classes depending on language skill levels. These levels include English Language and Literature and Language Acquisition offered at three different levels in the Middle School and Pre-Diploma programme. In the DP, students can choose between standard or higher level for English A: Language and Literature and English B courses.

English as an Additional Language (EAL) - The purpose of EAL in ISSH's secondary school is to offer a flexible programme for Grade 6 to 10 students, who do not have English as their mother tongue. This is to support and give students the opportunity to achieve their potential and to be successful learners at ISSH. This service is at an additional cost.

Students from grades 6 through 10 entering the Secondary School are required to sit a placement test to determine their level of English. Students requiring extra support are then scheduled to receive extra EAL lessons and are withdrawn from a specified subject dependent on the student's needs, and after discussion with the parents and teachers involved. These lessons are planned to take into account the student's individual requirements and the pace at which they are capable of working. In addition, the students will also participate in the English Language Acquisition course at their relevant level.

Depending on the student's progress after the first semester, it may be decided that the student no longer needs the EAL support for the second semester and should join the mainstream subjects, or that the student should move from EAL to content-based subject specific support to gain an understanding of English for academic purposes.

Mother Tongue Languages - Support for mother tongue language development continues in the secondary school through encouragement in lessons and resourcing. Parents are encouraged to support their children in developing a healthy attitude towards the development of their mother tongue as these skills will transfer over to their development in English. Where possible, students are encouraged to continue their studies by attending after school classes or clubs in their mother tongue.

Foreign languages offered in the secondary school

German as the language of the host country - German continues in the Secondary School with 160 minute lessons per week in Language and Literature or Language Acquisition classes as appropriate. Students new to the language in Grade 6-10 start their Language Acquisition classes at beginner level. Students enrolled in the German as an additional language programme, are taught in the language acquisition classes according to their ability. This allows them to develop a greater proficiency in both the use and communication of the target language (spoken and written), and in the understanding of the language (comprehending, analysing and evaluating visual, oral and written text).

Placements and transfer between classes are assessed by the teachers using the Language Acquisition levels' assessment criteria. Students are expected to have completed one level for a minimum of one academic year before progressing to the next level.

Mother tongue speakers of German are generally taught in Language and Literature classes, rather than a Language Acquisition class. Language and Literature classes focus on learning to express oneself accurately in a variety of contexts, in addition to analysing literature and linguistic aspects of the German language. Students use a broad range of vocabulary and grammatical structures, which they are able to use with ease, skill and creativity when writing and speaking.

In the Diploma, German is available as a Language A (Literature) choice, or a Language B (Acquisition) choice. ISSH also offers the option of a starter course (German ab initio) as either the sixth subject, or a Language Acquisition choice. This course is designed for those starting out in their German studies or for students who demonstrate little knowledge of the language. In addition, students have the possibility to further enhance their German language skills outside of their normal curriculum. Extra hours of German can be taken via the school's language school cooperation partner "Linguasud" if required.

French as another language of the host country - French language acquisition classes are offered in secondary school for all students. Three lessons of forty minutes a week are undertaken in Grades 6-8 of the Middle School. From Grade 9 onwards French is no longer considered a core subject, but becomes an elective. Students can choose to continue with French if they have shown motivation and promising progress in this subject. This gives them additional choice when entering the Diploma Programme with French offered as a Language B (HL & SL) subject. It is also possible to study French ab initio and Spanish ab initio, currently offered online with Pamoja.

The acquisition and interest in other languages at ISSH is encouraged whenever possible.

Language and Literature course in secondary school - Students often join ISSH from countries and backgrounds where neither English (language of instruction) or German (language of host country) are spoken. As such it is recognised that this policy may need to be adapted in specific individual cases, placing the students' needs at the center of the discussions. Students are placed in language acquisition classes and are expected to move through the levels with the assistance of additional EAL support if needed. Throughout the secondary school, students may move to Language and Literature courses after the successful completion of an upper intermediate class and the recommendations of language teachers.

Students entering Grade 9 without a sufficient level of either English or German may not follow a Language and Literature course in the high school. However, after two years of accelerated instruction they may be able to choose between English as Language A, or school supported self-taught Language A in their mother-tongue, in order to meet the subject requirements of a full Diploma Programme. This choice may be influenced by the university entrance requirements of the country where they wish to study and with the parents understanding and consent. Students entering Grade 10 who wish and are able to study Language A English or German in the Diploma Programme, will be encouraged to follow the Grade 10 Language and Literature course of either English or German at the beginning of the school year.

Students beginning Grade 11 without a proficient level of English or German will be asked (to agree, with their parents' consent and an understanding of the implications for university applications), to choose a self-study Language A in their mother tongue, with external tutors and the support of the school supported self-taught coordinator at ISSH. The school supports the students' needs for literature resources and study skills required for successful completion of a Language A course. If they wish to study English as Language A, they will be set an entrance examination to assess their ability. A decision will then be made with the student, the parents and Diploma Programme teaching staff as to which course the student follows. If a student chooses the option of taking a language other than English as mother tongue, English is offered as their Language B option. This ensures that students will have proficient understanding and competence in English as the language of instruction for all other courses offered in the Diploma Programme.

Referencing Guidelines for Students at ISSH

To ensure consistency of approach when citing works in written reports and presentations, students at ISSH are required to reference according to Modern Language Association (MLA) guidelines when submitting work across the subject areas. Further guidance is to be found in the ISSH Academic Honesty Policy.

Policy revised during the 2022-2023 school year

Next policy review June 2024