



ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE (ESL)

STATEMENT OF AIM

We aim to create an inclusive and supportive learning environment where the language of instruction is English and multilingualism is valued and celebrated. We view language as a tool for making meaning in the world, and that every student brings unique experiences, skills, and cultural knowledge to the classroom. The English as a Second Language (ESL) program is designed to help students develop the language skills necessary to succeed in all subjects. We support students becoming confident readers, writers, speakers, and listeners. At MEF IS, students are also encouraged to use their home languages and connect with their cultural identities.

Language learning is integrated into all areas of learning and focuses on the use of language in both academic and social settings. We aim to help students become curious, effective communicators who can think critically and participate in a global community. As a result, teaching and learning is designed to "promote inquiry-based authentic language learning; focus on the transdisciplinary nature of language learning; incorporate the teaching and learning of language into the programme of inquiry; develop the skills of listening, speaking, reading, writing and media literacy; interrelate the skills of listening, speaking, reading, writing and media literacy; provide for the teaching of additional languages; promote consistency of practice in the teaching and learning of all languages where more than one language of instruction is used" (IB, "Guidelines for developing a school language policy", 2008).

RATIONALE

Language is taught in meaningful and relevant contexts. These contexts vary but often involve the use of real-life scenarios, exploration of the local area, and exposure to a variety of text types. We believe students learn language most effectively through inquiry, allowing students to make connections with different contexts to explore and investigate. Language learning is a developmental process that builds on each student's background and abilities, helping them grow in confidence, accuracy, and fluency over time.

Language of Instruction

English is the language of instruction at MEF International School. Students are expected to develop both everyday communication skills and academic language. Therefore, all teachers at MEF IS are expected to support English language development as part of their teaching practice. Language learning is recognized as a key component of overall academic learning.

Through our admission policy and in-school English language support, we ensure that all students are given the opportunity to access the curriculum in English. Instruction is differentiated and scaffolded to meet the needs of students who are not yet proficient in English.

Home Language and English Language Development

Students are encouraged to maintain and develop their home languages, as a strong mother tongue supports English language learning. Students at MEF IS come from diverse linguistic backgrounds, and they are encouraged to continue developing their home language alongside English.

In alignment with the International Baccalaureate, the school is committed to the following practices:

- The school places importance on language learning, including mother tongue, host country language and other languages (IB Standard A, Practice 7).
- Collaborative planning and reflection recognizes that all teachers are responsible for language development of students (IB Standard C1, Practice 8).
- Teaching and learning address the diversity of student language needs, including those for students learning a language(s) other than their mother tongue (IB Standard C3, Practice 7).
- Teaching and learning demonstrates that all teachers are responsible for language development of students (IB Standard C3, Practice 8).
- Assessment at the school aligns with the requirements of the programme(s). (IB Standard C4, Practice 1).

Primary School Procedures

First Language English

This course is designed for students who have a strong proficiency in the English language. Speaking, listening, reading, and writing are integrated with the course content. Lessons also include transdisciplinary skills and topics. For further information about the First Language English Curriculum, the course guide may be consulted.

English as a Second Language (ESL)

During the admissions process, the English proficiency of incoming students is evaluated to determine their ability to access the curriculum. In addition, students are assessed using the WIDA MODEL within the first two weeks of school to determine eligibility for ESL support.

Students who are identified as English Language Learners from Kindergarten to Grade 5 take ESL classes in place of their First Language English course. These classes are taught by qualified ESL teachers and focus on developing the language skills needed for academic success, following the Cambridge International Curriculum.

In the Reception classes, students are fully immersed in English through instruction from their homeroom and specialist teachers. Teaching takes place in English, and understanding is supported by modelling, visuals, and action prompts rather than through translation. It is acknowledged that at this age, supporting the development of language as a means of communication is vital to all teaching and learning.

In-class support

Teachers provide in-class support for individual English language learners or small groups, based on the students' needs or the number of students in the classroom. Support might include working with reading groups, literature circles, and learning centres, depending on the classroom schedule and availability of support teachers. All homeroom teachers and specialists are considered responsible for supporting English language development. Teachers are expected to differentiate instruction and communication to meet the needs of English language learners.

ESL Assessment Accommodations

Primary students identified as English language learners may receive accommodations during assessments to support their language development. These accommodations include up to 25% extra time and the use of translation dictionaries when appropriate. Additional accommodations can be provided based on individual needs and with approval.

Secondary School Procedures

First and second language English courses are offered at all grade levels. The Administration (Principal, Deputy Principals) decides on the groupings, taking into consideration previous performance and teacher recommendations. All subject teachers are responsible for making the curriculum accessible to students, regardless of their English proficiency.

First Language English

The First Language English course is designed for students who have a strong proficiency in the English language. The course follows the Cambridge International curriculum for grades 6 to 10, and the IB curriculum for grades 11 and 12. The course focuses on advanced language skills, including critical reading, writing, and analysis. For further information, the course guide may be consulted.

English as a Second Language

During the admissions process, the English proficiency of incoming students is evaluated to determine their ability to access the curriculum. In addition, students are assessed using the WIDA MODEL within the first two weeks of school to determine eligibility for ESL.

ESL courses are offered as an alternative to the First Language English course.

- Grades 6 to 8 take the Cambridge ESL course.
- Grade 9 and 10 take the Cambridge IGCSE ESL course.
- Grades 11 and 12 take IB English B, Standard Level or Higher Level.

These courses focus on developing foundational academic English skills in speaking, listening, reading, and writing. Additionally, students who need extra support may receive supplementary English support during their Modern Foreign Language (MFL) lessons.

In-class support

Teachers provide in-class support to individual English language learners or small groups, based on student needs and the number of students in the classroom. Support may include working with reading groups, literature discussions, or learning centres, depending on the lesson objectives and availability of support teachers. All subject teachers and specialist teachers share responsibility for supporting English language development. Teachers are expected to differentiate instruction and communication to meet the needs of English language learners.

ESL Assessment Accommodations

Secondary students identified as English language learners may receive accommodations during summative assessment to support their language needs. These accommodations include up to 25% extra time and the use of translation dictionaries. Additional accommodations can be applied based on individual needs and with approval.

Appendix: Identification and Support of English Language Learners

1. Identification of English Language Learners

- a. School Application Form - Home language survey and self-identification
- b. Review School Records
- c. WIDA Model - administered within the student's first week of school

2. Score Threshold and Placement

- a. Scale scores fall within the 100 - 600 range, and each domain has a separate scale.
- b. English Language Proficiency (ELP) levels: 1-Entering, 2-Emerging, 3-Developing, 4-Expanding, 5-Bridging, and 6-Reaching.
- c. *Primary Students*
 - i. Students scoring below 4.5 are identified as English Language Learners.
 - ii. Students scoring 1-2 attend ESL class in place of English class.
 - iii. Students scoring 3-4 receive additional support from support teachers.
- d. *Secondary Students*
 - i. Students scoring below 4.5 are considered English Language Learners.
 - ii. Students scoring 1-3 attend ESL class in place of English class and MFL, subject to academic requirements.
 - iii. Students scoring 3-4 will receive additional support from support teachers.

3. Communication with Families

- a. Parents are informed of WIDA score results and placement decisions.

4. Progress Monitoring

a. Primary

- i. The WIDA Model, administered in May, is used to monitor the growth of students in speaking, listening, reading, and writing.
- ii. Formative Observations: Teachers monitor classwork and participation.
- iii. Cambridge Progression Tests: ESL, Science, and Mathematics scores are used to provide insight into how well the student is applying their language skills.
- iv. Collaborative Review: ESL and classroom/specialist teachers review progress, discussed in SST meetings.

b. Secondary

- i. The WIDA Model, administered in May, is used to monitor the growth of students in speaking, listening, reading, and writing.
- ii. Formative Observations: Teachers monitor classwork and participation.
- iii. Cambridge Progression Tests and IGCSE Results: Results help to assess how well ELLs are applying their English skills in subject-specific contexts.
- iv. Collaborative Review: ESL and classroom/specialist teachers review progress, discussed in SST meetings.

5. Transition / Exit from ESL Support

- a. Students may exit the ESL program based on WIDA scores, classroom performance, internal test scores, and teacher recommendations.
- b. Exited students are monitored for one academic year to ensure success.

Policy last reviewed, August 2025