

*since 1980*



***St. Nicholas***

# Language

Policy and Procedures<sup>1</sup>  
@Pinheiros

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[www.stnicholas.com.br](http://www.stnicholas.com.br)

<sup>1</sup> We would like to thank the international schools who have shared their language policies publicly. In particular, the International School of Amsterdam, Bonn International School, and the International School of Paris.

Dear community members,

Our school policies draw from the Unique Adventure and our beliefs outlined in the Principles of Learning. We aim to model the IB learner profile and mission. Our policies have been developed through discussions with the community.

St Nicks is a diverse community. We embrace different identities, neuro diversities and language backgrounds. Our Language Policy reflects our understanding that language is central to learning, the diversity of our multilingual community and the approaches to language used to respond to the unique linguistic background and needs of each learner. By enrolling your child(ren) at St Nick's, you agree to embrace and promote the diversity of our community.

In each of our policy documents, you will find the philosophy driving the policy and the community's rights and responsibilities. In the appendices are the procedures and processes associated with each policy.

This policy has been written by the Language Policy Review Group, a diverse team of leaders and lead learners.

We look forward to you, enjoying a unique adventure. Thank you, in advance, for reading this policy.

*St. Nicholas Leadership Team*

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## Our Guiding principles



## St Nick's mission

A unique adventure to ignite a passion for learning from our hearts to others for the world

## Principles of Learning most relevant to Language



## IB mission statement

*The International Baccalaureate® aims to develop inquiring, knowledgeable and caring young people who help to create a better and more peaceful world through intercultural understanding and respect.*

*To this end, the organization works with schools, governments and international organizations to develop challenging programmes of international education and rigorous assessment.*

*These programmes encourage students across the world to become active, compassionate and lifelong learners who understand that other people, with their differences, can also be right.*

## **International mindedness<sup>2</sup>**

Multilingualism and cultural diversity are integral to St Nicholas and IB. We are shaped by local and global culture. All members of the community are responsible for understanding, valuing and respecting different perspectives, therefore fostering international-mindedness in our learning spaces and promoting inclusion, tolerance and respect.

### **IB Learner Profile**

Language, multilingualism and communication are embedded with the IB Learner Profile attributes and international mindedness. Every member of the community is committed to embodying these attributes on a daily basis.

*Inquirers, Knowledgeable, Thinkers, Communicators, Principled, Open-minded, Caring,  
Risk-takers, Balanced and Reflective*

### **Diversity, Equity and Inclusion @ Pinheiros**

We bring our authentic whole on a journey for all. Embracing ethnicity, physical and neurodiversity, gender and gender identity, age and socio-economic condition.

We are aware of how we see, listen and speak. We acknowledge our shared history, understand our present and advocate for a just future.

We are safe and free to explore. Diversity broadens perspectives, generates ideas and ignites innovation. It is the right way to be.

Agency and personalisation of learning are the rights of all our learners.

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<sup>2</sup><https://www.whitbyschool.org/passionforlearning/cultural-diversity-international-mindedness-integral-in-ib-schools>

## **Aims of the Language Policy**

### **Language Philosophy**

St Nicholas School believes that language is at the centre of all learning and that language is a defining aspect of cultural identity, personal development and intercultural understanding. This anchors our mission and forms the foundation of our international philosophy. For some families who transfer frequently between countries, English provides continuity of learning from one country to another. Some families, although Brazilian, have formerly lived abroad and find English the smoothest transition back into their home culture.

At St Nicholas School all lead learners are language teachers and we recognise that incorporating learning language, learning through language and learning about language is necessary to ensure a balanced language experience for all learners. The school values and fosters the development of all languages, at all stages of children's educational experience. Language learning is a holistic experience and language is best learnt when it is applied in authentic, meaningful situations to explain new understanding and perspectives.

Learners are immersed in an intercultural environment by learning with peers from several cultural, linguistic and personal backgrounds. As they expand their linguistic repertoire, they make use of all their knowledge and resources to express and communicate with lead learners, peers and the whole school community.

St. Nicholas School recognises the power of language in today's rapidly changing global society and realises that the ability to communicate using a range of languages is highly advantageous. The nature of the curriculum at St. Nicholas involves the transference of skills between languages, uses language as a learning tool, and provides a context for cross-cultural experiences and appreciation. We believe that nurturing positive attitudes and respect for all languages plays a key part in promoting international mindedness, both within the school and the wider community.

St. Nicholas provides our learners opportunities which enable them to become proficient in at least two languages. As such, our aim is that every learner will complete a bilingual IB Diploma at the end of their secondary education. We believe this helps our learners to play a full and active role in the international community of which they are all a part.

### **Language Profile**

St. Nicholas caters for a wide range of nationalities, cultures and languages and our

language profile is complex, dynamic and diverse. The school welcomes learners from all cultural and linguistic backgrounds, according to our Admission Policy. The Language Policy reflects the complex and changing nature of the language profile of the school community.

At the time of the last language school census carried out in March 2023, there were 20 mother tongues spoken by our learners. The majority languages are Portuguese and English, followed by Spanish, Japanese and Korean. Nine percent of the learners have two or more home languages, twelve percent have English as a home language and seventy percent have Portuguese as a home language. Twenty five percent of learners do not speak Portuguese at home and some classes have as many as sixty percent of the learners who do not speak Portuguese at home.

St Nicholas has an open Admissions Policy with respect to English Language requirements throughout the Early Years TT to Kg2. Applicants from Grade 1 onwards are evaluated for understanding and spoken fluency, to determine whether English as an Additional Language (EAL) or Portuguese as an Additional Language (PAL) support will be required. The school supports specific learner needs in regards to the acquisition of the English and Portuguese languages as described in our Inclusion Policy.

Learners throughout Primary have access to their home language at school through vertical interactions with other learners. In Years 11 and 12, learners have the opportunity to study their mother tongue within the Diploma, either in regular classes or self-taught, and can enter the programme in the early stages of Intermediate Fluency in English.

Portuguese lessons are provided for overseas lead learners when they arrive in Brazil. English lessons may be provided for administrative workers and local lead learners at the school.

### **Languages across the curriculum**

Learning at St Nicholas is inquiry based and differentiated to support the unique learning stage of all learners, including language acquisition, academic support and other individual needs. English is the language of instruction for the majority of the curriculum, in all phases of the school. Lead learners recognise that all lead learners are, in practice, language teachers.

The transdisciplinary nature of language learning places language learning, whether oral, visual or written, at the heart of the learning process. Learners are encouraged to develop language-related skills within and beyond the learning space. Communication, Social,

Self-Management, Research and Thinking Skills are underpinned by the development of language, and learners are encouraged to develop these whenever possible in both mother tongue and other languages. Formative assessments provide information about language growth.

We celebrate multilingualism and believe in the power of translanguaging. Opportunities are provided to allow learners to develop their conceptual understandings through both languages of instruction and, where possible, other mother tongues. The school will continue to look for more formal ways to support learning across the curriculum in more mother tongues.

### **Approaches to Language**

English is the main language of instruction at the school, and the ratio of English and Portuguese instruction varies according to learners' stage of development, linguistic and academic profile. Learners are encouraged to use English, as this is the language of inclusion at the school but can use their mother tongue for understanding, using translanguaging practices when beneficial.

The Language Learning Continuum has been designed by Lead Learners and describes how language development takes place for our learners from Tiny Tots to Grade 5 and includes both English and Portuguese language learning, connecting our international and Brazilian curriculum (BNCC) to support the collaborative team in understanding where learners are and what the next stage for them is. This Continuum is revised vertically and horizontally to promote consistency of practice, to support lead learners in building upon previous conceptual understandings and learning outcomes, and to facilitate learner growth and development across the three strands.

The language of the IB Diploma programme is English and the school recognises the need for all learners to be proficient in English. St Nicholas provides personalised support programmes for learners in the Pre-Production to Intermediate Fluency stages of English and Portuguese development. All learners who require this support have it provided either as push-in or pull-out sessions, depending on need. All language support lead learners are experienced and skilled language teachers, play a full and active part in the curriculum, and contribute to collaborative planning.



## Approaches to Language in the Early Years

*“Students use play to make meaning and understandings of the world, and to develop oral language and symbolic competence. They share personal experiences and understandings through talk, play, shared stories and collaborative exploration.”<sup>3</sup>*

The Early Years understands that children express themselves through different ways and languages and the act of communicating with others is an instinctive need. Children are immersed in a learning environment where they will develop their cognitive, social and emotional skills and language will play a fundamental role in this process. As a multilingual community, the Early Years lead learners aim at developing a caring language community in which all students feel accepted and confident that they will be supported by others in language learning.

Language and literacy in the Early Years begins with speaking, listening and viewing at the center of play-based learning. The invitations for learners develop their vocabulary and help them acquire new sentence structures, improve their comprehension of what is said and read to them, and strengthen their phonological awareness skills. These happen every day, by listening to nursery rhymes and singing along; listening to good literature books and retelling the story; role playing and assuming the roles of a character, creating their own plays and constructions; interacting with a lead learner and a peer; learning the daily procedures of their school routine, playing games, amongst so many other experiences.

The introduction to the formal synthetic phonics programme in English takes place between Kindergarten 1 and Kindergarten 2 and is done when the collaborative team of lead learners identify that the cohort of learners is ready. Learners are invited to identify the letter and the sounds within their names, their friends' and family members. The alphabetic knowledge, letter-sound correspondence, blending and segmenting skills are part of the process of written language acquisition that happens throughout the day. Due to a balanced literacy approach, early learners are also invited to develop their reading identities, a passion for authors and books, the elaboration and composition of their stories, and a study of different genres so they can understand the use and function of them in different contexts of communication. These are the main practices to nurture the development of passionate lifelong readers and writers.

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<sup>3</sup> 2018, IBO. *Language development and play*. In: *The learner*, page 13.

Learning language, learning about language and learning through language represents the simultaneity of a complex and fascinating process in which our lead learners are aware of and committed to foster and nurture. In the Early Years, English is the main language of instruction. Portuguese language learning, with focus on oral language, storytelling and nursery rhymes, begins from Nursery. Other mother tongues, whenever possible, are used in the learning environment to support learning and understanding and to promote inquiry and curiosity.

In addition, families are invited into the learning space to share experiences in different languages, with the aim of promoting an appreciation of other languages and cultures, and a connection between home and school.

### **Approaches to Language in Primary**

Language learning and teaching are integrated into the inquiry cycle with authentic links to units of inquiry. Discreet language lessons, both English and Portuguese, take place outside the units of inquiry to ensure coverage of all aspects of language learning, learning about language and learning through language. However, the greater percentages of language learning takes place as key parts of transdisciplinary units of inquiry, and to facilitate this, collaborative planning ensures that all learners are given the opportunity to develop, extend and apply their language skills in all areas of their learning.

The skills of listening and speaking, viewing and presenting, and reading and writing are closely interrelated and complementary. Lead learners plan engagements that integrate expectations from the three strands to help learners recognise that these skills reinforce and strengthen each other. When planning, lead learners ensure that learners are using all three strands for a variety of purposes and range of audiences.

Inquiry is valued in all mother tongues and learners are grouped in such ways to encourage them to think, inquire, and critically discuss significant, challenging, and engaging issues using their whole linguistic repertoire. The links between language learning, the ATLs and IB learner Profile are made explicit to learners and the use of language to develop other skills and knowledge is encouraged. Inquiry is planned for in English and Portuguese and the reflections of this inquiry are recorded on our Designs for Learning.

Learners are encouraged to make connections with their learning and language both in and out of school. The school understands the importance of mother-tongue development. Learners have access to their mother tongue through classroom resources, additional

activities and books.

### **Approaches to language by Primary Specialist Lead Learners**

Specialist lead learners plan strategies for learners to develop language through learning. Collaborative planning supports specialist lead learners in giving effective continuation of language development and enriching the process.

### **Approaches to Language in Secondary**

Over ninety percent of learners in the DP programme graduate with bilingual diplomas.

In Grade 6 to Year 12, English, Portuguese, French, Japanese, Korean, and Spanish are all taught as first languages and Portuguese, French, and Spanish as foreign languages. English, Portuguese, French, Japanese, Korean, Hebrew, and Spanish are offered at Diploma as Group 1 courses and English, Portuguese, French, and Spanish as Group 2 courses.

In Global Perspectives, the language of instruction is English, however, all the inquiry and the output can be in the language of the learner's choice. In all 7- 12 classes, learners are grouped according to the activity and this can be by language groups.

### **English as an Additional Language (EAL) in Secondary**

All learners attend regular English lessons and EAL support is provided in addition to the mainstream English lessons. The support is more commonly provided outside the classroom as pull-out support sessions and the curricular time may be taken from a combination of the second Humanity, Global Perspectives and/or the third language. The lessons focus on supporting English so that EAL learners can access all areas of the school's curriculum.

### **Portuguese as an Additional Language (PAL) in Secondary**

The PAL programme is provided from Grade 6 to Year 12 for non-native Portuguese learners. PAL lessons take place simultaneously with first language Portuguese classes and focus on learners' ability to communicate socially first, before moving onto formal language structures and writing.

### **Whole-School Events which celebrate Language and Culture**

The host country language is celebrated and valued in our community. The school organizes a Literature event, "Made in Brazil". Learners, lead learners, administrative staff members, families and the wider community come together in a celebration of the Portuguese language, through the submission of written poetry and short stories. The event culminates in the publishing of an anthology book which is sold to raise money for a local public school.

Cultural trips take place designed to promote a love and curiosity for language, such as the "Museu da Língua Portuguesa" and "Museu da Imigração". Visiting members of the school and local community also provide links to Portuguese, and other mother tongues, through specific events and workshops.

The learning and teaching of Portuguese also contemplates content from local examinations, such as Vestibular and ENEM, allowing our graduates the opportunity to enter Brazilian Universities.

In conjunction with the PTA the school promotes, in the month of June, a traditional cultural celebration called "Festa Junina", which involves a celebration of Brazilian culture for the whole community. Every two years in October, we host our "International Day" where families representing the different nations and languages of our community share what makes them proud of their culture.

## **Links to other policies**

[Admissions Policy](#)

[Assessment Policy](#)

[Inclusion Policy](#)

## **Cycle of review**

This policy will be subjected to a regular and official review which will take place every two years, as per the school's policy review cycle. The next scheduled review will take place in March 2025, and will include all relevant stakeholders including:

- Senior leadership team, including all programme coordinators
- Steering group of lead learners
- Student representative
- Parent representative

Aim of developing a coherent philosophy of language, understood by the entire school community, as well as refining practice to reflect our beliefs about language and language learning and teaching is a priority: a steering group will oversee the implementation and further development of the Language Policy. All future changes to the document will be communicated to our school community.

## **Bibliography**

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