



INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL

UWEKIND

# LANGUAGE POLICY

The IB Diploma Programme

**Updated:** April 2015

*This policy is a working document which is intended to provide an overview and guiding principles for language learning at International School Uwekind. The document outlines our school's linguistic and academic goals.*

*Our policy is a statement of agreement—one to which the staff and the Uwekind community are asked to commit to so our school can achieve its mission. The policy is consistent with the principles and practices of the IB. (Programme)*

## *1 The International School Uwekind's Mission Statement*

The mission of International School Uwekind is to create and inspire balanced, responsible global citizens, who are independent thinkers with a passion for learning. Uwekind is committed to providing a supportive and enabling learning environment in which all members of the community are challenged to achieve their individual potential. Uwekind strives to create an international culture which is open-minded towards the values and traditions of different cultures.

## *2 Language Philosophy*

At International School Uwekind we aim to foster the love of language as a means of engaging with society and developing an appreciation of culture. We provide our pupils with the skills required to become individuals and effective contributors to our society.

At International School Uwekind we aim to provide rich, varied and meaningful experiences whereby students can communicate thoughts, ideas, and opinions, across a variety of cultures and genres. We hope to empower all our students to engage positively with all aspects of language and literature, enabling them to contribute effectively in an ever changing and diverse world.

To achieve this we aim to develop the necessary and relevant skills to receive and communicate language effectively and confidently through quality learning and teaching.

The language is central to learning, all teachers are, in practice, language teachers with responsibilities in facilitating communication. Every learning experience is a literacy experience. We think through language. We speak and listen through language. We read through language and we write through language. Every aspect of our lives is governed by language. We view on-going language development for all Uwekind students as the responsibility of all teachers.

We recognize that language is the primary vehicle for learning and cognitive development and acknowledge its importance to the curriculum.

Gaining command of language is a process involving the gradual acquisition and expansion of skills, understanding and knowledge at increasing levels of difficulty and demand. In the school context this will involve different combinations of listening, talking, reading and writing, according to the needs and progress of the pupils, enabling all pupils to become successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens and effective contributors.

We teach students to use active and experimental learning strategies appropriate for linguistically and cognitively diverse students. We use specific instructional strategies for different kind of learners and take into account their different backgrounds.

The primary aim of studying languages is to encourage students to gain competence in a modern language other than their mother tongue, with the long-term goal of balanced multilingualism.

We facilitate language development by providing extensive opportunities to hear language in meaningful and comprehensive ways, to receive feedback regarding their own efforts, by giving students extensive opportunities to practice authentic communication thereby responding to increasingly sophisticated and complex linguistic demands.

### *3 School Language profile*

Bulgarian is a mother tongue for 95% of our students. All students in our school are required to study two languages in addition to Bulgarian - German and English. The students start learning German at the age of 3 (kindergarten) and English at the age of 8 (3<sup>rd</sup> grade).

We believe that our Bulgarian curriculum reflects the benefits of our culture and provides learners with positive images through their reading of literature. Bulgarian language is a vital way of communicating in school and in public life.

In studying Bulgarian students develop skills in speaking, listening, reading, writing and presenting. It enables them to express themselves creatively and imaginatively and to communicate with others effectively.

Learning Bulgarian at our school students learn to become enthusiastic and critical readers of stories, poetry and drama as well as non-fiction and media texts. The study of Bulgarian helps

them to understand how language works by looking at its patterns, structures and origins. Using this knowledge, pupils can choose and adapt what they say and write in different situations.

German language learning starts at a very early age in Uwekind. In the field of German language learning our school has a very rich experience and traditions. Uwekind gives students the opportunity to be exposed to German language and culture by learning more about the countries, where German is an official language. The school provides support for its students in their learning process to attain certificates in German language.

At our school we recognize that English is the language of international communication and the number of people use it has increased dramatically in recent years. Therefore, it is very important to encourage students to gain competence in it.

### **Mother Tongue**

*(where the native language is neither Bulgarian, German nor English)*

In our school we admit students, whose first language is different from all three languages we teach. For these students we provide an individual approach, and additional language learning classes. If the teachers and parents find it necessary, they can provide more Bulgarian language classes.

Uwekind supports students and parents, in their attempt to learn Bulgarian, German and English, as well as in preserving their native language. Uwekind will assist parents who would like to teach their children their mother tongue.

The IBDP programme gives students, the opportunity to study the Bulgarian language as a “Self-Taught” subject at a Standard level, if they can't complete the Bulgarian language course as a Language A Literature.

### **Other Languages**

We provide opportunities for the study and acquisition of languages in addition to German and English (Russian as extra-curricular subject) from the 7th Grade.

## *4 Language Programmes*

### *4.1 Kindergarten*

#### **4.1.1 Bulgarian**

Bulgarian Language learning starts with the development of speech at a time as early as in kindergarten. Language learning is incorporated in various cognitive fields and is focused on transdisciplinary language learning.

#### **4.1.2 German**

In kindergarten the language is acquired through cognitive games, helping develop speaking and listening skills simultaneously.

### *4.2 Primary School*

#### **4.2.1 Bulgarian**

In primary schools students start learning Bulgarian and German language simultaneously. From the 1<sup>st</sup> to 4<sup>th</sup> grade is the time when we put the foundation of the metalanguage understanding. At this point, children begin to comprehend the basic spelling and grammar rules, and this in itself helps create the necessary conditions for a successful foreign language learning. The enthusiasm and natural curiosity are qualities innate to the young students, thanks to them we are able to nurture the love of reading at a very early age.

#### **4.2.2 German**

In primary school the intensive German language learning is continued.

In pre-school children strengthen their acquired skills from kindergarten and begin their learning process with letters and sounds. Speaking and listening comprehension, being a priority at this level, are acquired through nursery rhymes and songs. Elementary sentence structures are being introduced as well. Another very important accent falls on the correct articulation. Here the approaches of learning are through games and the methods-immersionary. The educational process has a transdisciplinary character, where music and art are widely use. Helping students stay highly motivated in learning the language is of greatest importance.

In 1st grade after the youngest students have learned the alphabet, the focus is on developing the reading and writing skills. The classes, of course are very interactive.

In 2nd grade, after the students have learned to read and write, they are gently being introduced to certain specific parts of grammar. At this stage, the process is becoming more and more explicit. Here the ambition is to develop all four skills, speaking, reading, listening and writing.

In the 3rd grade speaking and writing are the main skills that are being developed. At this level students are facilitated in the process of learning to study on their own, and on presenting the acquired knowledge.

In the 4th grade students are becoming more independent and take part in larger and more significant individual and group projects. These activities help them enrich their vocabulary and broaden their horizons. Their language learning, especially grammar is now taken to a deeper, more detailed level.

In 5<sup>th</sup> grade students are preparing to certify their language skills and knowledge by completing A1 according to the Common European Framework for Languages.

### **4.2.3 English**

English language learning starts in 3<sup>rd</sup> grade, when students are eight years old. Here the accent falls of oral communication. Reading and writing skills are introduced gradually, and its pace is determined by the needs of with each specific class.

## *4.3 Middle Years Programme*

### **4.3.1 Bulgarian**

At MYP we offer Bulgarian as Language and Literature A.

At this educational level we develop balanced knowledge and skills in language and literature. We use texts, required by Ministry of Education of Bulgaria, but also apply the principles of planning, teaching and assessment by the IBMYP.

The aims of MYP language and literature are to encourage and enable students to:

- a. use language as a vehicle for thought, creativity, reflection, learning, self-expression, analysis and social interaction
- b. develop the skills involved in listening, speaking, reading, writing, viewing and presenting in a variety of contexts
- c. develop critical, creative and personal approaches to studying and analysing literary and non-literary texts
- d. engage with text from different historical periods and a variety of culture
- e. explore and analyse aspects of personal, host and other cultures through literary and non-literary texts
- f. explore language through a variety of media and modes
- g. develop a lifelong interest in reading

- h. apply linguistic and literary concepts and skills in a variety of authentic contexts.

According to the curriculum, established by the Ministry of Education, with which the school is working, the educational training in 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grade is focused on studying various literary genres from different periods.

On the basis of the texts studied in class, students develop the competence to:

- a. think critically
- b. analyse of literary texts
- c. do analysis of social, historical and cultural context in the text
- d. to create various, depending on the goal and structure written texts and oral speeches.

After completing the Bulgarian curriculum students have the option of taking the State examinations at the end of 7<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grade, which enables them to continue their education not only in the Bulgarian educational system, but all over Europe.

#### **4.3.2 German and English**

German and English as Language acquisition

In the IB Middle Years Programme (MYP), the study of an additional language—language B—is compulsory and the course is designed to encourage the student to gain competence in a modern language other than their first language, with the long-term goal of balanced bilingualism. Learning additional languages greatly contributes to the holistic development of students.

The MYP language B course aims to encourage students to develop respect for and understanding of other languages and cultures, and is equally designed to equip students with skills, which facilitate further language learning.

The aims of the MYP language B are to encourage students to develop an awareness and understanding of the perspectives of people from other cultures as well as harnessing linguistic competence.

### *4.4 Diploma Programme*

#### **4.4.1 Bulgarian**

We plan to offer Bulgarian as Language A Literature in IBDP in HL. This is a pre-university course in literature. The programme encourages students to see literary works as products of art and

their authors as craftsmen whose methods of production can be analyzed in a variety of ways, and on a number of levels.

All our students, who have chosen to cover the Bulgarian National Programme, will take the Language A - Bulgarian Language.

The course is designed for students who have experience of using the language of the course in an academic context. The study of texts, both literary and non-literary, provides a focus for developing an understanding of how language works to create meanings in a culture, as well as in particular texts. All texts may be understood according to their form, content, purpose and audience, and through the social, historical, cultural and workplace contexts that produce and value them. Responding to, and producing, texts promotes an understanding of how language sustains or challenges ways of thinking and being.

The aims of the course are:

- a. to introduce students to a range of texts from different periods, styles and genres
- b. to develop in students the ability to engage in close, detailed analysis of individual texts and make relevant connections
- c. to develop the students' powers of expression, both in oral and written communication
- d. to encourage students to recognize the importance of the contexts in which texts are written and received
- e. to encourage, through the study of texts, an appreciation of the different perspectives of people from other cultures, and how these perspectives construct meaning
- f. to encourage students to appreciate the formal, stylistic and aesthetic qualities of texts
- g. to promote in students an enjoyment of, and lifelong interest in, language and literature.

#### **4.4.2 German and English**

German and English as Language B – HL\SL

German ab initio

Group 2 consists of three language courses accommodating the different levels of linguistic proficiency that students have when they begin – Standard Level, Higher Level and Language ab initio.

There is a single set of group 2 aims, which are common to all the courses, but the assessment objectives are differentiated according to what the students are expected to be able to demonstrate at the end of each course.

The aims of group 2 are to:

- a. develop students' intercultural understanding
- b. enable students to understand and use the language they have studied in a range of contexts and for a variety of purposes
- c. encourage, through the study of texts and through social interaction, an awareness and appreciation of the different perspectives of people from other cultures
- d. develop students' awareness of the role of language in relation to other areas of knowledge
- e. develop students' awareness of the relationship between the languages and cultures with which they are familiar
- f. provide students with a basis for further study, work and leisure through the use of an additional language
- g. provide the opportunity for enjoyment, creativity and intellectual stimulation through knowledge of an additional language.

Subjects in Groups 3, 4, and 5 are taught in English and the students are examined in English

#### **4.4.3 Bilingual Diploma**

ISU aims to produce a competent bilingual students who can effectively communicate in at least two languages. Our students are required to study subjects in Groups 3, 4, and 5 in English and will be registered to be examined in English. This is a language other than their Language A (Bulgarian) and they can obtain a bilingual diploma. The courses taught in English may be taken either SL or HL, and the candidate must obtain a final grade of at least 3 in each.

## *5 Language teaching hours and options*

The German and English classes are the same for all students from the 5th to the 12th grade. This gives the school the opportunity to divide the students into groups depending on their level of acquisition. Depending on the students skills and achievements, the teachers can transfer the students from one group to another.

Age	Bulgarian	German	English
<b>Kindergarten</b>	Language of instructions	Transdisciplinary language learning	-
<b>Primary School</b> <i>Pre-school</i> <i>1 – 4 grade</i>	Language of instructions <b>7h x 45 min/week</b>	Second Language <b>12h x 45 min/week</b>	Additional Language <b>4h x 45 min/week</b> <i>3-4 grade</i>
<b>Middle School</b> <i>5-th grade</i> <i>(preparatory class)</i>	Language A Language and Literature	Language acquisition <b>8h x 45 min/week</b> 5 <sup>th</sup> grade	Language acquisition
<b>MYP</b> <i>6 – 10 grade</i>	<b>5h x 60 min/week</b>	<b>6h x 60 min/week</b>	<b>4h x 45 min/week</b>
<b>High School</b> <i>11 – 12 grade</i>	Language A Literature HL  <b>4h x 60 min/week</b>	Language ab initio Language acquisition Language B HL/SL  <b>4h x 60/3h x 60 min/week</b>	Language acquisition Language B HL/SL  <b>4h x 60/3h x 60 min/week</b>

## 6 Language Learning Methodology

The school has created a vertical distribution of the language learning curriculum, which covers all educational levels. All language teachers plan their lessons together, in order to support the language learning processes, and other subjects. Developing all four skills, such as reading comprehension, speaking, listening and writing are needed not only in language learning, but are sufficient and crucial for the development of the whole curriculum.

Language learning in Uwekind is developed in the following educational levels:

### 6.1 Kindergarten

- Focuses on the transdisciplinary nature of language learning
- Develops the skills of listening, speaking, reading
- Interrelates the skills of listening and speaking

## 6.2 Primary school

- a. Promotes inquiry based authentic language learning
- b. Focuses on the transdisciplinary nature of language learning
- c. Incorporates the teaching and learning of language into the programme of inquiry
- d. Develops the skills of listening, speaking, reading, writing and media literacy
- e. Interrelates the skills of listening, speaking, reading, writing and media literacy
- f. Provides for the teaching of additional languages
- g. Promotes consistency of practice in the teaching and learning of all languages where more than one language of instruction is used
- h. Provides appropriate feedback to support learning

## 6.3 Middle school and IB MYP

- a. Formulates practices for the provision of languages A and B
- b. Integrates the learning of languages with learning in the subject groups
- c. Integrates language learning with interdisciplinary planning.
- d. Formulates multifaceted unit questions that stem from the areas of interaction
- e. Promotes purposeful, disciplined and integrative understanding of the topics
- f. Promotes collaborative learning
- g. Provides targeted assessment that integrates MYP objectives and criteria
- h. Provides appropriate feedback to support learning

## 6.4 High school and IB DP

- a. Considers prior knowledge
- b. Develops language in context in each content area
- c. Promotes collaborative learning
- d. Provides appropriate feedback to support learning
- e. Accommodates diverse learning styles
- f. Values and respects students' ideas
- g. Makes expectations explicit
- h. Embraces a multitude of perspectives
- i. Enables students to understand how judgments about learning are made, and how to provide
- j. evidence of their learning
- k. Develops meta-cognition, structured inquiry and critical thinking
- l. Promotes engaging, challenging, rigorous, relevant and significant learning

## *7 Language Learning and Admissions*

The level of knowledge in Bulgarian, German and English are determined during the admittance.

### *7.1 Admittance for new students and the Bulgarian language teaching*

The ability to read comprehensively, to create oral and written texts, the level of literacy, are all vital in order for the learning process to succeed. That is why we diagnose the students very carefully, provide an individual approach and support for all who need additional work, in order to reach the necessary skills and knowledge.

### *7.2 Admittance for new students and the German language teaching.*

Uwekind accepts students at all levels of German language acquisition. Students who apply for all classes from the 1st grade to the 11th grade can start learning ab initio. All of them are divided into groups depending on their level of achievement.

### *7.3 Admittance for new students and the English language teaching.*

If the students level of English doesn't correspond to the level of achievement in his/her class, we recommend that they take up additional language courses, which we do not provide.

In order to access the IB Diploma curriculum in Grades 11 and 12, all students are expected to have reached at least B2 level of the Common European Framework by the beginning of Grade 11.

For further information, please see the school Admissions Policy.

## *8 Teacher's professional development*

In our school community we believe that we are all life-long learners, as such we provide for our teachers professional development traings, like IB and in-school workshops. We will also like to mention that our teashers are high-qualified.

## *9 Language policy and school community*

The language policy will be introduced to the school community through multiple pathways including staff meetings, PTO meetings and Newsletters. The policy will also be featured on the Uwekind resource center and website. New staff will be familiarized with the document during orientation.

## *10 Language policy review process*

The language policy will be reviewed regularly as part of the curriculum review cycle and as part of the whole school improvement plan. The Leadership team will review the implementation of the policy in classrooms and throughout the school on a regular basis as part of the appraisal process.

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