

2026



Al Zahra College

PYP Language Policy

Reviewed March 2026



Rationale

Language is central to learning, identity, and the development of intercultural understanding at Al Zahra College. In alignment with the philosophy of the International Baccalaureate Organization (IB), language is understood as a vehicle for inquiry, reflection, and communication across all areas of the curriculum. Through language, students construct meaning, develop conceptual understanding, and engage with diverse perspectives. As a multicultural school where approximately 87% of students are from English as an Additional Language or Dialect (EAL/D) backgrounds—predominantly Arabic, alongside Farsi, Urdu, Indonesian, and Malay—linguistic diversity is recognised as a defining strength. This diversity enriches the learning environment and supports the development of international mindedness and the IB Learner Profile, particularly as students grow as communicators, open-minded, and reflective individuals.

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to provide a coherent and inclusive framework for language teaching and learning across the Primary Years Programme (PYP). It ensures consistency in practice, supports equitable access to the curriculum, and guides the school community in fostering multilingualism as a fact, a right, and a resource for learning. This policy aligns with IB standards and the requirements of the NSW Education Standards Authority (NESA), and it informs the roles and responsibilities of students, teachers, and families in supporting language development.

Alignment with the IB Mission Statement and School Values

This language policy reflects the principles of the International Baccalaureate Organization mission statement, which seeks to develop inquiring, knowledgeable and caring young people who contribute to a more peaceful world through intercultural understanding and respect. At Al Zahra College, language learning is central to achieving this mission by enabling students to communicate across cultures, appreciate diversity, and build meaningful connections.

The school's commitment to multilingualism is strengthened by its Islamic values, which emphasise respect, compassion, knowledge, and community. The prominence of Arabic within the school community supports both linguistic development and cultural identity. Students are encouraged to value their home languages while developing English and additional languages to engage confidently in a global context.

Through the integration of IB philosophy and Islamic values, students develop as principled and open-minded communicators who demonstrate empathy and responsibility. Language learning therefore supports both academic success and the development of internationally minded individuals.



Language Philosophy

At Al Zahra College, language learning underpins all areas of the Primary Years Programme and is essential for meaningful participation in both local and global contexts. In alignment with the philosophy of the International Baccalaureate Organization, we recognise that all teachers are language teachers and that language is integral to inquiry, conceptual understanding, and communication across the Programme of Inquiry. Students develop language through authentic, purposeful use as they question, collaborate, reflect, and take action.

Language is understood as a complex, dynamic system that encompasses multiple literacies, including oral, written, visual, and digital forms. Students are supported to interpret and construct meaning across a range of contexts and modalities, including subject-specific discourse and academic language. They develop the ability to communicate effectively for different audiences and purposes, using appropriate structures, vocabulary, and forms. Opportunities are provided for students to respond both creatively and analytically, enabling them to express their own perspectives while engaging with diverse viewpoints and developing intercultural understanding.

As a multilingual learning community, Al Zahra College actively promotes the use of students' full linguistic repertoires to support learning. English is developed through a wide range of experiences, including literature, visual arts, debating, public speaking, music, and the PYP Exhibition. Arabic, as the main additional language and the dominant home language within the community, is used across a variety of contexts including assemblies, religious and cultural events, learning experiences, and communication with families. This reflects the school's commitment to recognising multilingualism as a resource for learning and identity.

Students are provided with meaningful opportunities to apply their language skills across all subject areas, including HSIE, CAPA, English, Science and Technology, PDHPE, Mathematics, and Arabic. Through these experiences, students develop confidence, agency, and the ability to communicate effectively in diverse contexts, supporting the development of international mindedness and the IB Learner Profile

Alignment with IB and NESAs Requirements

This language policy is aligned with IB PYP language policy guidelines and is implemented consistently across the school. It reflects the IB's emphasis on communication, inquiry, and intercultural understanding.

The policy is also informed by the NSW Education Standards Authority (NESA), including:

English K–10 Syllabus

Languages K–10 Syllabus

EAL/D Learning Progression

These frameworks ensure that students meet state curriculum requirements while engaging in the IB's transdisciplinary approach.

The policy is reviewed annually through a collaborative process to ensure alignment with IB expectations and responsiveness to student needs.

Multilingualism: Fact, Right and Resource

At Al Zahra College, multilingualism is recognised as an integral part of the school community and is understood as a fact, a right and a resource for learning. It is a fact that the school population reflects significant linguistic diversity, with the majority of students coming from Arabic language backgrounds alongside other languages such as Farsi and Urdu. Multilingualism is also upheld as a right, where students are supported in maintaining and developing their mother tongue, the language of instruction, and additional languages. Furthermore, multilingualism is valued as a resource for learning, where students are encouraged to draw on their full linguistic repertoire to support meaning-making, deepen conceptual understanding and engage in inquiry. This includes the use of translanguaging and code-switching practices, enabling students to employ their linguistic resources to their fullest effect and to strengthen intercultural understanding.



Language Learning Programme

English is the host language at Al Zahra College and the mother tongue of some of the students at the College. Support for English as the mother tongue manifests through the school curriculum, and through activities such as drama, public speaking, interschool debating competitions, cultural and social activities, transdisciplinary units involving English, excursions and community service practices. Students learn about the English language and its cultural context through Australian texts as well as texts from other English-speaking countries. English in a contemporary context is studied alongside historically diverse language forms.

Language at Al Zahra College is taught holistically. We promote inquiry-based learning through an integrated approach that incorporates different genres, contexts and conceptual frameworks. The School invests in qualified, professional language teachers for the language of instruction / host language and other languages.

Arabic is taught by a specialised subject teacher for three periods weekly. Arabic language teaching is integrated into the POI, where possible. Arabic is also taught through Quranic Studies. The four language skills speaking and listening, reading and writing are taught with reference to the NES A K-10 Arabic Syllabus and the IB Language Scope and Sequence.

Teaching and Learning Practices

The learning of language in the PYP is transdisciplinary in nature. Our language programme involves learning language, learning about language, and learning through language.

It is integrated and taught within the framework of the College's transdisciplinary Programme of Inquiry. The Units of Inquiry, and their corresponding Central Ideas form the basis for our choices of core and supplementary literary texts which complement our English language learning. Specifically, the core and supplementary literary texts consolidate and reinforce the Central ideas of the Units of Inquiry, and are the springboard for teaching the interrelated skills of listening, speaking, reading, writing and media literacy. These skills are taught in a mutually reinforcing holistic manner. Language skills which are not part of the Units of Inquiry, are taught separately including spelling and handwriting.

In the PYP, language learning is based on developing two levels of language and literacy skills. The first level, namely constrained or decoding skills, includes print awareness, phonemic awareness, phonics, alphabetic knowledge, spelling and fluency. The aim of developing these skills, particularly in the early years of the PYP

is to empower students to fluidly decode language, in order to engage deeply and in intentional reading and writing practice. The second level of skills, unconstrained skills refers to the development of meaning-based skills such as oral language, vocabulary, comprehension, composition and critical thinking skills. These dual language skills are the focus language and literacy learning throughout the PYP. Beyond the language and literacy learning, the acquisition of the transdisciplinary skills (ATL) of communication are a consistent focus across students' experiences in the PYP.

The school provides a variety of physical and virtual resources to support language development, including multilingual texts, digital tools, and bilingual materials.

Learning Support

The College has whole-school processes for the identification, planning and delivery of language support. Individual learning plans are developed by our Learning Support staff in collaboration with students' classroom teachers, which document differentiation and learning adjustments to support students' language learning needs.

In addition, our Language Support Programme, is delivered in and out of the classroom. The support program implements the MultiLit (Making Up Lost Time in Literacy) literacy intervention programmes including MiniLit, Reading Tutor Program, and MacqLit. Based on initial diagnostic assessments to identify students' existing skills, the programmes implement subsequent intervention to address students' identified needs. These programmes are based on evidenced-based practice to assist low-progress readers.

In-class additional support is provided by Teachers' Aides in literacy and language learning, to support teachers in their implementation of the students' individual learning plans. Parents are a significant part of the collaboration process to support students' language learning. Parents are encouraged to assist students in developing their language skills at home through various College-based sessions and initiatives. These include:

- Parent information night
- Class home reading programmes
- Managebac Discussion Posts
- Weekly bulletin
- Premier's Reading Challenge
- Weekly College Library visits



Language extension

Students are able to undertake a wide variety of activities to develop their language use and apply their skills creatively and imaginatively. Examples of such activities include Mock Trial, Debating, Public Speaking, Writing Competitions, Theatre, Social Justice Activities, Leadership opportunities, representative roles, peer mentoring, community service involvement, etc. These activities provide opportunities for students to use language persuasively, and for an authentic audience and purpose.

Rights and Responsibilities

All members of the Al Zahra College community share responsibility for supporting language development and fostering a respectful, inclusive, and language-rich environment. The school recognises that language is fundamental to identity, learning, and wellbeing, and therefore ensures that all learners are supported to develop and use language effectively across contexts.

Students have the right to learn in an environment where their linguistic and cultural identities are valued and respected. They are supported to develop proficiency in English while maintaining and using their home languages, including Arabic and other community languages, as tools for learning and communication. Students are responsible for actively engaging in language learning, demonstrating respect for the languages and perspectives of others, and using language appropriately to communicate ideas, collaborate, and reflect.

Teachers have the responsibility to create inclusive classroom environments that support all learners, particularly those from EAL/D backgrounds. This includes explicitly teaching language, differentiating instruction, and providing appropriate scaffolds to ensure access to the curriculum. Teachers model effective communication, integrate language across all subject areas, and recognise multilingualism as a resource for learning. They also use assessment data, including the EAL/D Learning Progression, to inform teaching and support student growth.

Families are recognised as essential partners in language development. They have the right to receive communication in accessible formats and, where possible, in their home language. Families are encouraged to support the maintenance and development of home languages, particularly Arabic and other community languages, as this strengthens identity, wellbeing, and cognitive development. The school fosters strong partnerships with families through inclusive communication practices, including translation and multilingual engagement.

The school leadership has the responsibility to ensure that policies, resources, and professional learning support effective language teaching and learning. This includes providing access to multilingual resources, supporting staff in developing EAL/D



pedagogical practices, and ensuring that the language policy is implemented consistently across the school.

Good practice at Al Zahra College includes valuing all languages, embedding language across the curriculum, supporting EAL/D learners through inclusive strategies, and providing meaningful opportunities for students to communicate in a variety of contexts and for a range of purposes. Through these shared rights and responsibilities, the school community works collaboratively to promote multilingualism, intercultural understanding, and the development of internationally minded learners.

Assessment of Language

Teachers regularly use diagnostic, formative and summative assessment, and self and peer assessment to assist in the teaching and learning. Assessment takes place in accordance with the Al Zahra College PYP Assessment Policy and practices that are consistent with the IB policies. Student work is assessed using rubrics and/or pre-established criteria/descriptors/ objectives according to grade level. Students and parents will be informed of student progress through informal parent teacher meetings, scheduled Parent/Teacher consultations, Progress Reports and Portfolios.

Policy Review

This policy is reviewed annually to ensure alignment with IB standards and the requirements of the NSW Education Standards Authority (NESA). The review process incorporates feedback and student data to ensure continuous improvement.

References:

International Baccalaureate Organization. (2020). *Programme standards and practices*. International Baccalaureate Organization.