



GVS Language Policy

Mission Statement

'At Green Valley School we provide a challenging and inspiring education. We encourage students to develop their positive talents and qualities and aim for both academic and human excellence. We believe that Education in Human Values is the very foundation of learning. By becoming global citizens, students can contribute to transforming the world, through intercultural understanding and reinforced positive human attributes. We aim to empower our students to be successful by leading them to become lifelong, inquiring, principled and caring critical thinkers.'

Green Valley School reflects and honours the Mission Statement of the IB, which states: *'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 organisation works with schools, governments and international organisations 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.'*

Purpose

The language policy is designed to provide clarity and understanding for faculty, parents, students and the community on our use of the language(s) we use to communicate with one another. Our aims are to:

- Communicate our shared beliefs about language and language learning
- Meet the language standards of the British Curriculum (including IGCSE), the IB Diploma Programme and the Spanish national programme (regarding Spanish students only).
- Identify the overall needs of the students at Green Valley School and concerns that have to be addressed by the school regarding the teaching of first Language and Language Acquisition courses, as well as providing opportunities for Mother Tongue Maintenance (MTM)
- Make provision for the follow-up, monitoring and revision of the policy itself
- Integrate and align with other policies of the school



GVS's Language Philosophy - Beliefs about the Teaching and Learning of Language

'Language and the human spirit are inextricably intertwined. We interpret the world through language. We express ourselves through language. Language is powerful. Language can bring us together or set us apart.'

Cummins, J. (2003)

Language development is the centre of all academic learning and is taught through personal, collaborative and guided inquiry. Structured, purposeful inquiry is the main approach to teaching and learning language at GVS. There is a wide approach towards developing listening, speaking, reading, writing, viewing and presenting skills. Students rely on language as a key tool for many purposes, including: communicating, developing logical thinking, creating and sustaining social and cultural identity, as well as developing social skills and values.

Language is seen as an essential tool for teaching and learning, therefore GVS's philosophy is based around a core set of values and beliefs, which include:

- All teachers are responsible for teaching language.
- All teachers need to be Spanish or English speakers and are models of language usage and attitudes towards language and literature.
- At GVS our educators are provided appropriate professional development in language instruction, so that the most effective language teaching methods can be implemented.
- There is a coherent and consistent approach towards the development of language throughout the school.
- Integrated learning across the language courses is linked by Approaches to Learning.
- Diversity of the student/staff body is celebrated through recognition of the mother tongue.
- At GVS there is an understanding that all languages are of value.
- A language-rich environment supports language acquisition; at GVS we value bilingualism and multilingualism.
- Language is learned in a context where risk-taking is encouraged and error making is considered inevitable and necessary.
- Language develops holistically rather than in parts; speaking, listening, reading, writing, viewing and presenting are interrelated and interdependent.
- Talk in the classroom is fundamental to learning; work talk, rehearsed talk and social talk all have a role in language acquisition.
- Language skills are acquired most effectively from using language in meaningful, realistic contexts.
- Our students require a balance of explicit and constructivist instructional approaches to help them to develop their languages.



Green Valley School is an international school that serves the diverse language needs of all our students. Our students are of different nationalities. Many are from Spain or England, and also from a range of other countries including Germany, Norway, Sweden, Denmark, China, Netherlands, Australia and Russia.

English is the language of instruction at GVS. All students study English as a first language and at least one additional language.

Spanish students study English as a first language up to Grade 11 and they also study Spanish as a First Language. They may also choose to study one additional foreign language.

Second Language acquisition

Year 7 - Year 11

All Y7 - Y11 students study English as a first language during four blocks of 50 minutes each week.

Spanish students also study Spanish as a first language during three blocks of 50 minutes, whilst Non-Spanish students study a Spanish second language acquisition course during three blocks of 50 minutes.

All students can choose to study one additional language course during three blocks of 50 minutes (Years 7-9) or two blocks (Years 10-11). The elective language courses are French, German and Catalan.

Year 12 and Year 13 (DP)

The school is planning for most students to continue studying English as a first language DP courses (Language and Literature HL or SL). Most students will naturally study Spanish B HL or SL in group 2. Some students will be able to choose to study a third language in Group 2 or in Group 6 if required (to be determined).

Spanish students will be given the choice to study English or Spanish in Groups one and two depending on their level of proficiency in these two languages. Additionally, they will be able to choose to study a second language acquisition course in Group 6.

Some students will be given the choice to study two Group 1 languages in order to gain the bilingual diploma.



Agreed Practices - Practices that reflect our beliefs at GVS

- The classroom environment is print-rich with teacher and student writing.
- Reading is taught using authentic text.
- Students are given plenty of experience accessing information from books, reference materials and resources with the goal of developing independent learners.
- Students write for meaningful purposes using a range of academic linguistic genres.
- Students are given the experience of using a variety of technologies and media: drama, oral presentations, exhibitions, multimedia presentations and concerts.
- Culturally diverse resources in Spanish and English are available.
- Students are encouraged to read for pleasure in their home language.
- Teachers read to students frequently from both fiction and non-fiction resources.
- Students communicate their understanding and learning through written, visual and/or oral methods.
- Students are given opportunities to express their opinions and feelings, and are explicitly taught to use language responsibly and respectfully.

At GVS we realise that language is not learned sequentially, nor does it follow a strict pattern. Rather, it is best acquired in a positive and supportive, yet challenging and motivating environment. We realise that students vary in their ability to learn a language and that they acquire language at different rates. We know that they will need to be supported throughout the learning process regardless of their language proficiency level. We believe differentiation is one of the fundamental requirements for teaching and learning language. Language acquisition occurs along a continuum and each individual must be allowed to progress at their own rate. Language is a major connecting element across our curricula and should be taught in a purposeful and clear manner.

Language skills and strategies are taught in a developmentally appropriate continuum, using a variety of Approaches and Teaching Styles and catering for individual needs:

- Students are involved in a variety of literature studies, exploring different academic linguistic genres, authors, styles of writing etc.
- Teachers nurture a love of words involving Spanish, English, French, Swedish or German, through a text-rich environment, games, word-oriented assignments etc.
- A wide variety of writing materials are easily available to the students, including electronic tools.
- Teachers model writing, reading strategies, listening skills and appropriate speech.
- Teachers actively foster respect for and interest in other languages.
- Teachers acknowledge and provide opportunities to maintain as well as expand upon their students' mother tongues or first languages.
- In Language Acquisition, a range of appropriate assessment strategies and tools are used including projects, portfolios and self and peer assessment.
- There is a balanced focus on meaning, on how language is used, and the forms of language.
- All teachers consider language development in their planning and assessing and support language acquisition in their teaching.



Assessment

Continuous assessment to check understanding is an integral part of the language programme. Students are assessed in a variety of ways through pre-assessments, formative and summative assessments. Assessments include presentations to their peers, parents and teachers, rubrics, student-led conferences, reflections (self-assessments, journals, and portfolios), open and closed book tests, and standardised tests in oral, writing, reading and listening comprehension.

Mother Tongue

At GVS we believe the mother tongue should be maintained as it not only provides the basis for the learning of an additional language, but is also central in developing cultural identity and emotional stability. Mother tongue development ensures that our community maintains culture, heritage and community links. It is essential in establishing a foundation for thinking processes, and developing communicative and literary competence. A learner's mother tongue is the linguistic foundation that all other language acquisition will build upon. It is crucial for cognitive development and is a strong predictor of their long-term academic achievement.

In our school, the primary language of instruction is English, but students are encouraged to integrate their mother tongue into their learning when it is the best means for effectively conveying their thinking and/or understanding. This scaffolds the students' learning to deepen their conceptual understandings as well as to increase their language proficiencies.

We believe that all students' mother tongue language ability should be promoted and continually improved so that it may positively impact learning an additional language.

Techniques currently used at GVS for Mother Tongue development are:

- Encouraging students to read in their mother tongue at home.
- Encourage students to consult resources in their mother tongue when they are conducting an inquiry.
- Encourage students to research information in their mother tongue to incorporate into their larger projects.
- To select topics of inquiry which connect with the culture of their mother tongue, in many cases when there is an element of choice provided by the teachers.

The school is currently discussing further actions and strategies which may contribute to the development of the mother tongue, such as activities conducted by parents in the library.



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Revision of the Policy

The policy was first developed in November 2019 by the DP Coordinator as a draft, followed by the collaborative work of a committee and finalised with the contributions and amendments made by the teaching staff during PD days and over a significant period of time via google comments, between December 2019 and January 2020. The policy was approved by the school management on February 2020.