

ISE Primary Division

LITERACY POLICY

Updated June 2020

Rationale

At the International School Eindhoven, we recognise that literacy skills underpin all elements of the school curriculum and are a fundamental life-skill.

Aims

At the ISE we aim to:

- Foster a positive attitude towards reading, writing, speaking and listening
- Develop children's ability to become confident users of language, both oral and written
- Value languages from other countries and cultures
- Ensure children have a broad, balanced and creative literacy curriculum
- Provide clear and consistent teaching throughout the school
- Educate and inspire our students to become creative
- Prepare students for an ever-changing world

Teaching and learning

The ISE uses the literacy objectives derived from the [Early Years Foundation Stage](#) (Foundation and group 1) and [National Curriculum in England: English programmes of study - key stages 1 and 2](#) (key stage 1, groups 2 & 3 and key stage 2, groups 4 - 7), taking into account our nature as an international school in a Dutch cultural setting, where most of our students' second or third language is English.

Inclusion

At the ISE, we respect the varied backgrounds that our students come with and we differentiate for all skill levels and English language levels within our classrooms. We provide a large range of texts to meet the needs of beginning through advanced readers. English as an Additional Language (EAL) students are supported both in the classroom and through small group work led by EAL specialist teachers, working to ensure continuity and progress. We are also a dyslexia-friendly school, supporting students both in the classroom and with small group support. For more information about support provided, please see the Language Acquisition Policy and the Education Needs policy.

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Speaking & Listening

Communication skills, including spoken language, are embedded within all aspects of our instructional day.

Speaking and Listening in Early Years (foundation & group 1)

Communication and language is one of the three prime areas within the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS). Each prime area is divided into early learning goals, for communication and language there are:

- Listening and attention - these skills support language learning and include the ability to discriminate sounds and maintain and monitor attention in a shared context.
- Understanding - young children gradually develop the ability to understand words in context, beginning with single words and building on this with phrases and more complex sentences.
- Speaking - this allows children to express their feelings, needs and wants, their thoughts and ideas and be able to talk about what has happened and about creative or imaginative events

Speaking and Listening in Key Stage 1 and 2 (groups 2 - 7)

The standards for these year groups come from the National Curriculum in England: English programmes of study and include the following 12 key skills:

1. Listen and respond appropriately to adults and their peers
2. Ask relevant questions to extend their understanding and knowledge
3. Use relevant strategies to build their vocabulary
4. Articulate and justify answers, arguments and opinions
5. Give well-structured descriptions, explanations and narratives for different purposes, including for expressing feelings
6. Maintain attention and participate actively in collaborative conversations, staying on topic and initiating and responding to comments
7. Use spoken language to develop understanding through speculating, hypothesising, imagining and exploring ideas
8. Speak audibly and fluently with an increasing command of Standard English
9. Participate in discussions, presentations, performances, role play, improvisations and debates
10. Gain, maintain and monitor the interest of the listener(s)
11. Consider and evaluate different viewpoints, attending to and building on the contributions of others
12. Select and use appropriate registers for effective communication.

Monitoring & Evaluation

Students' speaking and listening skills are primarily monitored through observations by the class teacher and teaching assistants. This information is shared with parents through the academic report. If there are concerns about a student's progress, a speech and language pathologist and the student educational needs coordinator will be consulted and parents will be informed through a parent meeting.

Reading

At the ISE, we place a strong focus on both reading for information and reading for enjoyment. We provide a wide selection of high quality texts and we encourage our students to read broadly and widely. We guide our learners to become engaged and effective users of ideas and information and to appreciate literature. Throughout our school day we read a broad range and variety of print and digital texts, through which we teach our students to comprehend, analyse and evaluate.

Approaches to Reading

We use a variety of instructional methods to build skills and confidence, with the aim of catering for all learning styles, preferences and skill levels. Our instruction methods include whole class exploration of books or text excerpts; whole class read-alouds with modelled comprehension strategies; structured small group reading sessions, such as guided reading or literature circles, targeted at students' specific reading levels; small group research tasks; silent reading for pleasure; and individual reading with a teacher or volunteer.

Reading in Early Years (foundation & group 1) and Key Stage 1 (groups 2-3)

Students are building their pre-reading and beginning reading skills through a focus on rhyme, repetition, phonics, sight words and comprehension skills. We engage students in talking about text to build vocabulary and comprehension skills. We use a variety of texts, including wordless books, to teach these skills. We teach our students to use a variety of strategies for decoding unfamiliar words, including using meaning, syntax and visual clues (including the aid of pictures within the text). We work towards making good independent reading choices and to begin thinking critically and analyzing text.

By the end of group 3, our goal is for students to be able to independently read and sustain reading a text with two to three sentences per page and with pictures to support meaning.

Reading in Key Stage 2 (groups 4 - 7)

Students in groups 4 - 7 are developing more fluent and independent reading skills. While we continue to teach vocabulary and word recognition strategies, we shift our focus towards comprehension of increasingly complex texts. By the end of group 7, our goal is for students to be able to read and think critically about age-appropriate chapter books, including texts with figurative language, long sentences and less common vocabulary.

Monitoring & Evaluation

We continuously monitor students' skill development through observation during individual and small group reading activities, the use of Fountas and Pinnell Benchmark Assessment System, running records and INCAS computerised assessment.

Reading at Home

Students in groups 2-4, as well as English as an Additional Language students, choose a Take Home Reader to bring home each evening to practice. These levelled readers are intended to be at a "just right level" (not too easy and not too difficult) to allow children to easily enjoy the content without being held back by the technical aspect of reading. When students become more advanced readers, their nightly reading practice comes from library books or assigned reading from class.

We strongly recommend that students also read and discuss books in their mother tongue to bridge any gaps in comprehension and to enhance understanding. We ask that parents encourage and support their children in reading a wide range of genres, themes, authors and styles.

Sight Words

Beginning in group 2 and with new English as an Additional Language students, students take home a list of words to practice each week for the purpose of building automaticity. Once students have mastered a list, they move on to the next. Students continue to work with these word lists until they have mastered all the sight words.

School Library

The ISE library is a place where students can explore and read and borrow high quality books (both hardcopy and [digital](#)) that reflect their own choice. The emphasis of the library is to enable the students

to gain the love of reading for pleasure and information, to see their world and needs reflected, to open up new areas to them and to expand the response to the written word.

The library endorses the reading policy rationale encouraging a strong focus on reading for enjoyment and to encourage students to read a broad range and variety of texts. For more information, visit the [primary library website](#).

Phonics & Spelling

Our approach to phonics and spelling instruction is based on the following philosophy:

- Spelling is an extension of phonics, which is taught to help our students become effective readers and writers. We teach phonics first because students need to understand the letters of the alphabet and the sounds they make before they can learn to spell effectively. Until students are confident in their phonics ability, we promote invented-spelling, which means we encourage students to spell words using the sounds they hear, rather than focusing their energy on spelling every word correctly.
- Spelling is a developmental skill. Students need to master the basics before more complicated spelling rules, regardless of the age or group level of students who join us. We begin teaching all students in groups Foundation and one with phase 1 phonics. Beginning in group 2, we assess and teach phonics and spelling in differentiated groups. Beginners to English will start with phase 2 and work their way up. All other students will be placed in appropriate groups to work at the level that matches their current attainment. Students' progress is faster if they are already literate in another language.
- Students must be taught at their developmental level. Students are taught phonics and spelling at the level at which they are ready. When they master a level, they move up. If they are not making progress, we provide additional opportunities for them to practise to ensure growth.
- We study words, their patterns and their meanings; we do not encourage rote memorisation. What is memorised is easily forgotten, but a lasting understanding is difficult to forget.

We use [Letters and Sounds: Principles and Practice of High Quality Phonics](#) to teach phases 1-6 and *Words Their Way* to teach spelling in phases that we have named phases 7-9. For more information about phonics, please [click here](#).

Phonics and Spelling Early Years (Foundation & Group 1)

Students in foundation begin with phase 1. Phase 1 concentrates on developing children's speaking and listening skills and lays the foundations for the phonic work which starts in Phase 2. The emphasis during Phase 1 is to get children attuned to the sounds around them and ready to begin developing oral blending and segmenting skills. Students in group 1 begin with phase 2, learning two sounds a week. Once phase 2 is completed, students revise phase 2 sounds once a week and learn a new phase 3 sound each week.

Phonics and Spelling Key Stage 1 and 2 (Groups 2-7)

Phonics and spelling are taught in small, similar-ability groups two to three times a week in a systematic and levelled approach across the international primary department. Phonics sessions are short, focus on one clear sound or spelling rule per session and involve a lot of game-based repetition with the intention of having students repeatedly read and practice words as much as possible in a highly engaging environment.

Monitoring & Evaluation

Students are pre-assessed to determine the appropriate level of instruction. Mid-phase checks happen periodically to ensure that students are making progress and are still working at the appropriate level.

Students are periodically re-grouped to ensure the most effective instruction. At the end of each phase, students are assessed again. These results are used both to place students for the next level of instruction and to review the integrity of the phonics and spelling curriculum.

Writing

Our aim is to grow students who are both effective communicators and who find enjoyment in expressing themselves creatively.

Approaches to Writing

Writing is taught in literacy lessons, small group guided writing sessions and it is incorporated throughout the curriculum. In addition to explicitly teaching grammar, conventions and different forms of writing, students are encouraged to develop the craft of writing, including voice, ideas and sentence fluency. Students have the opportunity to develop their creativity through Big Writing sessions and they learn to revise, assess the quality of their writing and to set targets for improvement.

Note: At the ISE, we use the term writing to describe the act of creating original ideas and recording them, whether it be handwriting them on paper or typing them on a computer. The term handwriting is what we use to describe improving students' letter formation and overall penmanship.

Writing in Early Years (Foundation - Group 1)

We encourage the children to write independently from an early age and support them in making links between speaking and writing. In Foundation and group 1, most of the students' writing is spontaneous and experimental. In Foundation, the goal is for students to give meaning to the marks they make as they draw or write. By the end of group 1, the goal is for students to write simple sentences independently using their phonic knowledge to spell words. In the early years classroom, teachers frequently model writing and do shared writing activities with their students. Children use writing for a variety of purposes but mostly to complement their play. Writing opportunities are meaningful and available through all areas of learning throughout the learning environment.

Writing in Key Stage 1 (Groups 2-3)

In groups 2 and 3 writing instruction is more structured. Through looking at high quality texts, students learn what authors do to make their writing interesting and easy to read and we incorporate these traits into our own writing. Students also have regular grammar lessons which focus on conventions of writing including punctuation, sentence forms and parts of speech. As much as possible, we try to create authentic purposes for writing, so students have opportunities for writing across the curriculum. For example, students may write to tell about something they researched, to describe a science experiment or an artwork, or to reflect on their design technology creation. By the end of group 3, the goal is for students to be able to produce one page of cohesive writing that includes some creative or original thoughts, punctuation, different forms of sentences or expanded sentences and a level of spelling that reflects their current phase of phonics.

Writing in Key Stage 2 (Groups 4-7)

By groups 4-7, students have mastered the basics of writing. The focus now shifts to improving the quantity and quality of writing. Writing lessons look more in depth at authors' purpose, structure and organisation, word choice, voice and creativity. In addition, students continue to have grammar lessons to improve their use of writing conventions, for example, lessons on punctuation, sentence structure and verb tense. As with key stage 1, we aim to give students authentic opportunities for writing, so students write throughout the day across different subject areas. Students frequently share their writing with peers to help refine their message and style.

Monitoring & Evaluation

Writing moderation is a writing assessment. We use this assessment to collect an unaided sample of writing from all of our students for the purpose of gauging their current writing abilities. Teachers compare writing attainment across classes and use this information to adjust lesson planning to meet the needs of their current students.

Handwriting

Our aims for handwriting instruction are to enable all children to develop a clear, legible and fluent style of handwriting; to assist children to produce writing with speed, ease and comfort; to ensure children are aware that handwriting can vary according to the audience; and to encourage children to develop a personal handwriting style that suits their own needs at school and later in life. We teach this movement skill in weekly lessons through demonstration, explanation and frequent, short practice using the Penpals Handwriting scheme. Our goal is for handwriting to become an automatic process which frees students to focus on the content of their writing.

Handwriting in Early Years (Foundation - Group 1)

Handwriting develops as children develop increased control over their bodies and a desire to communicate through mark making. In foundation a lot of gross and fine motor skill activities as well as finger play and whole body movement to music are practised to aid children's mark making and writing development. This continues in group 1 and later in the academic year, students begin practising correct letter formation.

Handwriting in Key Stage 1 (Groups 2-3)

In group 2 students continue to develop the skills of correct letter formation as introduced in group 1. More focus is placed on using proper posture and positioning while writing. Children are taught how to form both lowercase and capital letters correctly, whilst still developing fine and gross motor skills with a range of multi-sensory activities.

Joining is introduced in group 3 when the correct movement of all letters is established. Once students are using the correct movement, they may begin to join automatically.

Handwriting in Key Stage 2 (Groups 4-7)

In groups 4-7 students focus on refining their handwriting, improving the legibility, reducing the size and increasing the speed at which they write. While we encourage joined writing in a manner similar to the Sassoon style font, students may maintain any legible handwriting style they have learned from a previous school and we work with students to continue to make their handwriting more fluent and neat.

Monitoring & Evaluation

The standards and quality of the teaching and learning of handwriting are monitored through the Penpals beginning of the year assessment, writing moderation and lesson observation.