



THE ST.MARY'S SCHOOL LANGUAGE POLICY

*"The language we use communicates our values"
(Heydorn W. & Jesudason S; 2015)*

ST. MARY'S SCHOOL NAIROBI – KENYA

Vision

To become a school of choice for academic excellence and holistic development, discipline and God fearing global Learners

Mission

To educate learners in a holistic manner, faithful to the Catholic ethos in order to acquire knowledge, skills and values relevant to the society in order to compete effectively

The Core Values of our school are:

God fearing/loving

Respect All

Embrace Collegiality

Promote team work

Show concern for others

Are committed to success

Creativity and Innovation

Sensitive to the environment

Efficiency and Team work

Integrity, transparency and Accountability

Demonstrate International Consciousness

Are Loyal to the Spirit of St. Mary's School

Purpose

To provide relevant holistic education

Overall Goal

To nurture a model school

(St. Mary's School, 2013)

“Aim of all IB programmes is to develop internationally - minded people who, recognizing their common humanity and shared guardianship of the planet help to create a better and more peaceful world” (IBO, 2016).

The IB Learner Profile

IB learners strive to be:

Inquirers They develop their natural curiosity. They acquire the skills necessary to conduct inquiry and research and show independence in learning. They actively enjoy learning and this love of learning will be sustained throughout their lives.

Knowledgeable They explore concepts, ideas and issues that have local and global significance. In so doing, they acquire in-depth knowledge and develop understanding across a broad and balanced range of disciplines.

Thinkers They exercise initiative in applying thinking skills critically and creatively to recognize and approach complex problems, and make reasoned, ethical decisions.

Communicators They understand and express ideas and information confidently and creatively in more than one language and in a variety of modes of communication. They work effectively and willingly in collaboration with others.

Principled They act with integrity and honesty, with a strong sense of fairness, justice and respect for the dignity of the individual, groups and communities. They take responsibility for their own actions and the consequences that accompany them.

Open-minded They understand and appreciate their own cultures and personal histories, and are open to the perspectives, values and traditions of other individuals and communities. They are accustomed to seeking and evaluating a range of points of view, and are willing to grow from the experience.

Caring They show empathy, compassion and respect towards the needs and feelings of others.

They have a personal commitment to service, and act to make a positive difference to the lives of others and to the environment.

Risk-takers They approach unfamiliar situations and uncertainty with courage and forethought, and have the independence of spirit to explore new roles, ideas and strategies. They are brave and articulate in defending their beliefs.

Balanced They understand the importance of intellectual, physical and emotional balance to achieve personal well-being for themselves and others.

Reflective They give thoughtful consideration to their own learning and experience. They are able to assess and understand their strengths and limitations in order to support their learning and personal development.

(IBO, 2016)

ST. MARY'S SCHOOL CORE VALUES AND THE IB LEARNER PROFILE

In light of the school core values and the IB Learner Profile, there is need to harness these to reflect an all-rounded learner. The following is a reflection of the interrelation between the school's core values and the IB Learner Profile.

The values below are for the entire St. Mary's School but are aligned to the IB:

We are Caring because we show concern for others and are sensitive to the environment

We are Knowledgeable and reflective because we are committed to success

We are Communicators because we Embrace Collegiality

We are Principled because we uphold Integrity, transparency and accountability

We are Balanced because our overall goal is Provision of relevant Holistic Education

We are Open-minded because we demonstrate International Consciousness and respect for all

We are thinkers because we promote creativity and innovation

We are Risk-takers because we work together with all stakeholders through team work

Contents

THE ST.MARY’S SCHOOL LANGUAGE POLICY	1
ST. MARY’S SCHOOL NAIROBI – KENYA	2
The IB Learner Profile.....	3
ST. MARY'S SCHOOL CORE VALUES AND THE IB LEARNER PROFILE	5
What is a Language Policy?	7
Goals of the School Language Policy	7
Our Language Philosophy	8
Language Policy Steering Committee.....	8
CURRENT LANGUAGE SITUATIONS AND PRACTICES	9
1) Diversity of Language Needs.....	9
2) Other Language Needs of the School Community.....	9
3) Current Practices Related to Language Teaching and Learning	10
Orientation	10
Testing and Placement.....	10
Planning of Language courses.....	10
Learning Strategies	10
Promotion and Appreciation of Language as a subject.....	11
Referencing Style:	12
Rules and Expectations about Language.....	13
4) Beliefs Held about Language Teaching and Learning.....	13
5) Other Policies That Relate Directly to Language Teaching and Learning.....	13
6) Ideas for the Future	14
SCHOOL LANGUAGE PROFILE:	14
Bibliography	16

ST. MARY'S SCHOOL LANGUAGE POLICY

What is a Language Policy?

“A language policy is an action statement ... It is concerned less with where the students in a school are going, and more with how they are going to get there”.

Language Policy in Schools, Corson (1999)

Goals of the School Language Policy

The language policy must be consistent with the stipulated principles and practices of the IB.
The language policy:

- Recognizes that, since language is central to learning, all teachers are, in practice, language teachers with responsibilities in facilitating communication
- Outlines how students are to learn at least one language in addition to their mother tongue
- Describes how the development and maintenance of the mother tongue for all learners is to be supported
- Ensures that there are practices in place to provide inclusion and equity of access to the IB programme(s) offered by the school for all learners
- Describes how the language of the host country (as reflected in the Kenyan Constitution) is to be promoted
- Recognizes that administrators, teachers, librarians and other school staff will require professional development in the fields of language learning and teaching, and on how to make sure the language policy becomes a working document
- Considers what resources and practices are to be used to involve parents in planning their children's language profile and development.

*Guidelines for developing a school language policy
International Baccalaureate Organization, 2008
(International Baccalaureate Organization, 2008)*

Our Language Philosophy

St. Mary's School seeks to create and maintain an ideal learning environment with focus on the core values achievable through an adopted integrated language approach that encompasses the needs of the entire school community. This integrated language approach promotes the idea of living in an international community.

Language Policy Steering Committee

The following are members of the Language Policy Steering Committee.

- 1) A Representative of the School Board of Management
- 2) The School Principal
- 3) The IB Diploma Coordinator
- 4) The Head of English Department
- 5) The Head of French Department
- 6) The Head of Swahili Department
- 7) A Representative of the Spanish Subject
- 8) The Senior Librarian
- 9) 2 Students' Representatives
- 10) 2 Parents' Representatives
- 11) A Representative of the Support Staff

CURRENT LANGUAGE SITUATIONS AND PRACTICES

1) Diversity of Language Needs

St. Mary's School places language learning at the core of human experience. The school recognizes that students join the institution with proficiency of their first language, valuable life experiences and varying degrees of formal schooling, but without full proficiency of the English Language in both written and oral forms. The school's aim is to assist students to acquire or improve on both the oral and writing skills in English, Swahili, French and Spanish, to enable their independence, cultural diversity and confidence in listening, speaking, reading and writing. This ensures that the skills such as thinking, communication, self-management, research and social skills, that enable them to live in a diverse community.

2) Other Language Needs of the School Community

English and Swahili are together the official languages used in the country as enshrined in the Language Policy of the Kenyan Constitution. "The national language of the Republic is Kiswahili (Article 7, clause 2) and the official languages of the Republic are Kiswahili and English (Article 7, clause 3)" (Law Report Kenya, 2010, p. 14). At St. Mary's School (as is the practice in the whole country) English is the language of instruction. Kiswahili on the other hand, is taught as a both as an examinable subject under the national curriculum and a second language in the IB. It is also acceptable as an equal medium of communication in the school and a language of instruction.

The school also offers foreign languages such as French (*which is taught both as a second and a foreign language*) and Spanish (*taken at ab. initio level*) with a view of enhancing international - mindedness.

In addition, the provision of opportunities for learning *Ab. Initio* and the *B Languages* enables the students' language profiles to be developed.

The school's aim is to assist students to acquire or improve their communication skills in all the given languages to enable their independence, embrace cultural diversity and confidence in listening, speaking, reading and writing.

3) Current Practices Related to Language Teaching and Learning

Orientation

During introduction to Language lessons, it is clearly spelt out to the students, the expectations of the Course/ Subject, in each of the Language groups (Group 1 and 2). There is a rationale tied to the choices of all parts, and works to be covered in the language courses. The rationale spells out why the choices have been made.

Testing and Placement

From Standard 1 to the IB DP2, there are usually placement exams given to the learners to determine their academic entry behaviour. English is one of the compulsory placement examinations from STD 1 to IBDP 2 (St. Mary's School, 2013). Testing and placement is emphasized as an academic practice to identify the learners' language proficiency and establish their language profile.

Planning of Language courses

The choices and planning of language courses is based on information about students' prior understanding in all the languages for differentiation of tasks and activities. This is aimed at building up the required knowledge base necessary for learning to occur. The planning is done interdepartmentally, beginning with the known/ familiar concepts to the unknown or less familiar concepts.

Learning Strategies

The school has come up with varied strategies that take into consideration the fact that students learn in different ways. Students learn through activities and assessment tasks that advance the understanding and enjoyment of language learning.

The following In and out of classroom practices involving oral practice are embraced within St Mary's School;

Note making – Encourages critical engagement, reflection on meaning and invokes critical thinking

Use of Drama – Done through role play, monologues and hot seating to promote imaginative engagement with characters

Formal Debates – Encourages confidence with critical thinking, speaking and listening

Individual and Group presentations – Aids in active participation, character development and teamwork

Peer Reviews – Promotes active learning, peer engagement and correspondence.

Commentary Practice – Leads to critical thinking, reflection, evaluation, and deeper engagement with literary works from varied authors, cultures and settings.

Promotion and Appreciation of Language as a subject

The following standards, adopted from the IB Standards and Practices, outline the significant roles played by language, hence its promotion and appreciation must be underscored:

- The school places importance on language learning, including mother tongue, host country language and other languages. (*“Section A: Philosophy”—Standard A, 7*).
- Collaborative planning and reflection recognizes that all teachers are responsible for language development of students. (*“Section C: Curriculum”—Standard C1, 8*).
- Teaching and learning addresses the diversity of student language needs, including those for students learning in a language(s) other than mother tongue. (*“Section C: Curriculum”— Standard C3, 7*).
- Teaching and learning demonstrates that all teachers are responsible for language development of students. (*“Section C: Curriculum”—Standard C3, 8*).

(*Language Learning in the IB Programme, 2008*) & (*International Baccalaureate, 2014*)

As a result of these practices:

- All teachers in the school support students in their communication regarding classroom participation, written and oral skills in various subjects. As a result, there is a high level of professionalism, a core value, demonstrated by the teachers.
- Students are free to write articles for the School Annual in any of the above mentioned languages. This demonstrates teamwork, creativity and innovation, on the students' part.

- Students recite, sing and speak in these languages during various school functions such as Prize day, Kiswahili and cultural days in the school. This is a reflection of the holistic development of the learners, as depicted in the school's vision.
- Students participate in competitions in a vibrant house system during inter - house drama, debate and sports' days. This reflects the school's mission as there is acquisition of knowledge, skills and values relevant in society and effective competition.

Referencing Style:

The school has adopted the *APA Referencing protocol* for all assignments and assessment tasks. This is applicable for both internal and external assessments. The school has also put in place the use of *Turnitin*, software used for assisting teachers to detect plagiarism, a form of academic malpractice. It is at this stage, that students are advised on matters relating to academic honesty. "Many candidates for the Diploma Programme are fluent in two or more languages and are therefore able to conduct their research in more than one language, perhaps with the aid of the internet.

Such candidates must be aware that copying a passage of text, translating this passage into another language, then using the translated text in their work without acknowledging its source still constitutes plagiarism" (The IBO, 2011, p. 7).

The following are responsible for ensuring that there is absolutely no room for such malpractice as enshrined in both the IB and the School's Academic Honesty Policies;

"The **Head of School** establishes a school policy that promotes good academic practice and a school culture that upholds academic honesty and fully supports the IB DP students in the prevention, detection and investigation of malpractice.

The teachers need to confirm that, to the best of their knowledge, all candidates' work accepted or submitted for assessment is the authentic work of each candidate, detect any plagiarism, collusion or duplication of work and support and act on the school's policy on good academic practice in addition to providing candidates with advice whenever necessary. In this respect teachers must act as good role models for the candidates in maintaining academic honesty.

The **candidate** is ultimately responsible for ensuring that all work submitted for assessment is authentic.

*Academic honesty in the IB educational context.
First Published August, 2014.*

The **Senior Librarian** has the mandate to spearhead the proper referencing system in the school. The Senior Librarian is the champion of Academic Honesty in the School.

Rules and Expectations about Language

Within the school compound, English is the language of instruction. Kiswahili is the national language while French and Spanish are offered as courses. For language learning, students may use all the four languages to enhance learning. These must be used without prejudice, taking into account the school's core values.

4) Beliefs Held about Language Teaching and Learning

- a) All teachers are language teachers
- b) There is no communication without language
- c) Language is the key to international mindedness
- d) Language supports every career path
- e) Language opens new pathways
- f) Language supports critical thinking
- g) Language is a means of identity
- h) Language creates a sense of unity
- i) Language is a means to an end
- j) We dream and think in a language
- k) Language distinguishes human beings from animals

5) Other Policies That Relate Directly to Language Teaching and Learning

- a) Admissions Policy
- b) Assessment Policy
- c) Academic Honesty Policy
- d) Procurement Policy
- e) Accession Policy

6) Ideas for the Future

The school is considering employing a special needs teacher to assist challenged students with language and other special needs.

SCHOOL LANGUAGE PROFILE:

St. Mary's School places emphasis on the integral role played by language in the institution. All students are expected to demonstrate proficiency in the languages on offer, with regard to the following activities:

- a) Inter - House Drama
- b) Inter - House Debates
- c) The Annual School Musical
- d) The Holy Mass
- e) School Assemblies
- f) Career Fairs
- g) Parent - Teacher Meetings
- h) The Yearly School Annual
- i) Student Trips and Workshops (whether held locally or internationally)
- j) Class and House Meetings
- k) Collaborative Meetings

To this end, the following language profile was developed;

- English is the mother tongue of most students (since independence) at St. Mary's School and considering that they are (living in a multi - cultural) urban setting. Most of the students at the school have gone through the national curriculum (in their early years) which emphasizes on the use of the English Language right from Class 1 (Age 6/ 7) to Class 8 (age 13/14). In the Senior school from Form 1 to 4, or international curricula from Years 8 to 11, English is the official medium of instruction and communication (Law Report Kenya, 2010).
- At the senior school, for the O' Levels, French is offered as an optional subject at K.C.S.E so that, students interested can study it. Swahili is also offered as an optional subject to those undertaking the I.G.C.S.E. or O' Levels. However, it is compulsory for the students undertaking the K.C.S.E curriculum (Law Report Kenya, 2010).

- For those students who join the school, from other schools in the IBDP Programme, they may not necessarily have English as their mother tongue. Instead, they may be Francophone from neighboring countries. These students are assisted to learn in English because it is the medium of instruction, but are on the other hand strongly encouraged to pursue French at Higher Level to advance their proficiency.
- For the DP students, is it a compulsory requirement for each student to study a second language. The school offers French, Kiswahili or Spanish courses to serve this purpose. The aim is to develop international mindedness.

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