

Language policy of Harare International School

HIS Harare International School strives to enhance each student's self-worth, confidence, and pride by providing curricular programs and activities that encourage participation in multicultural experiences to make the most of the advantages offered by a our multi-cultural school community. The linguistic and cultural diversity of the school's population is considered to be both a strength and a rich resource in the promotion of language learning amongst students.

HIS seeks to enable children to function as international citizens which, in part, entails the ability to function capably and comfortably within and between cultures. Developing the capacity to speak more than one language is an integral part of this preparation and, as a result, the provision of additional language instruction has been made a mandatory requirement

The *language of instruction* used to deliver the curriculum at Harare International School is English, the official language of Zimbabwe. Students admitted to the school are taught the skills needed to become proficient readers, writers and communicators in the English language both for social interaction and academic success.

Knowledge of the English language is not a prerequisite for enrollment at HIS. In the High School, however, students must complete three credits of English, two of which may be EAL (English as an Additional Language) credits. Students, who require it, will be provided with specialist instruction in English as an Additional Language in lieu of other classes for the student's optimal development. A student's English language fluency will be a determinant as to grade level placement and may affect the number of years required to meet graduation requirements.

The *mother tongue* language is the one that is most strongly linked to the culture that an individual identifies with as their culture of origin, and often is the language used in the home. The *first language* is the one that the individual is most proficient in. HIS encourages the development of the mother tongue and first languages of students through an ethos of acceptance and celebration of linguistic diversity within the community. There is also recognition that a strong level of competency in the mother tongue or first language of students can be an important ingredient in their success as learners of additional languages. Parents seeking mother tongue or first language support for their children will be assisted in locating suitable teachers and given free use of school facilities outside the school day for this purpose.

Modern Foreign Languages are at the heart of the international human experience. At HIS, French (beginning in grade 2) and Spanish (beginning in grade 5) instruction educates students to become linguistically equipped and culturally aware in our pluralistic world. Through their language learning, students gain knowledge, appreciation and understanding of the different cultures where French and Spanish are spoken. By realizing that there are multiple ways of viewing the world, students would be able to communicate in multilingual communities in a variety of contexts and in

culturally appropriate ways. Completion of 2 credits of modern languages is normally a requirement of graduation from High School. The Foreign Language curriculum is clearly articulated throughout the school to provide a coherent additional language learning experience.

English as an Additional Language (EAL) refers to English instruction that is given to assist the student in gaining sufficient English language proficiency to cope within the English-speaking school environment. Instruction is designed to equip students with enough language to enable them to:

- forge social relationships and cope with the practical expectations of life in an English-speaking school.
- gain the spoken and written language required to function fully in the mainstream academic classroom.

This is accomplished through a combination of “pull-out” specialist instruction and support within the mainstream classroom.

The school provides trained specialist teachers to support the language learning of students with special learning needs.

At HIS every teacher is regarded as a language teacher. To this end school aims to maintain awareness of, and promote skills in, language learning and language teaching amongst all teachers and teaching assistants to improve language skills for all students, in the language of instruction, English, the specialized language required for the academic demands of different subjects, Modern Foreign languages and, where feasible, mother tongue and first languages other than English. In this way the aim is for language instruction to be integrated throughout different areas of the curriculum.

HIS seeks to develop the elements that will encourage students to be positively engaged in learning an additional language to the mother tongue or first language. Building on the encouragement of a strong foundation in a student’s first language, these include the following competencies:

- *grammatical competence* (referring to knowledge of vocabulary, sound and grammar)
- *sociolinguistic competence* (knowledge of how to use language appropriately in different contexts)
- *discourse competence* (linking elements of language together to take part in certain kinds of discourse, for example, conversation or debate)
- *strategic competence* (knowledge of appropriate strategies to use if communication breaks down and knowledge of how to learn language)
- *cultural competence* (includes sensitivity toward attitudes, norms, behaviours and cultures in which the other language is spoken).

HIS recognizes the importance of Shona language and culture as indigenous to the majority of the people in the region in which the school is located. While Shona is not

the official language of communication and education in Zimbabwe, acceptance and encouragement of communication in Shona and understanding of Shona culture is a feature of the school through day to day contact, extra curricular activities and outreach programs.