

Languages Policy

PURPOSE

1. This policy outlines the beliefs, understandings and responsibilities relating to teaching and learning language at Firbank
2. To clarify the definitions, purpose and principles of language and literacy learning.

SCOPE: This policy outlines:

1. The fundamental belief that we are all language learners.
2. Language is fundamental to learning.
3. The School must ensure there is consistent philosophies and pedagogical practices in relation to the teaching of language and literacy.

RELEVANT LEGISLATION

- Australian Education Act 2013
- Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority (VCAA) Victorian Curriculum achievement standards F – 10
- Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority (VCAA)
- International Baccalaureate Organisation (IBO) Standards and Practices

DEFINITIONS

Language is defined as:

- a complex form of communication and the means by which we think, construct meaning and make sense of our world.
- By learning language, as well as learning about and through language, we nurture an appreciation of the richness of language.
- When students begin school, they already have a fundamental understanding of language structures
- Students need opportunities to develop strong oral communication skills (listening and speaking) which are essential for developing effective reading and writing
- Language acquisition is a developmental process, through which all children move at different rates, with different needs and from different cultural backgrounds

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- Students' language develops through pedagogy which promotes intellectual stimulation, risk-taking, self-expression, creativity and reflection
- Language is most effectively learned in authentic contexts
- Language is context based and effective communication relies on the ability to make appropriate language choices
- Language is integral to culture, ways of viewing the world, and forming identity
- Recognising and supporting students' mother tongue language is crucial to their development
- Language development in children is a partnership between family, teachers, students, and the wider community in which we live
- All our teachers are teachers of language and are responsible for providing opportunities for students to learn language, learn about language and learn through language, across all disciplines, in both formal and informal contexts.
- the best way to promote language growth is by providing students with opportunities to think, speak, listen, read, view and write about significant topics for real purposes and audiences.
- Wider collaboration in team planning for the teaching of language, inclusive of all specialists and support teachers, ensures that differentiation for all students is in place to optimise learning for all.

The host country language is defined as:

- As Firbank is located in Australia, the host country language, English, is the language of instruction.

Language of Instruction is defined as:

- The main language (English) of communication at Firbank and, in the context of school, is central to students' creative, social and emotional development.

Approaches to language and literacy teaching at Firbank:

Firbank teaches in accordance with the curriculum requirements of the Victorian Curriculum F – 10 and IB PYP Language Scope and Sequence.

Victorian Curriculum F – 10

The English curriculum is organised by language modes and strands.

Language Modes and Strands:

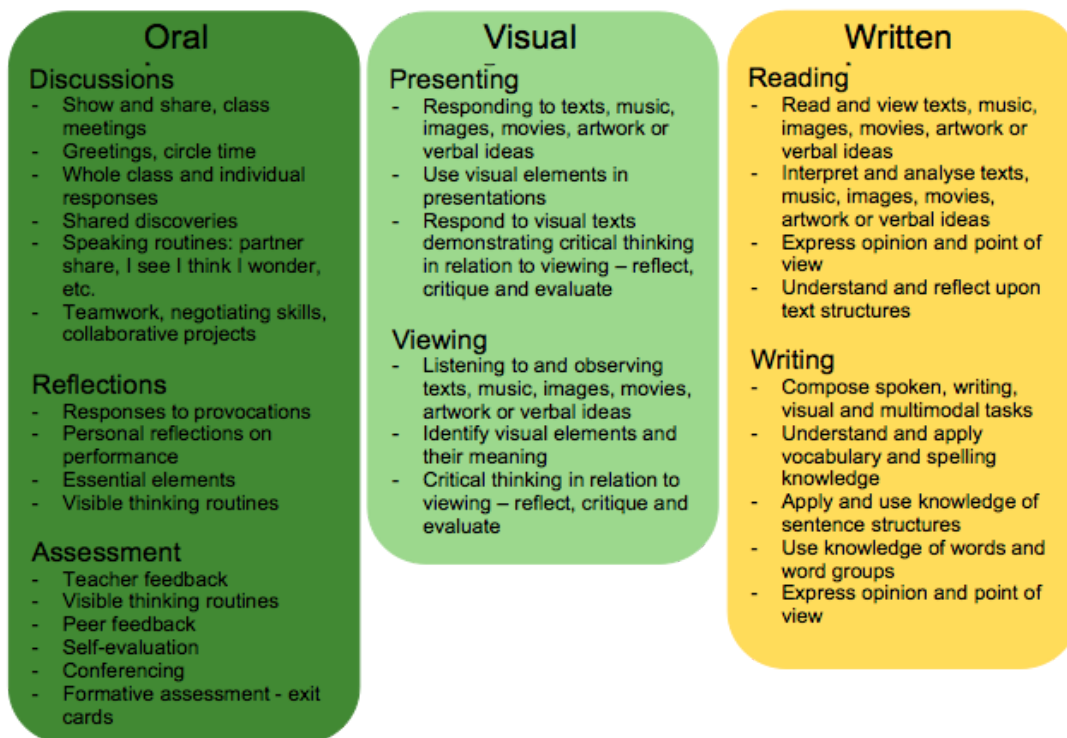
- The language modes are interrelated and the learning in one often supports and extends learning of the others.
- The language modes are reading and viewing, writing, speaking and listening
- Within each language mode, the content descriptions are grouped into strands: language, literature and literacy
- Each strand organises content descriptions into detailed substrands.

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- Students develop knowledge, understanding and skills across the strands of Language, Literature and Literacy. Each strand contributes its own distinctive goals, body of knowledge, history of ideas and interests to the study of English. (Ref. Victorian Curriculum F – 10 English)

PYP Language Scope and Sequence

The PYP has identified three strands - *oral language*, *visual language* and *written language* - that are learned across and throughout the curriculum, with each strand being an integral component of language learning. Each strand has been considered from both the *receptive* aspect - receiving and constructing meaning, and *expressive* aspect - creating and sharing meaning, while the receptive and expressive aspects are clearly reciprocal, the processes involved in receiving and constructing meaning are different from those involved in creating and sharing meaning. The learner's ability to understand language and use it effectively varies in different situations and from one individual to another.



The PYP guided by Halliday's (1980) model of language acquisition identifies three aspects of children's language development; *learning language*, *learning through language* and *learning about language*. We recognise that language development is a complex process, in which all three aspects are interrelated and not effectively learned in isolation or without purpose, relevance and meaningful context. Our transdisciplinary programme of inquiry provides this authentic context. Language is fundamental to thinking, learning and understanding, is the vehicle for inquiry and is the connecting element across the curriculum. It is every teacher's

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responsibility to help each student to develop the language knowledge, skills and understandings essential for lifelong learning. (*Making the PYP Happen: Language in the PYP*)

Assessment of language:

- is integral to all teaching and learning and is an ongoing process.
- Assessment will identify what students know, understand, can do, and feel at different stages in the learning process.
- Both students and teachers should be actively engaged in assessing student progress.
- A variety of strategies, tools and resources are used to assess student learning and inform students, parents and teachers, to ensure the needs of each student are met.
- Firbank assesses student language progress using the Victorian Curriculum F – 10; in English, students progress along a curriculum continuum that provides the first achievement standard at Foundation and then at Levels 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9 and 10.

Additional language Study is defined as:

- Learning a language in addition to mother tongue
- Refers to the languages that the school offers in addition to the language of instruction. Sometimes termed Second Language Study. In Australia this is often referred to as Language other than English (LOTE).
- All students at Firbank are exposed to second language learning, supporting the school's philosophy of developing confident communicators who understand different cultural perspectives.
- All learners benefit from having access to different languages and, as a consequence, access to different cultures and perspectives. Communication skills in a language other than English foster intercultural knowledge and awareness of language as a system. Students will develop skills of listening, speaking, reading, viewing, writing, and the use of body language, visual cues and signs. The intercultural knowledge and language awareness dimension develops students' knowledge of the connections between language and culture, and how culture is embedded throughout the communication system. The understandings are universal and are gained by comparing languages, including English.
- In the Junior Schools, students take Chinese from ELC 4 through to Year 6. This allows students to become familiar with these languages and encourages consistency in language learning, something that is very important for the study of any language. The teaching of Chinese also provide a solid basis upon which girls can build through middle school and for many, into senior years. Students receive a total of 90 minutes per week instruction in Chinese. ELC 4 receive 30 minutes a week of Chinese. The Chinese teachers provide instruction to support oral and written language, as well as a strong culturally based programme.

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- In the Senior School, all students of Years 7 and 8 learn French or Chinese. In Years 9 to 12, students may choose to continue their study of additional languages as part of the elective options (selecting up to two of the following: French, Chinese and/or German).
- We acknowledge that we have a number of students who are fluent in Chinese and recognise the need for differentiation. In addition, we provide Chinese course options in the Senior School curriculum (Chinese Second Language Advanced)

Mother tongue is defined as:

- The language the students has grown up speaking from early childhood.
- Proficiency in first language plays an important role in cognitive development. We value language diversity and encourage mother tongue maintenance.
- The vast majority of Firbank students speak English at home, although we do have a number of students speaking other languages, particularly Chinese, as their first language with their parents.
- Firbank recognises the importance of supporting the mother tongue needs of students whose first language is not English, as this assists development of higher order thinking skills. It also affirms personal and cultural identity, encourages a development of cross-cultural awareness and understanding. From a group perspective, support for mother tongue languages allows students who have members of small cultural groups within the school to maintain and share their cultural identities.

Sociolinguistic profiles:

- Students may enter any grade regardless of their level of English proficiency.
- To provide appropriately for the needs of students in the school who speak languages other than English, it is important for teachers to have knowledge of their learning histories and achievements in their first language, any additional languages, and in English.
- Information about a student's cultural, linguistic and educational background is collected as part of the school enrolment process. However, completing a sociolinguistic profile on each student gives us valuable additional data. Student information collected from parent/teacher interviews, from students themselves, reports from previous schools including transition reports from intensive English language programs, and/or academic records from other countries add to the profile we have of our students, their experiences and learning needs.
- Information collected and stored could include:
 - o whether or not students speak English as their main language at home
 - o the number of years of schooling students have had in their home countries
 - o whether their schooling has been disrupted
 - o date of arrival in Australia
 - o how long each student has been learning English, in Australia or overseas
 - o each student's level of literacy in their first and any subsequent language/s
 - o each student's assessments against the EAL standards
 - o students' access to English outside of school hours
 - o students' attendance at language classes external to school.

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Adapted from: *The EAL Handbook; Advice to schools on programs for supporting students learning English as an Additional Language (Department of Education and Training) 2015*

- Within our school we welcome and embrace cultural and linguistic diversity by:
 - o Recognising the role language plays in cultural identity and how this impacts on emotional wellbeing and social development
 - o Encouraging respect for and interest in other languages
 - o Encouraging students to think and plan in mother tongue and access learning in mother tongue when needed.
 - o Continuing to update the school collection of resources which support the development of the range of languages represented in our community (e.g. books, videos, online resources)
 - o Enabling students to share learning experiences through student-led conferences in mother tongue
 - o Using technology as a tool for student translations to mother-tongue and for research in mother tongue
 - o Utilising bilingual and multilingual staff to assist in communication for students
 - o Translating newsletters and other forms of communication
 - o Arranging for an interpreter during teacher-student and teacher-parent meetings
 - o Involving parents in mother-tongue maintenance strategies.

English as an Additional Language (EAL) is defined as:

- A learner of English whose first language is other than English
- All teachers are teachers of EAL and will collaborate to support EAL students in becoming competent and confident in English so they may:
 - o communicate effectively in a range of contexts
 - o interact socially
 - o access all aspects of the curriculum
 - o achieve academic success.
- The EAL teachers (both classroom and EAL specialist teachers) identify our EAL students' language needs by using the following criteria:
 - o Beginning English – students who have very limited oral and written English language skills
 - o Emerging English – students who have a growing degree of print literacy and oral competency with English
 - o Developing English – students who are further developing their knowledge of print Literacy and oral language competency with English.
 - o Consolidating English – students who have a sound knowledge of spoken and written English, including a growing competence with academic language.

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Important considerations when using the EAL learning progression:

The EAL learning progression provides teachers with a brief summary of an English language learning progression that EAL students typically make. It can take many years for an EAL student to complete this progression.

Each of the four phases describes a period of significant English language learning development, and there will be differences between a student at the beginning of the phase and a student at the end of the phase.

EAL students will move through the four phases at different rates: some students may move through more than one phase in a school year; while some may take more than one year to move from one phase to another.

Students may also be at different phases across the language modes of listening, speaking, reading/viewing and writing. For example, a student may be showing characteristics of Developing English in speaking, while still at Emerging English in writing.

Students may appear to 'slip' between phases at transition points, particularly between Developing English and Consolidating English, as they meet new academic challenges that require increasingly sophisticated use of academic language. For example, a student may appear to be in the Consolidating English phase in Year 6, but new language demands encountered in high school may mean that a student is better described in the Developing English phase in Year 7."

Reference: English as an Additional Language or Dialect Teacher Resource; EAL/D Learning Progression: Foundation to Year 10 from Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) 2015.

- To support EAL students we will:
 - o activate learners' prior experience and establish current understandings as a starting point for instruction
 - o create a safe and stimulating environment where language risk taking is encouraged
 - o provide purposeful and explicit learning experiences in meaningful contexts
 - o differentiate and personalise teaching and learning.
- The EAL specialist teachers will provide support and instruction both in classrooms and in withdrawal settings, depending on individual students' needs. These contexts will be negotiated between the classroom teacher and the EAL teacher, and, in some cases, also with the student and their parents.
- As each primary year level assumes a level of literacy skills needed to participate in class learning activities, EAL students are grouped not only by their English language skills, but also by their year level bands. The number of support sessions provided per week reflects the gap between the student's English language skills and that which is required to participate effectively in class.

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- The school embraces a transdisciplinary approach to language learning. Connections need to be made between the content and concepts explored in the units of inquiry, with language learning, to facilitate contextual understanding. The teaching of vocabulary and language specific to discrete disciplines is the responsibility of all teachers.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Director of Learning is responsible for:

- Overseeing the development and implementation of curriculum ELC – 12, including relevant policies and procedures and their communication.
- Providing leadership in the development, implementation and evaluation of quality teaching practices across the school in relation to language and literacy.
- Researching new language teaching pedagogies and developing plans to communicate and assist teachers to develop their understanding and use of these strategies.

Head of Turner/Sandringham Campus is responsible for:

- Implementing the Language Policy within the campus.
- Overseeing development and implementation of sequential and integrated language programs at ELC - 6.
- Encouraging high quality teaching methods in regard to language and literacy.

PYP Coordinator is responsible for:

- Updating language and literacy assessment tracking tools: Essential Assessment, Brightpath, OARS platform
- Liaising with EAL and learning support to identify student needs, adjustments and modified report options
- Upskilling teachers on tools and strategies for language and literacy assessment

Heads of Department is responsible for:

- Implements the Language Policy within the faculty.
- Develops sequential and integrated programs at the appropriate levels.
- Encourages high quality teaching methods in regard to language and literacy.

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RELATED POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Admissions Policy
Assessment and Reporting Policy
Diverse Learning and Inclusive Access Policy

COMPLAINTS AND ENQUIRIES

The school community may provide feedback on this document by emailing: kelith@firbank.vic.edu.au

APPROVALS AND REVIEW

Approval and Review	Details
Approval Authority	School Board
Advisory Committee to Approval Authority	SS and JS Curriculum Team
Administrator	Head of Risk and Compliance – Jen Shakespeare
Original Approval Authority and Date	June 2021
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