

Language Policy

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Introduction

This Language Policy has been developed to set out the philosophy and aims of language teaching and learning at Snowfields Academy. The document contains details of Snowfields Academy's linguistic context and vision for language, and outlines how mother-tongue language provision is supported in our community. As Snowfields Academy does not teach a language learned subsequently to a first language as part of a reasonable adjustment to be approved by the IB, we do support students with Communication lessons with a whole curriculum for the MYP.

We recognise the critical role language plays in fostering communication, literacy, and learning across all disciplines. Our language policy is designed to promote a holistic approach to language development, encompassing both the explicit teaching of language skills and the integration of language learning across the curriculum. While we do not allocate specific curriculum time for modern foreign language instruction, we are committed to nurturing language proficiency through various means, including literacy-focused activities, digital tools, and collaboration with speech and language therapists.

Snowfields Academy strives to ensure that its support for mother-tongue learners aligns with the principles and mission of the International Baccalaureate Middle Years programme. At Snowfields Academy, language is central to learning as all teachers are, in practice, language teachers with responsibilities in facilitating communication.

Language Philosophy and Vision

Snowfields Academy's aim is to prepare students to leave us with all the necessary knowledge, skills and attributes to successfully transition to their next stages of learning and life. Snowfields Academy has a range of therapeutic and support staff on hand to reduce any barriers to learning in terms of language by helping to meet the holistic needs of our learners.

Speech and Language Therapists (SaLT) employed by Snowfields Academy provide targeted support in the form of weekly whole class Communication lessons for Key Stage 3 and specialist support for individual students. At Snowfields students in Key Stage 3 receive whole class Speech and Language Therapy in the form of a weekly Communication lesson. These lessons aim to support the development of social communication and social interaction skills as these are challenging for our students who present with Autism Spectrum Condition (ASC).

Students arrive at Snowfields from a variety of educational backgrounds and have therefore received different types of therapies and supports. We aim to develop students' understanding and use of verbal and nonverbal communication in order to prepare them for the workplace and successful adult life.

A high-quality education around communication should support students in understanding others and the world around them. Lessons incorporate explicit teaching, picture and video analysis, discussion, research projects and role play using evidence based programmes and therapeutic interventions. It provides practical opportunities for communication and supports students to learn new ways of thinking.

Learning about communication styles is often the first step in developing a more open-minded attitude to the world, recognising that people see things differently and that this difference can be positive. Many tasks that are covered in Communication lessons support the development of listening and speaking skills and spelling, punctuation and grammar skills which are taught throughout their curriculum.

The aims for Communication lessons are closely aligned with the national curriculum and MYP aims for languages around speaking and listening. Students will be able to:

- Recognise and use an appropriate range of vocabulary linked to topics studied
- Listen to others and understand them
- Speak confidently using accurate pronunciation and intonation
- Communicate their ideas clearly in written and spoken format
- Discuss different perspectives

Implementation of Communication Curriculum

The Communication curriculum is overseen by the Head of Therapy who is a qualified Speech and Language Therapist and is developed in consultation with other Speech and Language Therapists within the Trust. It has been developed to build a solid theoretical foundation and multiple opportunities for students to practise their social and communication skills. Tasks are centred around student interests and real life experiences to support understanding and generalisation.

The foundation of our communication curriculum lies in universal interventions. These are the core elements that all students engage with, ensuring a common baseline of knowledge and skills. Rather than focusing solely on the basics of a foreign language, our students delve into the intricacies of their mother tongue. This approach serves a dual purpose. First, it strengthens students' proficiency in their native language, enabling them to express themselves more clearly and confidently. Second, it promotes a deeper understanding and appreciation of their cultural heritage.

In this universal phase, students explore various aspects of communication, from the role of language in different contexts, be it humorous exchanges, formal

presentations, or online communication. By grounding our curriculum in the study of the mother tongue, we ensure that all students have a solid foundation upon which to build their communication skills.

Building on the universal interventions, our communication curriculum incorporates targeted interventions designed to address specific needs and challenges faced by different groups of students. These interventions are tailored to cater to students who may require additional support or enrichment in particular areas of communication.

By offering targeted interventions, we ensure that every student's unique communication needs are addressed, promoting inclusivity and equity in line with our language policy's principles.

One of the most distinctive features of our specialised interventions within the communication curriculum is the personalised 1:1 approach. Recognising that each student is unique, with individual strengths, weaknesses, interests, and learning styles, we have designed our specialised interventions to cater specifically to an individual's needs. This personalised approach allows us to target and address the specific communication challenges or interests of each student effectively, ensuring meaningful and impactful learning experiences.

Through discussions, observations, and assessments, we gain insights into the student's strengths and areas requiring improvement. Based on this assessment, a tailored intervention plan is developed to address the student's specific needs and goals.

Impact

Students leaving Snowfields will be better able to interpret communication and express themselves with new and familiar people. They will be more confident and able to generalise what they have learnt to a variety of formal and informal settings. Students will have a clear understanding of their communicative strengths and challenges in order to access support and advocate for themselves in adulthood.

Language and Literature in Snowfields Academy: An Integrated Approach

At Snowfields Academy, our approach to language education extends beyond traditional boundaries to embrace a dual focus on both Language and Literature and Communication curricula. This integrated approach reflects our commitment to providing a holistic and enriching language learning experience that prepares students for the complexities of our interconnected world.

Our Language and Literature curriculum is designed to cultivate a deep appreciation for literature, develop critical thinking skills, and enhance students' language proficiency. Key features of our curriculum include:

Literary Exploration: Students explore a diverse range of literary genres, authors, and texts from various cultural and historical contexts. This encourages them to develop empathy, understand different perspectives, and appreciate the richness and complexity of human experiences.

Critical Analysis: Students learn to analyse and interpret literary texts through close reading, discussion, and written assignments. This fosters their ability to think critically, articulate their ideas effectively, and engage in meaningful dialogue with others.

Language Skills Development: Through studying literature, students enhance their language skills, including vocabulary acquisition, grammar usage, and rhetorical techniques. This supports their overall language development and literacy skills.

Communication Curriculum: A Practical Approach

In addition to our English curriculum, we offer a specialised Communication curriculum that focuses on developing students' social communication and interaction skills. This curriculum is particularly beneficial for students with Autism Spectrum Condition (ASC) and other communication challenges. Key components of our Communication curriculum include:

Social Communication Skills: Students learn and practise essential social communication skills, such as active listening, turn-taking, and non-verbal communication cues. This helps them navigate social interactions more effectively and build positive relationships with others.

Real-Life Applications: Lessons in the Communication curriculum are centred around real-life experiences and scenarios, enabling students to apply their communication skills in practical situations. This promotes generalisation of skills and prepares students for success in diverse social settings.

Collaboration with Speech and Language Therapists: Our Communication curriculum is developed in collaboration with qualified Speech and Language Therapists (SaLT), ensuring that it is evidence-based and tailored to meet the unique needs of our students. SaLTs provide targeted support and interventions, both in whole-class lessons and individual sessions, to address students' specific communication challenges.

Embracing an IB Alternative Approach

Our dual focus on Language and Literature and Communication curricula exemplifies Snowfields Academy's approach to language education, which aligns with the principles and mission of the International Baccalaureate (IB) Middle Years Programme (MYP). We share the IB's commitment to fostering international-mindedness, promoting holistic development, and preparing students for global citizenship.

By integrating a rigorous curriculum, we provide students with a balanced and comprehensive language education that equips them with the knowledge, skills, and attributes to thrive in their next stages of learning and life. This innovative approach reflects our dedication to excellence in language teaching and learning, ensuring that all students, regardless of their linguistic background or learning needs, have the opportunity to become confident, competent, and compassionate communicators.

Use of the Library

At Snowfields Academy, the library is an integral component of our language policy, serving as a vibrant hub that supports literacy, language development, and cultural awareness. The library actively promotes literacy through reading programmes, author visits, and thematic book displays, while also collaborating with teachers to integrate library resources into the curriculum. This collaboration ensures that students have access to relevant and engaging materials that enrich classroom learning and support language instruction.

The library stocks books and resources in various languages, including students' mother tongues. This commitment to multilingualism fosters bilingualism and celebrates students' cultural heritage. To further support language learning, the library provides access to online resources and educational software like *Languagenut* and *Giglets*, facilitating independent learning and exploration both in the library and remotely.

Inclusivity is a key focus of our library services, with the use of Widgit symbols and other visual aids enhancing comprehension and supporting students with dyslexia, autism, and other learning differences, as well as EAL learners and younger students. Special collections and displays are curated to highlight different cultures, traditions, and languages, creating an inclusive and culturally rich learning environment.

In conclusion, the library at Snowfields Academy plays a pivotal role in our holistic approach to language education. By providing a diverse range of resources, promoting literacy initiatives, and collaborating with classroom teachers, the library supports the development of literacy, language skills, and cultural awareness among our students, empowering them to become confident, competent, and compassionate communicators.

Policy Statements:

Literacy Promotion:

- We believe that literacy is foundational to academic success and lifelong learning. Therefore, we prioritise literacy promotion through a variety of activities, including reading programmes and library resources.
- Teachers across all subjects are deeply encouraged to incorporate reading and writing activities into their lesson plans and explicitly teach tier three vocabulary to reinforce literacy skills and expose students to diverse forms of language usage.
- The use of Wigit symbols can significantly enhance literacy promotion by providing a visual and accessible way to support language comprehension and expression. These symbols, which represent words and concepts through clear and simple images, cater to a variety of learners, including those with dyslexia, autism, and other learning differences, as well as EAL learners and younger students.
- We provide ample opportunities for students to engage with a wide range of texts, including literature, informational texts, and digital media, to develop their reading comprehension and critical thinking skills.
- Explicit programme to enhance literacy skills targeting students with reading ages as low as ages 5-6, promoting diverse methods to learn reading and access texts effectively, such as different wave interventions.

Explicit Language Instruction:

- Recognising the importance of explicit language instruction, we offer dedicated language and literacy lessons integrated into the curriculum.
- Explicit vocabulary instruction can help students articulate their feelings, thoughts, and needs more clearly in social settings. By introducing words that describe different emotions, social cues, and interpersonal dynamics, educators enable students to better understand and communicate their experiences in social interactions. This enhanced vocabulary equips students with the language skills to express empathy, resolve conflicts, and build positive relationships with their peers, fostering a more inclusive and supportive academy community and preparing them to live successfully with their Autism diagnosis.
- Lessons have an emphasis on essential language skills such as phonics, vocabulary development, grammar, and comprehension strategies.

- Teachers employ research-based instructional strategies to differentiate instruction and meet the diverse linguistic needs of students. The use of precision teaching strategies to introduce new and key vocabulary.

Integration Across the Curriculum:

- Language learning is not confined to language-specific classes but is integrated across all subject areas.
- Functional language that will help students to their next steps.
- Emphasis on Mother tongue language and the overall focus on developing communication in turn serves to support students' capacity to enhance their learning about other cultures/internationality more broadly by improving their skills to access this kind of content.
- Teachers are encouraged to create opportunities for students to use language purposefully and meaningfully in various contexts, including science experiments, mathematical problem-solving, and humanities inquiries. Students can also develop communication and presentation skills through projects and drop-down days.
- By integrating language learning into other disciplines, students develop a deeper understanding of content while simultaneously enhancing their language proficiency.

Digital Tools:

- We harness the power of digital tools to support language learning and literacy development.
- Educational software such as Languagenut, online resources, and interactive multimedia platforms are utilised to provide engaging and interactive language experiences.
- The use of digital tools like Widgit and Read&Write plays a crucial role in supporting both the receptive and expressive elements of communication in our setting. These tools offer innovative and accessible ways to enhance students' understanding, processing, and expression of language, catering to diverse learning needs and styles.
- Video analysis of modelling is a powerful and effective tool that can be effectively used to target and enhance the pragmatic element of communication. Pragmatic communication refers to the social use of language in different contexts, including understanding and using verbal and non-verbal cues, following conversational rules, and adapting language based on the situation and audience.

- Through the integration of technology, we aim to enhance students' digital literacy skills while facilitating their language acquisition and communication abilities.
- Developing access to online multilingual literacy and language resources such as Giglets to deliver an engaging and differentiated learning experience for all pupils.

Collaboration with Speech and Language Therapists:

- In partnership with dedicated speech and language therapists, we provide targeted support for students with language and communication disorders.
- Individualised intervention plans are developed to address students' specific needs and facilitate their progress in language development.
- Collaboration between classroom teachers and speech and language therapists ensures a coordinated approach to supporting students' linguistic growth and academic success.

Conclusion:

Snowfields Academy's Language Policy embodies a holistic and inclusive approach to language teaching and learning, reflecting our commitment to nurturing students' communication skills, literacy, and overall well-being. Our philosophy emphasises the central role of language in fostering academic success, social interaction, and personal growth, aligning with the principles and mission of the International Baccalaureate Middle Years Programme.

We recognise the diverse linguistic backgrounds and learning needs of our students, and our policy is designed to cater to these unique needs through targeted interventions, personalised support, and collaborative efforts with speech and language therapists. Our Communication curriculum, overseen by qualified professionals, offers a comprehensive framework that integrates real-life experiences, evidence-based practices, and digital tools to enhance students' social communication, language skills, and pragmatic understanding.

The use of digital tools like Languagenut, Widgit, and Read&Write, along with video analysis and modelling, amplifies our efforts to support both the receptive and expressive elements of communication. These tools provide innovative and accessible ways to engage students, promote inclusivity, and foster digital literacy skills essential for today's interconnected world. By emphasising mother tongue and enhancing communication skills, students' ability to learn about other cultures and international topics is broadened, improving their access to such content.

Collaboration with speech and language therapists further strengthens our approach, ensuring a coordinated and individualised support system that addresses

students' specific needs and facilitates their linguistic growth. This partnership underscores our commitment to reducing barriers to learning and promoting a supportive and inclusive learning environment for all students, particularly those with Autism Spectrum Condition (ASC).

In conclusion, Snowfields Academy's Language Policy serves as a guiding framework that reflects our dedication to excellence in language teaching and learning. By embracing a multi-faceted approach that integrates targeted interventions, personalised support, digital tools, and collaborative partnerships, we aim to empower students to become confident, competent, and compassionate communicators, equipped with the knowledge, skills, and attributes to thrive in their next stages of learning and life.

Definitions

Mother-Tongue - The terms that describe the language student's use at home and/or outside the classroom/school environment include "first language", "home language", "preferred language", "mother tongue", "native language" and "heritage language". For the purposes of the MYP, the term "mother tongue" is used.

Language Acquisition - is a standard linguistic terminology used to describe a language learned subsequently to a first language, and implies that a student also has access to the language for communicative purposes outside the context of the language classroom (in other subject classrooms, outside the school or learning environment, or in the community). English as an Additional Language learner (EAL) – EAL terminology is provided to those students for whom the Language of Instruction is not the student's first language.

Language A - Mother Tongues (English, Literacy & Communication)

English is the language of instruction at Snowfields Academy and is a compulsory subject throughout Key Stages 3 and 4 (Years 7 to 11), fulfilling the Language A pathway for the MYP, while students with Additional Educational Needs in the Year 7 and Year 8 nurture groups have additional lessons to support their literacy in English. During English we use four waves of intervention to support our students with their literacy (reading and writing). Students are baseline assessed when they join the school, and the relevant intervention waves are put into place.

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Language A - Mother Tongues (Heritage Languages)

Snowfields Academy strives to ensure that all students, including those for whom English is an additional language, have the opportunity to celebrate and share their mother tongue and home culture. This includes offering Heritage Language qualifications in students' first language with the support of multilingual members of the local community.

Promotion and celebration of student's mother tongue and culture at Snowfields Academy:

- Whole Academy Assembly of International Day of Language
- The Library purchases books in various languages
- Students are entered for GCSE exam in their mother tongue (pending availability from exam boards)
- Achievement Assemblies where students are presented a diploma for their performance in their mother tongue's GCSE
- Teachers make links in lessons with student's mother tongue and culture

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