School Language Policy

**School language philosophy**

Language education is fundamental to lifelong learning and communication. At Vardafjell Upper Secondary School all teachers are language teachers because language learning permeates the whole curriculum and is crucial for the success of the IB programme. Through language and literacy, our students acquire the ability to think and to learn, to develop social skills and values and to acquire knowledge.

**School language profile**

*Current language situation*

The majority of IB teaching staff are native speakers of the Norwegian language.

However, all are competent English language users.

In order to increase awareness and improve language skills of IB staff, all IB staff are required to participate in IB teachers’ professional development, in English speaking workshops.

The majority of our students are native speakers of the Norwegian language. They have been taught English as a second language since 1st grade (national programme), and they are fairly proficient users of English. This means that some of our students master English on the C2 Level (European framework of references), while others are placed on level B2. Some students are multilingual.

Norwegian is the main language of communication within the school and the community outside the classroom. English is to some extent used as a language of communication in trade and business in the local community and the country.

*Current practices/Language of instruction*

English is the instruction language in all IB classes except for in Norwegian and other languages offered in groups 1 and 2. All students are required to take at least two language subjects.

All subject teachers are aware that they are also language teachers. Training of formal and academic writing is an important part of any IB subjects in order to achieve higher level proficiency.

In accordance with our admission policy, students will only be admitted to the IB programme at Vardafjell Upper Secondary School if they demonstrate an acceptable level of English proficiency.

**Languages offered**

The language profiles of IB learners are diverse, and for most of our students Norwegian is the dominant language. However, the linguistic background of the pupils is steadily becoming more diverse as Haugesund’s international community is increasing. Students with Norwegian as a mother tongue are expected to choose Norwegian A literature HL and English A language and literature HL/SL.

Students with a different mother tongue than Norwegian will be offered the option of studying their own mother tongue through the Language A literature SL school-supported self-taught language course. These students are assisted by a qualified teacher/tutor either in Norway or abroad in addition to another teacher at Vardafjell.

If the student’s level of Norwegian is at the B1 level, and there are enough students to establish a class (at least 4 students), the school will offer Norwegian B HL.

Students who would like to apply for financial support from Lånekassen to study in Norway must have an exam in Norwegian B HL or higher on their Diploma or complete a test of Norwegian at advanced level (Norskprøve). <https://www.kompetansenorge.no/prover/norskprove/ove-til-proven/>

The school offers Spanish and French and German subjects from group 2, if the number of interested students is sustainable for in-class teaching. Pamoja offers online courses in languages depending on the student’s individual abilities (A, B or *ab initio*). The choice is made based on recommendations from the language teachers in the national curriculum (or IB language teachers if possible).

Students are advised to choose a language course that challenges them, enables them to enjoy the language learning and to identify progress.

**Support of development and maintenance of mother tongue for all learners**

The majority of our IB students access the IB programme in a language other than their mother tongue. The goal is to ensure that they become *balanced bilinguals who are highly proficient, literate and knowledgeable in two or more languages* (Learning in a language other than mother tongue in IB programmes (2008)). Vardafjell Upper Secondary School strives to provide *social and emotional conditions for learning that value all languages and cultures and affirms the identity of each learner to promote self-esteem and additive bilingualism* (Learning in a language other than mother tongue in IB programmes (2008)).

The school library is a natural part of the language development of our students, as the process of learning language is lifelong and fostered through reading. The school librarian assists Language A literature self-taught students in acquiring literature in their mother tongue.

**Strategies to support all teachers in their contribution to the language development of students**

All subject teachers are expected to help their students develop the literacy skills needed to access the language of academic texts. All teachers are regularly sent to IB recognized professional development workshops in English. They are also encouraged to build Professional Development Networks on social media to stay updated and practice written and oral communication as much as possible.

**Support for students who are not proficient in the language of instruction**

For the staff at Vardafjell Upper Secondary School it is important that all students have the same opportunity to succeed (see Inclusion policy). Since it may take up to seven years for learners who are using a language different than their mother tongue to attain the same level in academic language proficiency (*Learning in a language other than mother tongue in IB programmes* (2008)), all students are monitored carefully to look for language challenges if they do not reach the expected academic level in their IB subjects.

Tutor lessons with the subject teacher are used to help students who are not proficient enough in English to be able to reach their potential. The subject teachers will always stay in close dialogue with the English A teachers, the Norwegian A/B teachers, the personal tutor and the IB coordinator in cases of student concerns linked to language and/or literacy.

All teaching is done in English (except in Norwegian A/B classes or Group 2 classes other than English B). Students are allowed to use their mother tongue in smaller groups or when communicating with the teacher if the other students/teacher can communicate in that language. Allowing students to use their mother tongue in subject lessons may be important to help them activate their prior understanding and thereby enhance their deep learning.

**Learning of host country or regional language and culture**

The school library is important to provide students with a range of different books. The subject teachers in groups 1 and 2 play a central role in linguistic and cultural exploration. As the majority of our students are local, extra care is provided to international students to give them insight into the Norwegian language and culture. CAS and TOK are natural meeting points to help local students share their indigenous knowledge on culture and language to make all our students aware of how cultural background shapes them.

The School Language Policy is available in the school’s online information section.

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This language policy has been written based on the previous school policy, and also inspired by the Language policy at St.Olav Upper Secondary School and the International School of Luxembourg, and the following IBO documents: Learning in a language other than mother tongue in IB programmes (2008), Language and learning in IB programmes (updated version, 2014), Guidelines for developing a school language policy (2008)