EL ALTILLO INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL | iSP International Schools Partnership

LANGUAGE POLICY

Middle Years Programme and Diploma Programme

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1. INTRODUCTION

This language policy stems from the language philosophy of El Altillo International School and sets out the objectives for language teaching and learning. It is based on beliefs about pedagogy and learning and is therefore also a statement of action describing the specific practices through which those objectives can be achieved and evaluated.

The language policy of El Altillo International School focuses particularly on supporting the teaching of additional languages, responding to students' needs and reflecting the principles and practices of the International Baccalaureate. The school undoubtedly operates in a unique social context with complex language and learning needs; this policy takes into account the particular sociocultural circumstances of our school community.

This language policy is grounded in reflection and results from a detailed analysis aimed at implementing the collaborative measures needed to meet the language requirements of the international programmes.

2. PHILOSOPHY AND PRINCIPLES UNDERPINNING LANGUAGE TEACHING AND LEARNING AT EL ALTILLO INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL

ISP bases its educational philosophy on five fundamental pillars that it fosters and develops in all its schools: academic outcomes, multilingualism, life skills, international opportunities and career guidance. These five central strands are complemented by values education, providing a sound education rooted in the development of a free and critical awareness that enables students to act independently while always showing respect and tolerance. These principles relate to the fundamental concepts of the IB—communication, holistic learning and intercultural awareness—and to the attributes of the IB learner profile. Accordingly, El Altillo International School aims to provide a high-quality education based on respect and hard work as fundamental principles, making a distinctive and innovative contribution to the development of responsible, caring, free-thinking and cultured global citizens in a nurturing and attentive environment.

One of the principal characteristics of El Altillo International School that contributes to our students' strong academic education is its

multilingual character, evident from Early Years through to Bachillerato, with English, French and Spanish as the school's working languages. As noted above, developing multilingualism is one of the five central strands of ISP's educational philosophy and distinguishes the school from others. The school should be recognised as a strong promoter of English, and its students should be known for their command of the language. El Altillo International School supports trilingualism and encourages all members of the school community to communicate in the school's three working languages: English, French and Spanish. The school therefore regards language acquisition and proficiency as fundamental to learning and essential to the academic, social and personal development of all students. Through language, students learn about themselves and others, developing a lifelong love of learning that helps them become responsible, engaged citizens able to contribute, through mutual understanding and intercultural respect, to a better and more peaceful world.

El Altillo International School firmly believes that learning a language also means gaining a deep understanding of a culture. Language acquisition thus takes place through meaningful use, enabling students to move beyond linguistic knowledge and integrate intercultural awareness throughout their education.

As we have seen, El Altillo International School regards multilingualism as an essential pillar of its educational project. In line with the vision of International Schools Partnership (ISP), the school promotes an inclusive language environment in which all languages represented in the school community are recognised, valued and celebrated as tools for communication, thinking and personal development.

El Altillo's multilingual approach aims to develop students who can use different languages—principally English, Spanish and French—competently and confidently while fostering an open, intercultural and global outlook. From their earliest years in Early Years education, students learn in real and meaningful contexts through a methodology based on Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL), progressively consolidating their communication skills and capacity for linguistic reflection.

This philosophy is supported by the implementation of international programmes (IB, IPC, MYP and DP) and the global learning opportunities offered by the ISP network, such as

International Learning Opportunities (ILOs) and language exchanges. Through these experiences, students use language as a vehicle for cultural experiences, cooperation and meaningful learning.

The school also provides individualised support for students learning English as an Additional Language (EAL), recognising the educational and emotional value of their home languages as an integral part of their identity. The aim is to develop balanced communicative competence in all students, encompassing both everyday interpersonal skills (BICS) and advanced academic language proficiency (CALP). All the school's teaching staff are trained in multilingualism and are therefore able to meet these students' educational needs.

At El Altillo International School, all teachers are language teachers: they act as language models for students and use their subjects as vehicles for language learning, thereby helping to facilitate communication within the school. All teachers also strive to create a supportive classroom environment for students' language development and to strengthen students' confidence as they acquire language. Language teaching at El Altillo International School therefore involves not only the acquisition of a specific language but also learning activities through which students use language to develop the skills needed to acquire knowledge in different fields.
Finally, as an international school offering two International Baccalaureate programmes—the MYP and the Diploma Programme—we regard multilingualism as a benefit to individuals and society that should be encouraged and supported from the earliest years of childhood.

Overall, the language policy of El Altillo International School reflects its commitment to excellence, inclusion and internationalisation, ensuring that every student grows into a caring multilingual citizen prepared for a global world. It is aligned with the school's values and the Student Learning Outcomes that define it: innovator, communicator, open-minded, multilingual, caring and committed.

3. SCHOOL LANGUAGE PROFILE

3.1 LANGUAGE PROFILE OF STUDENTS AT THE SCHOOL

Although 82% of our students are Spanish nationals, the others come from countries including China, the United Kingdom, Australia, the United States and countries across Latin America, contributing to the school's international and intercultural atmosphere. Throughout their time at El Altillo International School, our students can grow up in a multilingual environment in which English and Spanish are used side by side in everyday school life. They also benefit from the trilingual setting established at every stage through the introduction of French from the age of one in Early Years.

By the end of their education at the school, our students are ready for the next stage, having developed the valuable ability to communicate in other languages and understand the cultures of other countries. The language profile we seek to develop is directly linked to the IB learner profile, particularly the aim that students become effective communicators in an increasingly global world to which they will undoubtedly have much to contribute, with language proficiency playing a vital role. In this way, we fulfil one of our central aims as an international school and an IB World School.

3.2 LANGUAGES: ENGLISH, SPANISH AND FRENCH AS LANGUAGES OF INSTRUCTION AND COMMUNICATION IN TEACHING AND LEARNING.

El Altillo International School's primary aim is for students to become proficient in the school's three languages (English, Spanish and French) by the end of their education here. All students are given opportunities and role models to develop the skills, knowledge and attitudes needed to communicate effectively in any of the school's three languages.

However, not all students have the same knowledge of or ability to use the three languages. Students differ in their ability to develop their linguistic potential. Some achieve functional proficiency in a particular language or languages, while others reach a level close to bilingualism or become fully bilingual. At El Altillo International School, language acquisition is understood as an ongoing process that goes hand in hand

with each student's individual progress at their own pace. In this way, the school seeks to develop additive bilingualism: students acquire additional languages and cultures without displacing or replacing their first language or culture.

Spanish and/or English are normally students' home languages and, in these cases, their principal tools of communication, helping them learn the other subjects in the school's educational programme. These languages also foster social interaction within the school.

The overall aim of language study and teaching is to encourage and enable students to:

- Use language to convey their thoughts, creativity and capacity for reflection and learning, to develop their ability to express themselves and to facilitate social interaction.
- Develop listening, speaking, reading, writing and viewing and presenting skills in a variety of contexts.
- Develop critical, creative and personal approaches to studying and analysing literary and non-literary works.
- Explore literature from a variety of cultures and historical periods.
- Study and analyse aspects of their own culture, the host culture and other cultures through literary and non-literary works.
- Use information and communication technologies to explore language.
- Develop a lifelong enjoyment of reading different kinds of texts.

- Apply the skills and knowledge acquired through studying Language A in a variety of real-life contexts.

In this way, language immersion is accompanied by knowledge of, respect for and dedication to the student, who is at the heart of their own learning in a trusting, safe, creative and tolerant environment enriched by the diversity of an international school.

4. ASSESSMENT OF STUDENTS' LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY. OFFICIAL QUALIFICATIONS

The school, and in particular the Languages Department, encourages students to prepare voluntarily for external examinations administered by various locally and internationally recognised institutions. The school handles the applications for these examinations. It is also an examination centre for English-language examinations. From Year 4 of secondary school onward, English and French groups are organised by level according to the external examination for which students are ready to prepare.

ENGLISH:

- Years 3 and 4 of primary school: Students take the Cambridge University Starters, Movers or Flyers examination at the appropriate level.
- Year 5 of primary school: Students take the Cambridge University KET examination.
- Year 6 of primary school: Students take the Cambridge University PET examination.
- Years 2 and 3 of compulsory secondary education (ESO): Students take the Cambridge University FIRST CERTIFICATE examination. A group of advanced students takes this examination in Year 1 of ESO.
- Year 1 of Bachillerato: Students take the Cambridge University ADVANCED examination.
- Year 2 of Bachillerato: Students take the Cambridge University PROFICIENCY examination.
- Years 1 of primary school through Year 2 of Bachillerato: Students take the **Trinity (levels 1–12) examination, administered by Trinity College.**

⇒ ENGLISH CERTIFICATES > DESCRIPTION

English as a Foreign Language diplomas are official qualifications certifying the holder's level of English proficiency. They are awarded by the University of Cambridge.

▪ STARTERS, MOVERS, FLYERS

Examinations designed for students whose first language is not English, certifying basic language proficiency in understanding and using English in predictable situations.

▪ (KET) KEY ENGLISH TEST

An examination designed for students whose first language is not English, certifying basic proficiency in understanding and using English in predictable situations, with particular emphasis on communication to meet immediate needs.

▪ (PET) PRELIMINARY ENGLISH TEST

An examination designed for students whose first language is not English, certifying sufficient proficiency to understand and respond appropriately to common everyday situations and communicate basic wants and needs.

▪ (FCE) FIRST CERTIFICATE IN ENGLISH

An examination designed for students whose first language is not English, certifying sufficient proficiency to manage ordinary everyday situations under normal conditions of communication that do not require specialised use of the language.

▪ (CAE) CERTIFICATE IN ADVANCED ENGLISH

An examination designed for students whose first language is not English, certifying the proficiency needed to handle situations requiring fluent use of the language and an understanding of the relationship between language and the culture it expresses.

▪ (CPE) CERTIFICATE IN PROFICIENCY ENGLISH

An examination designed for students whose first language is not English, certifying exceptional proficiency in situations requiring the fluency and complexity of a highly proficient English speaker. It demonstrates the ability to study or work in a demanding professional or academic environment, such as a postgraduate or doctoral programme.

FRENCH:

The DELF (Diplôme d'études en langue française) and DALF (Diplôme approfondi de langue française) are official diplomas awarded by the French Ministry of National Education that provide lifelong certification of French proficiency.

They comprise six independent diplomas corresponding to the six levels of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR).

DELF Junior (A1, A2, B1, B2) is the version adapted for young people and adolescents while they remain in education (from age 12).

Organisation of the examinations

	Diplomas *	**Group tests**	**Individual oral tests**	
DELF			**Prep.**	**Exam**
	A1	1h20	10 min	5/7 min
	A2	1h40	10 min	6/8 min
	B1	1h45	10 min	15 min
	B2	2h30	30 min	20 min

* ***Score: /100 – Pass mark: 50/100 – Failing score:***

less than 5/25 in any of the four tests.

- **The A1 diploma certifies that a candidate can interact with limited ability in very simple everyday situations. It is intended for our Year 6 primary students and is administered internally and unofficially at the school by its teachers.**
- **The A2 diploma certifies that a candidate is beginning to communicate independently in predictable everyday situations. Students sit the A2 examinations in Year 1 of ESO through the French Cultural Institute.**
- **The B1 diploma confirms that a candidate can deal with most communicative situations and is able to improvise and interact. The examination is offered to students from Year 3 of ESO onward.**
- **The B2 diploma certifies that a candidate can participate actively in almost the full range of personal and professional situations and is**

  able to express themselves clearly, in detail and with reasoned arguments. This diploma

waives the language test requirement and grants access to most French universities. Preparation for DELF B2 begins in Year 4 of ESO.

5. LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY TESTS IN THE ADMISSIONS PROCESS FOR NEW STUDENTS

As part of the admissions process, new students take an assessment of their proficiency in Spanish and English. The results are used to design specific strategies to develop each student's language skills at their own pace. (See Secondary School English/Spanish Induction Plan.)

6. PROMOTION AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE SPANISH LANGUAGE

From a learning perspective, students undertake exercises in reading comprehension, textual pragmatics, syntactic analysis, spelling, semantics and writing, among other areas. They write and analyse various kinds of formal and creative texts, including essays, letters, stories and poems. Students learn to encode and decode different kinds of texts according to the sender, recipient and intended audience. Both individual and group work are encouraged. Students are given the tools needed for research and presentations. Oral presentations are also emphasised through debates, performances and talks.

Interdisciplinary projects are undertaken with other departments. Areas of interaction feature throughout the subject curriculum, with specific references to each area as appropriate to the topic. Numerous activities promote and develop Spanish, including attendance at lectures, exhibitions and theatre performances, excursions, special celebrations (Book Day and Humanities Week), and visits by writers. El Altillo International School is particularly notable for its work in developing creative writing. All students are strongly encouraged to enter literary competitions, including local contests. The aim is to introduce students to literary creation through activities that foster creative writing and reading.

The value of literature as a source of pleasure and learning, not only during school but throughout life, is undeniable, and El

Altillo International School considers this one of its main aspirations in promoting and developing the Spanish language.

7. MULTILINGUALISM TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT FOR SCHOOL STAFF

Teacher training in multilingualism at El Altillo International School is part of the school's commitment to continuing professional development and the objectives of International Schools Partnership's (ISP) Multilingualism Roadmap.
Under this framework, all ISP schools should be linguistically inclusive environments in which all students' languages are recognised, supported and celebrated.

In this context, all the school's teachers—at every educational stage—take an annual multilingualism course through Learning Hub, ISP's internal training platform, which promotes continuous improvement and collaboration among teachers. This training helps teachers strengthen their ability to communicate in different languages, better understand the needs of multilingual students and apply teaching strategies that foster inclusive and global learning.

8. SECONDARY SCHOOL ENGLISH/SPANISH INDUCTION PLAN

Teachers at El Altillo International School understand that multilingual students need a range of resources and tools to support their learning in real time. AI-based tools and EdTech platforms are therefore used to support and accelerate multilingual students' language development. Teachers can identify and adapt resources to support students at specific stages of learning in class. They also recognise the importance of developing a school-wide repository of adaptable materials with curriculum-aligned resources for multilingual students.

The main purpose of the secondary school induction programme is to provide students with the language skills they need to integrate more quickly into the El Altillo International School community and, ultimately, to follow the secondary school curriculum successfully. The programme is intended for new students who arrive with insufficient English and/or Spanish and is integrated into English Language and Spanish Language and Literature, combining the four essential skills—

speaking, listening, reading and writing—in accordance with the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages.

The programme aims to equip these new students, as smoothly and quickly as possible and without separating them from their peers, with the language tools needed to participate and progress in the main curriculum subjects. Students undergo an initial assessment of their level, followed by periodic assessments to monitor progress and determine whether they are ready to follow the regular course of study with their group. While it is possible to reach the required language level in one academic year, some students may take longer. Progress depends on their prior knowledge, academic level and commitment to improvement; students starting at a lower level may need more than one year. Since learning does not stop at school, induction students are actively encouraged to continue improving at home through a range of methods and media that support language learning.

The following strategies will help accelerate and maximise this progress:

1. Have a native English/Spanish-speaking tutor for two or three homework-support sessions each week. Additional language support.
2. Read aloud for 15 minutes a day.
3. Play grammar or vocabulary games.
4. Watch English/Spanish television programmes and films with subtitles.
5. Listen to music, audiobooks or podcasts in English/Spanish.
6. Follow additional teacher recommendations tailored to each induction student.

9. MYP LANGUAGE ACQUISITION PHASES. ENGLISH

Assessment in Language Acquisition courses in every year of the programme is based on four criteria:

Criterion A: Comprehending spoken and visual text.
Criterion B: Comprehending written and visual text.

Criterion C: Responding to spoken, written and visual text.

Criterion D: Using language in spoken and written form.

Teaching and learning in the Language Acquisition subject group are structured in six phases. When planning the Language Acquisition curriculum, Year 1 ESO students begin in phase 2, taking into account the level of proficiency that both intermediate students and beginners or new arrivals may reach by the end of the year.

Students joining the school take a placement test beforehand to determine whether their level is suitable for entry into the phase.

To enable students to meet the specific objectives of Language Acquisition (English), each of the main language skills is addressed—listening, speaking, reading, writing and viewing. The units planned throughout the year give students opportunities to practise and develop these skills.

In MYP English, speaking skills are developed through oral presentations, class debates, talks and speeches. To develop and broaden their knowledge of the language, students have opportunities to communicate in a variety of styles and forms for different purposes and audiences. The study of literature and language is integrated and organised around fiction and nonfiction prose genres. Grammar, spelling and punctuation are taught in context and according to students' individual needs. At every level, the aim is to foster enjoyment of literature and language.

10. LANGUAGES IN THE DIPLOMA PROGRAMME. SPANISH A: LITERATURE AND ENGLISH B.

The Diploma Programme at El Altillo International School is taught in Spanish, the first language of the vast majority of our students. Through the Group 1 Spanish A: Literature Higher Level course, the school implements the IB policy of supporting the study of students' mother tongue. This subject may be studied in any language with a sufficiently developed body of written literature; in our case, that language is Spanish. At the same time,

students study the content of the national Spanish Language and Literature curriculum, which enables them to sit the university entrance examinations (PAU).

The Spanish A: Literature Higher Level course focuses on a selection of literary works approached through three different areas of exploration. The course involves a thorough exploration of works from a variety of cultures, genres and periods. Students learn to appreciate the art of literature, think critically about their reading and present effective literary analysis in both spoken and written communication.

One of the programme requirements is for students to study at least one Group 2 subject, Language Acquisition. At El Altillo International School, this is English B at Higher Level.

Modern language courses emphasise acquiring and using the language in a variety of contexts and for different purposes, while promoting understanding of another culture through its language. The course is designed for students with some prior knowledge of the target language.

All students pursuing the International Baccalaureate Diploma at the school complete the Bilingual Diploma. They earn this qualification by taking, in English, not only the Group 2 subject English B but also a Group 3 subject—in this case, Environmental Systems and Societies. Universities abroad greatly value the Spanish–English Bilingual Diploma because successfully completing demanding subjects in both languages demonstrates language proficiency. The bilingual diploma reinforces our students' excellent language education and greatly benefits those wishing to pursue higher education in international settings or careers requiring language skills and intercultural competence.

DOCUMENT REVIEW AND DISSEMINATION

This policy will be reviewed annually. The most recent review took place in October 2025. Those involved in its review and dissemination were the leadership team, the secondary school and Bachillerato coordinators (MYP and DP coordinators), heads of department, and Diploma Programme teachers in Groups 1 and 2: Studies in Language and Literature and Language Acquisition.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

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