

# Language Policy



**CRAIGHOUSE**  
SCHOOL

## I. Craighouse Language Philosophy

When children learn language, they are not simply engaging in one kind of learning among many; rather, they are learning the foundations of learning itself... Language is not a domain of human knowledge; language is the essential condition of knowing, the process by which experience becomes knowledge. (Halliday, 1993)

Language stands at the centre of the many interdependent cognitive, affective, and social factors that shape learning. (Corson, 1999)

In Craighouse School, we believe that language is central to any process of learning; therefore, **“every teacher becomes a language teacher”** (IBO, 2014) since not only is learning a language important, but so is learning about a language and through a language.

We foster a multilingual environment by valuing and promoting the use of Spanish and English in both academic and social contexts. Through curricular offerings, language acquisition programmes, and the celebration of linguistic diversity, we create opportunities for students to learn, use, and appreciate different languages as a means of deepening intercultural understanding.

We actively promote translinguaging between English and Spanish as “the act performed by bilinguals of accessing different linguistic features or various modes of what are described as autonomous languages, in order to maximise communicative potential” (Ofelia García, 2009: 140). This approach allows students to draw on the full range of their bilingual abilities to enhance communication, deepen understanding, and strengthen their learning in both languages.

As stated by the IBO:

Translinguaging is a process in which students draw on known languages, naturally and flexibly, combining their elements to meet communicative and social needs. It is what your students are doing when they make connections between their languages or use language skills from one language to support another. By supporting translinguaging, teachers can help students make meaning, access content, and promote cognitive growth. Translinguaging activates prior knowledge embedded in a different language, whilst affirming cultural identity (2018, 1).

We believe translinguaging amplifies our pupil's meaning-making process and helps them overcome language constraints. In this sense, “teachers aim to build on students’ diverse linguistic practices in order to support them in expanding their linguistic repertoires to include features needed to develop different kinds of literacies and subject-matter knowledge and to perform in academic environments” (García & Li Wei,

2014). As part of our ongoing commitment to developing a whole-school translanguaging approach, we provide targeted professional development to equip teachers with strategies that integrate these principles into their practice.

Although definitions of language often differ depending on the source, we agree that language is a system of conventional symbols that allows us to represent reality and communicate our thoughts and ideas. As Wittgenstein stated, “The limits of my language mean the limits of my world” (2001: 5.6); thus, **being bilingual or multilingual broadens horizons, enriches students' identities as “global citizens” and develops the skills, abilities and competencies that we strive for**, especially those related to communication, international-mindedness and global perspective, as it appears in our pupil profile.

To this end, we believe that through language, our students get to know, comprehend and transform their world with words that become actions when they develop their communication skills. Through language, they get to know themselves, have the possibility to express their inner world and create in any field of knowledge, and ultimately contribute to a more peaceful world; therefore, language is a vital component of any learning process and, for this reason, **“all teachers become language teachers”**.

As the IBO states:

Educators need to understand the important potential role of language in cultivating intercultural awareness and international-mindedness. The pedagogical approach to language learning should:

- be open and inclusive
- affirm each learner’s identity and autonomy
- promote critical thinking. (IBO, 2014)

This Language Policy seeks to establish the framework for language learning in Craighouse from Early Years to Year 12. It is important to recognise from the outset that this policy is by nature dynamic, designed to be revised, amended and changed in reaction to and in anticipation of changes both external and internal to our institution.

## **II. What are our goals for Language Teaching and Learning?**

Our goal is to promote learning experiences that develop our pupils’ voices as they learn how to think critically and express their ideas accurately and effectively in diverse contexts.

Guided by the IB Learner Profile, we strive to develop internationally minded, bilingual learners who can communicate fluently in English and Spanish, value cultural diversity, and contribute to a more peaceful, interconnected world. Recognising that language is central to meaning-making and academic success, we build on students' diverse linguistic resources to expand their repertoires, develop multiple literacies, and participate fully in the global community. It is our mission that all pupils develop into fluent English and Spanish communicators.

### **III. What are our teaching and learning beliefs regarding language?**

In Craighouse School, the teaching and learning process is inquiry-driven and student-centred. Learning is maximised through a shared commitment to a constructivist, inquiry-based philosophy that aims to develop voice, ownership and agency empowering students to engage meaningfully with the world around them.

All fundamentals of language (grammar, spelling, vocabulary, phonemic awareness, sentence structure, meaning, and effective listening and speaking skills) are taught in meaningful contexts within a concept-based learning environment. Students are provided with explicit modelling of academic language across subject areas so they have the tools to express complex ideas with clarity and precision.

Learning more than one language enhances intercultural understanding and opens pathways to a global education, as language carries cultural perspectives, identity, and nuance. Bilingualism enables our students to access and critically engage with diverse texts, viewpoints, and experiences from around the world, deepening their understanding of themselves and others.

Pedagogically, we believe in offering a curriculum that is accessible to all and we favour individualised education to allow all pupils to make the most progress possible.

### **IV. What practices would encourage our Language Teaching and Learning Goals?**

In order to achieve meaningfully our Language Teaching and Learning Goals, it is imperative that all teachers employ a diverse range of methodologies and strategies that foster proficiency in all language areas. We firmly believe that by prioritizing the development of reading, writing, and oral communication skills, we not only enhance our students' language abilities but also bolster their overall skill set within the school environment.

Through the cultivation of strong communication skills, our pupils not only become more adept at expressing themselves effectively, but also enhance their social interactions, research and thinking skills. By emphasizing these fundamental language skills, we provide our students with a solid foundation that positively impacts their holistic development and prepares them for success in all areas of their academic journey.

### **- Reading**

At our school, we firmly believe that we are all readers, and we are dedicated to fostering a culture of readers among every member of our school community. For us, Reading is not just a subject to be taught but a lifelong skill to be nurtured. From the Early Years, we have implemented a balanced literacy programme. The focus is not only to teach students how to read but to develop them into avid and critical readers.

As our pupils' progress to the Middle and Senior sections, we continue to cultivate and reinforce this idea of being readers.

We understand that the development of readers extends beyond the classroom, which is why as part of our strategic academic vision, Craighouse School has developed the **"We Are All Readers"** initiative, a whole-community approach to fostering a culture of reading. This programme engages not only students but also their families, recognising that a strong home-school partnership enriches learning. Each year, we offer parent workshops tailored to the developmental stage of their children, equipping families with strategies to support reading from home. In addition, our Parents' Book Club has been highly successful, providing opportunities for parents of older students to read the same books as their children. This shared experience strengthens family connections, encourages meaningful conversations, and deepens engagement with literature across generations.

### **- Writing**

Aligned with our reading focus, we also place great importance on developing strong writing skills as an integral aspect. We believe that fostering effective writing abilities is crucial for personal expression and academic achievement. To achieve this, we offer a wide range of opportunities for our students to engage in both creative and formal writing experiences. Our Writers' Workshop, aligned with the balanced literacy framework, provides a platform for students to explore their creativity and refine their writing skills through various writing exercises and prompts. Additionally, we encourage individual and collaborative writing projects that promote critical thinking and effective communication. Our interactive and shared writing activities help students develop their ability to express ideas collectively. We also provide guidance and

practice in academic essay production, equipping our students with the skills to excel in their academic pursuits, such as the PYP Exhibition, Personal Project and Extended Essay. Furthermore, we actively take part in writing competitions and support our school magazine, providing real-world contexts for our students to showcase their writing abilities. By nurturing a strong foundation in both reading and writing, we aim to empower our students to become confident and articulate communicators in all aspects of their lives.

### **- Oral Communication**

We have high expectations for our students to cultivate advanced oral skills in both creative and academic settings. To facilitate this, we strive to create a supportive environment where students feel comfortable speaking openly and confidently during class time and throughout the school day. We provide a variety of engaging activities that encourage and develop their oral communication abilities. These activities encompass drama classes, poetry recitation contests, which promote artistic expression, debate experiences that foster critical thinking and persuasive speaking, collaborative conversations that enhance interpersonal skills, book clubs that encourage discussion and analysis, oral presentations that refine public speaking skills, and Socratic seminars that encourage thoughtful dialogue and active participation. Moreover, we understand the significance of preparing our pupils for IB Diploma oral evaluations and offer guidance and practice to excel in these assessments. Additionally, we provide opportunities for students to join the debate club, participate in Model United Nations (MUN) simulations, and engage in English competitions, all of which further develop their oral skills and enable them to find their unique voice and enhance self-discovery. By emphasising advanced oral communication skills, we empower our students to excel academically, express themselves confidently, and thrive in various real-world contexts.

### **V. How do we assess Language?**

We embrace various principles to ensure effective language assessment. One of our fundamental principles is the implementation of diverse and challenging assessment strategies that are contextualised to the students' learning experiences. We believe that through these strategies, pupils can effectively show their knowledge, understanding, and skills across different areas and subjects. By integrating language assessment into various contexts, we provide students with opportunities to showcase their language proficiency in real-life situations, enhancing their overall language development.

Timely and constructive feedback is an integral part of our language assessment approach. We prioritise providing feedback to students as promptly as possible, enabling them to recognise their strengths and areas for improvement. This feedback not only highlights areas of growth, but also offers specific guidance on how students can enhance their language skills. In our Readers and Writers Workshop classes, we conference individually with students, providing them with targeted feedback, opportunities to practise specific strategies, and support in setting personalised goals for future improvement. We encourage self-assessment and co-assessment, empowering students to take an active role in evaluating their own progress and engaging in collaborative evaluations with their peers. Through these practices, we explicitly develop students' metacognitive skills, helping them reflect on their learning processes, monitor their progress and make informed decisions about their next steps. By involving students in the assessment process, we aim to develop a sense of ownership and responsibility for their language learning journey.

We recognise the educational value of information gathered through language assessment. To ensure continuous improvement, we maintain a systematic process of monitoring and analysing assessment data. This allows us to identify students' strengths and areas of improvement, leading to informed decision-making in adapting and refining learning experiences in the classroom. By regularly assessing student progress and analysing data, we can tailor instruction and interventions to address individual needs, promoting greater language proficiency and growth among our students.

We understand the importance of constant communication among all stakeholders involved in the learning process. This includes fostering regular communication between the home, teachers, and students. We actively encourage the exchange of information to inform and engage parents, share best practices, make collaborative decisions, and address any concerns or challenges. By establishing a strong communication network, we create a cohesive and supportive environment that aligns all participants' efforts toward facilitating optimal language learning outcomes.

## **VI. Family Involvement in Language Development**

We believe that language learning flourishes when home and school work together. Families play a vital role in helping us understand each student's unique linguistic background and in shaping the learning experiences that support their bilingual development in English and Spanish.

From the PYP, families contribute to building each child's language profile, a living document that reflects their linguistic history, current abilities and future goals.

Teachers invite families to share information about the languages spoken at home, cultural influences and their aspirations for their children's language learning. This collaboration may take the form of questionnaires, family interviews and informal conversations that help teachers tailor instruction and support to each learner's context.

In the MYP, parents, students and teachers review progress in both languages, identifying strengths and areas for development during parent-teacher interviews throughout the year to align home and school practices, ensuring that language growth continues in their learning process.

In the DP, students take increasing ownership of their language journey. Families remain active partners as they can provide insight, encouragement and feedback as their children refine academic language, pursue bilingual diplomas and develop as global communicators.

## **VII. Craighouse as a Bilingual School**

### Language requirements for Admission

Little Darlings, Prekinder and Kinder pupils are not expected to know any English. From Year 1 onwards, an English evaluation will be administered to all prospective applicants to ensure fairness. The family is responsible for supporting children to reach the minimum standard if accepted with a language level below the standard (English or Spanish).

We also have a dedicated Spanish Language Acquisition programme for students whose first language is not Spanish. From Year 1 to Year 8, this programme is delivered in smaller groups, allowing for personalised attention and targeted support. It is adapted to the specific needs of each pupil, their year level, and the requirements of the IB programme. The aim is to serve as a bridge, enabling students to integrate successfully into their regular classes alongside their peers. This support is provided only during some of their allocated language hours, ensuring they continue to participate fully in the wider curriculum.

### English as the Language of Instruction

English is the language of instruction within the school from Playgroup until Year 6. This is what we understand as **full immersion**. During this period, all subjects are taught in English (with the exception of Spanish and Religion). Thus, a student's success in other subjects during this period of their education depends to a large degree upon their

proficiency in English. Subject teachers must be proactive in developing students' general language skills as well as the language skills required by their particular subject (for example, specific Science terminology). Teachers must also differentiate their lessons in order to cater for students who are not native speakers of English. From Year 9 onwards, we offer Language and Literature in English, while the rest of the subjects are available in Spanish. However, in the IB Diploma Programme, several subjects are offered in English. These courses are made available according to student interest and demand.

### First language learning

In most cases at Craighouse, the pupils' first language is Spanish. Since the language of instruction is English, we are committed to promoting what is most often a child's first language, Spanish. Specialist Spanish language teachers have classes with pupils in Years 1 to 6 upwards. Some extracurricular activities are carried out in English for pupils at these levels.

Craighouse welcomes pupils whose first language is neither English nor Spanish and seeks to establish instances for these pupils to share something of their language and its surrounding culture with their classmates and teachers. For example, we hold an annual International Day in which we celebrate our diverse international community. On this day, pupils are invited to present interesting aspects of their culture, such as traditional dances, typical dress, music, and other customs, providing the whole school with a vibrant opportunity to learn from and appreciate the richness of different cultural backgrounds. The aim of these initiatives is to foster curiosity, respect, and appreciation for diversity, thereby developing pupils' international mindedness.

### Other languages

Pupils who take Jewish religion classes from Years 1 to 9 learn to read and write basic Hebrew.

Pupils in Years 10-12 have the option to take the Ab Initio French course from the IB Diploma.

### Exposure to Linguistic Diversity

Craighouse believes it is beneficial for pupils to be in contact with diverse and varied instances of spoken and written forms of English and Spanish. Students are exposed to the language and culture of different countries where Spanish and English are used. Students -particularly older ones- are taught to recognise, identify, and appreciate the myriad of different languages that exist. The international profile of Craighouse's teaching body actively reinforces the diversity of language.

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