



ST. JOSEPH'S INSTITUTION INTERNATIONAL

St Joseph's Institution International High School, Singapore Language Policy

The contents of this document have been compiled collaboratively by the High School's Languages Faculty, the Mother Tongue/Home Languages Coordinator, the teacher of English as a Second Language, the Admissions Officer, the IB Diploma Programme Coordinator as well as the Senior Leadership Team. Moreover, the views of parents and students (gathered through conversations and surveys) have informed the discussions that have in turn led to this policy.

The term "mother tongue" is usually used in common parlance, and in the research literature, to denote the language learned first, the language identified with as a "native" speaker, the language known best, and/or the language used most. In this policy, the term to refer to all these meanings will be "home language" instead. This is to distinguish itself from the Singapore Ministry of Education's term "Mother Tongue Language", which is likewise used in this policy to refer exclusively to the government-approved additional language that Singaporean Citizens and Permanent Residents study alongside their home language.

This Language Policy contains the following:

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Philosophy

We believe that all students should be given the opportunity to develop their home language. We recognise the strength and the great benefits of learning one's home language as well as deepening understanding of one's own culture. The home language is an integral part of the student's identity, and a strong connection to a home culture leads to better self-esteem, intercultural awareness and international-mindedness.

We also strongly believe that, in an ever-changing linguistic world, students should endeavour to achieve a high level of competence in two languages. This is shown through the continued study of the home language, and an additional language.

SJI International shares the ethos of IBDP schools in the Singapore, Malaysia and Brunei region: with regards to appropriate language course placement. Students are to be placed on a course that is "an appropriate academic challenge for the student" as decided by the school "based on evidence of language proficiency" ([click here](#) to read this document in full).

Not only does the study of two languages enable our students to communicate effectively in an increasingly global context, but it also empowers them to understand the cultures of other people. Through language learning, we expose students to various societies and people who speak and use these languages, thereby providing students with a more holistic understanding and appreciation of other languages.



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Students' background

All students seeking admission to SJI International High School are interviewed and tested in English, and attempt a language paper for class placement in their additional language (if applicable) prior to joining SJI International. The language paper is not used as part of the decision-making process for admission to the school. For students whose additional language is English, please see the separate EAL policy.

Students at SJI International are:

1. Singaporean Citizens, Singapore Permanent Residents and Dependant's Pass holders who followed the education system of the Ministry of Education of Singapore prior to joining SJI International High School. In this system, the language of instruction is English.
2. Foreign students and Returning Singaporean Citizens/Singaporean Permanent Residents whose first language is English. They may or may not have learnt a second or third language prior to joining SJI International High School.
3. Students whose first language is not English and who have been learning English as a second language.

A survey was carried out in November 2019 to identify the distribution of home languages spoken in our student community. Starting in January 2020, this data will be collected from new students in all Grades at the point of entry. This data will be used for the following purposes:

- to identify students with home languages other than English/Chinese to make sure that we offer provision for them to continue the learning of their home language for academic purposes as part of our Home Languages Programme; and
- to inform all teaching staff of the home languages of their students so that they can choose to organise students of the same home language to work together when appropriate for their cognitive development (i.e. translanguaging).

The data collected as of November 2019 demonstrates that English is by far the predominant home language amongst our student body. Chinese is the second most widely spoken home language, and Korean is in third place. Other home languages in order of popularity are: Indonesian and Japanese, followed by Hindi, Vietnamese, Spanish and French.



Language of Instruction

Since language is central to learning, all teachers are, in practice, language teachers with responsibilities in facilitating communication within and outside classrooms.

- **First language English lessons**

In these lessons, English is used for teaching and learning amongst teachers and students.

Students focus on developing their language ability in all the four skills of the language, i.e. listening, speaking, reading and writing using various texts and media stimulus materials. As language is inseparable from culture, students learn the culture of the countries where English is the lingua franca. Literature in English is studied throughout the curriculum, from Grades 7-12.

- **Translanguaging in other curriculum subjects**

At SJI International, we employ the process of translanguaging, whereby multilingual speakers use their languages as an integrated communication system. Therefore, in lessons, whilst the medium of instruction is generally English, students and teachers of the same home language background are encouraged to use this language when appropriate. This is to foster cognitive development in students' home language. Students might present their oral and written work in English, but their home language (if different) might prove to be a useful tool in their cognitive development. The use of language in such an extensive and multidisciplinary way enables students to use the appropriate language register and to be more aware of different vocabularies, styles, structures and presentations. In this way, students' command of language should improve dramatically.

Students who use their home language to behave inappropriately do not demonstrate the code of conduct that the school expects of all students, and is therefore an issue separate to the choice of language used. In such instances, the school's Behaviour for Learning policy ([please see separate document](#)) will therefore be implemented.

English as an Additional Language

Please see the separate EAL policy.



Curricular Languages

Learning an additional language at SJI International is a compulsory part of our curriculum at all levels. In the classroom, teachers employ a range of active learning strategies in order to improve students' listening, speaking, reading and writing skills. It is a learner-centred approach which is not restricted to textbooks. Instead, students are exposed to various types of texts taken from a range of authentic materials. Students learn the language through diverse activities such as role-play, oral presentations and language games.

Students also learn the culture of the countries where the language is spoken so that they have a better understanding of the similarities and differences between their own culture and the culture of the language they are learning. In this way, students will have a positive attitude towards their own culture and that of others.

- **L1 vs. Target-Language use**

Within home language contexts, teachers and students use the target language (as it is also their L1) exclusively for teaching and learning.

In classrooms where students are learning a foreign or a second language, teachers have adopted an optimal position of target language use (as defined by Macaro, 1997). We believe that whilst teachers and students should always aim to use the target language as much as possible in these lessons, there is certainly value in teacher and student use of the student's home language (L1) through strategic translanguageing in order to contribute to learner interaction and learner output.

- **Language choice**

At SJI International High School, Singaporean Citizens and Singaporean Permanent Residents (if they do not have an exemption from the Ministry of Education) must continue to learn an approved Mother Tongue Language (Chinese, Malay or Tamil), a Non-Tamil Indian Language, or a Mother Tongue Language-in-lieu (Japanese, German, French, Thai, Arabic). Please refer to the school's Adherence to the Mother Tongue policy [here](#).

Singaporean Citizens and Permanent Residents whose approved Mother Tongue Language is not Chinese, Malay, Tamil or Hindi and who choose to study it outside of school have the option of starting Spanish for beginners in Grade 7 (or in rare cases, in Grades 8 or 9, if they enter the school at a later stage). If they also have prior learning of another language (in addition to their Mother Tongue Language which they study outside of school), they can choose to study this other language at school.

Students who are not beholden to the Mother Tongue policy are encouraged to continue learning the language they have studied prior to joining the High School. Those with little or no prior learning of another language typically choose Spanish, which is the only language course that is designed for beginners. On a case-by-case basis, students who fit this profile but who have a cultural connection to another language will be allowed to study this language: although these courses are typically designed for students who are continuing this language from primary school, students will receive differentiated



instruction to enable them to acquire the language at a level of challenge appropriate for their needs as a beginner.

- **Language courses: student placement in Grades 7 to 10**

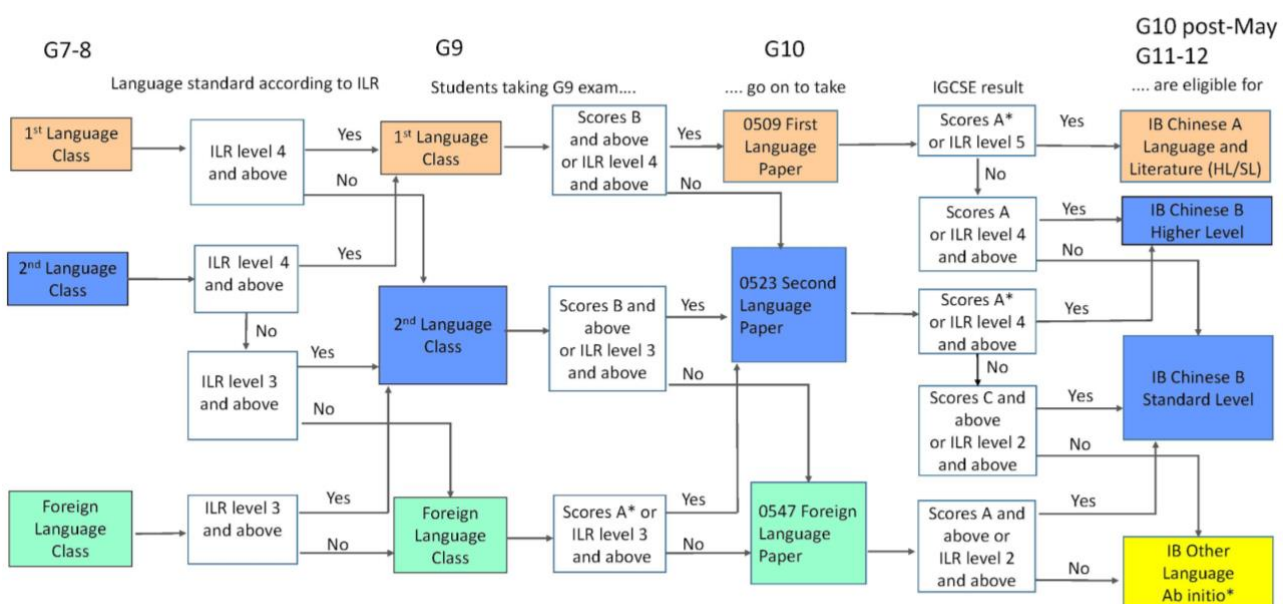
As part of the Admissions process for entry into Grade 7, all students from primary schools other than SJI International Elementary School are given a placement paper for the language they have chosen to pursue in the High School. Their written response allows teachers to gauge each student's current proficiency level in that language and to determine the most appropriate language course pathway. There is no placement paper for Spanish as it is primarily a beginner's course.

- **Chinese**

Students from SJI International Elementary School who continue to study Chinese are placed into High School classes by the Chinese teachers at the Elementary School according to their evidence-based understanding of the current language attainment level of each student. Chinese teachers from both the Elementary School and High School collaborate on a regular basis in order to ensure that students are placed into the correct class by examining student work samples.

In Grade 7 after the initial point of entry upto Grade 10, the placement of students is decided upon solely by the Chinese Department in the High School. Students of Chinese are placed in the class that best suits them in order to continue to provide them with the appropriate level of challenge. This placement is based on periodic benchmark assessments and the professional judgement of the teacher. Regular checks are made that students are placed in the correct classes and changes made when appropriate, as per the following diagram:

Chinese Language Course Routes



* Non-Singapore citizens, non-PR, and students who possess an exemption letter from the MOE may opt for other language courses at IB Diploma.



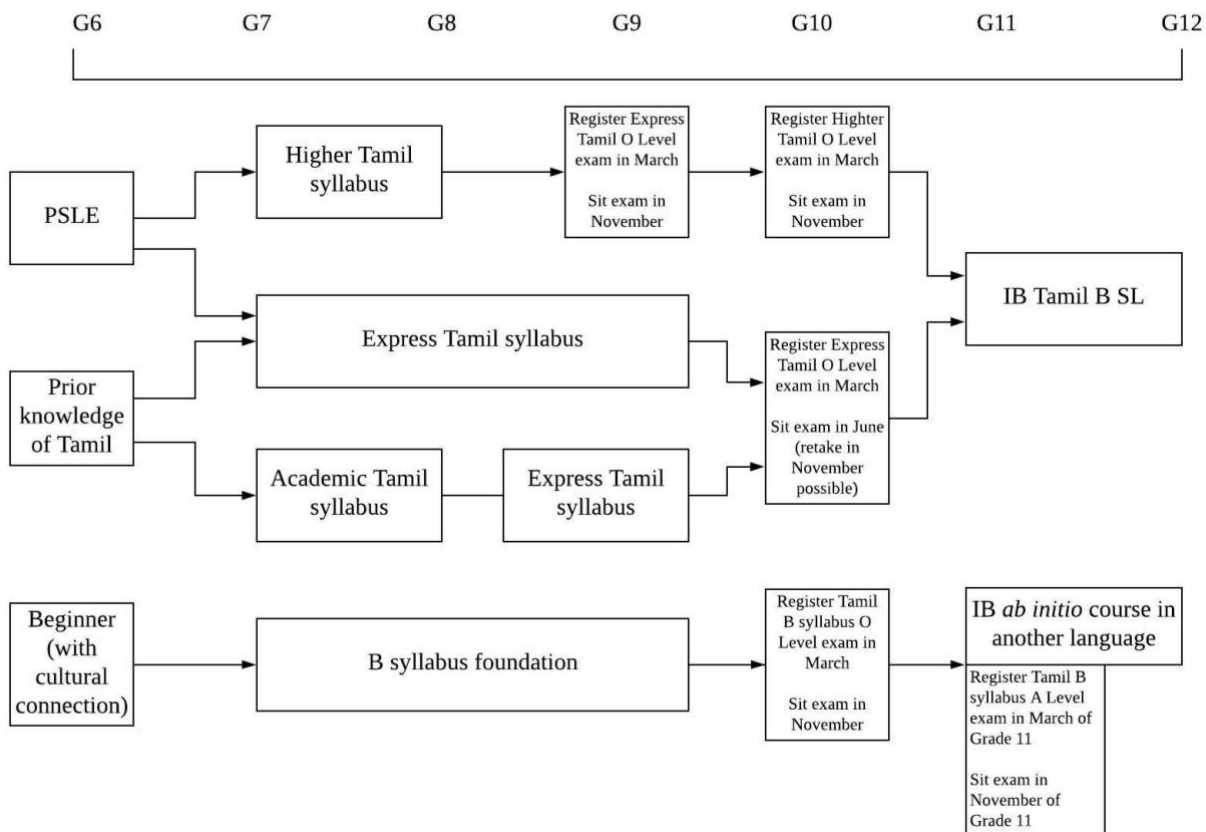
The level descriptors for the Chinese ILR scale referenced in the diagram above can be found [here](#).

Students of other curricular languages are placed in mixed ability classes, where appropriate challenge is provided through differentiation. This enables all students to be taught appropriately.

- **Tamil**

Within the same class in each Grade, students of Tamil follow the language course that best corresponds to their proficiency level as determined by the teacher based on the students' language placement paper sat prior to joining SJI International High School. Students then sit external examinations at various points according to the following diagram:

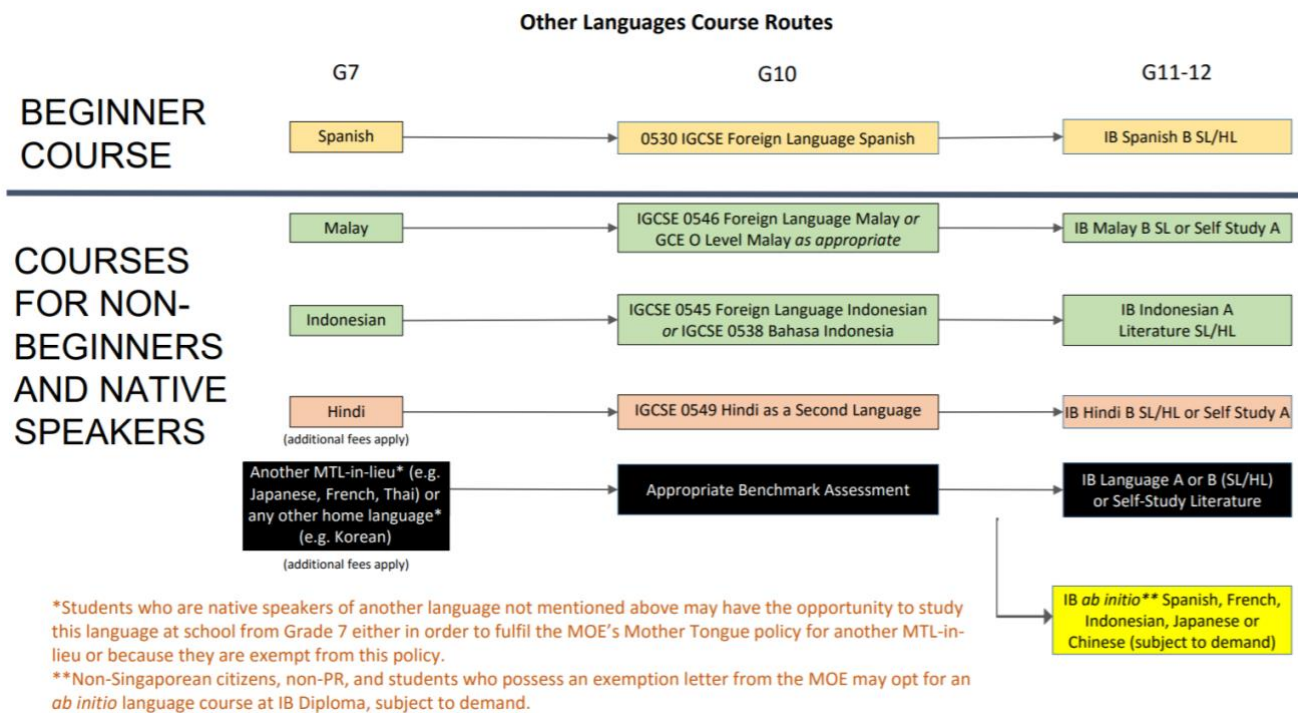
Tamil Course Routes at SJI International





• Other curricular languages

The following diagram demonstrates the courses and corresponding examinations that students of other curricular languages pursue. Where there is a choice in course/examination, this is decided by the teacher/department according to the students' current language attainment level, and to provide them with the appropriate level of challenge.



• Spanish from 2022 onwards

Beginning in January 2020, Spanish has been introduced in Grade 5 at the Elementary School with a class of 12 students. The Head of the Languages Faculty currently mentors the Elementary School Spanish teacher and oversees the provision of Spanish at the Elementary School in collaboration with the ES Vice Principal (Academic). This ensures that there is clear course alignment between both halves of the School for the Spanish curriculum.

This class will phase into Grade 6 in 2021; it is expected that, starting in January 2022, most of these students of Spanish will enter the High School, and they will have acquired a level of proficiency of Spanish that is higher than those starting in Grade 7 as a beginner. Based on student numbers, it is possible that Spanish will run in the High School on two concurrent pathways: a beginner's course, as well as a course for those with prior knowledge. Those students who are on the latter course will be encouraged to study Spanish B HL as part of their IB Diploma Programme.



● **Pre-IBDP *ab initio* Self-Study in Grade 10**

The school admits new students at the start of Grade 10 who then follow a one-year Foundation Course (FC) curriculum in preparation for the IB Diploma Programme in Grades 11 and 12. This FC curriculum normally requires students to continue their prior study of one of the additional languages on offer in Grade 10. However, some FC students will instead be given the opportunity to self-study, over the course of Grade 10, a new language (on offer as an *ab initio* language in Grades 11 and 12) if they meet the following criteria:

1. they are not bound by the Mother Tongue Requirements, as described in the section immediately above; and
2. they have never studied any of the languages on offer in the normal Grade 10 curriculum, or at least to the extent necessary in order to sit the IGCSE/O-level exams in that subject that year.

Self-study will be realised using online learning platforms such as Education Perfect. This is to provide students with a useful and purposeful head start to the *ab initio* course starting the following year, and is an endeavour that has been sanctioned by the IBO. Students' progress is tracked, and tasks and benchmarks are set throughout the self-study course for the following reasons:

1. to check that students are indeed using the resources and completing the activities on the platform on a regular basis;
2. to monitor how successful students are with each grammatical concept and vocabulary set learnt; and
3. to identify any areas of weakness which can be remedied by more independent practice or in a face-to-face conversation with teachers.

Furthermore, all students in Grade 10, if they are not bound by the Mother Tongue Requirements, have the option of discontinuing further study of their additional language (Chinese, Malay or Indonesian) upon completion of the IGCSE/O-level exams in May. This enables them to choose a new language *ab initio* as part of their IB Diploma in Grades 11 and 12. Therefore, as soon as the exams are finished, such Grade 10 students are likewise given the opportunity to self-study their new chosen language using online learning platforms such as Education Perfect in preparation for the following year.

● **Language courses: eligibility and student choice in Grades 11 and 12 (IBDP)**

For the IB Diploma Programme in Grades 11 and 12, teachers decide students' eligibility for Language A HL or SL or Language B HL or SL based on their attainment achieved in Grade 10. Students then have a choice of which language course to study out of these options (if more than one is offered to them). Although students are encouraged to choose the language course that will provide the most appropriate academic challenge, it is acknowledged that students will need to make this decision not in isolation, but rather from the holistic perspective of their entire Diploma package as well as of progression into Higher Education. For this reason, students considering a Language B course at Higher Level should consult the Mother Tongue Coordinator, the Head of Languages Faculty, the Vice Principal (Senior School) or the University Counsellors.

Students also have the option of studying a new language at *ab initio* level, instead of continuing their



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prior study of an additional language with a Language B course, if they are not required to fulfil the school's Adherence to the Mother Tongue Policy within school. Students who have sat an IGCSE or equivalent exam in a language are not eligible to study that same language at *ab initio* level in order to maintain the integrity of our acquisition courses. Students who are new to the school in Grade 11 often have diverse language learning profiles and varying levels of proficiency of a certain language: as such, the most important consideration when placing a student in *ab initio* level instead of Language B is that the course is a challenging academic experience for the student.

- **Experiential learning**

Immersion trips abroad (e.g. in Spain and in China) as well as activities such as outings, talks and cultural corners are organised to enhance and support the learning of the language and the culture.

Host Country Languages

The school complies with Singapore Ministry of Education's MTL requirements for Singapore Citizens (SC) and Permanent Residents (PR). All other pass holders do not come under the auspices of this policy. Please click [here](#) for the Adherence to the Mother Tongue policy.

Home Languages and Non-Curricular Languages

The aim of this programme is to help support the home language learning of students who are in our school community whose home language may be one we do not offer as part of our main curriculum. Students will be encouraged to study their home language to a high proficiency and will be able to study this language from Grades 7 to the IB Diploma (if the language is offered by the IBO), aiming to achieve a bilingual diploma (two group 1 subjects: Home Language and English). Please see the separate [Home Language Policy](#) for more details.

Foreign Scholars are informed upon entry to the High School that they will be studying their home language in keeping with the philosophy of the Home Language policy. Should the Scholar's home language be one that is not offered as part of the mainstream curriculum, scholarship funds are provided to enable them to study this language as part of the Home Language Programme.

Enrichment

Various outings and activities are provided for students which serve to develop their language skills. For example, our school has a Debating team which offers students opportunities to participate in inter-school debates. All students in Grade 7, 9, 11 and 12 take part in a social service to improve their communication skills with a variety of stakeholders. In the school magazine, One Voice, students have the option of creating articles in English, or in their Home Language. Students of SJI International also have the opportunity to participate in school sports and musicals. Throughout the non-academic



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programme, students with English as their second language are able to improve their command of the language through practical use.

There are also a wide variety of CCAs available which support students with their English language needs such as English mentoring and Study Skills, clubs for teaching Spanish and French language and culture, Chinese conversational classes, and school-supported Korean and German CCAs.

Support of library and other media

Resources for all languages are available in the school library and some classroom libraries. The librarian, teaching staff, parents and students all contribute to building up resources, which are not restricted to the printed media. Resources in students' home language are purchased as required.

Home support

Home learning for all languages constitutes homework formally set by the teacher, as well as self-directed study managed by students themselves. Please refer to the Homework section (page 8) of the Assessment Policy [here](#), which outlines the guidelines for teachers and expectations placed on students with regards to home learning.

Parents are encouraged to give full support to their children through close communication with the school, encouraging their children to use widely the languages they are studying, particularly in respect of all the four skills. There should be communication among parents, students and teaching staff. A parent-teacher conference is held at least once every academic year. Teachers can be reached by email or phone and extra meetings between parents and teachers can also be arranged.

The languages of communication used in the school and outside the classroom

Many languages are spoken within our school community; however English is the lingua franca.

Spelling

The use of British spelling is used for all formal communication.

Referencing protocol and bibliographic style

Teachers at SJI International have a clear understanding of the citing and referencing format their department uses. If in doubt, MLA format is the school's default, with library resources and support available.



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Professional development of teaching staff

All staff have received training (July 2019) highlighting the importance of differentiation for EAL students. Furthermore, differentiation strategies have been shared amongst some Heads of Departments for the purpose of dissemination and application by other teachers.

As of writing (June 2020), the Head of High School is going to be heavily involved with the whole School task force working out an EAL strategy going forward. As part of this strategy, it has been suggested that a new section be added to the High School's existing unit planners on the Eduplanet21 written curriculum repository, as part of the normal review and reflection process, for identifying and sharing key terms, phrases and language used in units of work and formative assessments to EAL students and support staff.

The Head of Languages will be running an INSET session (originally planned for July 2020, but postponed indefinitely for now due to COVID-19 restrictions) on the use of translanguaging by all classroom teachers.

The EAL team aims to train all staff to cater for the increasing need for EAL provision within all subject areas.

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A School of the De La Salle Brothers