Oslo kommune
Utdanningsetaten
Blindern videregående skole

IB Language Policy at Blindern Videregående Skole

The school's language profile

Blindern videregående skole was established in 2014 through the merger of two old and reputable upper secondary schools in Oslo, Fagerborg and Berg. It is a state-owned school that offers IB Programmes as an alternative to the Norwegian National Programme. The school has about 1.200 students including 115 DP students and 92 MYP students.

Blindern Videregående Skole has a highly qualified and competent staff. All teachers are certified secondary school teachers with an academic background from Norway or abroad. The teaching body is highly multicultural and made up of both native Norwegian speakers, as well as teachers from a diverse range of cultural and linguistic backgrounds. All teachers are highly proficient in oral and written English and many also master additional languages.

The IB programmes are delivered in English. Blindern videregående skole, being a publicly owned school, recruits students from all socioeconomic backgrounds. The large majority of our students within the IB programmes master English at C level (CEFR). The introduction of the Middle Year Programme in 2016 (MYP4/5) where English Language and Literature is a compulsory subject allows the school to ensure a language continuum, which has positive consequences on the language aptitude of the students in the Diploma Programme. On average 75 percent of the schools DP cohorts are enrolled in English A- Language and Literature.

Admission to IB programmes typically comprises of three groups, each with unique language profiles. The first group have attended Norwegian national curriculum schools, are largely native speakers of Norwegian and have a solid command of English. The second group consists of students who have some connection to Norway (a parent, citizenship or lived here more than 5 years) and speak Norwegian and English with varying degrees of proficiency. These students may have an additional mother tongue. The third group are students from various backgrounds where they are relatively new to Norway and unsure how long they may stay.

Role and place of the languages at Blindern videregående skole

At Blindern VGS the language policy is an action statement that determines our focus on supporting students in getting them where they need to be. This policy is grounded in developing an

understanding and integration of the IB Learner Profile. Students enrolling in our programme will be expected to approach the role of language as inquirers, communicators and risk-takers, thus embracing the core elements of what it means to be an IB student. The school is engaged in the development of proficient language skills to obtain an efficient academic development. All teachers share with the school management the responsibility of the students' language development in the language of instruction.

The school gives the students the opportunity to learn languages, learn through language and learn about language (*Language and learning in IB programmes*, 2014, section 4). The students are offered to study their own mother tongue or their academic language and to learn foreign languages. The students who have another academic language background than English or Norwegian are offered the opportunity to study that language through the Self-Taught Programme.

We believe that promotion and learning of foreign languages lead to knowledge and respect of different cultures and facilitates inclusion into the IB community and the Norwegian culture. This leads to a developed knowledge and awareness and gives new perspectives on one's own language and culture. Effective language skills are critical for developing balanced, open-minded and reflecting students. International competencies and language skills will be necessary for our students planning a professional career and aiming to live in a global world. We believe that these competencies will be acquired in the language classrooms, but also by being involved in extracurricular activities in the school, such as CAS and Service as Action.

Language offer in the Middle Years Programme

Blindern Videregående Skole aims to "encourage students to gain competence in an additional language with the long-term goal of multilingualism, enable students to develop lifelong learning skills and encourage students to develop an awareness and understanding of the perspectives of people from other cultures." (Language Acquisition Guide p.5)

Most of our MYP students master English and Norwegian at a satisfactory/above average level and will therefore study two Language and Literature courses. All the students attend the English Language and Literature course. For Norwegian, the school offers classes in both Language and Literature and Language Acquisition. As language is a key part of interdisciplinary learning, the school integrates different interdisciplinary units for several subjects e.g., Language Acquisition and Language and Literature in Norwegian and English.

All MYP-students will study a third language- French. The school offers all phases of French Language Acquisition. French native speakers are offered the opportunity to sign up for an additional foreign language through an offer by the Municipality of Oslo (Spanish, Italian, Japanese, Chinese-Mandarin, Russian, etc).

To support MYP-students in their language acquisition learning, the school documents each student's language profile at the point of admission based on previous school records and through conversations with students and parents. In addition, the language acquisition teachers carry out placement tests to determine the appropriate phase for the student.

Language offer in the Diploma Programme

The school offers two Language A courses, English and Norwegian, as well as Language A self-taught courses supervised by a Language A teacher.

The school offers three language B courses- English, Norwegian, and French. As English is the instructional language, English B classes will provide support for students who need to improve their English skills to excel across the curriculum in all subjects.

Students who do not have an academic background in Norwegian are encouraged to choose Norwegian B as this choice will facilitate their inclusion in Norway and allow them to fulfil the Norwegian language requirement for university admission in the country if they enroll in Norwegian B HL.

Language skills development in the language of instruction – a shared responsibility

At Blindern vgs IB Programmes are taught in English and all teachers share an equal responsibility for the language development of the students. Students should be given the opportunity to develop English language skills concurrently in all IB subjects while developing knowledge and skills specific to their subjects. This includes opportunities to increase vocabulary and further develop semantic skills. Subject teachers should draw special attention to the learning of Language for specific purposes (LSP) related to their subject area.

All subject teachers practice being language teachers in their subject by

- Teaching core academic vocabulary, subject vocabulary and command terms
- Differentiating teaching and supporting language learning differences
- Teaching subject specific writing styles and text type requirements

All students are expected to

- Use language as an inclusive communication tool
- Speak English in instructional context
- Speak Norwegian during Norwegian Language and Literature lessons
- Speak the target language in acquisition classes with support from the instruction language

Most of Blindern vgs' IB students master English at an academic level and have a background from schools where English is the language of instruction. Among the others coming from other national school systems some students will need additional support. The school strives to offer students with low proficiency in English extra English courses to enable a better participation and improvement in their subjects.

Additionally, extracurricular activities, can offer students the opportunity to further develop English language skills. As an example, The Blindern Vgs Model United Nations (MUN) Club which was established in 2007. This club provides students with an excellent platform with which to develop English language skills and utilize these skills in a professional environment through MUN Assemblies.

Involvement in these activities allows them to strengthen their oral and written English skills, engage with other language learners and participate in many oral presentations and report writing.

Engagement with the Norwegian Language and Culture

As a Norwegian publicly owned school Blindern videregående skole is strongly committed to prioritizing the students' access to and engagement with the Norwegian Language. The school prioritizes and assures the promotion of the Norwegian Language in the following ways:

- Norwegian is the prioritized language acquisition subject in both IB programmes.

- CAS/Service as Action is a key focus of the extra-curricular program, and this provides non-Norwegian IB-students with opportunities of being exposed to the Norwegian Language, as well as gaining understanding of the local culture and society. Conversely this gives Norwegian IB students the opportunity to experience their culture through the perspectives of non-native Norwegians. This strengthens the language capabilities of both the Norwegian IB students and students from an international background. Through involvement in these activities all IB-students are offered the chance to collaborate and interact with the school's community of language speakers. We believe that this involvement contributes to fostering mutual respect and understanding, as well as an inclusive school culture.

Promoting a language learning environment

The school has a suite of important language learning and support facilities accessible to IB students that are focused on effective language learning. The school's library has a substantial section of language support materials covering the main languages taught within the IB Middle Years and Diploma Programme. The library also provides a central hub for language learning in a quiet and reflective space and with access to a wide range of curated support material. The school's librarian plays a key role in the curation of these resources and updates resources to cover the syllabus of the IB subjects offered by the school. Another key resource that teachers and students have access to are the different support websites for their teaching and learning in class. Two of the most important resources are *Kognity* and *Inthinking* that provide a course companion for many of the IB subjects, and these digital resources have been very popular among students.

The improvement of language skills in the teaching language is an important part of the IB teachers' professional development. IB Teachers at the school participate regularly in IB workshops given in English.

This policy has been developed collaboratively by the IB community at Blindern vgs and it is reviewed every year in January. Date of last update- January 29th, 2024.

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