

## OPIS Language Policy

At OurPlanet International School Muscat (OPIS), we believe that language learning is essential in promoting the well rounded and holistic development of our students. Learning languages enables students to communicate and think more effectively, while learning through and about languages enhances cultural identity, international awareness and international mindedness through exposure to our community's diversity and a rich curriculum. All OPIS teachers are language teachers and have the responsibility to support student language development. Even though the primary language of instruction at OPIS is English, we place a very high importance on all of our students learning Arabic, and valuing the culture of our host country, Oman. We also value, encourage and support mother tongue language development.

### Early Years and PYP Grade 1

Within the Early Years Department at OurPlanet International School we follow aspects from the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS). This has been consolidated with the Language Scope and Sequence to provide a holistic education. This curriculum recognizes the critical role of literacy in shaping a child's overall development, communication abilities, and future academic success. The curriculum is thoughtfully designed to be developmentally appropriate, recognizing that learners progress through various stages of language acquisition and literacy understanding. It aims to create a strong foundation for effective communication, reading, writing, and comprehension skills, while also promoting a love for language and learning.

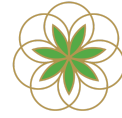
Key components of the Early Years Literacy Curriculum include:

**Oral Language Development:** Emphasis is placed on cultivating strong listening and speaking skills. learners engage in conversations, storytelling, and discussions, which enhance their vocabulary, articulation, and understanding of language nuances.

**Phonological Awareness:** learners are introduced to sounds, rhymes, syllables, and phonemic awareness. This component helps them recognize the building blocks of words, preparing them for later reading and spelling.

**Emergent Reading:** Through exposure to age-appropriate books and materials, learners develop an interest in reading. They begin to recognize print, understand book concepts (such as reading from left to right), and predict story sequences.

**Emergent Writing:** learners are encouraged to express themselves through drawing and early writing activities. This process supports the development of fine motor skills and the understanding that written symbols convey meaning.



**Vocabulary Expansion:** The curriculum introduces a wide range of words through stories, discussions, and thematic units. A rich vocabulary is essential for comprehension and effective communication.

**Comprehension Skills:** As learners progress, they learn to understand and analyse stories, make predictions, and recall details. These skills lay the foundation for critical thinking and analysis.

**Literacy Play:** Play-based learning activities, including interactive games, drama, and storytelling, are integrated into the curriculum to make learning engaging and enjoyable.

**Assessment:** Regular assessments, often through observations and informal evaluations, help educators track each child's progress and tailor instruction to individual needs.

## Primary Years Programme (PYP) Grades 2-6 & Middle Years Programme (MYP) Grades 7-10

### Languages of Instruction

*English (70%)* English is the language of instruction for 70% of the taught curriculum at OPIS. English Language (PYP), Personal, Social and Physical Education (PYP), Mathematics, Sciences, Social Studies (PYP), Art, Music, Design (MYP), English Language and Literature (MYP), Individuals & Societies (MYP), Physical and Health Education (MYP) and German Language Acquisition are all taught through the English medium in the context of transdisciplinary or standalone units in the PYP, and individual disciplinary or interdisciplinary units in the MYP. Islamic studies is also taught in English to all students who do not speak Arabic as a first language.

The aim of the PYP English Language and the MYP English Language and Literature programmes is to develop students into confident communicators and thinkers, with a sound knowledge of grammar and the creativity to apply this knowledge to communicate in multiple ways. Our main resource for teaching language arts is the Ontario Curriculum for English. This framework involves a clear outline of progression in language arts skills, as well as rigorous assessment tools for tracking students' development. Language lessons are differentiated, with students working on a variety of tasks in various different flexible groupings, in order to challenge and support all students, regardless of their level of competency or experience.

In the PYP, within this curriculum framework, the different strands of English Language are:

- Oral Communication
- Reading
- Writing
- Media Literacy



In the MYP, the English Language and Literature objectives are:

- Analysing
- Organizing
- Producing text
- Using language

*Arabic (30%)* Arabic is the language of instruction for 30% of the taught curriculum at OPIS. As Arabic is the language of our host country, as well as 21 neighbouring countries, learning Arabic takes on special significance at OPIS. Through the teaching of Arabic, we emphasise linguistic and cultural links to Omani and Arab culture across the curriculum, and through these links, students are encouraged to share and develop an awareness and appreciation for diverse cultures. Arabic language is delivered in two streams: Arabic as a First Language for Omani nationals and all Arab students who are nationals of the 22 Arab countries; and Arabic Language Acquisition for all students who do not speak Arabic as a first language, as well as students with exemptions from the MoE due to extraordinary circumstances.

All Omani students are required to follow the main objectives of the Omani Ministry of Education Arabic programme which runs in alignment with IB language scope and sequence in the PYP, and with MYP Language and Literature objectives in the MYP. Arabic as a First Language, Islamic Studies, and Omani Social Studies, are all taught in Arabic from PYP3 onwards. Arabic as a First Language is fully integrated in the PYP Programme of Inquiry and usually explores the same lines of inquiry. Arabic Language Acquisition, Islamic Studies and Omani Social Studies are integrated in some PYP units of inquiry in each grade level, following one or two lines of enquiry, or by making links to other subjects integrated in the units. When these subjects are not integrated in the PYP, teachers follow their standalone planner with its own central idea, lines of inquiry, key and related concepts and ATL Skills. In the MYP, Arabic Language and Literature and Arabic Language Acquisition are taught through individual disciplinary or interdisciplinary units. For Omani and Arab students in Grade 7 and above, Islamic Studies and Omani Social Studies are taught outside of the MYP curriculum. These subjects are taught in a way that fulfils Ministry of Education requirements, but are assessed using the criteria of MYP Individuals and Societies subject group.

### **Additional Languages**

*German* German Language Acquisition is introduced in PYP4 and is taught for two sessions per week in the PYP. Each PYP year has at least 2 units of inquiry with German fully integrated. For the remaining units, German is delivered as a standalone subject. In the MYP, German Language Acquisition is taught through individual disciplinary or interdisciplinary units for three sessions per week.

*English Language Support* OPIS has an English language support programme in place to support students new to learning in English. Based on current best practice, in EY1 to PYP1, English language



acquisition is supported through full immersion within the classroom environment. As English is the primary language of instruction at OPIS, students are required to demonstrate the linguistic capability to access the curriculum, especially in PYP2 and above. To support this, students identified with English language needs are assessed individually in order to ascertain their level of need. Once established, students are given an Individual Education Plan (IEP) to outline the necessary support that will aid the development of their English language skills, enabling them to access the curriculum. From PYP3 and above, students are assessed thrice a year using NWEA MAP Growth, a standardised data-driven adaptive diagnostic test. MAP results are used to support identifying students with English language needs. See *Learning Support* in the OPIS Diversity and Inclusion Policy for more detail on English Language Support provision.

*Arabic Language Club* The Arabic Department at OPIS organises a free after school support and enrichment programme intended for students for whom Arabic is a first language and for those learning it as an additional language. The programme is divided into three sections **(1) Support and Improvement**, designed to enhance the language skills of Arabic first language students in listening, speaking, and reading; **(2) Development and Enrichment**, designed to accelerate Arabic first language students' development into advanced phases of linguistic proficiency and literacy, with a focus on reading and speaking skills; and **(3) Communication**, designed for Arabic language acquisition students with a focus on developing communicative listening and speaking skills through linguistic immersion in realistic communicative activities that students are exposed to in their daily-life situations. The Communication section also includes basic content from the most common expressions in Omani Colloquial Arabic as well, intended to enable students to understand various aspects of Omani culture and interact with locals.

*Mother Tongue Development and Support* The significant cultural and linguistic differences within the OPIS community greatly enriches our learning environment by providing opportunities to appreciate the complexity and richness of culture, and to learn from our diversity to develop international mindedness. At this time, approximately thirty different languages are spoken in our school. We recognise and support the development of each student's mother tongue (first language or home language) by:

- Acknowledging and displaying the languages spoken by our community.
- Encouraging teachers to engage students in their mother tongue in inclusive and appropriate instances.
- Ensuring languages and cultural backgrounds are known and used as learning resources/opportunities throughout school life and curriculum teaching.
- Involving parents and members of the local community in participating in school assemblies or activities in the classroom.
- Promoting school community languages through our annual *Mother Tongue Language*



*Day*, as well as in other school events and celebrations.

- Encouraging parents to use their child's mother tongue in everyday activities, as well as storytelling, singing, and reading at home.
- Providing mother tongue books and resources in the Library with the help and support of our international parent body.

### **Language Learning Pedagogy**

At OPIS, we support language learning by:

- Promoting inquiry-based opportunities to expand knowledge and language skills.
- Making the transdisciplinary nature of language learning explicit to students (language learning happens in every subject, and in every lesson).
- Incorporating the teaching and learning of language into the Programme of Inquiry in the PYP, and in all subjects taught in the MYP.
- Planning, assessing and providing timely feedback to support the development of listening, speaking, viewing and presenting, reading, writing and media literacy skills.
- Providing opportunities for the teaching of additional languages.
- Promoting consistency of practice in the teaching and learning of English, Arabic and German.
- Accepting a variety of English and Arabic accents, spellings and vocabulary, and using these regional differences as an opportunity for students to further develop their knowledge, understanding, and accurate use of both languages.

### **Admissions**

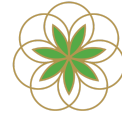
As English is the primary language of instruction at OPIS, students are required to demonstrate the linguistic capability to access the curriculum, with reasonable support, in order to be admitted to the school. Beginning from entry into PYP2, students applying for admission to OPIS take specific English language baseline assessments intended to identify and diagnose language level and any language learning gaps or needs. Results from these assessments are considered when making final admission decisions.

### **Language of Communication with Parents**

Communication between the school and parents is conducted primarily in English. At times and when appropriate, communication with parents will take place in both English and Arabic. When a family does not speak English or Arabic, the school reaches out to the OPIS community to support communication between parents and the school.

This policy should be read alongside the following policies:

- OPIS Diversity and Inclusion Policy



OURPLANET  
International School  
MUSCAT

- OPIS Admissions Policy

### **Policy Development and Review**

Policy reviewed in August 2021 by PYP coordinator and shared with academic staff.

Policy reviewed with Academic staff January 2022.

Policy reviewed and updated in January 2024 by MYP teaching staff, OPIS Senior Leadership Team.