Cambridge Assessment
International Education

Cambridge principles into practice: languages guide for schools

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This guide focuses on language use across your school curriculum and environment. It is made up of the following sections:

Introduction

This guide will help school leaders and others responsible for your school's educational programme to evaluate your approach to languages and develop an integrated language policy.

School leaders design the educational programme to meet the needs and aspirations of their learners. Curriculum decisions are at the core of the educational programme, but learning is also influenced by the broader school environment. Language plays a vital part in that learning and in developing the competencies to lead a fulfilled life. It is used in all aspects of school life, so the choices your school makes about language use will impact on the educational experience of every one of your learners.

The guide focuses on language use across the school curriculum and environment. It:

- identifies fundamental principles that we believe schools need to engage with while they evaluate their approach to language.
- considers practices that support these principles.
- describes how to develop a language policy.
- explains our programmes and the support we offer related to language.

Schools that follow Cambridge programmes will be teaching at least part of the curriculum through the medium of English. For some schools, English will be the language your learners know best and use inside and outside school. For others, your learners will be developing their English language through and for use at school. Many of your learners may know and develop other languages alongside English. This guide is for all schools and all learners whatever their language profile.

1. Languages in education: nine key principles

This section introduces some of the fundamental principles about language in education based on educational research.

1. We need language to learn.

For all students, whether they are learning through their first language or an additional language, language is a vehicle for learning. It is through language that your learners access the content of the curriculum and communicate their ideas. Language has long been considered fundamental for reasoning and conceptualisation. By using language to communicate, it helps us learn ways to think (Vygotsky 1978).

Language is at the heart of academic, social and personal learning in our schools. Opportunities for language use and language learning take place in all school subjects and all interactions. It is not just the domain of your language teachers and the language curriculum. Your learners develop their understanding of new concepts by discussing, reading and writing about what they are learning and making connections with what they already know.

2. Learners need support to develop academic and subject-specific language.

The language your learners use for everyday communication is not the same as the language they need for cognitively demanding academic study. Research shows that knowledge, understanding and use of complex language is key to academic achievement. The two types of language, 'conversational' and 'academic', are sometimes referred to as BICS (basic interpersonal communication skills) and CALP (cognitive academic language proficiency). This is based on the work of Jim Cummins (1984).

All learners need support to develop academic language, whether they are learning through their first language or an additional language. This includes learning subject-specific vocabulary (e.g. median in maths), high-frequency academic vocabulary that appears across the curriculum (e.g. examine) and functional language that supports specific cognitive processes (e.g. language for hypothesising in science).

3. Language skills, oracy and literacy can and should be developed consciously in schools.

Developing the four skills of speaking, listening, reading and writing that will support your students' learning across the curriculum should not be left to chance.

Speaking and listening skills can be improved so that your learners understand, express and communicate their thinking. An explicit focus on helping learners to develop these oracy skills has been shown to have a positive impact on achievement in, for example, maths, science and reasoning tests (Mercer 2014). Well-developed speaking and listening skills form the foundations for developing reading and writing skills.

Your primary school curriculum will place significant focus on reading and writing as these are fundamental for giving your learners access to further learning. Well-developed literacy skills are key to ensuring equal opportunity and improved attainment (Mellanby and Theobold 2014). Reading is the gateway to deepening subject knowledge, but successful reading is also dependent on core subject knowledge and vocabulary (Hirsch 1988).

4. Effective language use by teachers in the classroom improves learning.

How teachers use language in the classroom affects learning. This includes whether you or the learner is talking and what type of language is being used. Brief question–answer exchanges do not provide the opportunity for in-depth thinking. Questions that make learners draw on their knowledge and encourage dialogue allow your learners to use language to reflect, develop and explain their thinking (Alexander 2018).

5. For bilingual learners, languages are not separate but interdependent.

Learners who study through the medium of an additional language are becoming bilingual (or possibly trilingual or multilingual). Bilingual learners can speak, read, write and listen to each language. One theory is that each language has surface features such as grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation. Below the surface there is a shared skill, or underlying proficiency, that is common across languages (Cummins 1984). The languages are not kept separately in the cognitive system but interact with each other (Baker 2006).

Early bilingual education programmes tended to keep a strict separation of languages (Genesee and Hamayan 2016). By recognising that languages are interdependent and are a linguistic resource for learners, teaching can productively bring these languages into active contact (Lyster, Collins and Ballinger 2009). This means, for example, that the first language can be a useful tool for learning an additional language and new academic knowledge and skills. Such practices, sometimes known as translanguaging, recognise that drawing on more than one language is the norm for bilingual speakers worldwide (García and Wei 2014).

6. It is important to support the development of the first language for bilingual learners.

For learners who are introduced to a new language at school, it is important to continue to support and develop their abilities in their first language. The first language plays a key role in the overall personal and educational development of a bilingual learner (Baker 2000, Cummins 2000). By developing both languages, the learner has more exposure to linguistic processing and gains a deeper understanding of language and how to use it effectively (Cummins 2001). Literacy skills can be transferred from one language to another. How much is transferred and how quickly depends on the relation between the two languages and between the two writing systems. As such, students who are literate in their first language should also be encouraged to continue to read for pleasure in their first language (Bialystok et al 2005).

7. Language and identity are closely interrelated.

Language is not only used for communication, but also forms part of a person's identity as an individual and a member of a social group or groups. Language can help create a sense of belonging among a group. This could be a national, regional or even a subject identity, such as physicists or historians (Vollmer 2006). In the same way, language can provoke a sense of difference and a lack of belonging.

Your learners may have a complex set of cultural identities related to different social groups, contexts and language use. Schools should recognise the links between learners' identity and language (García 2009). Your learners can be encouraged to reflect on their own and other languages and cultures, develop an openness and curiosity towards them and make connections. Language proficiency in additional language(s) will make it easier for them to communicate and exchange experiences with learners from other cultural backgrounds.

8. There are cognitive, social and instrumental benefits to bilingualism.

There is a growing body of evidence suggesting that there are potential benefits to individuals and societies in being bilingual or plurilingual. There are: cognitive benefits such as increased mental processing capacity, greater control over information processing, improved memory, greater meta-linguistic awareness and increased mental flexibility; instrumental benefits such as increased opportunities for trade and increased income; and socio-cultural benefits such as improved health and improved intercultural skills (research quoted in Mehisto 2012).

9. Foreign language learning is effective when based on using language for communication.

Language evolved to address a need for social communication and there is increasing research evidence from neuroscience to show that language is learnt through social interaction (Kuhl 2010).

The view that a language user or learner is a 'social agent' underpins the approach taken in the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) (Council of Europe 2001). By seeing language learners as social agents, the CEFR sees 'language as a vehicle for communication rather than a subject to study' (Council of Europe 2017). It takes an 'action-oriented' approach which means that language learning should be directed towards tasks in which language is used for a purpose.

The outcomes of language learning are described using statements of what learners can do with language productively, receptively, in interaction and mediation. Since it was published in 2001, the CEFR has been highly influential in the design of foreign language curriculum, assessment and learning resources in Europe and across the world. This is relevant to schools as language learning as a subject in its own right through a foreign language curriculum is typically part of an educational programme.

Cambridge House Community College

Cambridge House Community College in Spain is a British school part of the NABSS group (the National Association of British Schools in Spain) where 90% of students speak Spanish as their first language. As part of NABSS the school is required to have a language policy. They follow the Cambridge curriculum as well as the Spanish and Valencian curricula and all teachers are native English speakers. The school also runs extracurricular events such as talent shows and singing competitions and takes part in international competitions like the Model UN and the European Youth Parliament education programme. The school finds that English is spoken by students spontaneously in subjects where they get particularly passionate such as PE, drama and music. Students typically leave Cambridge House to go on to higher education in one of three destinations; Valencia, the UK or a European university where they enrol in an English language programme. The education that students receive at Cambridge House prepares them well for further study by widening their horizons and offering much more than a high level of English language instruction.

2. Languages in your school: guidance for school leaders and teachers

This section describes areas of school life that are related to language. It gives guidance for school leaders and teachers on issues to consider and suggests actions you can take to develop a whole-school approach to language.

Introduction

Language lies at the heart of learning. Schools almost always have learners with a range of exposure to and competence in different languages. This reality should be reflected in a coherent approach to languages that reflects your school's context and supports your mission statement and educational values.

Decisions about language learning and use have a direct relationship with:

your curriculum e.g. subjects, learning outcomes and language-medium of instruction.

your learners e.g. language background, development and future expectations.

your teachers e.g. language background and professional skills.

your whole school e.g. environment, co-curricular activities and community engagement.

Below, we explain these areas in detail.

2.1 Your curriculum

It is important that the role language plays in the curriculum reflects your school's mission, values and context. When designing your curriculum:

Think about…

- Which languages should your learners know and to what level?
- Which subjects will be taught with English as the medium of instruction? In which years?
- Which subjects will be taught with another language as the medium of instruction? In which years?
- Which languages will be taught as a subject? In which years?
- How will your learners demonstrate and gain recognition for their language skills?

Curriculum design

Your school's educational mission should include expected outcomes in terms of language learning. It should make the school's position on languages clear and describe which languages learners should know and to what level by the time they leave school. Your school will then require well-designed and well-supported curricula to achieve your educational mission and aims. We provide

comprehensive guidance on designing school curricula in *Implementing the Curriculum with Cambridge: A Guide for School Leaders*.

Language is experienced in the school curriculum in two main ways:

1. As the medium of instruction. This can be:

- most learners' first language.
- most learners' second (or third) language.

2. As a subject in its own right. This can be:

- study of the learners' first language.
- study of the learners' second (or third) language, where this is also the medium of instruction.
- study of an additional, or foreign, language.

When designing your curriculum, think about how your learners will experience languages in early years, primary and secondary, and how this will help them to achieve the outcomes expected by the end of their schooling. For each stage, your curriculum should define which subjects are taught, in which language, and which languages are taught as a subject.

These choices should provide a coherent pathway so that your learners develop their language proficiency at a realistic pace. This will help them to achieve the intended outcomes for language learning, as well as supporting their learning in other subjects. We offer a range of language programmes and qualifications for schools to choose from (see section 4 of this guide).

Remember: these curriculum decisions cannot be taken in isolation and should take into account the learners, teachers and wider school context.

2.2 Your learners

The language profile of your learners, the language profile of your school and the wider socio-cultural and linguistic context all impact on learning. To make sure you meet your individual learners' needs:

Think about…

Language background

- What is the language background of learners at your school?

First language development

- How do you support the development of your learners' first language?

Linguistic and cultural diversity

- How do you use the school's linguistic and cultural diversity positively?

Support and inclusivity

- How do you identify your learners' needs for support with language?
- How do you provide support for language?

Well-being

- How do you provide language-sensitive pastoral care?

Language background

Like many schools, you may have learners with different language backgrounds. Many of them may share a first language, but this language might not be the medium of instruction. You may have groups of learners in your school who form a significant language minority. Or you may have individual learners who do not share a language with others. It is important to be aware of and respect your learners' language background as it will impact on their learning, their identity and their social integration. Make sure you are familiar with and understand their language profile. To help you do this, you can use our *Questionnaire: The Languages in your Life*.

First language development

From early childhood, proficiency in the first language has a powerful impact on cognitive development. Think about how you will help support the development of each learner's first language. Take into consideration how many of your learners share the same first language and the language skills among your staff. You could also ask parents or others in the community to provide in-school support.

Some options for supporting your learners' first language at school include:

- Give some lessons in this language. This might be language and/or non-language subjects.
- Provide books and other resources in the library.
- Give access to online resources.
- Set up language clubs at school, so learners from different classes and year groups can meet.
- Set up online links with learners in other schools, communities and countries who share the same language. This might be as a class or for individual learners.
- Offer extra-curricular activities in the language.

It is important to encourage parents and carers to help children maintain their first language at home, particularly in the case of younger learners. They can do this by using the language at home, reading with their children and where possible, keeping links with the community that speaks the language, either in person or online.

Linguistic and cultural diversity

Your learners' motivation and success in learning another language will be impacted by their perception of people's attitudes towards their own language. In most multilingual contexts, one language has more status. This might be because it is the language that is viewed as most useful, the language of power or perhaps the 'cool' language.

Be aware of how language background might affect how your learners relate to others: they might form sub-groups or individuals could become isolated. Making sure learners from different backgrounds interact regularly is fundamental in helping them to understand each other. You could do this by

thinking about seating plans in class or how to group your learners for cooperative learning activities.

Take proactive decisions that help to develop intercultural understanding by valuing and bringing awareness to what individuals bring with their varied linguistic and cultural backgrounds. This could include simple actions such as: making sure teachers and learners know how to pronounce everyone's names in a way that makes them feel comfortable; and being aware of special culture-specific days to mark them in some way.

Support and inclusivity

It is important that you track your learners' progress, so you can provide the right level of challenge and support. You need to be ready to identify when any problems with academic progress might be as a result of problems with language. Your learners may, for example, understand concepts but not have the language or the confidence in using the language to answer questions and explain their thinking.

Sometimes it is clear that learners are likely to need language support, such as when an older learner joins an English-medium school with limited previous experience of English-medium instruction. Differences in confidence and proficiency with languages can be for a number of reasons, for example:

- Learners have had varying exposure to linguistically rich environments.
- Their home language is different from the language-medium of instruction at school.
- They are in a country or social environment where they do not know the majority language.
- They have specific learning difficulties, such as dyslexia.

A whole-school approach to support will give each of your learners the best chance to access the curriculum successfully. There are a number of options for providing additional language input. Consider which will work best in your situation depending on:

- your staffing requirements and skills.
- available space in your school.

- the timetable.
- the number, age and proficiency levels of the learners.

Three key approaches to providing support are:

1. In-class time during the usual lessons, where an additional teacher or teaching assistant is available to work with individuals.
2. In-class time where the learners are taken out of lesson to have separate sessions.
3. Outside regular class time.

Well-being
Your school should be a safe place for learners, with an atmosphere of trust that enables learning. As part of the approach to pastoral care, consider how to deal with a situation where your learners are not confident in the language used at school. Think about whether it is possible to provide personal and emotional support in their preferred language (possibly through using interpreters where necessary) and make sure your staff leading pastoral care are sensitive to language issues.

2.3 Your teachers

All teachers are responsible for learners' language development. It is important to establish expectations related to your teachers' role with language. In terms of your teachers' language knowledge, skills and practice:

Think about…

Language proficiency
- What is the language proficiency of the teachers at your school?
- How can you provide language development for your teachers if needed?

Language awareness in teaching
- How can all your teachers develop language awareness?
- How do teachers use language(s) in non-language subjects?

Feedback and marking
- How do teachers give feedback on language?
- How do teachers respond to language in assessment and marking?

Resources
- How do teachers select, adapt and supplement resources to make sure they are suitable for your learners in terms of language?

Collaboration
- How do your language and subject teachers work together?

Professional development
- What professional development opportunities related to language are there?

Language proficiency

Schools will often have teachers with a range of language backgrounds. Teachers might: speak the language of the local community; use English from a different English-speaking country (e.g. UK, US, South Africa); or teach through the medium of their own second or third language. As with learners, it is important to understand, respect and recognise the language and cultural expertise teachers bring.

A key requirement is that teachers have a high level of proficiency in the language that they use to teach. Teachers' language proficiency includes: subject-specific language; pedagogical language (such as for classroom management); and social language to interact with learners and others as individuals. Where teachers are not using their first language to teach, consider whether they need any professional development support for their own language development.

Language awareness in teaching

In all subjects, your learners use language to access the content, develop their understanding, communicate their ideas and demonstrate their progress. All your subject teachers need to be aware of how language is used in their subject and the demands that language presents for learners.

When planning lessons, your teachers need to think what strategies they will use to overcome any potential barriers and give support for, or scaffold, learning. Your subject teachers might think this is not their role. But language is fundamental to learning so any barriers to learning must be reduced as far as possible and steps taken to ensure an inclusive classroom.

Your teachers should become aware of and plan for how learners will use language in reading, writing, listening and speaking in their subject and in lessons. Active participation is important for learning, so learners need to have the confidence in language to take part. All teachers can be 'language aware' and know how to deliver their subject to learners at different stages of acquiring academic English. For example:

- ✓ Plan language support to help learners understand and communicate content.
- ✓ Highlight and pre-teach content vocabulary.
- ✓ Give useful functional language (e.g. 'if…, then…' to describe cause and effect).
- ✓ Give glossaries of key words in the first language and second language.
- ✓ Provide a language-rich environment by using all four skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing).
- ✓ Be aware of 'social language' versus 'academic language'.
- ✓ Think aloud and describe what you are doing.
- ✓ Give visual support using pictures and diagrams.
- ✓ Use body language and gestures.
- ✓ Give learners time.
- ✓ Repeat, say a sentence in a different way and give examples.
- ✓ Encourage learners to ask if they don't understand.
- ✓ Ask learners how they say the word or sentence in their first language.
- ✓ Consider 'translanguaging' – read/listen/watch in one language, discuss/write in another.
- ✓ Encourage language-learning skills (e.g. paraphrasing, asking for clarification, dictionary skills).
- ✓ Encourage critical thinking about language (e.g. comparing languages, being precise, assessing their own progress in a language).
- ✓ Give feedback on language as well as content.
- ✓ If a resource is difficult, adapt the resource (e.g. simplify it) or help learners access it (e.g. reading strategies).

At times, it can be beneficial to use more than one language. Your learners could use their first language, for example, to discuss ideas among themselves or to research different sources on a topic. Make sure expectations are clear in terms of how your learners will produce evidence of understanding and progress. As an outcome from their discussions or research, they could be asked to give a presentation in the intended language-medium for the subject. Evidence of learning should be in the language as expected in the curriculum for that subject.

We offer support for your teachers in developing language awareness and planning for a language focus in lessons. See section 4.

Feedback and marking
Giving feedback is a key part of the teaching and learning cycle. Your teachers should include a focus on language that will support learning. Some learners will need support with language so that they can confidently access and demonstrate achievement in the content of a non-language subject. Others may be able to achieve even more if they learn additional strategies for language use in a subject. For example, learners writing a history essay can benefit from sophisticated language use. If learners regularly receive feedback on language across the curriculum, this helps them develop valuable learning strategies that they can apply more widely.

When your learners are working towards external exams, the language of ongoing assessment should be the same to provide sufficient practice and targeted feedback. Learners should also know and understand the words that are typically used in exam questions.

For more formal assessments or tests, it is helpful to have an agreed approach at a department and school level about how to respond to language in non-language subjects. For more on our approach to assessment and marking, see section 4.

Resources
Teachers should select resources that meet learners' needs in terms of content and also language. The language used in resources needs to be clear enough for your learners to access and understand subject content, but it should also develop their language skills.

When deciding what to use in lessons, teachers will have criteria they use to select appropriate resources. Often these criteria are implicit, rather than explicit. It can be helpful to reflect on the choices being made, so that you can make positive and productive decisions. There are general considerations, such as making sure the resources are relevant to the learning outcomes and age-appropriate. In relation to language, you should also consider characteristics such as:

- Clarity of the language content. Make sure it uses accurate, subject-appropriate language and consider whether your learners will have any difficulties understanding the language used.
- Use of visual support. Are there photos, diagrams or other graphics that support understanding?
- Cultural relevance. Does the material include cultural references that learners might not understand?
- Language skills. Do your learners need to read, write, speak or listen when using the resources?

As well as making choices in selecting materials, teachers will often have to adapt and supplement them to provide appropriate support and challenge from a language perspective. Ways of doing this include:

- Add visual support.
- Use more than one type of input (e.g. print, digital, audio, video).
- Pre-teach or add definitions for key terms.
- Use subtitles on videos.
- Give written as well as spoken instructions.
- Give more/less time.
- Provide writing/speaking frames (e.g. provide the start of sentences).
- Expect more/less extended spoken or written responses.
- Use monolingual or bilingual dictionaries.

Collaboration

Your learners experience language throughout the school day and across the curriculum. They may also be developing expertise in several languages at the same time. For them, the languages are not compartmentalised, but all form part of their daily reality. It is important to recognise the connections that your learners can make across different curriculum areas, including language.

For an effective integrated, whole-school approach to languages, teachers need to collaborate. You should know what the expectations are of your learners in different languages and what progress they are making. Find out what teachers responsible for teaching different languages are focusing on and share information about your learners' development. This is particularly important in the early years of primary when children may be learning to read and write in more than one language.

At all stages of schooling, take the opportunity to draw on knowledge from other languages, developing your learners' language-learning skills.

Language and subject teachers can collaborate to support language needs for learning. Language teachers can help subject teachers develop their language awareness. They may also be able to align some of the language programme to subject-specific learning. Some language lessons might also be used to address language needs identified by subject teachers.

Professional development

You can continually develop your teachers' professional knowledge and expertise. Teachers should be encouraged to consider language as an important component of professional development. Two key areas are language proficiency, if the language of instruction is not their first language, and language awareness.

Your school needs to make sure that all teachers have the language proficiency needed to teach their subject effectively and to provide support where there are development needs. All teachers should develop their language awareness so that this aspect of their professional practice helps your learners achieve excellent learning outcomes.

If your school has policies and practices related to teacher professional development, these should incorporate a language element. This could mean, for example, that language awareness is a focus for classroom observations or learning walks.

The Anglo School

Most learners and teachers at The Anglo School in Uruguay speak Spanish as their first language. The school follows two curricula: the Spanish department follows the Uruguayan National Curriculum and the English department programme is based on the Cambridge curriculum. When the school first adopted Cambridge International, the two departments carefully analysed both programmes and decided which topics would be delivered in Spanish and which would be delivered in English. They also identified topics that would benefit from being covered in both languages, to help reinforce the concepts. It was decided that the Spanish department would introduce the topic then the English department would reinforce and consolidate. At Secondary level, the school opted to teach subjects in English that allowed for the development of a wider range of language but did not overlap with what was taught in Spanish. This made it more motivating for students as they were learning new topics both in Spanish and in English.

2.4 Your whole school

Language is used throughout your school and school day, not only in lesson time. A whole-school approach to language links many areas of school life and is relevant to every member of the school community.

To inform decisions about the role languages play in achieving your school's mission and vision:

Think about…

Environment

- Which language or languages do you use for displaying school information?
- Which language or languages do you choose for displays of learners' work?
- What range of languages and cultures are represented in visual displays?

Language of interaction

- Which language do you use in all areas of school life?

Communications

- What language(s) do you use to communicate with all staff in your school?
- What language(s) do you use to communicate with the home?

Co-curricular activities

- In which language(s) do you offer regular co-curricular activities?
- What events do you hold to celebrate different languages and cultures?

International links

- What intercultural and international links do you have and how do you develop them?

Careers guidance

- What support do you provide about language and international requirements for learners leaving school?

Environment

As soon as someone walks into your school, they will learn about the school's approach to language. What they see has an immediate impact on how a learner, teacher or visitor expects language to be used in that environment. There are many types of written language visible in schools that relate to administration, activities or events, such as signs, notices and school brochures. This environmental language is also an opportunity for everyday exposure to a target language and helps build the language community.

Your school should make active choices about which language or languages information is displayed in. Are there signs in:

- the language of instruction?
- the national language (where this is different)?
- a regional language?

It is important that the signs communicate clearly to the expected audience. If, for example, it is likely that not all people in the building understand English even when this is the language of instruction, signs need to include a language that means they are still useful – so bilingual signs can be helpful here.

Displays of your learners' work inside classrooms and in communal areas of the school are a good opportunity to give visual evidence of how languages are used in your curriculum. You need to take decisions about the balance of learner work displayed in each language, being aware that these choices communicate not only your learners' achievement but also the approach and importance put on learning in these languages.

Visual displays are an opportunity to showcase all the languages and cultures represented in your school community. They can also be used to highlight the international or intercultural links your school has developed.

Language of interaction

Along with what is read, the language heard in different situations has an impact on the whole school environment. When designing the curriculum, your school will have made key choices about which language is used during class time. In addition to this, you should think about the language used during other

moments of the day such as in corridors, at lunchtime and between staff. Consider your school's expectations about how and where each language is used and how they fit with the school's philosophy on language.

Make decisions about how language is used according to location, time and purpose. The whole school community needs to understand and be ready to implement choices such as:

- Do teachers always communicate with learners in their language of instruction, both inside and outside the classroom?
- Which language are learners expected to use when moving between classes? How is this monitored?
- Which language are teachers and other staff expected to use among themselves?
- Which language do learners use when speaking to non-teaching staff?

Communications

You will need to think about which language is used for communicating information both inside and outside the school. It is important that all staff, both teaching and non-teaching, can access all the information they need. If your school has staff with different language backgrounds, you will need to decide which language is used for which information. It is essential that all staff can understand all messages for practical reasons. It also helps build a school community.

Consider how you will provide information in different languages where it is needed. If your school has a large number of staff with different language needs, written documents should be produced in more than one language. If only a few staff have different language needs, identify staff who can take on the responsibility of communicating with those who do not have language proficiency in the language of your school administration.

Parents' or carers' engagement with their child's learning is essential. For schools with international staff and/or international learners, it is important that you plan how to communicate with the home. It might be appropriate for written messages to be provided in more than one language. At times, a learner may have the language skills to act as an interpreter between teacher and parent/carer. Although this can be helpful, it is not always desirable as teachers may need to communicate with sensitivity about challenges learners are facing. Your school should consider the options it has to make sure the school/home connections are positive and constructive.

Co-curricular activities

Your school's co-curricular offer forms an important part of your learners' experience. These activities that take place outside curriculum time are an opportunity to provide a rich and diverse language environment. Your school should consider the breadth of co-curricular offering and the links that can be made with learning across your school.

Regular activities can be offered through the medium of instruction to complement the learning in class or in another language to broaden the language base. Your learners might participate in drama, dance, music or other activities to get an insight into and develop their relationship with the cultural aspect of a language context. Some activities, such as martial arts or music, use terminology taken from one language and your learners can be made aware of that, regardless of the language they are participating in.

One-off events can celebrate connections with the language backgrounds represented in the school and community more widely. You could set up events as a class, for year groups or the whole school, such as:

- assemblies.
- inviting visitors into the school.
- music or dance performances.
- sports events.
- art and craft exhibitions.
- food festivals.

International links

Having a language-rich environment inside your school gives your learners an excellent basis for developing their language skills and intercultural competence.

Links outside the school, local community and country give learners real opportunities to put these skills into practice and to develop their global citizenship. Where learners are learning each other's language as a foreign language, direct contact can be a powerful motivating experience.

Your school can make connections with other schools where learners have different language and cultural backgrounds. Your learners might interact directly with learners from a country where they speak the language of instruction (e.g. if learning in English, connecting with learners from English-speaking countries such as the UK, Canada or New Zealand). Your learners might also interact with learners from a country where the language of instruction is used as a common language (e.g. Chinese learners in China connecting with Dutch learners in the Netherlands using English).

There are many ways in which connections can be made, such as: online, either individually or through class projects; or in person, through school visits and exchanges. You can help make the most of these contacts by sharing objectives and vision for language development and intercultural understanding.

Careers guidance
As your learners come towards the end of their schooling, they will need to make decisions about what they will do in the future. Your school has an important role to play in giving information and guidance to help them make the most of their interests, strengths and opportunities.

Some universities, courses and professions require certain levels of language proficiency and have specific requirements about the kind of certification or evidence they accept. Your school should be well informed so that you can provide guidance and opportunities to your learners to fulfil the requirements they need for future success.

Cambridge qualifications are accepted and valued by many leading universities and employers around the world. We publish a variety of resources to support Cambridge learners who are applying to universities. Find out more on our webpage Guidance for schools and students.

3. How to develop your school language policy

This section explains the purpose of a school language policy, what it contains and how you can develop and implement one.

3.1 What is a language policy?

A policy is a guide for action based on clear principles and should be used to influence practice and decision-making in your school. A language policy states your school's position on language, the mission and aims for your learners in relation to language and the guidelines for practices that will help achieve them.

We require a number of supporting documents for the Cambridge registration process, so if your school has completed that process, you will already have some policy documents. A school language policy is a requirement, specifically for bilingual and multilingual schools. It is valuable for all schools to develop and implement a language policy that lays out what principles you will follow for all decisions about language in your curriculum and school.

3.2 Who should develop your language policy?

Language impacts on every area of school life so the development of your language policy should be a collaborative effort. It should take into account and engage with the whole school community. The work can be led by a small group that has responsibility for drawing together information, expertise and views from other stakeholders.

We provide general guidance on how to develop school policies in our guide for school leaders *Developing Your School with Cambridge*.

St. George's School (Colegio San Jorge de Inglaterra)

St. George's School (SGS) is a bilingual (Spanish–English) school in Colombia. Its language policy creates clear definitions for the three languages it teaches and uses. Spanish is defined as the first language and, in the majority of cases, is the home language. English is defined as the second language for academic, cultural and personal purposes. French is defined as a foreign language. Writing the policy encouraged the school to look at language from many perspectives and throughout the whole school. It led the school to:

- complete an analysis of its library collection and access to languages in the online library database.

- identify reading promotion activities in all three languages.

- identify physical and digital resources (for students and teachers) and in which languages.

- review its own institutional communications (e.g. print, website, parent communication, signage) and increase the amount of bilingual messaging.

- identify special activities that take place in one or more languages e.g. events with other schools.

- highlight student travel or exchange opportunities and the corresponding languages.

3.3 Five key steps to developing your language policy

1

Mission and aim

1. Consider your school's mission and aim for languages
Most schools will have a mission statement that defines their educational purpose. Before starting to develop your language policy, think about what role language plays in your mission. Your school should be clear about the educational aims for your learners related to language i.e. what your school's views on languages are and what skills and competences your learners are expected to develop. Once there is a statement of what your school aims to achieve, it will be easier for you to evaluate how well current practices are contributing towards that goal.

2

Current position

2. Know your school's current position
Before defining a language policy, there needs to be a good understanding of the existing language context of your school. Gather information about all aspects of the school's language characteristics and practices. Consider each of the areas described in section 2. You can use the 'Know your school's language context' checklist on page 25 to help you do that.

Relevant information might be found in a number of different places and ways, including:

- curriculum documentation.
- other policy documents (e.g. assessment, behaviour).
- opinions from your staff, learners and parents, gathered through interviews or questionnaires.
- learning walks.
- assessment data.

Once all the information has been collected, evaluate the current situation to identify strengths and opportunities for improvement. Your language policy will guide the decisions that promote positive practices.

3. Write your language policy

Produce a language policy that sets out the principles that will guide your school's decisions in relation to language practices. The policy document can be structured in different ways. You might have a common template you use for other policy documents in the school. The document's core information should answer the following questions:

- What is your school's position on languages?

- What are the school's aims for language learning?

- How is your curriculum structured and organised? Include language as a medium of instruction and language as a subject.

- How will you identify and support your learners' English language needs?

- How will you encourage and support the maintenance of your learners' first language?

You should also include other areas from the wider school environment, as identified in the evaluation process. Check that you are not duplicating information that belongs in another policy. Sometimes it will be more effective to review and revise other policy documents to include principles about language.

For example, how you provide language-sensitive pastoral care may best be covered in a pastoral care or safeguarding policy. Some of the more detailed information about practices might be included in a staff handbook or departmental guidelines. Recommendations for selecting and adapting teaching and learning resources could fit in a general teachers' handbook or subject-specific schemes of work, depending on the level of detail.

3
Write language policy

4
Policy into practice

4. Put the policy into practice

A policy is only worthwhile if it is used and influences practice and decision-making in your school. When the policy has been finalised, share and communicate it widely with your school community.

5
Review and improve

5. Review and improve

Once in place, the language policy should form part of the regular cycle of self-evaluation, monitoring and review that your school carries out to ensure a continual focus on quality and improvement. Your school development plan will include this as a focus. You can find out more about school development planning in *Developing your School with Cambridge*.

4. Cambridge language programmes and qualifications: what we offer your school and learners

This section describes the programmes, qualifications and support Cambridge International offers teachers and learners related to languages. It also shows you where you can find more information.

4.1 Different types of language learner

We provide language programmes and qualifications for learners with different language profiles and contexts. These are designed for learners who are learning a language as either a first language, second language or foreign language.

To choose the most appropriate approach for your learners, the main factors to consider are:

- the language the learner usually speaks at home.
- the language usually used as the medium of instruction at school.
- the language learned as a school subject.

Other important considerations are:

- when a learner joined your school.
- how long they have been learning a particular language at your school.
- the language commonly used in the community, country or region where your school is located.

At Cambridge International, we distinguish between three main types of language learners.

A first language learner:

- speaks this language at home and possibly in the community.
- uses this language at school as the medium of instruction.

A second language learner:

- speaks another language at home.
- often uses the second language at school as the medium of instruction.

If these second-language learners have been at a school from a very young age, they are likely to be able to follow a first-language curriculum.

A foreign language learner:

- speaks another language at home.
- learns the foreign language at school in language classes.

Elian's British School of La Nucía

A Cambridge school in Spain for learners between the ages of 2 and 18. Around 60 per cent of learners are from Spain and speak Spanish at home. Other learners come from various countries and have been in Spain for different amounts of time. The school follows a British curriculum, with at least 80 per cent of teaching in English from early years. Learners follow a first language English programme. Anyone joining the school later is given additional English language support to make sure they can access all the curriculum. Depending on when they have joined and their language background, they study non-language subjects in English but may take an English as a second language qualification. Spanish learners also take Cambridge IGCSE™ Spanish as a first language. All learners study either French or German as a foreign language.

4.2 Developing knowledge, skills and understanding

In general terms, our programmes for each approach to language (first, second or foreign language) aim to develop the knowledge, skills and understanding as shown in the table. Details of the aims, content and assessment objectives for each qualification can be found in the syllabus or curriculum framework for each language.

First language	Second language	Foreign language
• Skilled communicators for a range of different purposes and audiences. • Competent readers who appreciate a wide range of different texts, including those from different periods and cultures. • Skills in evaluating and analysing written and spoken language.	• Effective use of language for the purposes of practical communication. • Confidence in reading a range of texts. • An awareness of the nature of language and language-learning skills. • Skills to support using the language for progress in academic or professional careers.	• Skills in speaking, listening, reading and writing for practical communication. • A positive attitude towards language learning and other cultures. • A sound base for further study of the language. • Learning objectives are informed by the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR).

4.3 The Cambridge Pathway

Learners usually follow either a first or a second language pathway. Each stage builds on your learners' language development from the previous stage.

Stage	First language	Second language
Cambridge Primary	• Cambridge Primary English (0058) • Cambridge Primary Checkpoint English	• Cambridge Primary English as a Second Language (0057) • Cambridge Primary Checkpoint English as a Second Language
Cambridge Lower Secondary	• Cambridge Lower Secondary English (0861) • Cambridge Lower Secondary Checkpoint English	• Cambridge Lower Secondary English as a Second Language (0876) • Cambridge Lower Secondary Checkpoint English as a Second Language
Cambridge IGCSE	• First Language English (0500/0990) • Literature in English (0475/0992)	• English as a Second Language (0510/0511/0993)
Cambridge O Level	• English Language (1123)	
Cambridge International AS Level	• English Language and Literature (8695)	
Cambridge International A Level	• English Language (9093) • English Literature (9695)	

For updates and more details, see our website.

4.4 Cambridge English: our English language programmes for schools

Cambridge English programmes are often most appropriate for contexts where English is being taught as a foreign language and where close alignment to the CEFR is considered a high priority. Its in-depth examinations are targeted at specific levels of the CEFR with clear progression pathways from one level to the next. Cambridge English Qualifications encourage development of all four language skills. For more information, visit the Cambridge English website.

Cambridge Assessment English programmes for schools

Meeting university English language admissions requirements

For learners planning to gain entry into universities in English-speaking countries, the English language component of their learning programme is very important. Universities set their own admissions criteria for courses and these are usually available on their websites.

In order to demonstrate English language proficiency for degree courses, some universities will accept a good grade in Cambridge IGCSE English as a Second Language, while others require Cambridge IGCSE First Language English. In the UK, for example, some universities require a Secure English Language Test (SELT), such as the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) assessed by Cambridge English. For more information on English language university admissions requirements, visit our Recognition and acceptance webpage.

4.5 Our other Cambridge language programmes and qualifications

We offer programmes and qualifications in a wide range of languages for first, second and foreign language learners, as well as some which are suitable for a wide range of learners.

	First Language	Second Language	Foreign Language	General
Cambridge IGCSE	• First Language Arabic (0508) • First Language Chinese (0509) • First Language French (0501) • First Language German (0505) • First Language Malay (0696) • First Language Portuguese (0504) • First Language Spanish (0502) • First Language Thai (0518) • First Language Turkish (0513)	• Afrikaans as a Second Language (0548) • Hindi as a Second Language (0549) • IsiZulu as a Second Language (0531) • Swahili (0262) • Urdu as a Second Language (0539)	• Arabic (0544) • Mandarin Chinese (0547) • Dutch (0515) • French (0520/7156) • German (0525/7159) • Italian (0535/7164) • Malay (0546) • Spanish (0530/7160)	• Bahasa Indonesia (0538) • Literature (Spanish) (0488)
Cambridge O Level	• First Language Urdu (3247)	• Second Language Urdu (3248)	• French (3015)	• Arabic (3180) • Bengali (3204) • Setswana (3158) • Sinhala (3205) • Tamil (3226)
Cambridge International AS Level	• First Language Spanish (8665)			• Literature (Spanish) (8673) • Literature (Hindi) (8675)
	• Afrikaans (language) (8679) • Arabic (language) (8680) • Chinese (language) (8681) • French (language) (8682) • German (language) (8683) • Hindi (8687) • Portuguese (language) (8684) • Spanish (language) (8685) • Tamil (8689) • Urdu (8686)			
Cambridge International A Level	• Afrikaans (9679) • Arabic (9680) • Chinese (9715) • French (9716) • German (9717) • Hindi (9687) • Portuguese (9718) • Spanish (9719) • Tamil (9689) • Urdu (9676)			

4.6 Language awareness in our non-language Cambridge programmes and qualifications

Cambridge International exams are taken by learners in over 160 countries, learning in many different contexts and speaking a wide range of languages at home and in school. We make sure our assessment materials and resources are appropriate for learners in Cambridge schools worldwide.

Assessment materials

Language used in question papers and other assessment materials takes into consideration different language backgrounds of learners, aiming to be as clear and widely comprehensible as possible. Some syllabuses include a glossary of terms used in question papers so that your learners understand what is expected by different command words used in questions.

Marking

Mark schemes make it clear how learners will gain marks for their answers. The focus is on evidence of learners' subject knowledge, understanding and skills. There is a positive approach to marking where your learners will not usually be penalised for language errors, as long as meaning has clearly been communicated and terminology used appropriately.

Support resources

Example candidate responses use examples of candidates' work to show how different levels of performance (high, middle, low) relate to the subject's curriculum and assessment objectives. Teachers can also use these to see examples of learners' use of language in exams. You can find example candidate responses and other resources on the School Support Hub.

Endorsed resources

In addition to the resources we produce, we also endorse resources from a range of publishers. Endorsed resources go through a rigorous quality-assurance process to make sure they closely reflect the curriculum framework or syllabus and are appropriate for Cambridge schools worldwide. Find out more on our website in Endorsed resources.

4.7 Professional development to support your language teaching and language awareness

We offer a coherent framework of training and professional development for teachers in Cambridge schools, designed to meet the needs of teachers who have different levels of experience. The support we offer includes qualifications, courses and resources focused on the role of language in your classroom and school.

Qualifications for teachers of subjects other than languages

Our Cambridge International Certificate and Diploma in Teaching Bilingual Learners are for teachers who teach subjects other than languages who want to help their learners learn curricular subjects through an additional language. These qualifications will help you to:

•   explore and apply new ideas and approaches.

•   contribute actively to your school's development of bilingual education policy and practice, including the role and use of first language.

•   demonstrate your professional development in integrating content and language in teaching and learning.

Find out more on our website in Teaching Bilingual Learners.

We also offer a 'Language Awareness in Teaching' online training course to help teachers of subjects other than languages plan language support into lessons and develop techniques for overcoming language issues. To see when the next course takes place, go to the Events and training calendar.

Online training for language teachers

Our online introductory and extension syllabus training is tutor-guided and helps teachers become familiar with our syllabuses and curriculum frameworks to build confidence in teaching towards them. To see which courses and dates are available, go to the Events and training calendar.

Resources for all teachers

Our Getting Started with Language Awareness online resource introduces and develops key concepts in language awareness. The interactive resource links

research about language awareness with classroom practice and provides new ideas to help teachers get started. To find out more, go to *Getting Started with Language Awareness*.

Cambridge University Press and Cambridge International have collaborated on producing a number of books to support teachers and school leaders. Publications for teachers include:

Approaches to Learning and Teaching: A Toolkit for International Teachers

This is a series of subject-specific guides for international teachers to supplement teacher learning and provide practical resources for lesson planning. Each guide includes a section on language awareness. To find out more about the books go to *Approaches to Learning and Teaching*.

Language Awareness in Teaching: A Toolkit for Content and Language Teachers (Tim Chadwick, 2012)

This book helps teachers to develop language awareness to support their learners with the academic language they need to be successful in subjects taught with English as the medium of instruction. To find out more about this guide go to *Language Awareness in Teaching*.

Support for school leaders
Publications for school leaders include:

Excellence in Bilingual Education: A Guide for School Principals (Peeter Mehisto, 2012)

This practical guide is produced by Cambridge University Press in partnership with Cambridge International. It supports school principals in the implementation of bilingual education and helps schools with an existing bilingual programme to evaluate and improve their practice. Read more about *Excellence in Bilingual Education*.

Implementing the Curriculum with Cambridge: A Guide for School Leaders

This guide will help school principals, school leaders and others responsible for the educational programme in your school to design, develop, implement and evaluate the curriculum where Cambridge programmes and qualifications are followed. It includes sections on approaches to English language development and curriculum models for bilingual and multilingual schools. To learn more read *Implementing the Curriculum with Cambridge*.

5. Checklist: know your school's language context

Use the following questions to guide your review of your school's current position in relation to languages.
For more information, refer back to section 2.

Your curriculum

- Which languages should your learners know and to what level? ☐
- Which subjects will be taught with English as the medium of instruction? In which years? ☐
- Which subjects will be taught with another language as the medium of instruction? In which years? ☐
- Which languages will be taught as a subject? In which years? ☐
- How will your learners demonstrate and gain recognition for their language skills? ☐

Your learners

- What is the language background of learners at your school? ☐
- How do you support the development of your learners' first language? ☐
- How do you use the school's linguistic and cultural diversity positively? ☐
- How do you identify your learners' needs for support with language? ☐
- How do you provide support for language? ☐
- How do you provide language-sensitive pastoral care? ☐

Your teachers

- What is the language proficiency of the teachers at your school? ☐
- How can you provide language development for your teachers if needed? ☐
- How can all your teachers develop language awareness? ☐

- How do teachers use language(s) in non-language subjects? ☐
- How do teachers give feedback on language? ☐
- How do teachers respond to language in assessment and marking? ☐
- How do teachers select, adapt and supplement resources to make sure they are suitable for your learners in terms of language? ☐
- How do your language and subject teachers work together? ☐
- What professional development opportunities related to language are there? ☐

Your whole school

- Which language or languages do you use for displaying school information? ☐
- Which language or languages do you choose for displays of learners' work? ☐
- What range of languages and cultures are represented in visual displays? ☐
- Which language do you use in all areas of school life? ☐
- What language(s) do you use to communicate with all staff in your school? ☐
- What language(s) do you use to communicate with the home? ☐
- In which language(s) do you offer regular co-curricular activities? ☐
- What events do you hold to celebrate different languages and cultures? ☐
- What intercultural and international links do you have and how do you develop them? ☐
- What support do you provide about language and international requirements for learners leaving school? ☐

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