



Prva gimnazija Varaždin  
International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme

## **Language Policy**

**Prva gimnazija Varaždin  
International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme**

**Diploma Programme  
Language Policy**

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### **IB mission statement**

The international Baccalaureate aims to develop inquiring, knowledgeable and caring young people who help to create a better and more peaceful world through intercultural understanding and respect.

To this end the organization works with schools, governments and international organizations to develop challenging programmes of international education and rigorous assessment.

These programmes encourage students across the world to become active, compassionate and lifelong learners who understand that other people, with their differences, can also be right.

### **PGV mission statement**

We aim to provide students with the opportunity to develop their knowledge and skills according to contemporary educational practice.

We want to develop curious, inquiring and knowledgeable young people who will understand, respect and care about others.

Our goal is to produce future citizens of the world who will know how to accept challenges, how to act in global reality, be active lifelong learners and competitive collaborators within international society.

## IB LEARNER PROFILE

The aim of all IB programmes is to develop internationally minded people who, recognizing their common humanity and shared guardianship of the planet help to create a better and more peaceful world.

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|--|--|
| <p><b>INQUIRERS</b><br/>We nurture our curiosity, developing skills for inquiry and research. We know how to learn independently and with others. We learn with enthusiasm and sustain our love of learning throughout life.</p>             | <p><b>OPEN-MINDED</b><br/>We critically appreciate our own cultures and personal histories, as well as the values and traditions of others. We seek and evaluate a range of points of view, and we are willing to grow from the experience.</p>                                      |
| <p><b>KNOWLEDGEABLE</b><br/>We develop and use conceptual understanding, exploring knowledge across a range of disciplines. We engage with issues and ideas that have local and global significance.</p>                                     | <p><b>CARING</b><br/>We show empathy, compassion and respect. We have a commitment to service, and we act to make a positive difference in the lives of others and in the world around us.</p>   |
| <p><b>THINKERS</b><br/>We use critical and creative thinking skills to analyse and take responsible action on complex problems. We exercise initiative in making reasoned, ethical decisions.</p>  | <p><b>RISK-TAKERS</b><br/>We approach uncertainty with forethought and determination; we work independently and cooperatively to explore new ideas and innovative strategies. We are resourceful and resilient in the face of challenges and change.</p>                             |
| <p><b>COMMUNICATORS</b><br/>We express ourselves confidently and creatively in more than one language and in many ways. We collaborate effectively, listening carefully to the perspectives of other individuals and groups.</p>             | <p><b>BALANCED</b><br/>We understand the importance of balancing different aspects of our lives - intellectual, physical and emotional - to achieve well-being for ourselves and others. We recognize our interdependence with other people and with the world in which we live.</p> |
| <p><b>PRINCIPLED</b><br/>We act with integrity and honesty, with a strong sense of fairness and justice, and with respect for the dignity and right of people everywhere. We take responsibility for our actions and their consequences.</p> | <p><b>REFLECTIVE</b><br/>We thoughtfully consider the world and our own ideas and experience. We work to understand our strengths and weaknesses in order to support our learning and personal development.</p>  |

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## Introduction and Purpose of the document

The purpose of this document is to present the language teaching and learning philosophy as incorporated in principles and practices at Prva gimnazija Varaždin (hereinafter as PGV). This policy will start with a brief presentation of PGV with a special emphasis on the language component that is inherent to the education principles pertinent to the school philosophy. After that, a set of ideas and practices governing the language philosophy at PGV and IBDP at PGV will be presented, in line with the following IB documents: *Diploma Programme: From principles to practice*, *Programme Standards and practices*, *Academic honesty*, *Guidelines for developing a school language policy* and *Learning in a language other than mother tongue in the IB programme*. The document will conclude with a clear outline of the PGV language policy provisions.

## PGV – general description

Prva gimnazija Varaždin is a state-owned school which offers three national curriculum programs (general, science and language program), a bilingual program in English/Croatian and the International Baccalaureate Diploma Program (IBDP). In terms of language learning, students can also take the German language diploma (DSD), Austrian Language Diploma (OSD) exams and French language diploma exam (DELF). Students achieve excellent results in regular programs as well as in national and international sports and science competitions, including the Olympiad in mathematics, physics, informatics, chemistry. The students also regularly take part in language competitions in modern (English, German, French, Spanish) as well as classical languages (Latin), with excellent results on local, regional and state levels. Apart from activities performed through regular programs, there are extracurricular activities and various learning groups which enable students to express their talents and creativity, and to develop communicative and interpersonal skills, such as Music Group, Theatron Drama Group, English News Agency, English Book Club, Literary Group, Debate Club, Sprachdiplom Workshop, French language group, Cultural Heritage Workshop, Exploration Groups, Photography Group, Sports Clubs, etc.

The school has been involved in a number of projects under the aegis of the Council of Europe (e.g. Education for Democratic Citizenship) and European Commission (e.g. Comenius, Erasmus+ etc.). Furthermore, PGV is a member of the UNESCO's *Associated Schools*, working on projects dedicated to the promotion and protection of both national and global cultural and natural heritage, as well as projects leading towards intercultural education. Through mentioned programs, language-related activities are one of the key elements, as will be shown in the following section of this document.

Prva gimnazija Varaždin became an IB school in April 2006 and started teaching in September 2006. Currently it offers IBDP only. This Language policy will mostly refer to and discuss the language philosophy pertinent to the IB section of our school, while drawing parallels with the state program where needed.

## PGV and language teaching philosophy

At PGV a holistic approach to teaching and learning languages is used. Students are prompted to acquire proficiency in speaking, listening, reading, and writing in the target language while at the same time expanding their intercultural understanding and international-mindedness. Various activities are used to promote inquiry-based learning.

At PGV language teaching philosophy is closely connected with the IB learner profile, especially the component that is most closely linked to the linguistic skills:

„Communicators - They understand and express ideas and information confidently and creatively in more than one language and in a variety of modes of communication. They work effectively and willingly in collaboration with others “(Language B guide, 2018).

In line with the mentioned quality required from IB students, our school strives to provide the students with a plethora of activities and tasks where the described personal quality may be developed to the fullest. Some activities that may lead to the development of such a quality are working in group projects, developing team spirit through working in pairs and in groups, working in class and outside class, and promoting communication not exclusively with their peers but also with teachers, family members and members of a wider community. Through such activities not only English or students' mother tongue is promoted but the usage of other languages as well. It is a consequence of the fact that through various activities students may come in contact with individuals that do not have a shared first or second language, thus paving a way to the communication in languages other than Croatian or English.

## PGV and language teaching practices

As an IB School, PGV is committed to following Practices:

- The school places importance on language learning, including mother tongue, host country language and other languages (IB Standard A, Practice 7).
- Teaching and learning addresses the diversity of student language needs, including those for students learning a language(s) other than their mother tongue (IB Standard C3, Practice 7).
- Teaching and learning demonstrates that all teachers are responsible for language development of students (IB Standard C3, Practice 8).
- Assessment at the school aligns with the requirements of the programme(s). (IB Standard C4, Practice 1).
- Collaborative planning and reflection recognizes that all teachers are responsible for language development of students (IB Standard C1, Practice 8).
- The school utilizes the resources and expertise of the community to enhance learning within the programmes (IB Standard B2, Practice 11).

### **1 The school places importance on language learning, including mother tongue, host country language and other languages (IB Standard A, Practice 7).**

PGV Admission Policy entails the following section on languages at PGV:

“IB DP in PGV is provided in English language. This language has the internal status of the official language, both for delivering as well as assessing programme materials.

Final exams are provided in English language.

The exceptions are mother tongue (Croatian for majority of students at our school) or other Language B (German or French language).” (Admission Policy, 2021:3).

Since PGV is a national school, a vast majority of PGV students are of Croatian origin so Croatian A represents a logical preference for almost all of them. Most students that enroll to IBDP come from Croatian national program where Croatian language and literature is extensively taught with a significant proportion of teaching hours. Nevertheless, PGV is flexible enough to meet any potential, emerging needs of its students. Whenever a potential student enquires about the possibility of taking another language at level A, B, or *Ab initio*, the school has several teachers of other languages (more specifically, French, Spanish and Latin) that are ready to acquire a license for teaching in the IB and provide the students with the language education that they require.

In the past the school had a few students from foreign countries who opted for English A, while at the same time taking German B, French B or French Ab initio as language B, which points to the fact that PGV is flexible and can adapt to the emerging needs in terms of offering various languages at various levels.

In terms of language B, the preferred option is English B. However, some students choose German as their language B. Regarding the levels chosen, almost all students take language B at higher level, with only a few students taking that language at Standard level. It is a logical consequence of the socio-cultural context in which the school functions.

The town where the school is based is a relatively small town with predominantly Croatian population whose native tongue is Croatian. Due to historic and cultural reasons, preferred options for second and third language learning from a general educational perspective have been German and English. Since those are the foreign language that the school offers through IBDP, it is a proof that PGV gives its best to meet the needs of the local community.

In case of foreign students, PGV provides individual Croatian language classes through private tuition, if students are interested in learning the host country language. The school will commit to identifying a tutor and the parents will commit to paying the tutor for their services. ?Lessons will be scheduled during the regular school day.?

External tuition is organized if PGV receives a request for other languages A than the ones that are regularly offered in the IBDP and for which the classes are not sustainable, which means the class of sufficient size. The School is responsible for finding a suitable tutor with appropriate teaching credentials while the tuition is additionally paid by parents. A tutor might be found through other IB schools in Croatia or Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences Zagreb. External tuition excludes self-taught option because of the size and regional position of the school.

## **2 Teaching and learning addresses the diversity of student language needs, including those for students learning a language(s) other than their mother tongue (IB Standard C3, Practice 7).**

In addition to the languages taught and offered in IBDP, the school offers its students (both coming from the national program and IBDP) to take language classes in optional language groups. In that way multilingualism and multiculturalism are promoted, as the students learn to express themselves and think in other foreign languages (such as French, Spanish, Russian or Italian). During the process of third or fourth language acquisition students learn about the cultures of those communities as well, thus promoting international-mindedness and multiculturalism.

## **3 Teaching and learning demonstrates that all teachers are responsible for language development of students (IB Standard C3, Practice 8).**

*“The development of international-mindedness is central to an IB education, and this term explicitly encompasses the three aspects of multilingualism, intercultural understanding and global engagement. Language is, therefore, highly valued by the IB, not least for the crucial role it plays in the cultivation of intercultural understanding. Every DP teacher plays an important role, and has an important responsibility, in supporting and reinforcing students’ language development.” (ATL:29, IBO, 2015)*

This is the principle that PGV – IBDP tries to incorporate in the teaching activity of all IB subjects. As teachers of specific subjects, all teachers from the IB cohort give their best to discuss the issues, as well as subject-specific terminology, in the language of teaching, which means that all teachers are language teachers as well. The official IB language in the school is English which functions as the language of teaching for all subjects apart from Croatian A.

In terms of precision, through various in-class and out-of-class activities, students are encouraged to practice oral and written language in all possible forms, in line with the special requirements of specific subjects. A special form of expression is the assessment component of the curriculum, where written expression is practiced and tested by the educators. Also, those groups that have oral assessment

practices work extensively on developing the necessary communicative skills that are required for various forms of oral examinations.

**4 Assessment at the school aligns with the requirements of the programme(s).** (IB Standard C4, Practice 1)

In the IB DP at PGV assessment is in line with the requirements of the IB DP and is comprehensively outlined in the Assessment Policy.. Since it is very important to determine the exact level of students' language competences before starting the course, initial testing is conducted for language acquisition courses (Language B and Language Ab Initio). According to the results, students are advised about the suitable level (Standard, High, Ab Initio). Both formative and summative assessment are used throughout two years of Diploma Programme for all four skills (reading, listening, writing, speaking). Criteria are level specific and based on the course chosen. Parents are informed about assessments in various ways.

**5 Collaborative planning and reflection recognizes that all teachers are responsible for language development of students (IB Standard C1, Practice 8).**

Since all teachers contribute to the language development of students at PGV, collaborative planning is part of the curriculum planning as well as focus of staff meetings throughout the year. During these meetings language teachers and teachers of other subjects discuss the academic and linguistic progress of individual students, plan what will be taught and reflect on best practices.

**6 The school utilizes the resources and expertise of the community to enhance learning within the programmes** (IB Standard B2, Practice 11)

PGV recognizes that administrators, teachers, librarians and other school staff require professional development in the fields of language learning and teaching. This need is accomplished through various methods. For example, all IBDP teachers are regularly sent to local and international seminars and PD workshops, where they are exposed to an international setting which naturally promotes foreign language usage and proves to be beneficial for their language proficiency. As PGV does not have a separate cohort for national curriculum and IBDP, all IBDP teachers teach in national curriculum as well or hold an administrative function (such as the school psychologist). Because of that, teachers, librarians and administrators use all the acquired knowledge and skills in their everyday work, both in IBDP and other realms of school activities.

Furthermore, despite the fact that current economic situation is far from favorable and resources have to be distributed with extreme care, PGV strives to provide the staff with all the necessary up-to-date scientific literature related to language teaching and learning. Whenever an opportunity is given, PGV organizes lectures delivered by foreign lecturers or public figures, thus proving an opportunity to both teachers and students to participate in an international setting.

Erasmus + and Comenius programs have proved to be an excellent method of promoting international-mindedness of PGV students, with one of the major benefits being the language and cultural learning that takes place during every mobility. So far PGV has participated in several EU mobility programs, and IBDP students have been active in almost all of the past and active projects.

In terms of parents' inclusion, PGV strives to include parents to the school educational process, both in case of national program and IBDP. Parents are regularly contacted by the school administration and teachers and PGV has always emphasized the role that they play in the overall development of their children. Parents are regularly present on school events, PTA meetings, they are consulted for all major decisions that entail an implication for their children's education, and they are acknowledged as one of the key factors in the education and development of PGV students.

Taking all of the mentioned factors in consideration, it is clear that PGV puts a great emphasis on language learning and teaching. By means of the mentioned methods the IBDP section, as well as the school in general, has produced several extremely successful classes that have continued their

education both at Croatian universities and abroad, where they keep achieving superb results. Because of that PGV takes pride in its current practices and activities. Nevertheless, the school is aware of the fact that we live in a dynamic environment where new needs may arise at any given time. Because of that, our educators and administration keep track of all the mentioned activities and practices and try to identify those elements that may need to be adapted or modified.

## Language policy

The school agrees to:

- Set up a steering committee responsible for putting this Policy into practice. The committee shall consist of members of both the school administration as well as members of the school cohort
- Harmonize the school language teaching philosophy with this Policy in all respects
- Keep track of language teaching and learning practices through all means available in order to work permanently on improving school teaching and learning philosophy and amending this Policy
- Provide for all the language needs of its students, in accordance with the national and IB legislation
- Acknowledge English as the working language of the IBDP, while promoting the usage of the mother tongue(s) of its students, as well as other languages taught at PGV, through all viable in-school and out-of-school activities and practices
- Promote language teaching and learning that is harmonized with the contemporary pedagogical standards and theoretical tenets
- Provide regular PD to all of its staff on effective teaching and learning strategies and practices
- Provide the students with clear instructions on how to use language in an academic context (academic language practices)
- Keep track of language teaching and learning practices through various methods of data gathering, such as informal discussions, interviews, conferences and observations
- Keep track of language teaching and learning development in order to work on necessary improvements and future planning
- Promote library –based activities that lead to language teaching and learning
- Monitor potential needs for providing education on another L1 other than Croatian, as well as supporting students that need to learn in a language other than their L1. Also PGV shall analyze previous experiences and practices in order to make necessary improvements and adjustments
- Keep track of language development of their students (through regular observation by their language teachers and other members of the cohort)
- Keep track of IB documents that may lead to an improvement of school policies and practices
- Promote inquiry-based authentic language training
- Make an effort to promote language learning as an interdisciplinary activity spanning over several subjects at IBDP

- Put an emphasis on integrated process of learning and teaching all 4 language skills (reading, writing, listening and speaking) with a development of international-mindedness, interculturalism and media literacy
- Make an effort to provide for all educational needs of its students in terms of offering various languages at IBDP levels A, B, *ab initio* or self-taught level, as well as additional (optional) language instruction (languages such as Spanish, French, Italian etc.)
- Monitor the teaching process of various languages in order to make sure that consistent methods are used, in line with contemporary theoretical, pedagogical principles
- Periodically perform a review of the language practices pertinent to this Policy in order to keep track of its efficiency. In case improvements are needed, the steering committee will try to reach an optimal solution and implement the necessary modifications in accordance with the defined timeline and procedures.

## References:

- *Language B Guide (IBO, 2018)*
- *Admission Policy (2021)*
- *Programme standards and practices (IBO, 2014, 2019)*
- *DP Assessment Procedure (IBO 2021, 2022)*
- *General regulations: Diploma Programme (IBO, 2019)*
- *The Diploma Programme: from principles to practice (2015)*
- *Programme evaluation guide and self-study questionnaire: Diploma Programme (IBO, 2016)*
- *Approaches to teaching and learning in the Diploma Programme (IBO, 2015)*