

## **POLICY: Language philosophy and policy**

### **Language philosophy statement**

1. UWC Waterford Kamhlaba (WK) delivers a challenging and transformational educational experience to a diverse cross section of students, inspiring them to create a more peaceful and sustainable future. Students come to WK from different contexts, bringing with them a wealth of cultural and linguistic backgrounds. Although English is WK's operating language, WK is a multilingual environment, and many students learn and numerous teachers teach through a language that is not their mother tongue.
2. As such, our Language Philosophy is as follows:
  - 2.1. WK aims to respect and support the development of language and literacy in our school community.
  - 2.2. We believe that language plays a fundamental role in a person's social development and in the development of thinking skills, as well as in a person's linguistic development.
  - 2.3. We recognize that academic language skills need to be explicitly taught and we believe that all teachers are language teachers within their subject specializations.

### **The place of English**

3. English is our language of instruction and the language we all wish to share. We aim to develop the English skills of all our students, which includes providing support for students who need extra help because English is not their first language. We recognize the importance of English for our students from Eswatini, where it is an official language. We also recognize the importance of English in the wider Southern African region, and in the world at large. We need to prepare our students to be able to study, work and live using English after they leave WK.

### **The place of SiSwati**

4. SiSwati is an official language of Eswatini and the home language of many members of our school community. We aim to support the development of the SiSwati of our first language SiSwati speakers and we will provide opportunities for all students and staff to learn SiSwati, whatever their language background. We recognize the importance of SiSwati for those of our students who will remain living, studying and working in Southern Africa after graduating from WK.  
Other mother tongue languages
5. We encourage all students to maintain and develop proficiency in their mother tongue language, although we realize that for a growing number of students "mother tongue language" is increasingly hard to define. For many students at WK, either English or SiSwati (or both) will be their mother tongue language, but we also encourage those with a different mother tongue language to continue studying and learning it within an academic framework.

### **Learning foreign languages**

6. We believe that all our students should study at least one language in addition to English. The ability to communicate in more than one language fosters intercultural understanding and, in experiencing foreign language study, students also become aware of how to learn a language. We believe that we should offer French at all levels of the school given its importance in Africa and as a world language. In addition, we offer Spanish to students who wish to learn this important global language.

### **Bilingualism and multilingualism**

7. We believe that language is integral to identity. We aim to create conditions for learning that value all languages and cultures, promoting the individual self-esteem of our students who are bilingual and multilingual – this is the majority of our students. We aim to promote both bilingualism and multilingualism by recognizing the value of all languages spoken in our community. Bilingualism and multilingualism is not about competition between languages, and we endeavor to ensure that no language replaces the value or use of the mother tongue. We also believe that it is desirable for students to maintain and develop their literacy skills in all their languages. We recognize the

importance of liaising with parents and caregivers on this.

### **Reading**

8. While we aim to support the development of all language skills, reading deserves special mention. We believe that wide reading contributes greatly to academic success, and we aim to foster a culture of reading at our school. We wish that all students are always reading a fiction or nonfiction book, and have it with them at school. The question “what are you currently reading?” should never remain unanswered.

### **Language policy**

#### *Whole school (F1-7)*

9. Realizing that all teachers, regardless of the subjects they teach, are also language teachers, WK endeavours to provide suitable and ongoing professional development in the area of teaching through language and language learning. Every new teacher at WK is required to complete the Teaching ESL students in mainstream classrooms course within their first contract period. Exceptions may be made when a teacher has very recently completed a similar course elsewhere. Long-serving teachers are invited to retake the course if they wish to do so or when this is deemed beneficial.
10. English is the medium of instruction and operating language of the school. WK requires all students to learn and teachers to teach through the medium of English, unless the course determines that another language should be used (such as language and literature classes of other taught languages).
11. In addition to English, all students at WK must study at least one foreign language. Exception may be made to students entering WK in the middle of a school year, who were not required to study a foreign language in their previous school. These students will be expected to enter a foreign language ab initio course when entering the IB Diploma programme.

#### *Junior school (F1-3)*

12. All Form 1 and 2 students are required to study English Language and Literature, French as a foreign language and conversational SiSwati. Beginners’ French is offered in Form 1 and 2. Students who join WK after the beginning of Form 2 are expected to choose Spanish instead of French at the start of Form 3. Students joining Waterford in Form 3 with no previous French language learning will be required to take Spanish. French will not be an option. Provision will be made in the planning of classes to accommodate new students in the Spanish class.
13. All Form 3 students are required to study English Language and Literature and must continue with at least one of SiSwati, French as a Foreign Language or Spanish as a Foreign Language. Provision is made for students who wish to study French as a Foreign Language in addition to Spanish as a Foreign Language or SiSwati. Students who speak and read SiSwati are strongly encouraged to take SiSwati.
14. Reading is encouraged and supported through a weekly reading period, usually led by the English teacher, and students’ reading ages are closely monitored. Structured support is available for ESL students throughout the Forms 1-3.

#### *Middle school (F4-5)*

15. All Form 4 and 5 students are required to study English Language and Literature. An additional structured support lesson is available for students struggling in English in Form 4.
16. All Form 4 and 5 students must continue with at least one of SiSwati, French as a Foreign Language or Spanish as a Foreign Language. Provision is made for students who wish to study French as a Foreign Language in addition to Spanish as a Foreign Language or SiSwati.
17. Students joining Waterford in Form 4 with no previous French, Spanish or SiSwati language learning:
  - 17.1. May attempt Spanish, French or SiSwati for a term after which a decision will be by school management made about continuing. Students who are not making the necessary progress to ensure success will need to drop the subject. Parents and guardians as well as the student will need to be fully aware of the implications of that for tertiary education post IGCSE. They would then still be eligible to take Spanish or French ab initio as a 2nd language for their IBDP.

- 17.2. May choose not to do a 2nd Language for IGCSE provided parents and guardians as well as the student is fully aware of the implications of that for tertiary education post IGCSE. Students wishing to continue with the IBDP could take Spanish or French ab initio as a 2nd language for their IBDP.
- 17.3. May choose to continue with their mother-tongue learning as a self-taught option. Support will be provided if possible. Students could choose to write a Cambridge exam if one is offered or an exam from their own countries
- 18. Students joining Waterford in Form 4 with previous French, Spanish or Siswati language learning:
  - 18.1. Must continue with the language they have been learning
  - 18.2. Are not eligible for self-taught mother-tongue options in the IGCSE phase.
  - 18.3. May opt to do self-taught mother-tongue learning in the IBDP phase provided the IB is prepared to allow it.
- 19. Students joining Waterford in Form 4 with French or Spanish as a first language:
  - 19.1. Will continue with French or Spanish as a first language with the support of a teacher
  - 19.2. Will write the IGCSE first language examination
  - 19.3. Will be encouraged to take self-taught mother tongue learning in the IBDP phase.

#### Senior school (IB 1 and 2)

- 20. All students entering the IB Diploma programme are required to take one of the following three courses: English A Literature (HL only), English A Language and Literature (HL or SL) or English B (HL or SL). Students whose mother tongue language is not English but have a solid level of proficiency are encouraged to enter the English A Literature and Language course. Students with a weak or even minimal background in English are encouraged to enter the English B course.
- 21. All students entering the IB Diploma programme from Form 5 ('internal applicants') are required to continue studying the foreign language they were already studying at IGCSE level as an IB Diploma Language B course. Exception to this rule may be granted, in special circumstances, by the IB Coordinator.
- 22. Students originating from Eswatini are encouraged to choose SiSwati A Language and Literature (SL only), an IB Diploma course unique to WK, in addition to an English A course.
- 23. Students whose mother tongue language is not English or siSwati are encouraged to choose a Self-taught language course (SL only). During the first of the two years these students are taught in mixed-language classes, with individual reading lists and, where available, informal language tutorials offered in the second year.  
In addition to English B, the following languages are offered as taught foreign languages (Group 2): French B (HL and SL), French ab initio (SL only), Spanish B (SL only), Spanish ab initio (SL only).

**Adopted June 2012**

**Revised July 2019**

**Revised November 2019**