



## Languages Policy

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## **1. Philosophy and Approach for the Teaching and Learning of Languages**

At Tanglin, we value language learning and recognise the increasing relevance of modern foreign languages (MFL) given the trend of globalisation and the increased mobility of tomorrow's global citizens. Our aim is to develop languages through carefully planned programmes for all students from Nursery to Year 11, with options to continue through to Year 13.

Our guiding principles are to encourage a love of languages and an appreciation of cultures, as well as to equip our students with essential language learning skills which will form a strong platform for fluency and further study if appropriate. In the Senior School, students are introduced to Latin which gives them a deeper understanding of grammatical structure and the development of European languages, including English (see section 5).

We are committed to providing opportunities for students to develop awareness of, and respect for, the customs and traditions of Singapore and other countries, including their home country. Hence, we offer a wide variety of cultural and linguistic events to arouse the curiosity of our students.

We strongly encourage students who speak a language other than English at home to continue to develop their 'Mother Tongue' (see section 6).

Language learning at Tanglin is characterised by active learning in stimulating and supportive classroom environments. Lessons are designed to be motivating and inclusive whilst at the same time providing an appropriate level of challenge. They are led by well qualified, experienced language teachers, supported by fluent teacher assistants in the Infant and Junior Schools. Information technology is used extensively to support language teaching, where it can enhance motivation and differentiation, as well as encouraging independent learning. Children look forward to their language lessons and take pride in their increasing abilities to communicate in another tongue.

## **2. Tanglin's Languages Context**

Tanglin is an international school based in Singapore, following a 'British-based' curriculum. Over 50 different nationalities are represented in the student community, although approximately 50% of students are UK passport holders.

The language of instruction is English throughout the school and it is a requirement that all students have age appropriate fluency in English, so that they can be taught in a mainstream classroom without requiring significant language support.

Whilst the school does not have an English as an Additional Language (EAL) support department, we do recognise that for a significant number of our students, English is not their first language. These students may receive additional support in English, particularly in the areas of reading comprehension and written expression. This may simply be in the form of appropriate differentiation by the class/subject teacher but may involve targeted interventions or in-class support from the Learning Support (LS) team; every teacher at Tanglin is a teacher of English.

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### **3. Core Modern Foreign Languages at Tanglin**

#### **3.1 Infant and Junior Schools**

Chinese (Mandarin) is the core Modern Foreign Language (MFL) studied in the Infant and Junior Schools. All children from Nursery to Year 6 experience specialist Chinese teaching as part of the curriculum.

##### Rationale:

- Mandarin is one of the four official languages of Singapore and is increasingly important globally as China grows its economy.
- The study of Mandarin in the Infant and Junior schools by all students helps them to feel ‘located’ in Asia, leads to an exploration of some aspects of Chinese culture and links to the Humanities curriculum.
- We believe that experiencing a second language at a young age gives students an advantage not just in that language but in all language learning later in school and in life.
- The early experience of Mandarin for European children is particularly important due to the significant differences from European languages in both written and spoken language and the additional time required to attain a level of competence in the language (Jackson and Kaplan, 1999).
- We believe that, for most students, focusing on one additional language apart from their mother tongue results in faster progress and a greater level of proficiency than when two or more foreign languages are studied.

#### **3.2 Senior School (Year 7 to Year 11)**

Chinese, French and Spanish are the core MFLs studied in the Senior School. In Years 7 and 8 the vast majority of students\* are required to study two of the core MFLs as part of the curriculum. They will then choose one core MFL to study from Y9 through to Y11.

*\*Students with specific learning difficulties may follow a reduced curriculum; students who speak one of our core MFLs at home may be allowed to follow the 'Mother Tongue' programme in that language (see section 4 below)*

##### Rationale:

- French and Spanish are the two most common foreign languages studied in both state and private schools in the UK (Board and Tinsley, 2014) – so good choices for students who may transfer between British system schools during their secondary schooling.
- The two-language structure in Y7/8 means that the vast majority of students will have studied at least one European language other than English – whilst having the option to continue with their study of Chinese from the Junior School
- We believe that, for most students, focusing on one additional language apart from their mother tongue from Y9 results in faster progress and a greater level of proficiency than when two or more foreign languages are studied.
- The two years spent studying two MFL subjects allows students to make a well-informed choice of which language to continue to a higher level.

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### 3.3 Sixth Form College (Year 12 and 13)

In the IB pathway, the vast majority of students\* will study one of our core MFLs (Chinese; French; Spanish) as their Group 2, Language Acquisition, subject. This may be at higher, standard or 'ab-initio' levels.

*\*Students who can demonstrate fluency in a language other than English may be eligible to take a School Supported Self Study (SSSS) literature course in their Mother Tongue and achieve a bi-lingual diploma (see section 4 below)*

In the A-level pathway, students may opt to continue with the MFL that they have been studying in the Senior School as one of their A-level subjects. Studying a language is not compulsory in the A-level pathway.

In both pathways, the specific options offered may vary from year to year according to student demand and the most effective allocation of staff resources to meet that demand.

## 4. Support for 'Mother Tongue' Languages

### 4.1 Overview

Many of our students live in bilingual (or multilingual) households and we want to support those families in encouraging the development of mother tongue languages alongside English.

In facilitating Mother Tongue tuition, Tanglin provides: advice to parents about appropriate levels of tuition/ examinations to aim for; a suitable location on site for tuition to take place (if required); a suitable self study area for Senior School students who have approval to study their Mother Tongue language in curriculum time (see section 4.3 below); limited co-ordination between families wishing to arrange tuition in the same language.

With the exception of enrichment classes for Mandarin in the Infant and Junior Schools (see section 4.2 below), parents are asked to pay privately for any tuition in the Mother Tongue language which goes beyond the levels normally expected for a non-native speaker at that age.

#### Rationale:

- We believe that bilingualism gives individuals an advantage in global society – culturally; socially and economically.
- We believe that maintaining bilingualism can be beneficially generally to brain development (see for example, Blom E. et al., 2014).
- Asking parents to cover the costs of tuition in the mother tongue allows us to support the greatest range of languages, whilst being fair to all families.

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#### **4.2 Support for Mother Tongue in the Infant and Junior Schools**

In the Infant and Junior Schools, native speakers of Mandarin are largely catered through differentiation in normal curriculum lessons, enhanced with some additional small group sessions. Private tuition in a range of other languages (based on current demand and the availability of suitable tutors) is offered at school, through the SRC programme.

#### **4.3 Support for Mother Tongue in the Senior School**

In the Senior School, the MFL department will help families to source suitable private tuition for native speakers in any language. This tuition may take place on the school site.

Students in Year 7 to Year 11 who are native speakers of one of our core languages (Chinese, French or Spanish) may be permitted to have tuition in curriculum time, in place of that language. This will always be on condition that there is a structured and challenging programme in place, with tutors who are approved by the School.

In the Sixth Form College, native speakers may be eligible to be entered for a bi-lingual diploma in the IB pathway. This will involve the study of literature in the mother tongue language, through School Supported Self Taught (SSST) course. Students undertaking the SSST course are required to have an external tutor for the specific language being studied; a Tanglin teacher will be assigned to teach Literature skills in English, to liaise with the external tutor and to act as a supervisor for students.

### **5. Latin**

In Years 7 and 8, all students study Latin as part of the curriculum and in addition to their MFL subjects, unless they are following a reduced curriculum due to a specific learning difficulty.

Students have the option of continuing with Latin from Year 9; Latin is offered as a GCSE option subject and in the Sixth Form College, in the IB pathway.

#### Rationale:

- Latin is the source language for many words found in English and other European languages. It is an inflected language, with a highly structured system of grammar that is easier to grasp than in the case of a modern language. We believe that as such, the study of Latin leads to a deeper understanding of European languages, their grammatical structure and their development.
- The study of Latin develops transferable skills, including analytical thinking and problem solving.
- Latin is learned in the context of ancient Rome and therefore has strong links with the Humanities curriculum, helping to stimulate an interest in ancient history and the importance of language for cultural, social, political and economic development.

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## **6. External Examinations**

### **6.1 Qualifications**

In common with other curriculum subjects, students studying a Language as part of the curriculum at Tanglin will be entered for GCSE or IGCSE examinations in Year 11, and IB or A-Level examinations in Year 13.

Students who are part of the Mother Tongue programme in the Senior School are encouraged to work towards an appropriate qualification. The Mother Tongue coordinator can help students and parents to identify a suitable qualification to aim for and will agree a timeline for the entry for the examination if the School is to act as the examination centre.

As for all public examinations taken at Tanglin, parents are invoiced for the cost of the examination entry and administration.

### **6.2 Appropriate Entry for Language Examinations**

Senior School students who follow a mother tongue programme will normally be entered for appropriate, first language, (I)GCSE examinations in Year 11. They may be entered for second language (I)GCSE examinations in their mother tongue language in Year 9, as a step towards this.

Given the varied nature of the concept ‘Mother Tongue’ or ‘native speaker’, decisions about the appropriate language course in the Sixth Form College will always be made on a case-by-case basis and will usually be based on samples of work provided by the Year 11 Mother Tongue tutor. The key question is whether the course being considered offers appropriate challenge for the student. If a student has a relationship with Mother Tongue to an extent that our diagnostics suggest he/she has achieved the exit level of a language acquisition course (Ab Initio/Language B/ Second language A-Level) even before entry into the course, they will not be allowed to start that course; examination entry at that level would be unethical, unfair and would not provide appropriate challenge for that student.

Similarly, students who have had significant exposure to a second language (e.g. completed a second language GCSE course) will not be allowed to study an Ab Initio course in that language in the IB pathway.

We endeavour to treat every child as an individual whilst recognising the need to maintain Tanglin’s reputation as a centre of integrity regarding language selection. We also aim to ensure that any qualifications gained will be valued by higher education institutions.

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