



Goetheschule Essen

Language Policy

*A German should learn all languages
so that no foreigner could discomfort him at home
and he himself could be at home everywhere when abroad.*

(Johann Wolfgang von Goethe)

1 Multilingualism

1.1 The Concept of Multilingualism at Goetheschule

At Goetheschule Essen we consider languages to be a gateway to cultural identity, mutual (intercultural) understanding and peaceful co-existence. Multilingualism is a fundamental human right, because it provides orientation in a globalized world and access to cultural heritage and knowledge. It allows individuals to express their identity through their native language, while at the same time enabling cross-border communication.

As a resource for learning, multilingualism enhances cognitive development, critical thinking and problem-solving skills, improves memory and concentration, and increases cultural understanding and empathy. Being able to speak multiple languages also opens up new job opportunities and can improve career prospects, especially in a globalized job market.

All teachers at our school are language teachers, because communication is a key aspect of teaching and learning. Effective communication is necessary for teachers to convey information and for students to understand and process that information. Teachers also play a role in helping students develop their language skills, including pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, and comprehension. Furthermore, teachers help students develop the ability to communicate effectively and express themselves in a clear and confident manner, which is a critical life skill.

Based on the convictions outlined above, we have developed a concept which allows our students to learn

as many as **four foreign languages** while expanding their native speaker competence in German from Year 5 to Year 13.

1.2 Foreign Language Choices at Goetheschule

	Year	or	
mandatory	5-6	Latin plus English	English
	7 -8	Latin plus English	English plus Spanish (or Latin)
optional	9 – 10	French	Bilingual Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) in English
	11	French or Spanish or Italian	
	12 - 13	Abitur with French or Spanish or Italian or English	Abitur & Bilingual IB Diploma with French or Spanish or English

1.3 Physical and Virtual Resources to Facilitate Foreign Language Learning

Our school provides a range of physical and virtual resources to offer students multiple opportunities to practice and develop their language skills. Each resource has its own unique strengths and can cater to different learning styles and preferences. The use of physical resources such as textbooks can help learners develop their language skills through hands-on activities, while virtual resources such as online language platforms and multimedia resources allow learners to practice listening and speaking in real-life scenarios. Through the use of a variety of resources, we hope to promote learner engagement and motivation and

support our learners optimally according to their respective needs.
The following non-exhaustive list gives some examples of useful resources:

a) Physical resources:

- textbooks, workbooks and graded readers;
- audio and video materials (CDs, Mp3s, DVDs);
- visual (pronunciation) aids;
- games and activities (e.g. flashcards, board games, role-playing activities).

b) Virtual resources:

- online language learning platforms and communication forums (e.g. eTwinning or Kialo);
- digital dictionaries and thesauruses;
- language-specific websites and apps (e.g. news websites, podcasts, and vocabulary-building apps);
- online multimedia resources (e.g. videos, audio clips, interactive games).

1.4 Foreign Language Learning in Lower School

1.4.1 Overview

Year 5 – 6	or	
	Latin plus English	English
<p>Goetheschule Essen offers English as well as combined Latin and English courses as the first foreign languages. The Latin and English model means that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Latin is the first foreign language; - additional English is taught in a mandatory three-hour study group in which the students' work is not graded. 		

1.4.2 Goals and Operational Methods

English, Spanish and Latin have different characteristics and teaching methods. Consequently, language instruction has, in each case, different goals and different operational methods.

The teaching of **English and Spanish** as modern languages aims at an independent and fluid discourse in the respective language. Therefore, teachers foster **contextual learning** so that students make connections between what they are learning and real-life situations which they need to master in order to communicate effectively. These situations comprise topics and areas of the students' everyday experience, such as family life, school, pets, free-time and holiday activities etc., which allow them to draw parallels and observe differences and thus develop an increasing degree of (inter-)cultural awareness.

Basic teaching goals are to foster:

- auditory and visual differentiation ability;
- knowledge of the culture(s) in which the target language is spoken;
- an awareness of intercultural differences and similarities;
- tonal imitation ability;
- a quick grasp of new language incentives;
- a readiness to communicate and a fluency of speech.

With the adaptation of listening and imitative application, the students become directed toward situations that they recognize or in which they want to act. The structure of the language is at the beginning unconscious and learned in a playful manner, through imitation and modification; only later is the structure of the language systematically learned.

Latin is the only subject which is generally taught in two languages. An inherent characteristic of an ancient language is that speaking and hearing it in a modern context is not possible; thus, the meaning of texts is discovered through **reading and translating**. The situation behind the structure of the language recedes. Through translation, the students discover the relationship between individual elements and the entire text. They are thus educated to practice **close reading** to render a careful, sustained interpretation instead of taking in the text holistically.

In addition to this, students work out the text's overall structures and rules in grammatically oriented phases. The **analytical examination** of ancient Latin is always conducted in comparison to German, which strengthens an awareness of both languages.

It should also be mentioned that with many stories and specialized texts, students come closer to the ancient world and achieve, through this distance, knowledge of our own world. They discuss speech in the framework of a historical perspective and experience the exotic through a **critical perspective** of cultural distance.

Last but not least, the educational value of Latin for all romance languages, as well as many other languages, substantially **facilitates the learning of new lexicons** and the grammar of modern languages:

Lat.	French	Spanish	Portugese	Italian	German	English
amicus	ami	amigo	amigo	amico	Freund	friend
flos	fleur	flor	flor	fiore	Blume	flower
sal	sel	sal	sal	sale	Salz	salt

On the whole, Latin serves

- as a model for the functioning of languages;
- to improve verbal skills in German;
- as a practical vehicle to understand foreign words and internationalism;
- to strengthen precise thinking, and to cultivate powers of observation and powers of deduction;
- to develop critical thinking in the argument of basic human situations and the intercession of humanistic values in works and figures of world history and world literature.

To summarize, here are the particular skills which are trained in English, Spanish and Latin:

English & Spanish (contextual):

- interpersonal communication skills, through learning in situational contexts;

Latin (structural):

- grammatical analysis skills;
- the ability to recognize and communicate

- acoustic differentiation;
 - the ability to respond spontaneously in different situations;
 - the ability to speak fluently, eloquently, and idiomatically;
 - (inter-) cultural awareness and knowledge.
- text structures;
 - the ability to analyze problems, to differentiate and to discover similarities;
 - the ability to illuminate phenomena in different perspectives, and to discover new approaches; to known phenomena.

1.5 Foreign Language Learning in Middle School

1.5.1 Overview

Year	or	
8	French	Bilingual Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) in English
	<p>The beginning of 8th grade means a difference in schedules and subject offerings. Students may now choose 4 hours of elective courses according to their inclinations and interests.</p> <p>French is offered as a third foreign language. In addition, a combination of Geography, History, Politics and Sustainability Concepts is taught in English. The third elective, project-oriented Natural Sciences, is a combination of Biology, Chemistry, and Physics and also contains mathematical components, IT and coding.</p> <p>The students' achievements in these courses are combined in a grade, in which the appropriate portions of the classwork in the subject (up to 4 times a year) are weighted accordingly.</p>	

1.5.2 Goals and Operational Methods

The basis of our **French** curriculum is the diversified and established work with the course book *Découvertes* (published by Klett), which brings the exciting world of France closer in a colorful and informative way. Our teaching of French follows modern didactic and methodical principles which are **communication- and activity-oriented**. In the language classroom students for example take the roles of guests, tourists, email or Facebook partners, and thus learn to explain what moves them, to ask for explanations or to maintain a conversation.

All competences of the modern teaching of foreign languages, the **active oral fluency** and **writing competence**, the **receptive listening, reading and comprehensive competence**, are schooled in parallel and successively built upon.

Another important teaching goal is the **promotion of intercultural awareness through the use of authentic media** like songs, films or pictures. This offers more than a brief glance into regional studies, as students are continually confronted with questions like "What do we share with our French neighbours, and what connects us?" and "Where are the differences that make the others interesting, but also leave us puzzled?"

In terms of methods, we proceed monolingually, which means that French is the general language of instruction. Despite the predominance of **monolingual instruction**, the teacher may, however, occasionally use German to explain grammar.

Project work is another component which strengthens the use of the foreign language as well as social interactions and reading competence.

To summarize, here are the particular skills which are trained in French:

French fosters ...

- the communication readiness, eloquence and speech ability to communicate with today's friends and neighbours and tomorrow's business and trade partners;
- a quick grasp of new sounds and thus enables spontaneous reaction and interactions;
- the key competence of auditory and visual differentiation;
- a deeper understanding of other cultures, selected authentic texts and interesting literary works.

The teaching of French...

- is predominantly monolingual and ensures the ability to articulate oneself fluently in the target language;
- reflects on regularities in the language;
- aims at independent communication in the language;
- enables students to master different communication situations;
- favours speech ability, eloquence, writing talent and the ability for students to write their own texts;
- encourages the quick grasp of new speech patterns, spontaneous reactions, imitations, and the auditory and visual differentiation abilities of different sounds.

French as a foreign language...

- can be a building block for professional success, since France is the fourth largest economy in the world;
- is spoken in 47 countries in the world and is either the official or local language in 35 countries; is the mother tongue in France and Canada, and it is spoken in the European Union by around 70 million people as a second language; is spoken by 336 million people worldwide and is spoken on all continents of the Earth;
- is an official language of the United Nations, the Council of Europe, the European Union, the International Olympic Committee, FIFA, the Union of European Football Associations, UEFA, and an official language of organizations such as Reporters Without Borders, Doctors Without Borders, and the World Trade Organization.

Bilingual Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) in English reflects an approach to integrate the learning of languages with learning in the subject groups. In Year 9 and 10 regular subjects (History, Geography, Politics, Sustainability) can be studied in English.

Our CLIL course

- is basically designed to cover Geography, History, Politics, with a focus on sustainability;
- is mainly focused on English-speaking cultures;
- is primarily taught in English. Grading is based on subject competence, not language competence;
- requires the readiness to work in English;
- is concerned with independent work and the execution of interdisciplinary working methods related to specific fields;
- favours application-oriented and practical interdisciplinary work, research, field studies and project-managing skills;
- refers to content as well as methodical knowledge and skills when information for grades are compiled;
- enables students to prepare for their responsibilities in a global society;
- encourages an understanding of global questions and develops a knowledge of geo-economic and energy-efficient processes;
- trains students for independent work and prepares them for study in the upper grades.

1.6 Foreign Language Choices in Upper School

1.6.1 Overview

Year	or	
11 – 12	<p>Abitur in</p> <p>French, Spanish, Italian (B1)</p> <p>as well as Latin (A2), English (B2/C1), French (B2/C1)</p>	<p>Abitur & Bilingual IB Diploma</p> <p>in French B,, Spanish B, Spanish ab initio, English B</p>
	<p>With the exception of Latin, all languages can be continued from Year 5 to Year 13. Abitur examinations can be taken on different levels of the CEF, depending on the grade of proficiency students have gained during their school career.</p> <p>Highly-motivated students who exhibit extraordinary talents in language learning may also complete the IB Diploma Programme, which the school offers as an extension to the Abitur.</p>	

1.6.2 Goals and Operational Methods

Multilingualism in Upper School aims at

- achieving proficiency in speaking, listening, reading, and writing;
- understanding and communicating with native speakers;
- developing cultural competence and appreciation;
- preparing for future studies and/or careers in fields related to the language;
- enhancing cognitive abilities and memory skills.

Among the Operational Methods of Learning Foreign Languages are:

- Formal Instruction: attending language classes, learning grammar and vocabulary, and practicing through oral and written exercises.
- Practice with Native Speakers: conversing with native speakers to improve speaking skills and learn colloquial expressions.
- Use of Technology: Utilizing online resources, language learning apps, and multimedia tools to supplement learning.
- Cultural Activities: Participating in cultural events, visiting countries where the target language is spoken, and engaging with local communities.

1.6.3 Fostering Different Mother Tongues in Upper School

Students in Upper School are generally entitled to special tuition in German and English if they find it difficult to meet the expected language standards.

Non-native IB students in Upper School may choose to study literature in regular German A Literature classes (if they have a native speaker-like competence of German) or choose school-supported self-taught literature courses in languages other than German or English.

Since the German Ministry of Education, representing the 16 German state education authorities, the

Kultusministerkonferenz (KMK), agreed in March 2017 to grant equivalency to the school supported self-taught language A courses, IB students with a native speaker competence in a language other than German or English may choose from more than 40 languages in which the IBO offers externally assessed literature exams.

1.7 Fostering German as a Mother Tongue and as a Foreign Language

1.7.1 German as a Mother Tongue

Mastering advanced reading, writing and speaking skills in German and developing an awareness of venerated literary traditions, important linguistic strategies and current cultural concepts is of utmost importance to become a successful and sophisticated member of German society. Goetheschule Essen therefore fosters competences in these areas among students of all age groups. The following examples have been chosen to illustrate the school's approach in our classes for native speakers of German:

Literary Traditions

Students deal with a broad selection of different genres and literary periods, ranging from ancient fables and fairy tales in Year 5 and 6 over classical German drama in Year 9 to German Romantic poetry and post-modern novels in Year 11 and 12.

Linguistic Strategies

Students learn how different writing styles, registers and jargons may affect the communication between sender and receiver. They write CVs and letters of application in Year 9, analyze commercial language in Year 8 and rhetorical devices in political speeches in Year 9, study communication models and theories about the origin of language in Year 10 and 12.

Cultural Concepts

Students reflect on changes in their own culture and its relation to other cultures in regular essay writing workshops. A good example is the project "Back then at (the age of) 15", during which students in Year 9 interviewed senior citizens about their youth and compared it to their own experiences. Essays from three consecutive years have already been published as a book of the same title.

Skills

Students practise a variety of reading, speaking and writing skills during their German lessons. In Year 6 they have a read aloud competition to improve both their reading and their intonation. In Lower and Middle school they write regular class tests to check their writing competence with regard to drafting descriptions, reports, editorial letters or satires. All age groups are encouraged to give regular presentations, especially book presentations. In Upper School students focus on professional presentation techniques and the writing of analytical texts and interpretative literary commentaries.

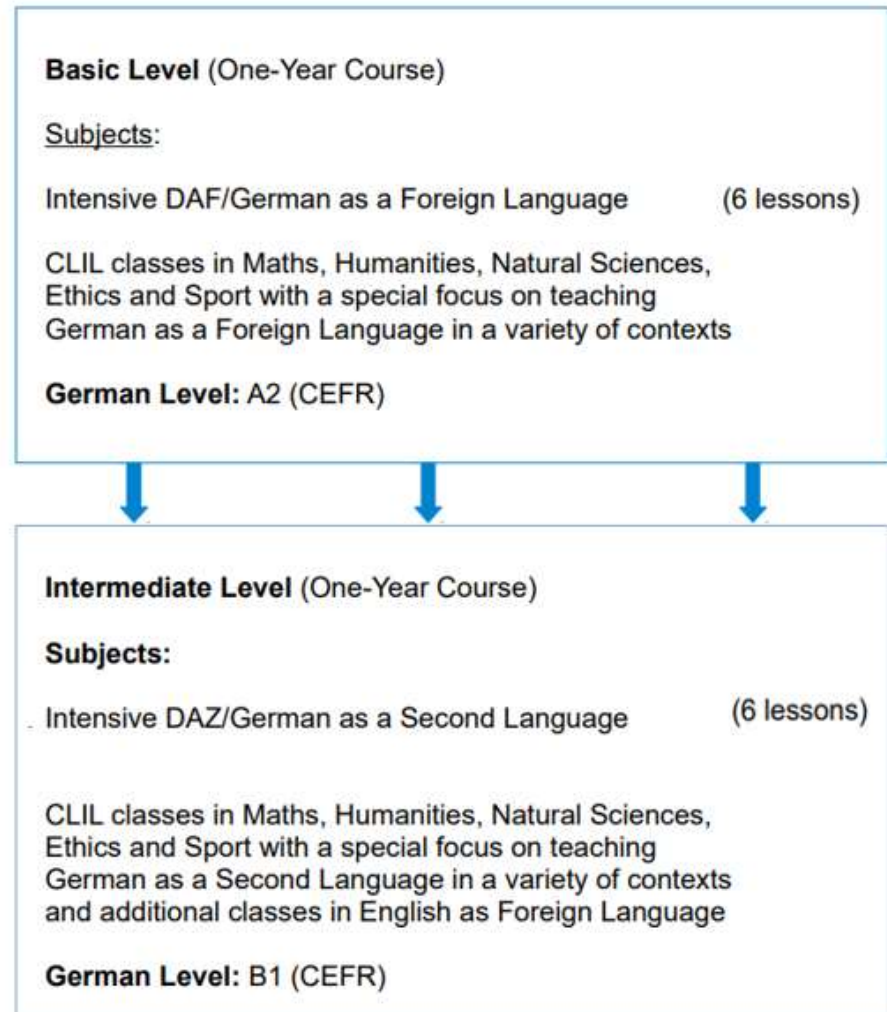
1.7.2 German as a Foreign Language

Speaking German fluently is a major challenge for many students from abroad. Some students in Lower or Middle School have been brought up bilingually and have already mastered the essentials of German as a Foreign Language, while others have no prior knowledge of the language. Our school's aim is to integrate these students as quickly as possible into regular classes. We have therefore developed a two-year programme which offers intensive German tutoring to non-natives. The individual's progress in the programme is regularly assessed, which allows students to be transferred into regular classes at the earliest opportunity. In regular classes these students receive further tutoring in German as a Second Language on a basis of 4 lessons per week.

Regular Classes



Intensive Programme (for students with no or little knowledge of German)



1.7.3 Languages in the Abitur and IB Diploma Programme

German A1 (Literature)

All students at Goetheschule Essen attend at least 3 German lessons per week from Year 5 to Year 13 to continue and develop their German mother-tongue skills. They receive marks at the end of each term for their classroom participation and their performance in regularly scheduled class tests. In Upper School the requirements for the North-Rhine Westphalian Abitur and the final examinations in the IB Diploma Programme are similar in many respects.

Both course systems require students to:

- develop an understanding of the techniques involved in literary criticism;
- form independent literary judgements;
- develop skills of formal literary analysis;
- have a thorough knowledge of different textual genres and intercultural understanding;
- develop the ability to support an argument in clearly expressed writing;
- use the German language in an academic context;
- give an individual oral presentation (10-15 minutes).

Furthermore, IB Diploma students are expected to study a variety of literature translated from other cultural domains. The works are chosen from the Prescribed Reading List. Higher level students also complete a literary essay on one work studied; both HL and SL students give a formal oral commentary

comparing two works studied. These additional requirements are covered by a German A1 World Literature Course in Year 12 and 13.

Language B

In addition to the regular canon of languages, Goetheschule Essen offers various foreign languages as obligatory elective Abitur subjects. Students receive marks at the end of each term for their classroom participation and their performance in regularly scheduled class tests. Among the obligatory elective languages, English, Spanish and French can be chosen as Language B subjects in the IB Diploma Programme.

Both course systems require students to:

- gain fluency in the foreign language;
- develop receptive, productive and interactive skills to be able to understand and discuss topics of global importance;
- analyze works of literature in the foreign language;
- demonstrate an understanding of other cultures through the study of language;
- develop critical thinking skills;
- complete an oral examination.

Language ab initio

In Upper School students may choose to learn another foreign language without prior experience of the language. They receive marks for the new subject at the end of each term on the basis of their classroom participation and their performance in regularly scheduled class tests. Among the electives which can be studied for the Abitur are French, Spanish and Italian. Spanish ab initio can also be chosen as an IB subject.

Both course systems require students to:

- engage in simple conversations about everyday topics;
- understand, both aurally and in writing, simple sentences and some more complex sentences;
- understand simple authentic written texts and relate to them in the target language;
- express information fairly accurately, in both writing and in speech, using a range of basic vocabulary and grammatical structures;
- demonstrate some intercultural understanding;
- complete an oral examination.

1.8 Language Learning in All Years

1.8.1 Fostering Multiliteracies

Multiliteracies refer to the multiple ways of reading, writing, and communicating in different contexts and through various modes of representation. The term acknowledges the diverse and evolving forms of communication in our digital and globalized world.

Multilingualism supports multiliteracies by providing individuals with diverse perspectives and ways of expressing themselves, thereby fostering critical thinking and intercultural competence. In a multilingual setting, individuals can access a wider range of information, cultural products, and modes of expression.

Multiliteracy is fostered at our school through multilingualism in several ways:

1. Language policies: We offer multiple languages as part of our curriculum and create policies that support the development of language skills in all students.
2. Cultural understanding: We promote cultural understanding and appreciation by exploring the literature, art, and traditions of different language communities.
3. Intercultural communication skills: We develop intercultural communication skills through exposure to different language and cultural perspectives.
4. Technology integration: We utilize technology to access multilingual resources, such as through online resources, language learning apps, and multimedia tools, and communicate with others who speak different languages.
5. Bilingual instruction: We incorporating bilingual instruction in our CLIL course, to support the development of literacy skills.
6. Teacher training: We providing teacher training on how to support multilingual students, including strategies for differentiating instruction and developing students' language proficiency.
7. Cultural events and activities: We organize cultural events and activities to promote multilingualism and cultural awareness, and to provide opportunities for students to practice their language skills.

By implementing these strategies, we try to create an inclusive, supportive and dynamic environment that benefits all our students and supports their language development and success.

1.8.2 Students with Other Languages of Origin

The proportion of foreigners in our school's catchment area is considerably smaller than in the city in general: 8.9 % (Essen average: 17.8 %). Among the languages of origin most frequently by our students and their families are Turkish, Russian, English, Polish, Chinese, Spanish, Ukrainian, Romanian, Albanian, Bosnian, Greek, Italian, Croatian and Serbian.

Our school board offers lessons in the language of origin. The programme is aimed at lower secondary school students whose language of origin is other than German. The language of instruction is the language of origin.

The students need at least a basic knowledge, i.e. the language of origin must be mastered as a family language, i.e. be understood and spoken. In class, the students expand their skills in the language of origin by dealing with various topics.

In addition to this, our school tries to incorporating the languages of the wider through cultural activities and community events. In collaboration with town library, we provide access to multilingual resources, including books, videos, and online resources, to support students' language development.

It is also important to us to provide support for students who speak a language other than the dominant language of the school community, for example with the help of our CAS volunteers, and encourage respectful attitudes towards different languages and cultures, since we consider linguistic and cultural diversity as a strength rather than a problem.

1.8.3 Inclusion in the Language Classroom

Inclusion is of great significance in our language classrooms as it promotes a sense of belonging and acceptance among students, while fostering respect and appreciation for linguistic and cultural diversity. In an inclusive language learning environment, our students are able to develop their language skills and engage in meaningful language learning experiences that help to build their self-esteem, social skills, and cultural awareness

If a student has major learning difficulties, the language teacher will try to meet the individual needs of the student by

- a change of instructional methods;
- individual counselling on alternative learning techniques;
- the provision of (self-)study revision material.

If difficulties persist over a longer period of time, the class teacher or the language teacher may recommend the attendance of one of the faculty's tutoring groups or free tutoring by an older CAS student.

If a student is affected by a long-term illness, the class teacher or the school counsellor will develop a tailored learning programme for the student.

1.8.4 Extracurricular Language Learning

Students at Goetheschule Essen can choose from a wide range of extracurricular activities, among which many are devoted to foreign language learning. Our English Drama Group *No Fear!* for students in Year 5 to 13 is run by an American free-lance director. Each year in May, after months of rehearsals completely conducted in English, students perform a play based on a well-known literary work from the English-speaking world. Among them there have been Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, *The Tempest* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's *Sherlock Holmes* as well as Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland*.

Since 2016 our school has been participating in Erasmus Plus, which gives students from Year 9 to 13 the opportunity to collaborate with students from other European countries, either online via eTwinning or face-to-face during project weeks at the respective schools.

We also offer the Spanish DELE and the French DELF/DALF examinations at all levels. Talented students may as well complete the FCE exam in Year 10 or 11 or the CAE in Year 13.

1.9 Love Languages and Learn them for Life!

1.9.1 The Continuity of Language Learning at Goetheschule Essen

Continuity in language learning provides our students with a foundation for developing their language skills over time and helps them to build their language proficiency and fluency. It thus ensures that students are able to achieve long-term success in their language studies and reach their language goals.

We are convinced that

- every language is a key to extensive experiences with our European neighbours; with every single Language doors open to history, culture and geography;
- intercultural experiences are essential in order to change perspectives and initiate encounters which enrich and extend personal development;

- language teaching should be seen as an ongoing educational process. Hence, with the exception of Latin all languages at our school can be studied up until the Abitur.
- language and subject teaching should not be considered in isolation, since “Language is the primary vehicle of learning and every teacher is a language teacher.”
(Irene Davy, *Learners without borders: a curriculum for global citizenship*, 2011, p. 7)
- with the IB Diploma Programme we promote multilingualism in a way which the German Abitur does not, giving students the opportunity to study 6 subjects in a language other than their mother tongue and thus become highly proficient bilinguals with an ability to communicate in a variety of modes.

1.9.2 Working Hand in Hand Towards Success

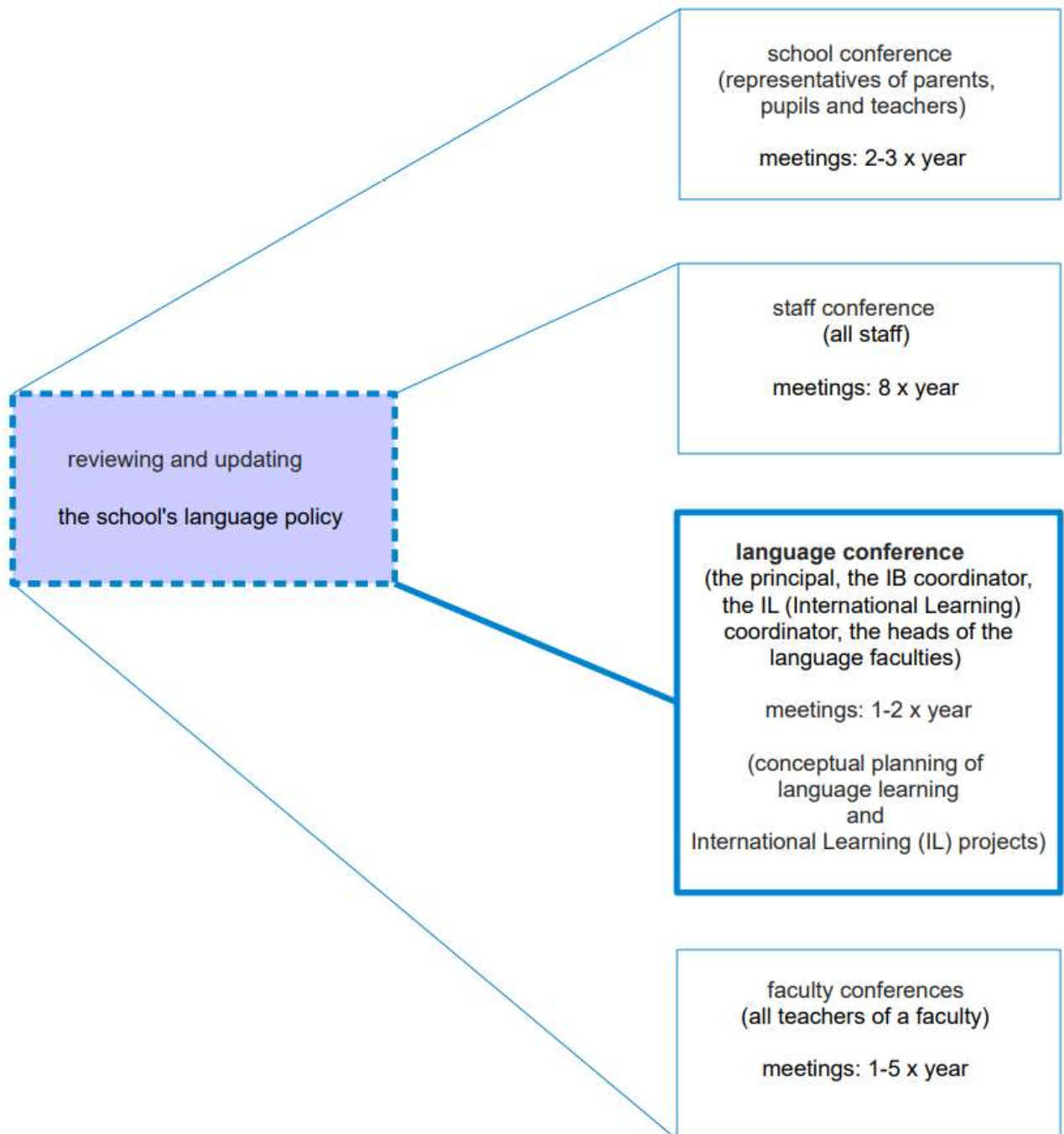
Our strategy of encouraging multilingualism and multiliteracies allows our students to learn up to four foreign languages, depending on their inclinations and abilities. To achieve this, students, teachers and parents work hand in hand. It is important to us to involve parents in planning their children's language profile and development in various ways, including:

- Parent-teacher conferences: We scheduling regular parent-teacher conferences to discuss each child's language development and to involve parents in setting language learning goals.
- Communication tools: We providing clear and effective communication tools, such as our newsletter GoetheNews, our websites and our social media channels to inform parents about the school's language curriculum and programmes.
- Parents’ evenings and our ‘Foreign Language Evening’ (Fremdsprachenabend): We regularly inform parents about language development, multilingualism, and multiliteracies as well as about the specific languages offered at our school and the associated choices.

If you have any further questions about our language concept or individual support options, please do not hesitate to contact us.

2. The Language Policy Review Process

The school's language policy is constantly reviewed by the various committees (see chart: school conference, staff conference, language faculty conferences). Conceptual changes and adaptations developed in these committees are discussed and further elaborated by the language conference whose results are then reported back to the various committees. Thus the permanent exchange and update of ideas and agreements is guaranteed.



References

For further information please refer to

- the school's language brochure "Goethe spricht"
- the school's IB website goetheschule-ib.de/
- the school's Assessment Policy
- the school's Inclusive Education Policy
- Irene Davy, *Learners without borders: a curriculum for global citizenship*, 2011
- *IB Learner Profile Booklet*, 2013
- *Learning in a language other than mother tongue in IB programmes*, 2008
- DP language courses: overview and placement guidance, 2020

This policy was developed on 30 March 2011, authorised by the IB Staff Conference and the Language Conference in October 2011, and last reviewed in January 2023.