



Forrest Primary School

Language Statement



At Forrest Primary School we recognise all teachers are responsible for language teaching and learning with responsibilities for facilitating the development of communication skills. We believe language is integral to exploring and sustaining personal development, cultural identity and intercultural understanding. We acknowledge parents and carers play a crucial role in their child's language development and value and promote strong home-school partnerships.

We understand the connection between language and identity. Language learning includes the development of the home and family languages, the languages of the school, additional languages and the development of literacy.

Culture 4.1: The school implements and reviews a language policy that is aligned with IB language policy guidelines. (0301-04-0100)

School Language Profile

Our school is culturally and linguistically diverse, providing education for approximately 600 students from preschool to year 6, from over 45 different nations at any one time. A large percentage of our school population have culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds.

In 2025 our language profile consists of 46% of learners who are proficient in a language other than English. Due to the context of our school, our population is globally mobile. Many learners commence at our school speaking a language other than English or with bilingual proficiency in both English and their mother tongue or other language.

English as an Additional Language and/or Dialect (EAL/D)

Through the enrolment process into an ACT public school, parent/carers are required to identify additional languages spoken by their child on the school enrolment application. This forms part of the process for schools to identify students as eligible for EAL/D support.

Students with a language background other than English (LBOTE) who require specific support to develop English proficiency and cultural knowledge to access the Australian Curriculum, are EAL/D learners. EAL/D learners who attend our school may include, but are not limited to:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students speaking Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander languages and/or dialects
- children born in Australia of migrant heritage where English is not spoken at home
- children of deaf adults who use Auslan as their home language
- English-speaking students returning to Australia after extended periods in non-English speaking settings
- immigrants to Australia and temporary visa holders from non-English speaking countries
- international students from non-English speaking countries
- students who use varieties of English whose syntax and vocabulary are markedly different from Australian English
- students with a refugee background

The role of our EAL/D teacher includes identifying students with a language background other than English who meet the eligibility requirements for EAL/D support and implementing explicit and targeted EAL/D teaching and learning that meets the needs of the schools EAL/D learners.

Students who meet the definition of an EAL/D learner as stated in the English as an Additional Language or Dialect Learner Policy **and** are assessed by their home school as having a beginning phase level of English language proficiency overall, as described by the ACARA EAL/D learning progression may be offered a place at a local Intensive English Centre (IEC). Primary students can access an IEC program for two terms, with the possibility of a one term extension based on their English language proficiency. Students can begin and exit an IEC at any point in the school year. Students attend for approximately 20 weeks from when they first enter the IEC and return to their home school and mainstream class when they exit the program.

Culture 4.2: The school describes in its language policy the way that the school recognizes multilingualism as a fact, a right and a resource for learning. (0301-04-0200)

Mother tongue

The term mother tongue is used in the research literature in various ways. It may denote the language learned first; the language identified with as a “native” speaker; the language known best; the language used most. When used in this document, it includes all those meanings. (IB 2024)

We use a variety of practices that nurture the valuable diversity of multilingual and multicultural classrooms to develop internally minded people. Teachers recognise and value students’ mother languages as both an important part of their identity and as a useful tool to access English. We realise this is critical to build relationships with parents/carers as well as using knowledge of the students’ cultural and educational backgrounds when planning and developing appropriate teaching and learning experiences.

Mother tongue awareness provides students with the opportunity to engage with the language and culture of various cultural groups within our school. In facilitating parents to act as expert others, we are valuing languages and cultures other than that of the hegemonic culture. We are exposing students to a variety of perspectives and building a world view as a global citizen. In asking classroom teachers to facilitate use of mother tongue to gather and share knowledge we are acknowledging that the learning of language is a whole school responsibility and that every teacher contributes to building our resources. Other initiatives which encourage the valuing of mother tongue languages include:

- Hosting mother tongue language clubs to facilitate the building of community that is connected, respectful and internationally minded
- Holding mother tongue morning teas and events for parents to meet, develop relationships and share their thoughts on building capacity as an internationally minded school
- The inclusion of a mother tongue section in our school library
- The sharing and valuing of mother tongue languages and celebrations in classrooms, for example responding to the class roll in a mother tongue language or signage
- Celebrating and participating in community cultural events such as Chinese New Year celebrations and the Canberra Multicultural Festival
- Hosting parent student workshops, where parents share their language and culture with students

Culture 4.3: The school identifies in its language policy a variety of physical and virtual resources used to facilitate language development. (0301-04-0300)

Language Other Than English (LOTE)

We believe the ability to communicate in a variety of modes in more than one language is essential to the concept of an international education that promotes intercultural understanding. Using the Australian Curriculum languages curriculum all students from kinder to year 6 learn a language other than English (LOTE) once a week with a specialist languages teacher (currently Mandarin). The key concepts of language, culture and learning underpin the teaching of this language.

Our LOTE classroom is resourced to facilitate promotion and enjoyment of learning an additional language. Class teachers are encouraged to reinforce the Mandarin language by finding ways to model and promote Mandarin outside of specialist lessons. All students are provided the opportunity to participate in our Mandarin Club run by our specialist teacher.

School Library

Our school library is strategically located within the main building, providing a primary resource for students, teachers and parents to support language development. Our full-time teacher librarian collaborates with classroom teachers to ensure the collection in the library supports the units of inquiry. Research skills are introduced to the students early and built upon as students' progress to higher grades. The teacher librarian plans and teaches in conjunction with units of inquiry, ensuring that all students are developing skills to successfully find, evaluate and use information. The core function of our library is to focus on promoting lifelong learning and the desire to develop students' inquiry skills through:

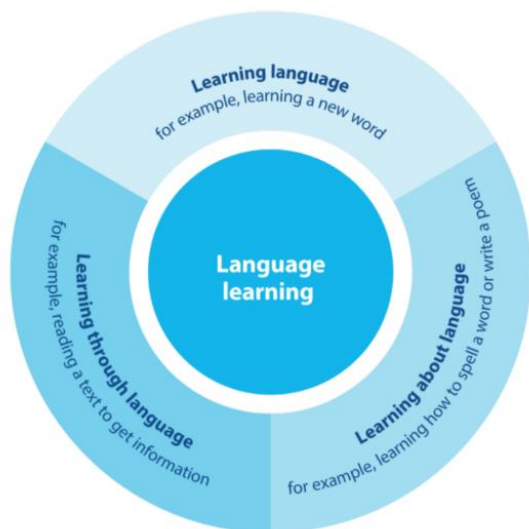
- Enriching and supporting the curriculum and units of inquiry
- Providing texts which vary in the level of difficulty and appeal
- Supporting literate development in mother tongue
- Representing a range of views on all issues
- Valuing difference without deficit, including efforts to reduce indigenous disadvantage
- Supporting personal intellectual growth in students
- Promoting and understanding of diversity and inclusion
- Encouraging the pursuit of recreational interests
- Fostering a love of reading

Translanguaging

Translanguaging is the process by which language students actively draw on all their linguistic resources to communicate and make meaning (Garcia, Li Wei 2014). *PYP: Principles into Practice* states that students use language most effectively by drawing on all their prior linguistic resources, their skills and knowledge about language and language learning. They benefit from awareness of the similarities and differences between their languages in phonemic, syntactic and grammatical aspects. By providing opportunities for students to make connections between their languages and to draw on prior knowledge, the teacher facilitates effective learning while affirming identity (Cummins 2000).

Translanguaging is encouraged in our classrooms as it promotes student agency and connection to mother tongue languages and prior knowledge about how language works. Translanguaging is supported through using bilingual texts, working with someone who speaks the same language, working with learning support staff who may be bilingual and providing students with access to iPads or Chromebooks to use to Google Read and Write and Google Translate.

Culture 4.4: The school clearly describes in its language policy the rights and responsibilities of all members of the school community and what constitutes good practice within the school context. (0301-04-0400)



Language Learning and Teaching

Language provides the structure for conceptual and critical thinking within and beyond our PYP transdisciplinary framework. Language learning and teaching at Forrest immerses students in the interplay between learning language, learning through language and learning about language (Halliday 1985). These aspects are inseparable to support an understanding of how language is learned and used to make meaning.

The teaching of English knowledge, concepts and skills through a balance of direct instruction and an inquiry approach supports students to use and learn through language in real world contexts within our transdisciplinary units of inquiry.

Teachers align the Australian Curriculum content descriptors to the IB Approaches to Learning (ATL) skills during the planning process to ensure students develop thinking, research, communication, self management and social skills as they use language across the curriculum.

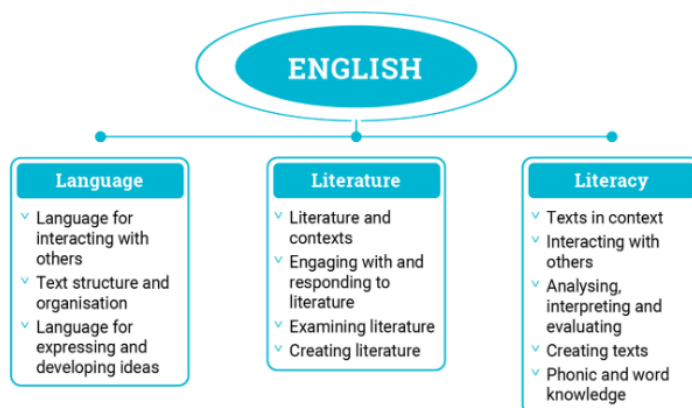
Learning language at Forrest also involves a focus on the development of the IB learner profile attributes, allowing learners to grow and demonstrate positive dispositions as language learners.

English Language

English is our school’s language of instruction. The Australian Curriculum Version 9 states: *English is the national language of Australia and, as such, is central to the lives, learning and development of all young Australians. Through the study of English, individuals learn to analyse, understand, communicate and build relationships with others and the world around them. It helps create confident communicators, imaginative and critical thinkers, and informed citizens....proficiency in English is invaluable globally.*

The Australian Curriculum: English is organised into three interrelated strands: Together the three strands focus on developing students’ knowledge, understanding and skills. The three strands are:

- **Language:** knowing about the English language
- **Literature:** understanding, appreciating, responding to, analysing and creating literature
- **Literacy:** expanding the repertoire of English usage.



Literacy Response to Intervention

We believe that early intervention in language learning is pivotal in ensuring all children become successful learners and a team of expert language teachers has been established to provide assistance and support to teachers and/or those students who are not meeting their language development goals. This is provided through in a Response to Intervention (RTI) programme driven by analysis of student data and includes teachers implementing a range of adjustments including quality differentiated in class tasks, learning support staff within the class to support students and flexible literacy intervention groups as required.

If students do not make growth after interventions have been implemented an Individual Learning Plan (ILP) can be developed. An ILP is a teaching tool used to deliver a targeted educational programme to achieve appropriate learning outcomes for identified students with specific needs. It is developed through a collaborative planning process involving the school, parents/carers and any other relevant services and agencies. An ILP identifies a student's individual needs and priorities for learning and outlines both short and/or long term goals as well as actions, strategies, modifications and adaptations that will be taken to achieve them. ILPs are reviewed throughout the year and new goals made accordingly.

The Language Learning Community

Creating a multilingual learning environment at Forrest is a collaborative process involving all members. As a language learning community all stakeholders work together to establish shared understandings about language and reach agreements together through the discussion and exploration of perspectives. Each group has rights and responsibilities as outlined below:

Role of school leaders

- Ensuring equal access to the curriculum for all learners
- Valuing and using diversity as a resource to enhance learning
- Promoting cultural inclusivity and awareness of the CALD school community
- Establishing a learning environment that welcomes and embraces diversity in languages, cultures and perspectives
- Involving the learning community in establishing understandings of how best to collaborate to achieve shared goals for students
- Ensuring the delivery of equitable education and social outcomes for EAL/D learners through implementing relevant ACT Education Directorate policies and procedures
- Ensuring school staff are adequately supported to be attentive and responsive to the unique social, cultural, emotional, and psychological needs of EAL/D learners.

Role of teachers

- Fostering a successful teaching and learning environment for all learners
- Stimulating curiosity and open-mindedness in a spirit of inquiry
- Promoting a class culture that affirms the self-esteem of each learner, such as embracing the diversity of cultures and valuing multiple perspectives
- Ensuring new learning and understanding is constructed on prior knowledge, previous experiences and conceptual understandings
- Having an awareness of barriers to learning that language might create, and personalise support for students when necessary
- Differentiating language learning to meet individual student needs and abilities
- Using a gradual release of responsibility model, where modelled, shared, guided and independent learning experiences support all students to learn

- Being responsive to the needs of students and then planning and making adjustments accordingly.
- In planning for a unit of inquiry, taking multilingual diversity into account and providing opportunities for its development within individuals, groups and the local and global learning community
- Scaffolding language in order to facilitate successful access to the resources and ideas students need in the pursuit of their inquiries

Role of students

- Having agency in their learning
- Sharing their linguistic knowledge and skills with the learning community
- Being naturally curious about other languages
- Engaging with language at school in multiple contexts and multiple modes
- Discussing what language means to them personally and setting language goals for themselves
- Understanding not all peers will have the same previous learning and background and some will need adjustments in the classroom to support access to language learning
- Being open minded to opportunities within units of inquiry to appreciate the multilingual nature of the world

Role of parents/carers

- Sustaining home and family languages
- Using language at home to provoke thought, spark interest and promote independent, motivated learning with their child
- Seeking out and welcoming opportunities for home-school partnerships to support their child's language development

Related documents:

IB Programme Standards and Practices 2021

PYP: Principles into Practice Updated 2024

Learning in another language other than mother tongue in IB programmes

Language and learning in IB programmes

The Australian Curriculum Version 9

Early Years Learning Framework

Related policies:

ACT Education Directorate Learning and Teaching Policy

ACT Education Directorate Strong Foundations- A system wide model of curriculum, teaching, and assessment to develop the literacy and numeracy skills of all students

ACT Education Directorate English as an Additional Language or Dialect Learner Policy

This Languages Statement will be reviewed annually and/or as any updates or changes to local, national or International Baccalaureate requirements are communicated.

Last updated: March 2025