



TALLINN INTERNATIONAL KINDERGARTEN

Language Policy

Tallinn, Estonia 2025



Introduction

At Tallinn International Kindergarten, we believe that language is key to children's cognitive, social, and emotional development. Following the PYP framework, we see language not only as means of communication but as a crucial part of learning and thinking. Language is viewed as a tool for expressing ideas, building relationships, and promoting international-mindedness, which supports our children's academic and personal development.

The language policy is a document developed by staff and administration of the Kindergarten. This policy reflects on our language philosophy and practices implemented at TIKi. It serves as a foundation for our approach to teaching and developing language skills.

Language Philosophy

At Tallinn International Kindergarten, we recognize language as a fundamental tool for learning, communication and cultural expression.

- We provide an environment with English as the official language of instruction.
- Multilingual exposure is key, with the Estonian language (as the local community language) and home languages acknowledged, supported and valued.
- We believe all teachers are language teachers, contributing to language development in all areas of learning.
- English language immersion encourages our young learners to actively engage with language in the variety of hands-on forms and activities (listening, speaking, reading and writing) and across all the areas of learning.
- Language is central to inquiry, helping children deepen their understanding of the world and connect with others around them.
- Language enables students to engage with ideas critically and reflect on different perspectives, fostering the IB learner profiles of open-mindedness and critical thinking.
- We see language learning as a shared and continuing process, which happens at the kindergarten and beyond; in cooperation with teachers, parents and other members of the community.
- The local Estonian language as well as home languages are considered essential for building identity, nurturing international-mindedness and fostering inclusivity.



Language profile and multilingual practices

English is the primary language used for teaching, learning, and communication across all areas and subjects at Tallinn International Kindergarten. This ensures a consistent and immersive environment for students aged 3-6 within the PYP framework. Language is not taught in isolation but integrated across all curriculum, enabling students to make meaningful connections between their learning and the world around them. Through inquiry-based methods, students develop the ability to ask questions, reflect, and engage with diverse perspectives, promoting holistic learning.

The development of listening, speaking, reading, writing, and media literacy skills through various activities is supported at the Kindergarten, according to the PYP Language Scope and Sequence documents.

- **Listening:** Activities like storytelling sessions or interactive read-alouds engage students in active listening and comprehension.
- **Speaking:** Circle time and group discussions encourage verbal expression, helping children articulate ideas clearly.
- **Reading:** Early readers explore picture books, practice letter recognition, and develop comprehension skills using phonemic awareness programs such as [The Heggerty Phonemic Awareness Curriculum](#).
- **Writing:** Students use drawing and writing tools to create letter shapes, label pictures, and eventually form simple words and sentences.

These are cultivated in an interconnected manner, allowing students to see how each skill complements and enhances the others.

Differentiated instruction ensures that learners with varied linguistic backgrounds receive tailored support, promoting both confidence and competence in English. For students who enter with limited or no prior English, additional scaffolding is provided through visual aids, gestures, and simplified language. These strategies ensure that all students can access the program and engage meaningfully in classroom activities.

Estonian as an Additional Language

Acknowledging Estonia as the host country, the Kindergarten incorporates local traditions, festivals, and cultural practices into its activities. Students experience Estonian culture through events like museum visits, traditional celebrations, and creative projects, fostering a sense of community and cultural appreciation.

In alignment with the PYP IB program, students at the age of 7 are offered the opportunity to learn a second language. Although the Kindergarten primarily serves Early Years students aged 3-6, in rare cases, we accommodate 7-year-old students. For these students, weekly Estonian



Language and Culture classes are provided in an informal, play-based format, focusing on engaging activities that introduce basic language skills and foster cultural appreciation.

Home Languages

Tallinn International Kindergarten represents a diverse international community, bringing together children from a wide range of linguistic and cultural backgrounds. Many families are in Estonia for a short time and prioritize an English-based education.

Our Kindergarten recognizes the importance of maintaining students' family languages, therefore collaborates with parents to support the development of their home languages both at school and at home. For instance, International Week and country presentations celebrate students' cultural heritage and linguistic diversity. The classroom library corners also have resources in different languages to support the language diversity and the school continues to widen the collection.

To involve parents more actively in planning their children's language profiles, the Kindergarten organizes parent-teacher meetings where families can contribute insights about their home languages and discuss strategies to support language development collaboratively.

While English remains the primary medium of instruction, teachers and management may use students' home languages to communicate in specific situations, depending on the needs of the child and their family. This approach ensures effective support for language development while embracing the linguistic diversity of the school community.

Teachers collaborate to ensure consistency in the teaching and learning of language, emphasizing inquiry, creativity, and authentic contexts. Teachers also receive ongoing professional development in strategies for supporting second-language learners, ensuring they are equipped to address diverse linguistic needs and foster inclusion in the classroom.

By embedding language into all areas of the curriculum, students are empowered to communicate effectively and build critical literacy skills. Through these practices, Tallinn International Kindergarten ensures that language learning nurtures not only academic success but also personal growth, cultural understanding, and a foundation for lifelong learning.

Language Policy Review

The Language Policy was collaboratively developed by the staff and administration of Tallinn International Kindergarten in December 2024.

The policy will be reviewed regularly to ensure its continued alignment with the PYP framework and the needs of the Kindergarten community.



References

Guidelines for developing a school language policy, International Baccalaureate Organization, 2008.

Learning in a language other than mother tongue in IB programmes, International Baccalaureate Organization, 2008.

Primary Years Programme: Language scope and sequence, International Baccalaureate Organization, 2009.