

Approved by the decision of the Management Board of Tallinn International School Ltd, 06.03.2019



**INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL OF TALLINN**  
**Curriculum**

**GENERAL INFORMATION**

Name of the school: International School of Tallinn (**IST**)

School owner: Tallinn International School Ltd

School type: preschool, primary school and secondary school as one institution

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Special features: nursery, primary, and upper secondary education in English

**Tallinn 2019**

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## Introduction

The International School of Tallinn is a private school offering **nursery, primary and upper secondary education in English**. The curriculum of the International School of Tallinn is a main document describing how the learning activities are organized at the school.

IST curriculum follows national regulations, IB (*International Baccalaureate*) documents, and the special features of the school (i.e. English language general education). The curriculum consists of a general section and the annexes to it.

**The general section** provides the basis and principles for the preparation of the curriculum. It describes the school's values and distinctive features, its learning and educational objectives, organisation of studies and activities planned for the diversity of the learning environment.

It furthermore describes the organisation of students' development, study support, and assessment principles for organising the learning activities of students with special educational needs and the procedures for applying for special needs support.

Finally, it describes the organisation of informing, counselling, and cooperation with students and parents, and the principles for work planning and cooperation of teachers.

Annexes include **subject syllabuses** by subject fields and contain descriptions of the learning outcomes of subjects and learning content based on grades.

Annexes also include the **preschool curriculum** that describes the expected development outcomes and general competencies of preschool students and syllabuses of the **cross-curricular topics** for upper secondary school.

## THE GENERAL PART OF IST CURRICULUM

### Baseline, task, and structure of the curriculum of the International School of Tallinn

The curriculum for Tallinn International School follows the [national regulations](#) below:

- Private Schools Act
- Preschool Child Care Institutions Act
- Basic Schools and Upper Secondary Schools Act
- National Curriculum for Preschool Child Care Institutions
- National Curriculum for Basic Schools
- National Curriculum for Upper Secondary Schools

The curriculum takes account of IB (*International Baccalaureate*) documents and the fields of study and particularities of the school.

The school is aiming to implement the following **IB (International Baccalaureate) programmes**:

- 1) **PYP** (*Primary Years Programme*) – preschool (ages 4–6) and primary (grades 1–6);
- 2) **MYP** (*Middle Years Programme*) – basic school (grades 7–9) + 10th grade;
- 3) **DP** (*Diploma Programme*) – upper secondary school grades 11–12.

The objective of the curriculum of the International School of Tallinn is to support the individual development of each child and student considering their [special characteristics](#), [national identity](#), [the cultural traditions of their country of origin](#), and objectives of the child's parents for continued education. The school curriculum supports introducing the culture of Estonia as [a temporary host country of the student](#).

The structure of the school curriculum is divided into its general section and syllabi.

## Teaching and educational objectives the International School of Tallinn

The objective of the International School of Tallinn is to provide **general education in English**.

The school curriculum and school organisation are aimed towards the following student groups:

- International students temporarily living in Estonia
- New immigrant students
- Estonian citizens who need or prefer to obtain a general education in English

The main goal of learning and education in the International School of Tallinn is the **development of a person** who is motivated to learn and knows how to learn; is aware of their interests, talents and abilities; is happy, adaptable and environmentally responsible and values healthy lifestyle behaviours.

**The learning concept** is understood as the active and purposeful actions of the student aimed at comprehending and interpreting perceived information through interaction between other students, teachers, parents, and the general living environment while relying on knowledge structures already obtained. The International School of Tallinn applies **a new, innovative learning concept** with the aim to support the child's individual and social development, to bear in mind the child's interests, and develop their research skills, creativity and entrepreneurship.

The pillars of the **teaching methods** of the International School of Tallinn are **inquiry-based teaching, planning studies based on project management principles, openness, and feed on the learning process**. The school implements diverse and innovative teaching methods to raise students' learning motivation and achieve better learning outcomes.

The child learns through imitation, observation, exploration, experimenting, communication, play (especially in preschool), practice and more.

The central part of learning activities is for students to construct their knowledge actively. For that, a learning environment that encourages independent learning, including the development of the necessary learning skills, must be created. Students must be allowed to set their own goals, learn to study both independently as well as collectively, and given the chance to find the most suitable **learning style** for themselves by trying various working methods.

The International School of Tallinn is a school providing a strong academic education based on the application of value education principles, whose graduates are self-aware, with adequate self-esteem, have independent powers of reasoning, are eager to learn, creative, dignified, cooperative and self-sufficient. They have a tolerant world view, value the diversity of the world, do not focus

on the differences but on finding common ground, are aware of their civic duties and responsibilities, trust in themselves, and are well-intentioned towards fellow human beings. Graduates cope well in **different spheres of life**: as partners in personal life, standard-bearers and promoters of culture, in various positions and roles in the labour market, and as citizens responsible for the sustainability of their society and natural environment.

## **Learning and educational principles of the International School of Tallinn**

In terms of learning and educational objectives, the following principles are followed.

- Ensure constant **collaboration** between children of different cultural backgrounds and ages, learning abilities, and skills that facilitates developing an outlook on life that values diversity and tolerance.
- Consider the **peculiarities of each child and support individual development**. The school focuses on analysing the capabilities of each child and on the greatest possible development of their potential. Organisation of teaching is based on the peculiarities, interests, and talent of each child and their development opportunities are supported in every way possible.
- Support the **holistic and balanced development** of students. Aside from developing intellectual abilities and academic knowledge, the school places great importance on developing research skills, creativity, analytical skills, critical thinking, and the ability to cooperate. Cognitive, social as well as emotional skills are developed simultaneously.
- Assess students' development by **comparing their outcomes only with their earlier performance** and not the performance of fellow students. The indicator of the student's success is their development. The creation of a competitive atmosphere is avoided and the emphasis is put on having the **students set their own goals and letting them manage how to achieve it**. Each child experiences success and knows their strengths.
- Value educational activities and teaching methods that help to bring up **socially and environmentally conscious and critically thinking people**. A strong education is acquired by using and maintaining the natural curiosity of children (including through play), keeping the students eager to learn.
- Provide a secure, creative, and innovative learning environment. The school creates a mutually respectful **stress-free** environment where the child can openly share their feelings and thoughts and where the child maintains their joy of going to school and their desire, habit, and need for lifelong learning. Having a small staff, a calm and pleasant learning environment, and following the principle of partnership between the teacher and student all help sustain good relations within the school and prevent bullying and stress.
- Value education has a very important role. Throughout the time the student attends the

school, they are instilled with values that the school community has agreed upon and regards important.

- Maintain and promote **health** in terms of mental health, emotional well-being, a healthy diet as well as sufficient physical activity.
- Facilitate the full use of school location-based and community-provided opportunities for diversifying educational activities.
- Follow the principles of **joint classes and differentiated instruction**.
- Include special methods (including **language immersion**) and experiences when teaching students who do not speak English.
- Value the integration of creative subjects in all other subjects and learning activities and facilitate the use of manual activities and creative methods that enable students who do not speak the language of instruction of the school to express themselves in the foreign language learning environment.
- Implement **integration between subjects** to develop social, language, and learning skills.
- Facilitate open communication and close cooperation with parents, including when organising school events and study visits, and strive for the **versatile application of skills employed by actively committed parents**.
- Include the full use of teachers' mental resources – professional preparation, erudition, and experience as well as personal characteristics – in the implementation of the school curriculum and in developing the school further.
- Ensure fast and transparent administration and decision-making processes in organising educational work.
- Facilitate openness and responding to the changes in society.

### **Language of instruction and admission to IST**

The language of instruction of the International School of Tallinn is **English**. The school accepts both native English speakers as well as students who are not proficient or are below proficient in the language of instruction (English).

Children are **admitted** to the International School of Tallinn based on an application by the parent. A student from a foreign educational institution submits a document certifying their education obtained in the foreign country. The student's class is determined based on that document and the student's date of birth. If possible, a conversation among the student, their parents, and school representatives will be held, during which the school's teaching and educational principles and core values shall be introduced.



Further identification of the knowledge and skills possessed by the student, adjusting their grade level upwards or downwards, and the confirmation of their class is done after a four-week observation period at the latest. It is extremely important that the school and home cooperate openly in determining the suitable grade level for the student based on the knowledge, skills, and needs of the student, parents' observations, and the school curriculum and educational objectives. The social skills and school readiness of students without previous school experience are determined through an expedited process, with a family conversation held on the same day, if possible.

Students not proficient or below proficiency in the school's language of instruction are offered **language support** for the faster acquisition of the school's language of instruction either on an individual basis or in small groups. If necessary, the principles of intensive English language learning shall be applied to all subjects and teachers shall teach subject-related vocabulary alongside the learning outcomes outlined in the curriculum. Numerous **visual aids** and manual activities shall be used for the faster acquisition of English.

In addition to language learning that has been integrated with the subjects, there shall also be English language lessons that have been set out in the school curriculum. The school shall closely cooperate with parents all throughout the period of language learning and adaptation. The school also considers adjustment difficulties faced by the students and their families who have arrived from abroad and offers support within their limitations by providing information and helping to find the necessary contact persons.

## **Learning environment in the International School of Tallinn**

The learning environment supports the student in becoming an independent and active learner; it carries the core values of the curriculum and the mentality of school, also preserves and develops the traditions of the district and school body.

**The physical learning environment** of the school is safe and in compliance with health and safety requirements. Opportunities for promoting physical activity and healthy lifestyle behaviours are created both during lessons as well as for extracurricular hours. Classes of the International School of Tallinn are small and that enables us to deal with each student individually. The rooms, furnishings, and study materials have an aesthetic appearance. The classroom is equipped so that it supports interaction between students and the teacher, promotes joint discussions for solving common problems and challenges, and develops dialogue skills and public speaking abilities. Classroom furnishing and teaching aids and technology create an environment in which the student learns by exploring and discovering.

Where joint class teaching methods are used, **combined classes** or **groups** are formed, if necessary. The school values having their students learn and act together, thereby contributing to the enrichment of the learning environment and implementation of its educational goals.

The interior design of classrooms includes bookshelves from where the student can take or borrow books and supplement the library. The school has a systematic and comprehensive stock of children's books. **The library's** collection is supplemented on a continuous basis. Use of digital means is a natural part of learning, use of computers with Internet access and presentation equipment is provided. The students are instructed on how to use age-appropriate study materials, materials adapted to individual needs, and digital aids to make the best use of them in achieving their learning objectives.

The International School of Tallinn values environmental sustainability and healthy lifestyles. The organisation of the school day contributes to protecting the students' mental and physical health – **breaks outside** are held under the supervision of the teacher. Warm school lunches are provided in the school. If possible, catering considers the special needs of students who are from different cultures or have particular dietary requirements.

Learning is also organised outside the school premises (for example, in the playground, in nature, museums, natural and environmental education centres, companies) and in virtual learning environments. Study **visits** help the students research the studied topic or consolidate earlier knowledge. Studying outside the school premises is included in the curriculum. Technology studies are enriched by study visits to handicraft workshops and master workshops. Transportation of students is organised, if necessary.

The whole school community participates in the development of the school's **social and intellectual environment**. The school has developed a **communication policy** intending to create a positive atmosphere within the school body, promote good relations, and foster successful cooperation between parties.

Competent and motivated international teaching staff supports academic and personality development of the students. The International School of Tallinn attaches great importance to the **professional development** of its teachers as only by ensuring the latter is it possible to provide students with the best conditions for their development.

The teacher is the instructor of the whole teaching process with their guidance, support, and help in establishing links and shaping values. The teacher involves students in planning the learning process.

The parents have a significant role in shaping the mental and physical learning environment. The International School of Tallinn is open to parents and tries to make use of their competences in the best ways possible by including them on different levels of running the school: school management, teaching, and carrying out recreational activities.

The development of the social and intellectual environment of the school is structured around the following principles:

- 1) creating relations based on mutual respect, consideration of each other's viewpoints, and due respect to agreements between students, parents, teachers, school management and other parties participating in teaching and education;
- 2) treating all students without prejudice, fairly, and equally while respecting their self-worth and individuality;
- 3) dividing decision-making powers and liability appropriately and clearly;
- 4) noticing and recognising the efforts and educational success of all students; refraining from labelling students and diminishing their self-confidence;
- 5) preventing violence and bullying between students;
- 6) being open to a free exchange of opinions, including criticism;
- 7) creating opportunities for students to take the initiative, participate in decision-making processes, and act both individually as well as together;
- 8) creating an environment characterised by helpfulness and supporting each other through hardships in life and learning;
- 9) creating an environment based on relationships of trust, friendliness, tolerance, and good will;
- 10) organising school life as a model society honouring human rights and democracy, characterised by shared and constant core values within the school body and by supporting good ideas and positive innovations;
- 11) organising school life based on principles of equality of treatment regardless of nation, race, gender or other characteristics and on gender equality objectives.

The official **language of instruction** in the school is English, and language learning is integrated with the topics covered in lessons. In the International School of Tallinn, it is possible to learn foreign languages either as part of the curriculum or separate from the curriculum. The learning environment and organisation of studies of the International School of Tallinn supports the development of students into independent and active learners, protects and promotes the mental and physical health of children, and takes into account the differences and needs of students from different nationalities and cultural backgrounds.

Teaching is based on an **individual approach** and **noticing each student**. The school creates conditions where no child remains neglected, tasks are differentiated to ensure all students are motivated to learn, and the interests of children are taken into consideration.

The learning process is based on **active learning** methods. The children themselves explore, discover, test, set their objectives but also analyse and motivate themselves and support others in these activities. The child also experiences positive emotions from exertion. The International School of Tallinn values academic results highly. Skills for finding information sources, assessing information critically and the competencies for analysing, associating and using information in practical life are considered very important when acquiring factual knowledge.

A strong emphasis is placed on **recreational activities** and useful spending of the child's time between the end of lessons and going home. There are hobby groups at school, and extra-curricular activities are planned based on student interests and the learning and educational objectives of the school, which in turn supports the implementation of the school curriculum.

## Mission and vision of the International School of Tallinn

### MISSION

The International School of Tallinn aspires to support the comprehensive development of each individual so that they grow up to be **responsible global citizens** and **independent lifelong learners** and aims to do so by providing its students with an exploratory and multicultural learning environment.

### VISION

To **prepare future world citizens** who value research, critical and creative thinking, having an entrepreneurial mindset, and act with tolerance and compassion.

- A homogenous community throughout grades 1–12: students, teachers, staff and parents.
- A distinguished teaching staff who consistently implement the best teaching practices.
- Enhanced knowledge and skills in mathematics, science, and technology – preparing students for the perpetually changing technological future.
- Students who wish to be the enterprising leaders in their chosen field.

### Core values of the International School of Tallinn

The core values of the International School of Tallinn are values that underlie the relationships between parties within the school as well as outside the school.

Core values respect general humane values (honesty, thoughtfulness, reverence for life, fair-mindedness, human dignity, respect toward oneself and others) and societal values (freedom, democracy, respect towards mother tongue and culture, patriotism, cultural diversity, tolerance, environmental sustainability, lawfulness, solidarity, responsibility, and gender equality).

The core values of the International School of Tallinn shall create the basis for the implementation of the mission of the school. We describe values as a set of common values, activities, and principles. This allows understanding their description in a broader context but at the same time precisely. School values are based on **IB Learner Profile attributes** that are **oriented towards internationality** and the development of answering attitudes. These ten characteristics make up the **IB Learner Profile**.

**IB (International Baccalaureate)** aims to develop learners who are:

Inquirers, Knowledgeable, Thinkers, Communicators, Principled, Open-minded, Caring, Risk-takers, Balanced, Reflective.

## **CORE VALUES OF THE SCHOOL**

**Taking action** – we believe it is our fundamental function as citizens of the world to react and act with enthusiasm concerning the local and global challenges imposed by the different issues that impact our existence as a community of learners.

In terms of IB, this means being a risk taker, a communicator, open-minded and caring.

**Balancing our lives** – we believe in the importance of balancing the different aspects of our humanity. We promote a healthy lifestyle, mindfulness, good relationships, physical and mental development, and career enhancement.

Balancing our lives means being reflective, principled, and balanced.

**Becoming lifelong learners** – we believe learning should not stop at any particular point in our lives. As a community, we work hard to achieve our goals using different strategies and approaches to learning. We give importance to the development of skills and attitudes that help us to satisfy our curiosity continuously.

In terms of IB, becoming a lifelong learner means being knowledgeable, an inquirer, and a thinker.

Academic and integral personality development form the framework for these values via tolerance, dialogue and cultural openness that includes openness to receiving support from one's companions and providing support in return.

## **What is the graduate of the International School of Tallinn like?**

The graduate of the International School of Tallinn is a continually developing educated person with strong academic knowledge who respects fellow people, has empathy towards others and is tolerant and a responsible member of society.

The graduate of the International School of Tallinn is:

- ❖ Eager to learn and curious, has a constant need for self-development
- ❖ Active and energetic
- ❖ Self-aware, able to analyse oneself, knows who they are
- ❖ Coping and competitive
- ❖ Has a broad outlook
- ❖ Tolerant, views oneself and others well
- ❖ Bold, confident, able to express oneself and have their say
- ❖ Innovative and open to new ideas
- ❖ Able to find information, critically evaluate it, create links, and use them in practice
- ❖ Polite and respectful towards others

Upper secondary schools create opportunities for each student to develop the maximum extent and, taking into consideration their preferences, for creative self-actualisation, reinforcement of a knowledge-based worldview, and attainment of emotional, social and moral maturity.

Graduating the upper secondary school will give students the necessary preparation to allow them to find areas of activity and enable them to [continue](#) their corresponding [educational career in a higher educational institution or vocational education without interruption](#).

## **ORGANISATION OF WORK OF THE INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL OF TALLINN**

### **School structure and management of the International School of Tallinn**

The International School of Tallinn is a general education school that houses a primary, basic, and upper secondary school. The content of the curriculum is based in the Estonian national curriculum that is implemented based on the IB philosophy and according to IB principles. There is mainly one parallel class in the school, and there are 8–16 students in one class (maximum permitted number of students in a class is 24).

Management bodies of the school are the **Board** and the **Director**. Main tasks of the Director are to be responsible for the organisation and efficiency of learning and educational activities, develop and improve the school concept and represent the school in the public eye.

**The School Board** is the collegial decision-making body of the school which includes the representatives of parents, representatives of teachers, the management team and a representative of the school owner. The Council's task is to determine the overall strategy for the school, approve the curricula and development plans, and make proposals for the better organisation of the school's work.

Tallinn International School was founded at the initiative of the Supervisory Board of AS Mainor who created the subsidiary Tallinn International School OÜ for running the school and ensures the school's keeper with the necessary resources for schooling. The school concept is developed in cooperation between school community, and educational and business experts. School children, parents and staff of the International School of Tallinn make up the school community.

The school's student self-government commences its activities starting from the upper secondary level and, if possible, includes students more actively from the third stage of study. The school has developed a tradition that students from the senior stage of study meet with the school management once every trimester to discuss topics relevant for students and solve issues that have emerged.

### **The school's daily schedule and calendar**

The International School of Tallinn opens at 8:30 a.m. in the morning, and classes start at 09:00 a.m. Students who arrive at school before the start of lessons shall spend time with an assistant teacher. Between the two longer learning cycles of the school day, there is a 60-minute break, the first half of which is for the lunch break and the second half includes outdoor activities.



Learning activities are according to the weekly academic load of the grade (for example, up to the grade 2 until 14:00, for grades 3–6 until 15:00, and even longer for seniors), followed by [afterschool childcare](#) and [hobby classes](#). The afterschool childcare centre is open daily until 17:00. During the afterschool childcare, children can also participate in hobby classes for an additional fee.

In the first stage of study [morning circles](#) are carried out by the class teachers where reflections of the previous day are shared and everybody talks of the new day. [Student gatherings](#) for various stages of study or on a broader scale take place at least after every 6-week study period (unit) and are intended for promoting school values, giving performances, and recognising students and teachers.

The length of a lesson is **45 minutes**. With primary classes, it is allowed to use [daily schedules](#) that define only the learning and resting times instead of [timetables](#). In that case, the school day starts with joint planning of the students' day where the lessons, research work and independent work time is determined by setting the daily schedule and time for giving feedback and analysis (including independent and group work analysis) is planned for the end of the day.

The lesson may take place in a classroom but may also be carried out as a [project study](#), an [outdoor study](#) or a [museum study](#) that is planned and carried out by the teacher with the approval of the Director and in accordance with the school's internal procedures and other documents regulating project-based and extracurricular studies. The time spent on project studies and extracurricular studies is reduced to 45-minute study units or lessons.

The International School of Tallinn considers learning outside of the curriculum (should it be outside of the school building) as part of the studies carried out in school on the condition that it enables students to achieve learning outcomes defined in the school or individual curriculum. This is done by agreement between the student and the Director or a teacher authorised by the Director.

The maximum permitted **weekly academic load** in lessons is:

20 lessons in grade 1

23 lessons in grade 2

25 lessons in grades 3 and 4

28 lessons in grade 5

30 lessons in grades 6 and 7

32 lessons in grades 8 and 9

In grades 10–12 the optimal academic load is 32 lessons per week

175 school days are recorded to one academic year in the International School of Tallinn. The school follows the school holidays established by the state. The academic year starts on 1st September and lasts until 31st August.

## **Cooperation and participation in school organisation**

One of the essential principles of the organisation of the work of the school is that the **learning process is inclusive and transparent** for everyone – for the students, the parents as well as teachers. Students, parents, and teachers have an opportunity to have a say in bettering the organisation of school life. Parents can get actively involved in studies and the organisation of events. The family is closely connected to the school and has the opportunity to contribute to the school organisation. The children participate in the discussions, agreements are emphasised over rules, and they apply both to school staff as well as students. The objective of the school is to further develop into a community centre where training courses and seminars are also provided to parents.

The parent is very well informed about the developments taking place at the school and gets thorough and constant feedback on their child's progress. At least three times a year **progress reviews** are held with the participation of the student, the parent, and the teacher. Every day after classes, the teacher gives feedback to the parent about the day of their child (predominantly in an electronic environment but also on a face-to-face basis, if necessary). The management and teachers of the International School of Tallinn always try to find a solution to the problems the parents or students have encountered.

First, the teacher tries to find a solution by themselves. In the case of a more complex problem, the teacher also engages other employees in finding the solution.

The learning environment is diverse and inspiring. Traditional classroom layouts are not used. This creates a favourable opportunity for group work and discussions and reduces the inhibitory effects of an academic environment. The International School of Tallinn is well equipped with a diverse selection of textbooks. The teachers themselves can choose what types of teaching materials they want to use in their lessons. The school provides a tablet or laptop to be used in the lessons. Each student has a personal notebook/diary for planning purposes and self-analysis. This supports the development of learning skills, helps to prioritise activities, and makes the student independent of technology.

The teachers collaborate daily in the planning and analysis of studies. Systemic in-house training and workshops are organised for teachers. Teachers share best practices and what they have learned in these training sessions. The teachers participate in a joint supervision seminar every two to three years.

## ORGANISATION OF LEARNING AND EDUCATION

The stages of study in the International School of Tallinn:

Preschool (PYP) – ages 5–6

1st stage of study – grades 1–3

2nd stage of study – grades 4–6

3rd stage of study – grades 7–9

Upper secondary level – grades 10–12

**Compulsory subjects** in the International School of Tallinn:

- Language and literature: English as the school's language of instruction and literature
- Foreign languages: Estonian as the second language, French, German or Russian as foreign language A
- Mathematics (in upper secondary school: extensive and narrow)
- Sciences: natural science, biology, geography, physics, chemistry
- Social subjects: human studies, history, civics and citizenship education
- Art subjects: music, art
- Technology: manual training, handicrafts and domestic study, technology studies
- Physical education

In the **upper secondary level** the following additional courses are based on the national curricula and the IB programme:

- English language: Extended Essay
- Social sciences: human geography, global politics, religious studies, national defence, economic studies, and business studies
- TOK: Theory of knowledge
- Design: IT, technology studies
- CAS (*Creativity, Action, Service*): creative activities and community service

The content of upper secondary level subject courses and elective courses has been provided in the annexed syllabuses.

In **preschool** learning activities are carried out, and general competencies are developed through UOI (Unit of Inquiry) research topics in collaboration with primary school teachers according to the learning outcomes stated in the national curricula.

## **Learning the language of instruction (English)**

The language of instruction in the International School of Tallinn is English. The school accepts both native English speakers and students who speak it to a small extent or do not speak it at all.

Learning the language of instruction (English) takes place in the **following study forms**:

- Acquisition of the language in the English language and literature lessons. The content of English language and literature teaching depends on whether the language is studied as a mother tongue or a foreign language.
- Teaching the language of instruction in other lessons (acquisition of subject-related vocabulary, learning environment in English in all subjects).
- Language teaching through harmonised syllabuses which ensure the acquisition of general language competencies. Studying the language of instruction of the school, foreign language A, Estonian as a second language and, if possible, the student's native language is integrated.
- Events and projects.

## **Learning Estonian as a second language**

Estonian language as a second language is taught in the International School of Tallinn from primary school. Estonian language as a second language is taught in the first stage of study twice per week in each grade and starting from the second stage of study there shall be 4 lessons per week, and in the upper secondary level 3 lessons per week.

Studying Estonian as a second language is achieved by:

- Learning Estonian as a second language as a dedicated subject
- Learning the Estonian language as it has been integrated into other subjects
- Learning Estonian language and culture outside the classroom (training visits, hikes, and excursions in the Estonian language and culture space, joint events with Estonian students; theatre shows in Estonian). Learning Estonian language and culture in a direct contact language environment amounts to at least 35 lessons per academic year in each grade.

Teaching the Estonian language as a second language may also take place by participating in an Estonian hobby group or extracurricular training groups. If studies of or activities in the Estonian language outside the curriculum enables the student to achieve learning outcomes specified in the school or individual curriculum, the school may consider it as if it has been taught at school.

## Other foreign languages

Teaching **foreign language A** (French, Russian or German) starts in the International School of Tallinn from grade 3. Starting to learn foreign language A depends on the adequate command of the school's language of instruction. Students may be temporarily excused from the study of foreign language A until they have obtained the school's language of instruction on a level that allows them to participate in learning activities sufficiently. For students who study the school's language of instruction as a foreign language, foreign language A is the third foreign language learned beside Estonian as a second language and English as a foreign language. The language group shall be opened if there are at least three students interested.

The school organises **language and cultural studies** for students whose native language is not the school's language of instruction or who speak a language other than the language of instruction at home with at least one parent being a native speaker of that language, on the condition that at least ten students with the same native language or home language wish it. The Government of the Republic establishes the conditions and procedure for providing opportunities for language and cultural studies.

## Expected language levels in the International School of Tallinn

Foreign language	Grade 3	Grade 6	Grade 9*	Grade 12
English	A2	B1	B2	C1
Estonian as second language	A1	A2	B1	B2
French, Russian or German	–	A1/A2	B1	B2

\* For graduating basic school (grade 9): satisfactory = B1.1; good = B1.2; very good = B2.1.

All foreign language learning (including Estonian as a second language) is based on the principles of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFRL) document and language proficiency levels. Foreign language learning outcomes across different subskills have been described in the school's foreign language syllabuses in their language proficiency tables. Implementing the principles of the CEFRL document and European Language Portfolio in learning allows motivating students in their foreign languages studies, to take into consideration their age and individual needs, guide students in different stages of advancement towards setting attainable learning goals for themselves and give students objective feedback on their achievements. All the above support sustaining learning motivation and developing independent learners.

## Activities and methodology of learning and education

The study loads in the curriculum of the International School of Tallinn meet the requirements set out in the national curriculum. The study concept implemented by the International School of Tallinn is geared towards the **comprehensive development of the child**. Competencies expected with the curriculum of the International School of Tallinn comply with the general competencies established in the national curriculum for basic school and upper secondary school. In addition to focusing on academic studies, great emphasis is put on the development of the child's social, physical, emotional, and cultural competencies.

The International School of Tallinn focuses on analysing the **individual capabilities of each child** and developing their **potential** to the fullest. In addition to the teacher, a psychologist shall be involved in analysing the child's development to determine the child's academic strengths and development areas through the use of different tests and this information, in turn, is taken into consideration when guiding and organising the child's learning activities.

The majority of lessons in the first stage of study are carried out by the class teacher. Foreign language lessons are given, separate subject teachers teach creative subjects. If necessary (especially in joint classes) an assistant teacher may be used whose task is to help the teacher carry out learning activities and watch over the children between lessons. Additionally, volunteers are involved as assistant teachers, if possible.

The International School of Tallinn regards **discovery and exploratory learning** as the most effective and natural learning method where the student themselves are the guides and assessors of their learning process and, through the integration of subject fields, the students are given the opportunity to draw connections between real-world phenomena and to use acquired experiences and knowledge in real life. One example of this is the **science fair** where the child prepares a **research/test/project** in collaboration with their family and presents it to fellow students. Different subject fields are interconnected via one research topic that also helps ensure the better acquisition of the whole educational content of the subject field.

Instead of carrying lessons out as lectures, we use **active learning methods** that are as diverse as possible and develop independent thinking. Students are allowed to discuss, explore, develop debating and cooperation skills in group work, and make suggestions on what they want to know and, through that, contribute to the planning of their studies.

Students acquire new knowledge through the exploration of information sources, critical assessment and analysis of information, practical examples, discussions, and independent work.

Learning takes place in **learning cycles** that enable an in-depth approach to the subject.

There is no homework in the classical sense in the first stage of study, and learning takes place mainly at the school. A small amount of homework is assigned on research topics but not every week. Instead of homework, children shall read **books** at home, and many books both from recommended literature as well as of their choosing are read out loud to them. The school supports their interest in reading with, for example, bookshelves in classes and boards on which to make notes.

**Economic studies** are integrated with mathematics in order to add a more practical approach to studies. For example, the class has its budget which is used for acquiring teaching aids, organising class activities, or adding to the classroom furnishings and the children shall have a say on how the class budget is spent.

Great significance in the curriculum is attached to **learning outside the classroom**, through going, for example, to the theatre, exhibitions, concerts, sports competitions, nature, urban environments, etc. Each month a whole school day is dedicated to researching places for thematic study visits outside the school.

The school puts great value on children's personal interests and tries to integrate the hobby and sports activities that they practice during their free time with learning activities.



## IST Curriculum: Allocation of subject lessons

List of compulsory courses	First stage of study Grades 1-3			Second stage of study Grades 4-6			Third stage of study Grades 7-9			Fourth stage of study Grades 10-12		
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1) Language of instruction (English)	5	7	7	5	3	3	2	2	2	2	2	2
2) Literature					2	2	2	2	2	2	2	1
3) Estonian as second language	2	2	2	4	4	4	4	4	4	3	3	3
4) Foreign language A (French, Russian or German)			3	3	3	3	3	3	3	2	2	1
5) Mathematics	3	4	3	4	4	5	5	4	4	3	2	3
6) Natural science	1	1	1	2	2	3	2					
7) Geography							1	2	2	1	1	1
8) Biology							1	2	2		2	2
9) Chemistry							1	1	2	1	1	1
10) Physics								2	2	2	2	1
11) History					1	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
12) Human studies	<b>+ 1</b>	1	1	1	1		1	1		1		
13) Civics and citizenship education						1		1	1		1	1
14) Music	2	2	2	1	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
15) Art	1.5	1.5	1.5	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	
16) Crafts, manual training, domestic studies and technology studies Design (ICT, technology, other)	1.5	1.5	1.5	1	2	2	2	<b>1+1</b>	2	<b>+2</b>		
17) Physical education	3	3	<b>2+1</b>	3	3	<b>2+1</b>	2	2	2	2	1	2
Optional subjects										7	9	11
<b>The total number of lessons per week</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>32</b>

For **primary school**, the principal approves the corresponding daily schedule (that also includes Estonian language learning) each academic year.

In **upper secondary school** (grades 10–12) the minimal academic load of a student is 96 courses (i.e. at least 32 courses per year).

**MYP** (grades 7–10) requires dedicating at least 70 lessons per year to each subject field group.

The **8 subject field groups** of MYP are:

- 1) Language of instruction (English)
- 2) Foreign language (Estonian and French, Russian or German)
- 3) Mathematics
- 4) Humanities and social sciences (geography, history, human studies, economic studies)
- 5) Natural sciences (biology, chemistry, physics)
- 6) Visual arts (including media) and music (performance arts)
- 7) Design and manual training (handicrafts, domestic study, technology studies, IT)
- 8) Physical education and health education

### IST Curriculum: Optional subjects (Grades 10-12)

List of optional subjects (required minimum: 40 courses)	Gymnasium / DP		
	10	11	12
1) English (Extended Essay)		1+1	1+1
2) Foreign language (French, Russian or German)	1	1+1	2+1
3) Mathematics (Extended/High Level)	1	1+2	2
4) Geography		2	1
5) Biology		1	2
6) Chemistry		1	2
7) Physics		1	1
8) History		1	2
9) Global Politics		1	
10) Physical Education	1	1	
11) Religious Studies	2		
12) National Defence	2		
13) Economics	1		
14) Business	1		
15) CAS (Creativity, Action, Service)		1	1
16) TOK (Theory of Knowledge)		2	1
<b>The number of options (44)</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>17</b>

#### Accordance between the study loads of the lesson division plan and IB programmes

In transitioning over to IB programmes, the school has also taken MYP (Middle Years Programme) as well as IBDP (IB Diploma Programme) requirements for minimum study loads into account in preparing its lesson division plan.

**IB DP** (grades 11–12) includes **6 subject fields**:

- 1) Language and literature\* (English)
- 2) Foreign languages\* (French, Russian or German; Estonian)
- 3) Humanities and social sciences (geography\*, history\*, global politics, economic studies, business studies, information technology in global society)
- 4) Natural sciences (biology\*, chemistry\*, physics\*, computer science, sports\*, health education)
- 5) Mathematics\* (standard mathematics, extensive mathematics)
- 6) Fine arts (music\*, visual arts\*, dance, drama)

\* The minimum study load for these subjects during DP: **5 courses** on the standard level (one course = 35 lessons).

All DP (grades 11–12) students are **required** to complete the following mandatory core components of the IB programme\*:

- **Extended Essay** – an independent research essay (text of 4,000 words)
- **Creativity, activity, service (CAS)** – a set/project of creative, physical and voluntary activities
- **Theory of knowledge (TOK)** – a 1,600-word essay and oral presentation on the nature of knowledge and ways of obtaining it.

\* For all these three elements the International School of Tallinn shall develop a more detailed programme and instructions by the launch of the DP (grades 11–12).

For every year DP students must choose the following from the 6 subject fields:

- **3** standard level subjects (at least **150** lessons);
- **3** higher level subjects (at least **240** lessons);

All other subjects in grade 11 and 12 that the student has not chosen to study on the DP standard or higher level must be covered in the subject study load determined in the lesson division plan.

In terms of the chosen standard or higher level subjects and in addition to the study load given in the lesson division plan the students must additionally choose courses from the list of **optional subjects** in the study load required. For the time being the offered higher level (7 courses) subjects in International School of Tallinn are English, mathematics, history, and biology. These opportunities shall expand as the school grows.

## DEVELOPMENT OF COMPETENCIES

Competence is understood as a set of knowledge, skills, and attitudes that ensure the ability to operate creatively, flexibly and in an entrepreneurial way in a particular area of activity or field.

The curriculum distinguishes between:

- General competencies
- Subject field competencies
- Competencies expected in certain stages of study

The development of competencies is described in the school curriculum. The development of capabilities described in the curriculum is expected through the acquisition of (general and subject field) competencies across subjects. A certain capability shall be considered developed only when it has been proven.

To demonstrate the competencies of a student, the International School of Tallinn issues class teacher assessments for each trimester and, if necessary, also joint expert assessments of subject teachers teaching the student, formulated by the teachers' council at the end of each academic year. The class teacher discusses the results of competency assessments and the achievement of values during the child [development conversation](#) with the child and their parents. The achievement of learning outcomes and selection of teaching methods according to the student's learning outcomes are described in more detail in the teacher's work plan.

### General competencies

General competencies are subject field and subject-specific competencies that are important in helping the student develop into a person and citizen. General competencies are developed through the achievement of learning outcomes in subjects but also through addressing cross-curricular topics in subjects, lesson activities, and extracurricular activities. The development of general competencies is supported and guided by the cooperation of teachers as well as cooperation between the school, home, and community.

General competencies express what the entirety of the school's activities is trying to achieve, namely the development of necessary capabilities in the student. In developing general competencies, the school, therefore, defines the **emphases** (in the International School of Tallinn these are supplemented by the 10 characteristics of the [IB Learner Profile](#)) that are focused on throughout all subjects and stages of study.

All the activities of the school are organised in the context of general competencies which means these are taken into consideration in planning, defining, conducting, and feedbacking teaching processes. Learning opportunities and general competencies included in extracurricular activities facilitate placing the activities performed in school into a broader context. **School events** are organised and carried out bearing general competencies in mind.

General competencies direct the readiness of school staff to respond to various situations that arise during lessons as well as extracurricular activities in a purposeful way and based on common perception. General competencies are also developed in environments that the school cannot control or shape. The behaviour of teachers and other school employees is an example to all students. **Feedback** is important in developing general competencies and is carried out through **formative assessment**. Feedback on general competencies contains information on the extent to which the consciously planned and meaningful development of general competencies takes place. Aside from feed provided by the school, the **self-assessing role** of the student in terms of feed on how their general competencies are progressing is also important in the sense that it allows the student to monitor their activities and gives the teacher information that observing the student's activities and behaviour from afar simply does not provide.

Feedback presumes the presence of specific **criteria** that allow assessing the development and achievement of general competencies. Teachers specify the criteria for the development of general competencies for each grade separately before the beginning of each academic year and these criteria, in turn, enable them to understand whether the specific general competencies have been achieved. Since competence is defined as a set of relevant knowledge, skills, and attitudes, the feedback criteria are provided by levels of **knowledge, skills, and attitudes**.

**General competencies** developed in students

1) **Cultural and value competence** – ability to evaluate human relations and activities from the standpoint of generally accepted moral norms; to sense and value one's ties with other people, the society, nature, the cultural heritage of one's own country and nation and those of others, and events in contemporary culture; to value creation and shape the sense of aesthetics; to value general human and societal values, to value human, cultural and natural diversity; to acknowledge one's values.

2) **Social and citizen competence** – the ability to become self-actualised; to function as an active, aware, helpful and responsible citizen and to support the democratic development of society; to know and follow values and standards in society; to respect the rules of various environments and societal diversity, the particularities of religions and nations; to engage in cooperation with other people in different situations; to accept differences in people and their values and to take them into account in interacting with people; the ability to understand global problems, take responsibility for solving them; value and follow the principles of sustainable development: feel as a member of society capable of dialogue in the context of Estonia, Europe and the whole world.

3) **Self-management competence** – the ability to understand and evaluate one's weaknesses and strengths in an adequate manner, to consider one's abilities and options; to analyse one's behaviour in different situations; to behave safely and adhere to healthful lifestyles; to solve problems related to one's mental and physical health; to behave in an independent manner in human relationships; to acquire information about the options for continuing one's education and finding work, to plan one's career.

4) **Learning to learn competence** – the ability to organise the learning environment individually and in a group, and to procure the information needed for learning, hobbies, health behaviour and career choices; to find suitable sources of information and supervisors and use their help in studying; to plan studies and follow the plan; to use different learning strategies and use the outcome of the learning in different situations and for solving problems; to associate acquired knowledge with what has been learned before; to analyse one's knowledge and skills, motivation and self-confidence and on that basis, the need for further learning.

5) **Communication competence** – the ability to clearly, relevantly and politely express oneself in both one's mother tongue and in at least two foreign languages on the level of an independent language user, taking into account situations and understanding partners in communication and the safety of communication; to introduce oneself, present and justify one's positions; to read, make a difference between and understand informative texts and fiction; to write different types of texts, using appropriate referencing, linguistic devices and a suitable style; to prioritise correct use of language and rich expressive language and style of communication based on mutual agreement.

6) **Mathematics, natural sciences and technology competence** – the ability to use the language, symbols, methods and models characteristic of mathematics and natural sciences when solving different problems in school and everyday life; to understand the importance of natural sciences and technology and their impact on everyday life, nature and the society; to understand the limitations and risks of natural sciences and technology; to use models and measurement tools of natural sciences and to make evidence-based decisions in different fields of life; to use new technologies purposefully, creatively and innovatively.

7) **Entrepreneurship competence** – the ability to create ideas and implement them, using the acquired knowledge and skills in different areas of life and activity; to see problems and the opportunities that lie within them, to contribute to solving problems; to set goals and carry them out, to make short-term and long-term plans, introduce and execute them; to organise joint activities and take part in them, to show initiative and take responsibility for the results; to react creatively, innovatively and flexibility to changes; to take judicious risks; to think critically and creatively; to develop and value one's own and others' ideas.

8) **Digital competence** – the ability to use developing digital technology for coping in a quickly changing society for learning, acting as a citizen as well as communicating in communities; to use digital means for finding and preserving information and to evaluate the relevance and trustworthiness of the information; to participate in creating digital content; including creation and use of texts, images, multimedia; to use suitable digital tools and methods for solving problems, to communicate and cooperate in different digital environments; to be aware of the dangers of the digital environment and know how to protect one's privacy, personal information and digital identity; to follow the same moral and value principles as in everyday life.

#### Emphases of the activities performed by school staff in developing general competencies

The development of **value competence** focuses on the following aspects:

- Following the school values is a daily and natural part of learning; these are followed in planning activities and different forms of work.
- Discussions held by the teacher cover different aspects of events, phenomena or opinions based on the principle that each phenomenon has several reasons, different interpretations, and opposing opinions.
- The school values the creation of others based on the principle of academic honesty and all teachers follow that principle beginning with the first stage of study.

The development of **social competence** focuses on the following aspects:

- The formation of a sense of responsibility is facilitated in the school by making and keeping agreements. Agreeing includes listening to the parties, being mutually considerate, and all parties accepting the conditions of the agreement. In developing the sense of responsibility, the role of the teacher lies in communicating appropriately, being patient in talking things through, and adhering consistently to agreements made.
- The formation of a democratic mindset lies in how day-to-day learning and educational processes are organised. The planning of the learning process is public, i.e. students must know at

the beginning of each study period what is being studied, what the expected learning outcomes are, how assessment is carried out, and what the assessment criteria are. All changes during the learning process shall be discussed with students. Unexpected summative assessments shall be excluded.

- Students are treated as partners in the learning process. At the end of the course, study period or topic the teachers ask for feedback on conducting the learning process.
- Teachers themselves act as examples in adhering to current legislation and rules. Students shall not be required to comply with legislation and rules that teachers themselves do not comply with.
- In all subjects, separate attention will be paid to developing cooperation skills. If the teacher has planned to use teaching in groups or group work as a teaching method, the physical and mental learning environment is modified accordingly.

The development of **self-management competence** focuses on the following aspects:

- All subjects make use of students' self-assessment within the framework of formative assessment through which students learn to define their strengths and weaknesses and plan improvement activities.
- The development conversations conducted with students are based on their self-assessments.
- Students must receive written or oral feedback on their strengths, weaknesses, and development needs for all submitted written works. Feedback is given by the teacher, a fellow student or performed through self-analysis based on previously known criteria.

The development of **learning to learn competence** focuses on the following aspects:

- All subjects focus on the development of functional reading skills. Furthermore, children are taught skills for finding information from reference books and on the Internet.
- The teacher acknowledges the needs of learners whose learning styles are different from the rest of the class and takes these styles into consideration in planning and conducting their activities and in developing the learning skills of students.
- In the case of learning difficulties, a written individual development plan for overcoming these difficulties is prepared in cooperation with the student and the teacher as the first remedial teaching measure. An individual development plan is a voluntary agreement between the student and teacher and has the objective of using the consultation time of the teacher more effectively.



The development of **communication competence** focuses on the following aspects:

- The student and teacher pay attention to the appropriate use and style of language according to situations.
- Vocabulary, oral and written communication skills as set out in syllabuses by stages of study are developed and facilitated in students.
- Students are taught to listen to their conversation partner, and give constructive written and oral feedback, if necessary. Students are taught the skill to perceive the emotional state of their communication partner and respond to it.

The development of **mathematics competence** focuses on the following aspects:

- All subjects draw attention to noticing and highlighting the subordination and process-related connections in the subject.
- All subjects draw attention to the use of mathematics presentation methods (e.g. diagrams, graphs, etc.) in the subject.

The development of **entrepreneurial competence** focuses on the following aspects:

- All lessons make use of active experimental learning which enables to put oneself to the test and apply acquired knowledge and skills in simulated practical situations.
- Learning processes aim to create learning situations that encourage students to find new and original solutions, respond flexibly to changes, and take reasonable risks.
- Learning processes make use of project-based teaching methods where students must achieve learning outcomes in cooperation.
- Project-based planning is used in organising extracurricular events, students are involved in organising, and all project management rules are followed.

### **Subject field competencies**

Subjects with similar objectives and content make up a subject field. The primary objective of a subject field is to shape the corresponding subject field competencies, supported by the objectives of and learning outcomes in each subject. The development of subject field competencies is also supported by subjects in other subject fields and extracurricular and out-of-school activities.

Descriptions of subject field competencies are provided in subject field syllabuses. These syllabuses include a description of expected learning outcomes, presented by subskills or study topics, which support the achievement of learning and educational goals and the formation of subject field competencies based on stages of study. Descriptive feedback on the achievement of values is provided to the student through means determined by the school.

## **REQUIRED COMPETENCIES IN STAGES OF STUDY**

Required competencies in stages of study provide a summarised description of the development of the student through the acquisition of general competencies, subject field competencies, and learning outcomes.

### **Required general competencies and learning outcomes in preschool**

The required general competencies and learning outcomes for the International School of Tallinn preschool students aged 6–7 have been described by subject fields in annexe "Preschool curriculum" added to the general section of the school curriculum.

### **Competencies required in the first stage of study (grades 1–3)**

At the end of the first stage of study, the student:

- 1) has respect for his or her family, class and school; is polite, keeps promises; knows that no one is to be humiliated, teased or mocked; is capable of listening to his or her peers and considering them;
- 2) wants to learn, derives pleasure from knowledge and aptitude, is able of learning alone and with others, in pairs and in groups, is capable of budgeting time for studying, hobbies, chores and rest periods;
- 3) is aware of his or her ethnic identity and takes a respectful attitude to his or her people;
- 4) is capable of adapting him or herself to the needs of succeeding at an assignment and making sense of his or her actions in fulfilling the assignment; is able to prepare a schedule for the day and follow it;
- 5) is capable of finding and understanding information in texts (including data, terms, characters, activities, events and their time and place) and presenting it orally and in written form;
- 6) understands and uses learned everyday expressions and simple phrases in the foreign language being studied;
- 7) calculates and knows how to use tools suitable for measurement and measurement units in different walks of life for solving age-appropriate assignments;
- 8) acts in a prudent manner concerning nature;
- 9) knows how to notice and describe in goal-oriented fashion differences and similarities, knows how to compare objects and phenomena, categorise them based on of one or two characteristics and to read a simple plan, table diagram and map;

- 10) is able to use simple computer programs and technical devices used at home and at school;
- 11) has respect for his or her hometown or region, homeland and the Estonian state knows its symbols and complies with the rules of conduct associated with them;
- 12) can notice and assess beauty, has an appreciation for creativity and takes pleasure in exercise, creative self-expression and activities;
- 13) maintains cleanliness and order, looks after his or her appearance and health and has a desire to be healthy;
- 14) is able to avoid dangerous situations and summon assistance in the case of danger, knows safe traffic practices;
- 15) knows whom to turn to with various problems and is prepared to do so.

#### Emphasis of learning and education in the first stage of study

The main objective in the first grade is for students to become adapted to school life, to experience a sense of security and success and to develop readiness for further successful studies. The school readiness of students and their abilities are different, and therefore study assignments and the time needed to accomplish them are differentiated.

The basis for organising learning activities in the first stage of study may be studying by topics common to many subjects. Depending on the preparation of the students, either a subject-based approach or an option combining a topics-based and subject-based approach may be used. The teacher's most important task is to support the self-confidence and learning motivation of each child.

The following are the focuses in the first stage of study:

- 1) learning and following moral tenets and good standards of conduct;
- 2) developing a positive attitude toward attending and learning at school;
- 3) developing study habits and skills, perseverance, independence and goal-oriented work skills and ability to make decisions;
- 4) shaping self-expression skills and confidence;
- 5) acquiring primary communication and cooperation skills, including the shaping of mutually supportive and valuing relations between students;
- 6) recognition of learning difficulties and offering support systems and aid.

## **Competencies required in the second stage of study (grades 4–6)**

At the end of the second stage of study, the student:

- 1) has an appreciation for harmonious human relationships, understands his or her role as a family member, friend, peer, and pupil; shall keep agreements, be trustworthy and be responsible for his or her actions;
- 2) is able to focus on fulfilling study tasks, is able, with guidance, to use age-appropriate techniques (including pair and group techniques) depending on the special nature of the study assignment;
- 3) values his or her ethnicity and culture among other ethnicities and cultures, espouses an attitude toward people that is free of prejudices, recognises the differences between people, views and situations and understands the need for compromise;
- 4) is capable of planning and evaluating his or her activities and, to attain the result, select and implement the necessary actions, see his or her errors and correct his or her activities;
- 5) is capable of expressing, justifying and defending his or her opinion, knows his or her strengths and weaknesses and tries to become clear on his or her interests;
- 6) is capable of listening to and reading in a mindful fashion age-appropriate texts, creating linguistically correct and situation-appropriate oral and written texts and understanding spoken speech;
- 7) gets by in at least one foreign language in everyday communication situations that require a direct and simple exchange of information on familiar and routine topics;
- 8) has mastered computational and measurement skills and knows and is able with guidance to use rules of logic in solving problems in different walks of life;
- 9) values a sustainable lifestyle, can ask questions in the field of natural sciences and obtaining information on natural sciences, knows how to act in nature, takes an interest in nature and exploring nature;
- 10) can use a computer and the Internet as a means of communication and can perform word processing with a computer;
- 11) can find answers to his or her questions, obtain the necessary information from various sources, interpret, use and convey it, and can distinguish between fact and opinion;
- 12) senses that he or she is a citizen of his or her state and follows social norms;
- 13) values art and is able to express him or herself using artistic means;
- 14) values healthful lifestyles, is aware of factors that harm health and of the hazards of substances that cause dependency;
- 15) has found a hobby to his or her liking and has a general idea of the employment world.

### Emphasis of learning and education in the second stage of study

The main objective of learning and education in the second stage of study is for students to become responsible and independent. It is important to incite and maintain interest on the part of students in knowledge and activity areas covered by the curriculum.

Diverse methods and assignments shall be applied, allowing students who reach puberty to make independent decisions and associate the material with practical life, and impart the ability to cope with individually different development of students, their changing relationships and acting in new roles.

The following are the focuses in the second stage of study:

- 1) maintaining and building motivation for learning, associating materials with practical aspects and allowing students to make decisions and take responsibility for their decisions;
- 2) providing opportunities for hobby activities;
- 3) recognition and development of special abilities and interests of students;
- 4) providing support systems and learning aid to students with learning difficulties.

### **Competencies required in the third stage of study (grades 7–9)**

At the end of the third stage of study, the student:

- 1) knows the generally recognised values and moral principles in society, follows them in school and outside the school, who does not remain indifferent when they are flouted, and intervenes in accordance with his or her abilities when necessary;
- 2) knows and honours his or her language and culture and contributes to the preservation and development of the Estonian language and culture; has a concept and knowledge of different cultures of the world, respects people from other ethnicities;
- 3) is intellectually curious, knows how to study and find opportunities for further study, using relevant advice if necessary;
- 4) is enterprising, believes in him or herself, shapes his or her ideals, sets goals for him or herself and acts in their name, heads and makes adjustments to his or her behaviour and takes responsibility for his or her actions;
- 5) can clearly and relevantly express oneself, taking into account situations and partners in communication; to present and justify their positions; to understand and interpret different types of texts; knows and follows the rules of orthography;
- 6) is proficient in at least one foreign language at a level that allows him or her to communicate in writing and orally and to read and understand age-appropriate foreign-language texts;
- 7) is capable of resolving issues arising in various fields in everyday life that require the use of

mathematical thinking methods (logical thinking and spatial reasoning) and presentation methods (formulae, models, diagrams, graphs);

8) understands the interrelations between man and environment, takes a responsible attitude to the environment and lives and acts in an environmentally sustainable manner;

9) knows how to pose natural science questions, discuss them, present scientific positions and make conclusions on their basis;

10) can get by in the world of technology and use technology for the designated purpose and with as little risk as possible;

11) is an active and responsible citizen who is interested in the democratic development of one's school, home region, and the state;

12) is able to express him or herself creatively, has respect for art and cultural heritage;

13) values and follows a healthful lifestyle and is physically active;

14) thinks systematically, creatively and critically, is open to self-development.

#### Emphasis of learning and education in the third stage of study

The main objective of learning and education in the third stage of study is to help students develop into responsible members of society, who cope independently in everyday life and who can choose a path that conforms to their interests and abilities.

The following is the focus in the third stage of study:

1) maintaining learning motivation;

2) associating learning content and acquired skills with everyday life and introducing their applicability in future working life and future studies;

3) the mindful use of various learning strategies and developing self-analytical skills;

4) evaluation, planning, setting goals and assessment of results of longer-term study assignments (including research study assignments);

5) development of special abilities and interests in students;

6) supporting students in making choices for further studies and career.

## CROSS-CURRICULAR TOPICS IN THE INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL OF TALLINN

### Principles concerning cross-curricular topics

**Cross-curricular topics** are a means of integrating general and subject field competences, subjects and subject fields and are taken into account in developing the school environment. Cross-curricular topics span numerous subjects, and fields that are priorities for society, and enable the creation of an idea of the development of society as a whole, supporting the student's capacity to apply his or her knowledge in different situations. The objective of handling cross-curricular topics is to form knowledge, skills, attitudes, values, and behavioural norms in areas which have many points in common with several subjects.

Teaching cross-curricular topics in International School of Tallinn is realised through the **functioning of the whole school organisation** – curricula and syllabuses; the school's microclimate; management and administration; mental, social and physical study environment; creative work in integrating the subjects; elective subjects; extra-curricular activities, hobbies, and cooperation in planning the school activities.

Cross-curricular topics handled in the IST are implemented as follows:

CROSS-CURRICULAR TOPIC	IMPLEMENTATION
<b>The values and morals</b> – the aim is for the student to develop into a morally advanced person, who knows the generally recognized values and moral principles in society, follows them in school and outside school, who does not remain indifferent when they are flouted, and who intervenes in accordance with his or her abilities when necessary.	School culture Rules of procedure Joint events Interaction of students of different age and cultural backgrounds A maintained and pleasant school environment Work of class teachers The school curriculum
<b>Health and safety</b> – the aim is for the student to develop into a mentally, emotionally, socially, and physically healthy member of society who is capable of following healthful lifestyles, act in a safe manner and take part in developing a health-promoting environment.	Safe learning environment Maintaining mental and physical health via syllabus and school organization Study visits Breaks outdoors Presence of a crisis plan and crisis team Cooperation with the school caterer Safety-related prevention and training The presence of a school psychologist
<b>Environment and sustainable development</b> – the aim is for the student to become a socially active, responsible and environmentally conscious person who preserves and protects the environment, and in valuing sustainability, is prepared to find	Compliance with the principles of sustainable consumption and development in the school Study visits Valuing outdoor studies and creating opportunities for them Participation in environmental and

solutions to issues pertaining to the environment and human development.	sustainable development projects
<b>Civic initiative and entrepreneurship</b> – the aim is for the student to become an active and responsible member of the community and society who understands the principles and mechanisms of the functioning of society and the importance of civic initiative, feels like a member of society and draws on the country’s cultural traditions and development directions in his or her activities.	Work of student self-government Students participate in planning and holding events Work according to the curriculum Grade 9/12 students are given the opportunity to participate in the Job Shadow Week.
<b>Cultural identity</b> – the aim is for the student to develop into a person who is culturally aware, who understands the role of culture in shaping people’s thought and behaviour and who knows how cultures have changed over history, who has acquired an idea of the versatility of cultures and particularities of lifestyles determined by culture and who values native culture and cultural diversity and is culturally tolerant and prepared for cooperation.	Cooperation of students from different cultural backgrounds Celebration of national holidays and traditions International Food Week Valuing one’s own culture
<b>Lifelong learning and career planning</b> – the aim is for the student to develop into a person who is prepared to learn lifelong, perform different roles in a changing educational, living and work environments and shape his or her life through conscious decisions, including making of reasonable career choices.	Job Shadow Week for grade 9/12 Career planning in the civics and citizenship education Study visits Meeting with the representatives of various professions Virtual remote training and career counselling via partner schools abroad
<b>Information environment</b> – the aim is for the student to develop into an information-conscious person who senses and is aware of the surrounding information environment, is able to analyse it critically and acts according to his or her aims and society’s communication ethics.	Modern opportunities for learning School paper Integrated with subjects
<b>Technology and innovation</b> – the aim is for the pupil to develop into a person who is well-disposed toward innovation and who knows how to use contemporary technologies for the designated purpose, who copes with the rapidly changing technological living, learning and work environment.	Use of innovative technical solutions (for example, the virtual remote training lessons and courses) Modern opportunities for learning

The cross-curricular topics for the upper secondary level have been described in annexe "Syllabuses of cross-curricular topics".



## Principles of integration

The aim of integration in the International School of Tallinn is to associate separate knowledge and skills taught on the basis of subjects and help students to give meaning to these by placing them into the context of real life. Integration also supports the formation of general and subject field competencies of the students.

Integration of studies in the International School of Tallinn is achieved by following the common part of subjects of different subject areas; the joint thematic emphasis of subjects, in-house projects and by the means of joint emphasis of leading topics, tasks and ways of learning. The International School of Tallinn supports cooperation of teachers; study activities and school environment are arranged in a way to enable [cross-subject handling](#).

The main **means of integration** used in the International School of Tallinn are as follows:

- Integration between subjects – relationships between elements of the study content of different subjects.
- Integration within the subject – creating relationships within the subject, for example, between the different topics.
- Use of the principles of studying by topics in the first stage of study.
- Integration within the subject field – co-operation between teachers who teach the subjects belonging to the same subject field.
- Integration of methods – use of the same teaching and learning methods in different subjects (for example, group work principles, forming habits for independent work).
- Integration of learning skills – shaping the same learning skills in different subjects (e.g. the use of dictionaries, handwriting practice).
- In-house, regional or international projects.
- Topic-specific integration – addressing the same topic in the whole school or in more than one class.

## **Creative work which integrates subjects in the third stage of study**

### **Principles for organising creative work**

Teaching cross-curricular topics in the International School of Tallinn is realised through creative work which integrates several subjects. Different subjects and topics are associated via creative work; development of general competencies is supported and creative self-expression of students is developed. Creative work may be a research paper, project, own creation or other creative work.

**Creative work which integrates subjects** is implemented in the International School of Tallinn in the **8th grade**. It can be performed either independently or as group work.

The 8th-grade student chooses a **creative work topic** from among the following topics:

- Environment and sustainable development of society
- Cultural identity
- Health and safety
- Civic initiative and entrepreneurship

The students also choose the method and presentation options of the creative work. Performance of the creative work generally presumes **20 hours of independent or group work**. Planning and execution of the creative work generally rely on the following stages and principles:

- The school explains students the topics and principles of the organisation of creative work.
- The student chooses the topic of the creative work and submits it for approval to the Director.
- Advanced planning of the creative work, material collection. In case of a study, this also includes analysis, generalisation and drawing conclusions; in case of own creation, this also includes the creation of an idea, execution of work and its presentation; in case of a project, this also includes its implementation and giving feedback on the performance of the project.
- Formalising and presenting the creative work.

The creative work is presented to a committee of at least three members (a chairperson of the committee and two teachers). The Director confirms the membership of the Committee and the date of the presentation with their directive. The presentation of creative works is public. The students themselves in cooperation with the tutor chooses the method of presentation.

Creative works are assessed according to the implementation of the work, its volume, content, and presentation at defending of the work. The topic of the creative work and its grade is indicated on the graduating certificate. In case of failure to pass the creative work, the student may apply for defending for the second time or perform it again in the 8th grade. A relevant application must be submitted to the Director for that.

### **Principles for planning projects within the school and between schools**

Pan-school projects and projects between schools are planned before the start of the academic year, and these comply with the learning outcomes of the curriculum of the International School of Tallinn. The project leaders and planners may be the teacher(s), Director, parent(s) or the students of the International School of Tallinn.

The project team introduces the project and procedure of implementation to all the teachers of the school, and the school council, if necessary. For the planning and implementation of the project, the project leader/project manager involves teachers who are interested in participating or whose participation is essential for the success of the project. The project leader will assign the specific tasks within the workgroup. The Director approves the project team and the leader.

### **ORGANISATION OF ASSESSMENT IN THE INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL OF TALLINN**

The purpose of assessment is the following:

- Support the student's development
- Guide the teacher's activities in supporting the studies and development of every student
- Guide the development of the student's self-esteem and support the student in their choice of further education
- Encourage the students to study purposefully
- Provide the student, teacher, school management, parents (guardians, curators) information about the student's study results
- Provide a basis for student's progression to the next grade and the making of the decision on their graduation from basic school

Assessment is a systematic gathering of information about the student's development, analysis of such information, and providing feedback. Students have the right to receive information on the assessment system, on the grades and evaluations they have received, and what grade or evaluation is the basis for final grades in a course. The grading system, the procedure for

notification of grades and evaluations, and requirements for student behaviour shall be set forth in the school's rules of procedure.

Assessment relies on various methods, evaluation tools and ways, which the teachers are given the freedom and responsibility to choose, and which must be in accordance with the educational principles of the school.

Assessment of the student relies on:

- The student's study portfolio
- The teacher's written assessment (assessment matrix and development description)
- The teacher's oral assessment

### **Types of assessment in the International School of Tallinn**

The International School of Tallinn uses assessment that supports the learning process (formative assessment), and assessment of the learning outcomes (summarised assessment). Parents shall be informed about the child's progress on an ongoing basis through the e-information system, summarised assessment sheets, by the use of a portfolio, and development conversations, the results of which shall be recorded.

In primary school, the children's development shall be monitored and documented by subject fields based on the expected learning outcomes and general competencies. Data on development shall be collected through the use of various methods: e.g. observations, activity descriptions, interviews/conversations with children, recorded work (annotated by the teacher and child) based on which development cards and/or school readiness cards are prepared.

**Formative assessment** is a process in the course of which the student's knowledge, skills, attitudes, values, and behaviour are analysed, feedback is provided on the student's previous results and shortcomings, the student is encouraged, and guided in further studies and the future objectives and routes of study are planned. Formative assessment focuses above all on **comparing the student's development with their previous accomplishments**. Feedback shall describe, at the right time and as precisely as possible, the student's strengths and shortcomings and shall include proposals for further activities that support the student's development.

The student shall be involved in the process of assessing themselves and their companions, in order to develop their skill to set their own objectives, to analyse their learning and behaviour according to the objectives, and to increase motivation for learning.

One instrument used for formative assessment is the portfolio. **The portfolio**, as a diary of learning, contains student work as well as analysis and feedback on the work. The portfolio may be compiled in a subject- or field-based manner, regarding cross-curricular topics or general competencies.

**Summative assessment** is based on comparing the student's knowledge and skills of the subject with the study goals and required learning outcomes indicated in the curriculum underlying the student's studies. Subject-related knowledge is assessed in the course of studies as well as at the end of the study topic. Also construed as a summarised assessment is the certification of knowledge and skills in the case where the school considers a study or an activity that is external to the school curriculum as part of that which is taught at school.

Assessment in the International School of Tallinn is carried out using a numerical assessment system with descriptive verbal assessments starting from the second grade of basic school.

The numerical grading system is not used in primary school and in the first grade of basic school the use of that system is optional, though it is recommended to prefer oral assessments.

The school may, in the assessment of elective courses, use the grades "pass" and "fail" and these assessments shall not be converted to the 5-point scale.

If the assessment identifies the use of assistance, or cheating, the written or practical work, oral answer, practical activity or its outcome can be assessed with the grade "weak". The mark "X" is used when the work has not been submitted, and the student is not given a grade.

When the student leaves school or is promoted to the next class, the oral assessments of the current academic year that form the basis for progression to the next grade are converted to the school's grade scale.

## The grading system of the International School of Tallinn

Grade	Formative assessment	Summative assessment	Trimester/annual grade
„5“	<p><b>90%-100% Extending</b></p> <p>The student achieves the learning intentions independently, with high-quality, and with mastery during the process of learning in a variety of different contexts.</p>	<p><b>90%-100% Excellent</b></p> <p>The student achieves the learning intentions with high quality and meets all the required expectations at the end of a certain unit.</p>	<b>90%-100% Extending</b>
„4“	<p><b>75%-89% Achieving</b></p> <p>The student achieves the learning intentions with good quality and independence during the process of learning in some familiar and unfamiliar contexts.</p>	<p><b>75%-89% Proficient</b></p> <p>The student achieves the learning intentions proficiently and meets most of the required expectations at the end of a certain unit.</p>	<b>75%-89% Achieving</b>
„3“	<p><b>50%-74% Competent</b></p> <p>The student achieves the learning intentions independently with basic quality during the process of learning in some familiar contexts.</p>	<p><b>50%-74% Satisfactory</b></p> <p>The students achieve the learning intentions satisfactorily and meet few of the expectations prescribed at the end of a certain unit.</p>	<b>50%-74% Competent</b>
„2“	<p><b>20%-49% Developing</b></p> <p>The student achieves the learning intentions with support, limited quality, during the process of learning.</p>	<p><b>20%-49% Insufficient</b></p> <p>The student insufficiently achieves the learning intentions and meets only a little of the expectations prescribed at the end of a certain unit.</p>	<b>20%-49% Developing</b>
„1“	<p><b>0%-19% Beginning</b></p> <p>The student struggles, needs more support and requires a significant amount of time to achieve the learning intentions.</p>	<p><b>0%-19% Not achieving</b></p> <p>The student shows difficulties in achieving the learning intentions and does not meet the expectations required at the end of a certain unit.</p>	<b>0%-19% Beginning</b>

## **Use of the descriptive verbal assessments in the International School of Tallinn**

**In first grade**, descriptive verbal assessments are used, and they may not have a numerical equivalent. The teacher is responsible for deciding on the form and wording of verbal assessments. Single-word, as well as more extended assessments, are used that describe the development and progress of the student.

Assessments in first grade reflect the students' long-term achievements and progress. There is no daily performance of oral or written answers (writing papers) or assessment (except in English language lessons). Assessment methods include observations, conversations, project presentations, and more during which primarily the students' general competencies and problem-solving skills are assessed.

Descriptive verbal assessments are used as additional assessment tools **in grades 2–6** where the dual assessment system (formative assessment together with numbers) is already in use. The numerical assessment together with textual explanation is used starting from the **7th grade**. This requires extensive feedback from the teacher both to the student as well as parents. The assessment is comprised of the student's self-assessment to their work as well as the grade given by the teacher.

### **Procedure for informing and disputing grades and assessments**

The assessment policy of the International School of Tallinn is available to the students and their parents on the school's website.

The assessment takes place on an ongoing basis throughout each trimester, at the end of which the student is issued an assessment report, which contains the assessment matrix and development description prepared by the teacher. Assessments at **progress reviews** take place with the same frequency, and during these conversations, the student presents their study portfolio to their parents followed by a conversation between the teacher, the student, and parents.

The class teacher or the subject teacher enters the grades and assessments of the students to the class register and/or student's study journal. At the end of each trimester, the school issues a certificate (an assessment sheet) to the students that indicate the summarised grades of that trimester.

Students have the opportunity to appeal their grade or assessment results within 10 days after becoming aware of the grade. To contest a grade or an assessment, the student informs the subject teacher about it and submits a reasoned written application to the Director. The Director decides on the appeal of the grade or assessment and informs the student about it within five working days. If necessary, the Director may convene the Commission for discussing the appeal on the grade or assessment. One can challenge the grade, and each appeal will be reviewed on an individual basis.

### **Procedure for retaking tests or assignments**

If the written or practical work, oral answer, the practical activity or its result is assessed with the grade "1" or "2" or a grade is not given, the student will have an opportunity to retake the work.

The student agrees the time and place of retaking the assignment with the subject teacher.

## **Summarised grades and progression to the next grade**

Summarised assessment means an aggregation of grades into trimester grades that are based on grades/assessments given in letters as well as orally.

If in the middle of the study unit, the student has not received a trimester grade or assessment and the student has not used the possibility to retake their exam?, their yearly grade or assessment for knowledge and skills acquired during the relevant period will be "2" or a similar oral assessment is given to the outcomes.

Based on yearly grades or assessments the teachers' council decides on whether the student is transferred to the next class, left on additional studies, or shall repeat the course.

## **Assessment of behaviour and care and attentiveness**

The International School of Tallinn assesses the behaviour and care and attentiveness of all children. In preparing these assessments, the class teacher shall consult with other subject teachers, if necessary. The International School of Tallinn uses a special form for behaviour and care and attentiveness assessment that is part of the grade certificate / assessment sheet and is issued at the end of each trimester. The Teachers' Council makes amendments and approves the form of behaviour care and attentiveness.

Behaviour and care and attentiveness are graded by describing the student's study skills, their attitude towards study activities, and their social competences. After each 6-week observation period (unit), at least two behavioural attitudes are graded, which means 12 in total per year.

Feedback on the occurrence of the student's attitudes on the assessment sheet is based on the following scale: "always", "mostly", "sometimes", "rarely".

The graded attitudes are dedication, cooperation, enthusiasm, respect, honesty, independence, gratitude, self-confidence, creativeness, curiosity, empathy, and tolerance.

Based on the school's 5-point grading scale, the assessment sheet also includes grades on primary IB general competencies (transdisciplinary skills / approaches to learning): thinking, research, social, communication, and self-management skills.

Furthermore, observing care and attentiveness also includes keeping records on tardiness and absences while distinguishing between justified and unjustified absences.

## **Organisation of graduation**

The school shall give the upper secondary school graduating certificate to a student:

- 1) whose grades for the stage of study are at least satisfactory or, in terms of elective courses, satisfactory or considered passed;
- 2) who has passed their foreign language (English, French, Russian or German), mathematics, and Estonian as second language state examinations\*;
- 3) who has passed upper secondary level school examinations at least satisfactorily;
- 4) research work or a practical assignment

= at least five final examinations, minimally three of these being state examinations. Other exceptions in terms of graduating shall be handled based on current regulations.



## **Principles of supervision of students and organisation of work of students with special educational needs and procedure for applying support services**

The International School of Tallinn monitors the health status, development, and studies of the students. It aims to collect comprehensive information about the student to spot health problems, learning difficulties, general and specific talents and other special needs which, where possible / if needed can be taken into account. The school organises **individual coaching** of students. All students shall be ensured the opportunity to receive additional systematic consultation from subject teachers, get individual help and consultation from a psychologist, school nurse and receive learning assistance.

A student with **special educational needs** is someone whose special talent, learning difficulty, developmental disorder, health disorder, disability, conduct disorder, emotional disorder, staying away from studies for a longer time or insufficient command of the language of instruction of the school or other circumstances lead to the need to make changes or adaptations to the study content, study process, learning environment (teaching aids, study rooms, communication language, including sign language, or other alternative communications, support staff, teachers with special training, or other similar) or in acquired learning outcomes.

The International School of Tallinn accepts students with moderate forms of special educational needs, who can learn according to the standard curriculum but require a more peaceful environment and being in a smaller class. We follow the principle that there are no more than two children with mild forms of special educational needs in one class. In addition to known assessments/diagnoses, the child's special educational needs are evaluated during the school's admission process, where different playful activities are organised for the child during which the psychologist, teachers, and school management provide an assessment on the child based on observation.

The school has established a **support system** for the better organisation of the learning and educational process. The aim of the support system of the International School of Tallinn is to support the development of the child. For that, the school attempts to provide a psychologically safe and supportive school environment. The support system operates on the principle of networking. If needed, different parts of the support system are engaged, there is cooperation and best solutions are sought based on the situation. The class teacher, psychologist and school nurse are a part of the support network.

The International School of Tallinn uses the services of a **psychologist** under an authorisation agreement or service contract. All students, parents, teachers, and support staff of the International School of Tallinn are welcome to address the psychologist with any problems in studying or working (e.g. learning difficulties, learning motivation, relations within the class or staff).

When the problems occur, the psychologist carries out an initial assessment and, if needed, refers the person to a specialist of the relevant profession. The psychologist who gives feedback to teachers and parents of the results of the familiarisation round is involved in the school's first-grade admission process if there is a reasonable basis for doing so. A psychologist may visit the lessons, if necessary, to monitor some children and give feedback to the teacher, the parents, and/or management. If necessary, the psychologist shall participate in problem-solving conversations. Additionally, the psychologist shall be ready to conduct a child development analysis within the school to bring out the child's strengths, weaknesses, and development areas using different tests. This provide teachers with an input for guiding and organising the child's learning activities.

The International School of Tallinn uses the services of a **school nurse** under an authorisation agreement or service contract. The students, as well as teachers, may address the school nurse for help. The school nurse performs prophylactic examinations after specified intervals and vaccinations according to the state vaccination calendar.

In order to identify students' special educational needs (SEN), there is **close cooperation** between the school and home, and professionals are engaged, if necessary. To organise the cooperation for supporting the studies and development of students with special educational needs, the Director appoints a **SEN Coordinator** who makes proposals to the teacher, parent, and Director for further pedagogical work, application of measures provided by the school for supporting the student's development, or for carrying out additional examinations whilst cooperating with the teachers and support specialist to do so.

### **Special educational needs (SEN) and individual learning plan (ILP)**

The school makes changes in study hours, study content, study process, the learning environment, and required learning outcomes of the students with special educational needs (both students who have learning disabilities as well as those that are particularly gifted) to support their development. The student and the parent are involved in making these changes.

If in connection with the amendments referred to above, the weekly load of the student dramatically increases or decreases compared to the school's curriculum, or the learning outcomes established in the state curriculum are lessened or replaced, an **individual curriculum** is prepared for the student.

The preparation of the individual curriculum also involves the student and teachers and support specialists, as appropriate. If the student's special educational needs are based on their talent, implementation of an individual curriculum is ensured and, if necessary, also additional tutoring by the subject teachers or other relevant area specialists via educational programs or other educational institutions.

A student, **whose command of the language of instruction of the school upon admission is not sufficient**, is considered to be a student with special educational needs. Due to their insufficient proficiency in the school's language of instruction, the student has difficulties in understanding in lessons, and this requires extra efforts from the student to perform tasks at school as well as at home. Consequently, the changes or adjustments must be introduced to the content of studies, learning process, study load, study environment or pursued learning outcomes. Changes made for the student are described in the individual curriculum prepared for the student.

An individual curriculum shall be drawn up in the following cases:

- The student has special educational needs (talent, learning difficulties, a health status, a disability, behavioural and emotional disorders).
- The student's proficiency in the language of instruction is insufficient. Assessment of the student's language skills and its development is given by the teacher of the language of instruction in cooperation with the subject teachers.

The student commences their studies in the middle of the academic year.

- The necessity for the implementation of the individual curriculum is based on the previous educational experience of the student (curriculum applied in the student's previous educational institution differs in studied subjects or the study load, the student has already passed certain subjects in the previous school, the native language of the student covers the foreign languages taught at school, including Estonian, etc.).

The student has difficulties in adapting to the new language and cultural environment.

- The student is away from learning for a more extended period (e.g. family is away from Estonia).
- The student is enrolled at the school for a short while (up to one academic year).

- Other cases where the student needs modifications in their learning content, learning process, learning environment or required learning outcomes. The implementation of support measures adapted for the student with special educational needs is monitored and assessed by the school and home, involving the cooperation of support specialists, if necessary.

If the changes and adjustments foreseen by the individual curriculum do not allow achieving the learning outcomes established in the state curriculum, implementation of the individual curriculum is allowed only by the recommendation of the external counselling committee.

Exceptions for students who are home-schooled for health reasons are implemented according to the requirements set out in the national curriculum.

### **The language learning support system**

As an international school, the International School of Tallinn frequently encounters situations where the school admits a student not proficient in the language of instruction, which in turn hinders effective learning in subjects, demands significant amounts of extra work from the teacher in order to differentiate, and can somewhat slow the learning process of other students in the class. In cases of greater deficits in the language of instruction, the language teacher shall certainly prepare an **individual learning plan** in cooperation with the teachers' council.

Regardless of the degree of language deficiency, the International School of Tallinn implements principles of an inclusive school at least on the PYP level (grades 1–6), aiming not to limit the admittance of students because of language barriers. Starting from the third stage of study (MYP) the school may implement language tests for the admittance process and impose further requirements for admittance to the school, for example, establish a 3-year transitional period to achieve the standard proficiency level together with yearly conformity assessments (at least in the language of instruction). For admittance to the DP level (grades 11–12), the school implements admission tests because the DP level ends with international examinations that require achieving certain minimum thresholds to pass. The school may exempt students from the requirement of taking DP admission tests if they have passed both the language of instruction final examination as well as the MYP programme as a whole positively.

The language learning support system is developed to lessen the language deficiency of the student in the school's language of instruction; however, the same principles are implemented for the intensive learning of foreign languages (including Estonian as a second language). The language learning support system supports and supplements the school's general language policy. The language learning support system has a clearly defined structure of roles and responsibilities in the catching up process (see annexe 2 added to the general section of this document).

### **Organisation of informing and counselling students and parents**

The International School of Tallinn ensures that the students and parents receive information about the student's development and coping at school and ensures the availability of information about the organisation of learning and educational activities. The student and parent receive feedback on the development of the student and how they cope at school in conversations with the class teacher and subject teachers, child **progress reviews** and through the **e-information system**.

Information about the organisation of the learning and educational activities is shared on the school's homepage, class lessons and parent meetings (class meetings and general meetings). The class teacher, subject teacher or the school management forward operative information to the students or parents via e-mail by using relevant mailing lists.

**Main forms of cooperation with families** include:

- General meetings (once a year in September) – to expound on the developments within the school and exchange information
- Class parents' meetings – (at least twice a year, in autumn and spring) with the participation of parents and teachers
- Direct day-to-day communication between the teacher and parents
- Communication via the e-information system or e-mail
- Child development conversation – a conversation between the class teacher, parent and student twice a year where the student and the teacher give an assessment of the child's work throughout the previous period
- Participation in school events
- Participation in the work of the school council
- If necessary, problem conversations where student-related concerns are discussed
- Feedback questionnaire from parents and students each spring
- Open lessons

Parents are always welcome to visit lessons on request by agreeing on the time of observing the lesson with the teacher in advance.

The class teachers or subject teachers monitor the student's progress and coping at school and, if necessary, adapt teaching activities according to the needs of the student.

In the International School of Tallinn, informing and counselling students and their parents is supported by open communication between the school and home, an inclusive school culture, and flexible administration support.

Students and their parents are **informed and advised** as follows:

- Pedagogical tutoring outside lessons to students who experience a temporary gap in achieving the expected learning outcomes: in agreement between the student parent and teacher.
- Differentiated studies: a selection of methods and learning topics according to the student's abilities and their further educational plans.
- Advising parents on supporting the child's development and learning at home: an individual conversation with the family.
- Informing the students and parents about opportunities for further education: communication of relevant information received from outside the school to students and parents; individual development conversations.
- Career studies and counselling: to integrate career study related projects with civics and citizenship studies.
- Informing parents about the learning and educational organisation at school: an individual conversation with families before enrolment, via the school's homepage, during parents' meetings twice a year.
- Development conversations with the student and their family two to three times a year.
- Weekly pedagogical consultations with teachers where teachers exchange information about the necessity of providing consultations to students and their parents.

## **Organisation of career services in the International School of Tallinn**

Career studies support students in assessing their personality traits, capabilities, and actual possibilities. Career studies help the student associate their expectations towards their careers with real-life working environments. Providing career guidance is, in particular, achieved through the common theme of “Lifelong learning and career planning”. Learning that, relevant approaches to topics, examples, and methods are included in teaching subjects and cross-subject, inter-class and inter-school projects are collectively carried out.

Initial career guidance is organised and carried out by the class teacher by integrating relevant topics into their lessons and organising events and study visits related to career topics (including cooperation with the centre Rajaleidja (Pathfinder)). The International School of Tallinn organises the notification of students regarding opportunities for further education and general trends on the labour market and ensures the availability of career services (career studies, information or counselling).

Parents are included in organising career services introducing their workplaces during study visits or with presentations. The students of grade 9 and the upper secondary level have a possibility to spend one day at a workplace as a job shadow.

## **Principles for planning teachers' cooperation and preparation of work plans**

At the PYP level (grades 1–6) teachers shall collaboratively prepare an **integration plan (PYP Planner) across and between subjects** for each grade before the beginning of each new study period (unit) with class teachers and subject teachers agreeing on a central research topic and research priorities, key concepts, and other subject integration aspects, for example carrying out joint projects.

The **teacher's individual work plan** is a document, based on which the handling of topics for each class is planned with weekly preciseness, along with the integration between subjects, reaching learning outcomes, and their assessment. Syllabuses of relevant subject fields form the basis for the preparation of the work plan. The teacher's work plan specifies what is provided in the general section of the school's curriculum and in the syllabus of the subject, taking into account specific students, study literature and materials to be used, and topics and study content to be acquired. Preparation and development of the work plan fall under the responsibilities of the class teacher and subject teacher.

The class teacher and subject teacher have the opportunity and right to choose the most appropriate methods for and approaches to the given subjects and classes, provided that they are based on the school curriculum, have been discussed with other teachers and the school management, take into account the material and mental resources of the school, and contribute to the particularities of the school, its educational principles and culture.

Each teacher selects their own form for the work plan (preferably in collaboration with other teachers and the management) but in itself the teacher's work plan is an action plan that reflects the following: learning outcomes; time spent; study content, learning activities, and the manner and time of assessment; topics and activities integrating different subjects and/or supporting topics and activities.

Teachers shall collaboratively prepare an annual work plan before the beginning of the academic year and a more detailed work plan before the beginning of each study period. The teachers cooperate closely with each other and the management on a day-to-day basis. Teachers shall discuss teaching-related topics every day. Teachers and management hold weekly meetings where study-related issues and problems are discussed and further events are planned.

Class observations are carried out by the study coordinators, the Director, or persons authorised by the Director who all give feedback about the observed outcomes to the teachers.

### **Procedure for updating and supplementing the curriculum of the International School of Tallinn**

The development of the curriculum of the International School of Tallinn is a continuous process, and all teachers and the school management participate in its development. The responsibility for and organising of the work on changing and supplementing the school curriculum falls on the school Director who is also responsible for the democratic organisation of the preparation and development of the curriculum. If the school council agrees, the International School of Tallinn may, if necessary, **change** the list of compulsory subjects and cross-curricular topics in the upper secondary school curriculum and change the allocation of allocations.

The preparation and development of the curriculum require cooperation between students and teachers, the management, the school council, parents, the owner, other educational institutions, organisations, and authorities. The proposed amendments to the curriculum are reviewed by the school council, coordinated by the owner of the school, and approved by the Director.

## **ANNEXE 1: Integration of the Estonian national curricula and IB programmes in International School of Tallinn**

### **General principles**

- The content of the curriculum is largely based on the Estonian national curriculum, the implementation of which is linked to the interdisciplinary teaching framework of IB (e.g. regarding content based on concepts and research topics prevalent across and between subjects).
- In case of distinctions between curricula, requirements (e.g. learning outcomes) of both systems shall be complied with as far as possible; however, the implementational emphasis in terms of teaching arrangements is put on IB practices (e.g. integration of the cooperation between teachers).
- The school has harmonised curricula across all subjects (fully developed for PYP, development underway for MYP, and creation underway for DP), aligning the learning outcomes described in the IB subject (field) curricula (Scope and Sequence documents, PYP) with the Estonian national curricula both horizontally (across subject fields) as well as vertically (between grades).
- The content of subjects is adjusted based on the principle of reasonableness and relevance, and rather on the basis of the international perspective than the national aspect (e.g. the language of instruction, history, geography, and civics and citizenship education).
- Some hybrid solutions work in practice under exceptional circumstances. For example, for English as the language of instruction, we combine the elements from the syllabuses of both native as well as foreign language in terms of the content and study loads stated in the national curricula.
- According to the IB system, the school distinguishes between curriculum implementation stages (written, taught, and assessed curriculum) that are adhered to be based on teachers' collaborative plans (unit planners), teachers' individual work plans, and student assessments (e.g. in the e-information system and on the assessment sheet), also in differentiating between teaching and assessment based on the students' educational needs.

### Preschool

The International School of Tallinn operates? based on the learning outcomes and general competencies set out in the Estonian curriculum that the teacher implements according to the principles of the PYP (Primary Years Programme) in cooperation with other PYP (grades 1–6) teachers.

### Primary school (PYP, grades 1–6)

- The International School of Tallinn expects the achievement of learning outcomes stated in the national curriculum by the end of the 1st (grade 3) and 2nd (grade 6) stage of study and, if readiness is achieved, shall carry out corresponding standard-determining tests.
- All in-house work plans for the implementation of syllabuses shall be harmonised with learning outcomes described in the IB Scope and Sequence documents while accounting for its key elements (at least in terms of its written, taught, and assessed stages) and being divided by PYP research topics.
- In its learning and educational activities, the school observes all PYP primary standards and practices: cooperation between teachers, POI (Programme of Inquiry) principles in collaborative planning and implementation activities (e.g. PYP planners); (self-)assessment of competences (transdisciplinary skills, attitudes) and the IB Learner Profile (e.g. on assessment sheets, development conversations, etc.); five key elements (in syllabuses and/or work plans, on the assessment sheet), PYP Exhibition (final project).

Starting from the academic year of 2020/2021 the primary school (or the PYP) of the International School of Tallinn shall include grades 1–5.

#### Basic school (grades 7–9 + grade 10 on MYP level)

- The International School of Tallinn expects the achievement of learning outcomes stated in the national curriculum by the end of the 3rd (grade 9) stage of study, and until the accreditation of its MYP shall carry out basic school final examinations at the end of grade 9.
- The school's objective is to follow MYP standards and practices. All in-house work plans for the implementation of syllabuses shall be harmonised with the requirements set out in MYP documents.
- The minimal MYP subject study load in each subject field is at least 70 lessons per year. Each year the MYP student shall also participate in at least two collaboratively planned interdisciplinary courses that involve at least two subject groups and shall complete a long-term research project (community and/or personal project).
- Approaches to learning (ATL) – a common approach to MYP skills that are considered important for independent learning and applying skills and knowledge in unfamiliar situations.

These five skills are thinking, research, communication, self-management, and social skills.

- STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) – an important MYP perspective from which to consider the concepts and skills related to science, technology, engineering, and mathematics.

After attaining MYP accreditation, the secondary level (or the MYP) of the International School of Tallinn shall include grades 6–10.

#### Upper secondary school (grades 10–12)

- The International School of Tallinn expects the achievement of learning outcomes stated in the national curriculum by the end of the upper secondary level (grade 12) and until acquiring its DP (grades 11–12) accreditation shall carry out upper secondary school final examinations at the end of grade 12.
- The school's objective is to follow DP primary standards and practices. All in-house work plans for the implementation of syllabuses shall be harmonised with the requirements set out in PD documents.
- The International School of Tallinn shall observe the DP lesson division plan's subject study volumes (including in terms of its Extended Essay, TOK (Theory of Knowledge) and CAS project requirements).



### Integration of the Estonian national curricula and IB programmes in International School of Tallinn

Estonian curriculum	IB philosophy and programmes	Implementation in IST
Learning and educational objectives and principles	IB Mission statement IB Learner Profile	IST core values and mission Learner Profile self-assessment (during the pupil's progress review) Student gatherings School/class events and projects (summaries in teachers' progress review reports) Displays in classrooms and corridors
General competencies	IB Learner Profile Attitudes Transdisciplinary skills	Learner profile self-assessment (at progress reviews) Formative assessment (in the e-information system) Class teacher assessments (on the assessment sheet, at progress reviews) Student gatherings, class morning circles School/class events and projects (summaries provided in progress review reports prepared by teachers)
Subject field competencies	IB Scope and Sequence documents Key and related concepts Units of inquiry PYP planner	Harmonised syllabuses Primary school curriculum Teachers' work plans and collaborative planning (PYP planner)
Competencies by stages of study	IB Scope and Sequence documents Units of inquiry PYP planner PYP Year 5 Exhibition	The main section of the school curriculum Primary school curriculum Teachers' work plans and collaborative planning (PYP planner) Formative assessment (on the e-information system)

	MYP Year 4-5 Project (community and/or personal project)	Class teacher assessments (on an assessment sheet, at progress reviews) Planning the PYP Year 5 Exhibition and MYP Year 4–5 Project
Cross-curricular topics	Key and related concepts Transdisciplinary skills IB Programme Standard C Units of inquiry PYP planner	Detailed description/practice on the implementation ways of cross-curricular topics (in the general section of the school curriculum): e.g. rules of procedure, work of class teachers, events, projects, study visits, hobby activities. Regular teachers' meetings (collaborative planning) Student's creative work in 8th grade
Organisation of assessment	PYP five key elements IB Programme Standard C Assessment part in "Making PYP Happen" Transdisciplinary skills Attitudes	Assessment policy / the school's assessment guidelines (assessment scale, formative and summarised grading, period and end-of-the-year grades) Online information system (grade reporting) Grade certificate / assessment sheet: grades, assessments
Behaviour and care and attentiveness assessment	Attitudes Transdisciplinary skills	Grade certificate / assessment sheet: grades, assessments Development conversations, self-assessment Keeping track of absences Problem conversations (if necessary)
Educational special needs and support services	IB Programme Standard B2 language policy, inclusive school <b>MYP</b> : SEN Policy	Description of the language learning and educational special needs support system Language policy Differentiated teaching and/or individual curricula: including work plans, assessments on the e-information system and assessment sheet Use of support personnel and/or assistant teachers Intensive English language learning for beginners

		Teachers' Council meetings (e.g. progression to next grade, IC results) School nurse, psychologist, special pedagogue – where necessary and justified
Organisation of informing and counselling	IB Programme Standard B2	E-information system, individual letters Progress reviews, individual meetings General meetings, school events Information letters (by the Director or class teacher)
Study environment	IB Programme Standard B2	School rules of procedure, other rules of procedure Study materials Computers and digital equipment Library
Career counselling and career services	MYP and DP: From principles into practice	Study trips to companies Parent presentations at school Cooperation with public organisation Rajaleidja
Allocation of lessons	<b>MYP:</b> at least 70 lessons per year in each subject field (during 4th and 5th year of MYP choosing 6 fields out of the total 8 is allowed). <b>DP:</b> Extended Essay, CAS, and TOK study loads. Each year at least 150 lessons in three standard level subjects and 240 lessons in three higher level subjects.	The study volumes of mandatory as well as elective subjects of the IST curriculum are in compliance with the Estonian national curriculum and the IB requirements (MYP and DP).
Cooperation between teachers	PYP planner IB Programme Standard C	Integration plans (on the school intranet) Individual work plans (on the school intranet)

		Teachers' meetings (collaborative planning)
Syllabuses	IB Scope and Sequence documents IB Programme Standard C2	Syllabuses (mandatory subjects, elective subjects, primary school curriculum, syllabuses of the cross-curricular topics)

## **ANNEXE 2: Roles of parties involved in the language learning support system**

### **Role of management/administration**

- Initial mapping of language levels of the student at the beginning of the admittance process. This requires the presentation of the student's grade certificate for the previous grade and an extract from the student's learning outcomes for the current academic year and includes a conversation with the student's family in order to ascertain the student's language competences in English and other foreign languages studied at the school.
- Based on the initial assessment of the language level(s), the potential language gaps and impacts shall be explained along with the possibilities of the language learning support system, the school's expectations for the family in terms of assuming responsibility, objectives shall be established, and primary activities shall be agreed upon.
- The initial language assessment and information along with the further activities of the process is handed over to the language teachers(s) and class teacher.
- In the context of cooperation with teachers and the family, the chosen strategy for language support shall be specified, its implementation shall be monitored, its effectiveness assessed, and adjustments made as necessary. As a part of that strategy, the student may be exempted from taking a certain subject (e.g. another foreign language) in the short term (for up to a year) to accelerate the intensive acquisition of the language of instruction.
- To have the school (at least in the language of instruction) provide minimally 3 lessons of individual language support (pull out lessons) per week in order to improve the student's language proficiency either on an individual basis or in small groups of students on the same language level (if critical mass of students of similar age is achieved).
- The school may regroup students in language learning (e.g. in English and in Estonian) by grouping students by levels instead of grouping them by classes if the need for differentiating grows too large in terms of language levels and the number of students.

### **Role of parents**

- If the student's admission to International School of Tallinn is known in advance and especially if the family still resides abroad, the parent is obligated to find adequate language courses and/or private teachers to prepare the student in the foreign language(s) before enrolment at the school as much as possible. This is especially important in terms of the language of instruction.
- Provide financial and time resources for the child's supplementary language studies (language courses, a tutor, home help) in addition to the language support provided by the school.
- Motivate the child to understand that temporary efforts more intensive than usual are vitally important in bridging the language gap.
- Regularly cooperate with the school in activities related to bridging the language gap and, if necessary, help the child with language studies at home (e.g. with homework) or practice language of instruction with them.

### **Role of the student**

- Understand that bridging the language gap requires studying in greater loads compared to fellow students in the longer term and consciously take that into account.
- Be actively ready to make efforts in order to implement the strategy for language gap bridging and acquire the language of instruction (and/or other foreign languages)
- Participate in language support lessons and other private tutor lessons or language courses, and do all the additional homework.
- Take co-responsibility in keeping up and supporting personal motivation. Try to monitor themselves consciously and figure out in what way they acquire language most effectively. Use all possible educational aids (e.g. digital means) and situations (including breaks between lessons) for language learning.

### **Role of the homeroom teacher and/or language teacher**

- Determine the student's skill gaps and development needs during the teaching and assessment process and plan their work accordingly.
- Ensure a differentiated approach that is evident in their work plan, the study information system, choice of learning materials, and assessment methods (e.g. test forms). Proper **differentiated instruction and assessment** presumes that the language teacher has a distinct objective and agreements with the teacher's council on the length of the transition period for a certain student to reach the standard level, what are the intermediate objectives of level requirements, and thus assess the student based on the **individual learning plan** prepared for their development and differentiation instead of the standard learning outcomes established in the school curriculum for the corresponding grade.
- Recognise their central role as a contact person for the family on the school side by constantly monitoring, coordinating, and guiding the student's language development.
- Teach the child effective language learning techniques and measures; create situations that give opportunities to actively practice what has been acquired.
- Actively collaborate with learning support teachers and, if necessary, subject teachers, exchange information.
- Assign and assess additional homework.

### **Role of the learning support teacher**

- Facilitate the student's general language development and skills to a level that allows them to fully participate in mainstream education.
- Personally cover and manage child's development gaps.

### **Role of subject teachers**

- Recognise that according to IB principles each subject teacher is responsible for the language development of a student. Participate proactively in supporting the student's language level development by, for example, correcting obvious language mistakes both orally as well as in writing.
- Facilitate the student's acquisition of subject-related vocabulary – a responsibility falling under the subject teacher rather than the language teacher.
- Participate in the preparation of the student's individual curriculum and as a result, use the differentiated approach. Upon assessment keep the subject-related competences separate from the language development level.
- Actively use exemplification in teaching, enable the student the use of educational aids (e.g. digital dictionaries, multilingual materials, illustrative materials) in learning.

**ANNEXE 3: Outline of the support system for students with special educational needs (SEN)**







