

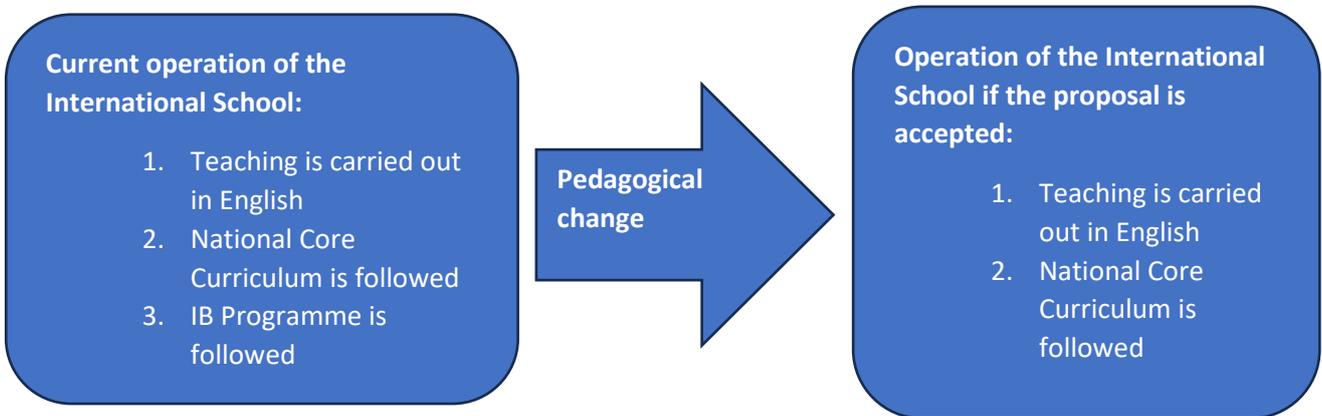


Study on the future of the IB programme at Oulu International School

Last October we informed you, the guardians, about the study on the future of the IB programme at Oulu International School. The report of the study was presented as an information listing at the Education Committee meeting on 16 January 2024. In this message, we give further details on the proposal for changes to the IB programme. There will be no changes to the school's pedagogy in the school year 2024-2025.

The Evaluation Team will propose a change of pedagogy for Oulu International School

As part of the study, a child impact assessment was carried out. On the basis of the child impact assessment, the Evaluation Team will propose to the Education Committee discontinuation of the IB programme as a pedagogical change for the International School. This means that the International School would continue as an English-language school without the IB programme. After the change, the school would exclusively follow the National Core Curriculum.



Pedagogical change in the school's everyday life

Current situation:	Proposal:
<p>National Core Curriculum and IB programme</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is a lot of overlap in assessment, which is reflected in a large number of school assignments for students and a large amount of work to be assessed. • Learning and mastering concepts related to the IB programme (e.g. key concepts, transdisciplinary themes, global contexts). 	<p>National Core Curriculum, IB programme will be dropped</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assessment is only carried out according to the National Curriculum. This reduces the amount of assessed work for students. • The concepts based on the National Curriculum are learned.

The matter will be taken forward for the Committee's decision in autumn 2024.

If you have any further questions, you can contact the following persons through Wilma or by phone:



5.2.2024

Jenni Alaniemi, Principal, tel. 044 703 9430

Anneli Jokelainen, Deputy Head, tel. 044 703 9703

ATTACHMENT: The information letter sent to the guardians on the 20th of October 2023 in Wilma

Study on the future of the IB programme at Oulu International School

The City of Oulu's Department of Education and Culture conducts a study on the future of the IB programme at Oulu International School. They are considering whether the school should teach following both the National Core Curriculum for Basic Education and the IB Programme, or only the National Core Curriculum with tuition in English. In the majority of international schools in Finland, education is provided according to the Finnish curriculum without the IB programme.

The study on the future of the IB programme in OIS has included a Child Impact Assessment. The Child Impact Assessment is a way of assessing in advance how an issue may affect children's lives, rights and wellbeing. In other words, the Child Impact Assessment investigates which decision would be in the best interest of the children. The best interest of the child is investigated by assessing the realisation of children's rights. The Child Impact Assessment is carried out by the officials preparing the case, together with experts with knowledge on the case. In this case, the Director of Basic Education and Youth, the Regional Director, the Regional Planner, the school's Principal and some other staff members of the school have been involved. Consulting the children and their guardians is an important part of the Child Impact Assessment process.

As part of the Child Impact Assessment, students and guardians were consulted during 31.8—8.9.2023 by means of questionnaires, which were answered by 78 students in grades 1–2, 181 students in grades 3–6 and 141 students in grades 7–9. Participation in the survey was voluntary and took place during the school day under the supervision of a teacher. The questions in the questionnaires were related to schooling and the IB programme.

The survey was answered by 312 guardians. The survey was conducted electronically. The questions in the questionnaire were related to the children's schooling and the IB programme.

Excerpts from the answers of the 1st and 2nd graders

Children think school is "nice" or "quite okay". The most important things about school were friends, breaktimes, playing, and teachers. A majority of respondents liked learning in English, some thought that learning in English was nice sometimes. Most children felt that they receive enough homework. A few children felt that there was too much or too little homework. The respondents said that they have friends at school, with some saying that they have friends "sometimes". Two children answered that they did not have any friends.

Excerpts from the answers of students in grades 3 to 6



According to the grade 3 to grade 6 students who responded to the survey, the best things about school were good teachers, nice classes, and friends. A large number of them said that they study at the International School either because of the English language or because of the international character of the school. Almost half of the respondents said they go to school because their parents wanted them to study at an international school.

A majority (95%) of respondents felt that there was enough or too little homework at school. When asked if the IB programme could be discontinued, 52% of respondents said yes (8%) or "I do not know" (43%). 49% of the students felt that the IB programme should not be discontinued.

In the open responses to the question "What is the best thing about your school?", 35 students mentioned good teaching, content of the lessons or teaching methods. IB studies were mentioned in five of the answers.

Questionnaire for 7th-9th graders

The 7th to 9th graders who answered the survey said that the best things about school were the international character of the school and the IB programme, friends and school atmosphere, teachers and nice classes. A majority of respondents found studying under the IB programme suitably challenging.

36% of respondents study at the International School because of the English language tuition, 21% because of the IB programme and 28% because of parental preference. 47% of respondents did not want the IB programme to be discontinued. The rest of the respondents either had no opinion (26%) or were ready to have the IB programme discontinued (27%).

47% of respondents would not want to give up the IB programme. Among the reasons given, the concern emerged that, if the IB programme were discontinued, teaching would no longer be sufficiently challenging or interesting. Students felt that the IB programme offers better opportunities for further education both in Finland and abroad.

Responses from guardians

79% of respondents said they live permanently in Oulu, while the rest said they would move abroad in the next few years. 44% of respondents said that their child attends the International School because of the IB programme. The rest of the respondents mentioned the language of tuition or the multicultural environment. 73% of respondents said that IB studies in basic education play an important role in their child's further studies.

52% of respondents felt that teaching in English without the IB programme is not sufficient. By the same token, 48% of respondents did not take a stance (30%) or felt that English language teaching without the IB programme would be sufficient (18%).

The respondents feel that the IB programme offers children better opportunities for further education, international studies, and future prospects. Some guardians had no wish to abandon the teaching methods and learning standards that are in line with international standards. The IB programme was seen as an attraction and an enabler of labour-related migration to Oulu.

Issues raised by the guardians and students



During the survey, for example the following issues related to the IB programme at OIS were brought up by the guardians and students:

If the IB programme were discontinued

Discontinuation of the IB programme would mean that the school would continue to follow the national and local curriculum. Assessment would only be based on the criteria of the national curriculum, which would clarify the school's operations and assessment. The school's pedagogical principles and the wide range of methods required by the Finnish curriculum would be retained, such as phenomenon-based and inquiry-based learning, criteria-based assessment, versatile assessment methods and project work. These methods can be used to promote active participation, critical thinking, and creativity. Students moving abroad will be directed to further studies as before, as they will continue to receive the Certificate of Completion of Basic Education in English. Students have not received an IB certificate from OIS in the past either.

Like before, students who speak Finnish can apply to either national or English-language upper secondary education institutions in Finland. For those who do not speak Finnish, in Oulu the IB Diploma at Lyseon lukio or OSAO's English-language Degree in Business are the options for further studies. The MYP Personal Project would be abolished, as well as the possible merit point for admission to the IB Diploma (the merit point has only affected 0-3 students per year). The target language would remain English, i.e. teaching would take place in English. The students' English language skills would remain at an excellent level, as they have been up to now. The number of assessed tasks would be reduced and the amount of schoolwork would be similar to that of a regular bilingual comprehensive school. The situation for students with special needs would be eased by the abolition of the IB criteria, as the school would no longer be academically more demanding than a typical bilingual comprehensive school in Finland. At the same time, the resources for differentiation upwards would increase.

The IB programme in the Finnish framework

The IB programme is particularly useful in a context where equality and equity in education are questionable, and the quality of the education system cannot be guaranteed, or it varies a lot between schools. High-quality Finnish education system, highly qualified teachers, a curriculum and its value base ensure high quality educational opportunities for all students. The Finnish curriculum takes well into account the needs of different types of learners.

The value base of the IB programme is very similar to that of the Finnish national curriculum, which has been followed since 2016. Therefore, the added value of the IB programme is now particularly linked to its international reputation. On the other hand, Finnish education also has a very good reputation internationally.

Decision-making process

The expert group carrying out the Child Impact Assessment has considered the responses of the children and guardians. The Child Impact Assessment is made up of the experts' views, influenced by those of the children



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and guardians. The results of the Child Impact Assessment are taken into account in the decision-making process. The matter will proceed to be discussed by the Education Committee later this year.

Regards,

Mika Penttilä

Director of Education and Culture Services, City of Oulu

Jenni Alaniemi

Principal, Oulu International School