Language Policy

I. School Background

Smart Vision School is a British international school with an established goal; the pursuit of excellence in all areas of a truly inclusive education context. We aim to provide learning for future readiness in an environment where children from various cultural backgrounds work collaboratively to develop the knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary to achieve the school mission.

English & Arabic are two languages that the school particularly promotes as languages of learning. These languages provide the cornerstone of our curriculum and support the construction of student knowledge and understanding. Additionally the school values the importance of exposure to other languages and offers a third language of French within it's curriculum.

Technology and various media are employed extensively in the teaching and learning of languages and provide opportunities for broader world perspectives and creativity.

At Smart Vision School, we are committed to a holistic approach to education, where every aspect of the child's being is developed. We create student-centred learning opportunities that address the physical, social and emotional needs of each child regardless of ability level and learning mode. We empower students to embrace diversity; uniqueness and individual talent in a safe, respectful and supportive environment, thus ensuring our school mission is brought to life.

II. Mission Statement

Smart Vision aspires to be an exceptional, inclusive, child-centered school at the heart of our community.
We aim to

- Provide a diverse community that nurtures the potential of every individual.
- Deliver a rich learning environment, where students feel safe, happy, challenged and empowered.
- Develop academic excellence and future-readiness through a skills and values-driven curriculum.
- Create confident, resilient and reflective learners and positive global contributors.

III. Philosophy

Language learning is, perhaps, the base to all learning. Communication is at the core of all human interaction and is an instrument for facilitating international-mindedness and purposeful expression in the sharing of common experiences and diversity. We encourage an approach to language teaching and learning that provides opportunities for students to better appreciate the multicultural world in which they live.

We recognise that language is essential to learning and the process of inquiry. All teachers, therefore, are in practice language teachers with responsibilities for facilitating effective communication. Through our academic programme, we strive to empower an appreciation of the aesthetic and functional uses of language.

For an internationally-minded society, it is crucial for students to develop understanding of their heritage and culture so that they may learn to appreciate those of others. The relationship between mother-tongue development and acquisition of other languages is acknowledged. Therefore, a strong, effective and challenging language programme evolves contextually and is a means through which transdisciplinary learning takes place. As communication in our world continues to change, we are committed to adapting language instruction to reflect the evolution of language in our modern world. We also believe that language is powerful and can have profound effects on others, both positively and negatively. We aim to develop in our students an awareness of their own responsibility towards language.

IV. Language Learning at Smart Vision School

Instruction at SVS is primarily English based. Arabic is taught throughout the Primary School at differentiated levels, which allows for more extensive language development in native and near native speakers of Arabic. A designated Arabic as an Additional Language (AAL) programme caters for the needs of expatriate students. All students are introduced to both languages from the age of three.

The SVS Primary curriculum provides authentic contexts for students to develop and use language. Wherever possible, language is taught through the relevant content of the curriculum. It is believed that purposeful inquiry is the way that students learn best, regardless of whether language is taught within the context of the cross curricular themes or in a stand-alone manner. In our community of internationally minded, multilingual learners and teachers, it is imperative that we consider language orally, visually and in written forms whilst providing ample opportunities for student expression.

The school's approach to teaching and developing mastery of essential language skills (reading, writing, listening and speaking) incorporates the following practices:

Written Language - Reading- Classroom Reading

▪ "Letters and Sounds" phonics is integrated into the reading readiness instruction in Foundation through Year 2. Struggling readers in Years 1-6 are supported through differentiated instruction from our parent volunteer/reading recovery programme.

▪ Reading takes place in all subject areas and genres (e.g. poetry, novels, plays, short stories, newspapers/magazines and information texts) as students learn to read with precision and a high level of accuracy and comprehension.

▪ Diverse resources support reading in order to cater for the needs of all learners (e.g. Oxford Reading Tree and related schemes, Arabic reading schemes, Comprehension texts and actiities, and class sets of fiction and non-fiction texts).

▪ Guided Reading, levelled group reading, reciprocal reading, shared reading, individual child/teacher reading and mixed ability reading groups contribute to the learning of reading within the school.

- Home Reading

▪ Pupils are encouraged to progressively develop as readers by reading high-interest levelled readers (Oxford Reading Tree and related schemes) and Arabic levelled reading books by various publishers. E-books and Scholastic Books also develop a passion for reading at home.

- Reading Strategies and Development

▪ Teachers provide resources for reading and teach reading strategies including vocabulary building techniques, word walls, comprehension practice and skills (scanning, predicting, inferring, skimming) and text analysis.

▪ Library classes provide interest-based reading and the library houses mother-tongue resources and world literature. The school library is also accessible during break times and after school.

▪ Pupils engage with the local community through planned activities (e.g. author visits and participation in the Emirates LitFest).

▪ Parents from various cultural backgrounds are invited to participate in literary activities within the school (mother-tongue language support, story reading etc.).

▪ Extra Curricular Activities (ECAs) support the development of reading through literary/book clubs in English and Arabic.

-Writing

At Smart Vision School we expect, at some point during our student's' learning journey that

they will develop the ability to clearly and effectively communicate ideas, thoughts, emotions, and aspirations in written form across genres using correct grammar and spelling.

- Text Types

▪ Teachers purposefully model and teach a variety of forms of writing across the curriculum.

▪ Students use written language daily through multi-modal forms of writing (e.g. conventional paper-based writing to E-language). The school's BYOD iPad programme enhances the development of our E-learners as digital natives, thus reflecting the school's overall mission of preparing students as leaders in an ever-changing global society.

▪ Students publish their writing regularly.

▪ Creative writing and personal expression are encouraged across the curriculum as a response to stimuli (visual or otherwise).

▪ VCOP (Vocabulary, Connectors, Openers and Punctuation), Big Write and Six Traits resources are used to develop effective writing across the curriculum.

- Grammar

The school recognises the ongoing debates about the teaching of grammar.

▪ At SVS grammar is taught holistically using a variety of resources. Grammar is also taught explicitly on a weekly basis.

- Spelling

▪ A school-wide approach to spelling using diversified spelling strategies and schemes is used to ensure that all students have knowledge of high frequency words.

- Handwriting

▪ Pupils develop the skills and mechanics of correct handwriting (pencil grip, letter formation, fluency, speed and style) in order to become effective communicators. The School follows the Nelson Handwriting Programme.

▪ Arabic handwriting is taught using two styles: one more appropriate to younger learners and one for upper primary; however calligraphy as a skill is further developed within the (ECA) programme.

Oral Language

- Listening and Speaking

At Smart Vision School, we encourage students to express themselves confidently, listen

respectfully, consider intelligently and respond appropriately. We value the significance of effective and diverse communication. Our aim is to confidently support oral language in English and Arabic/mother-tongues. We strive to provide our students with language tools, strategies and experiences to develop those skills that enable them to express information, feelings, thoughts and ideas in ways that show themselves to be principled and caring listeners.

▪ Students participate and practise their oral and listening skills individually, in pairs, in groups and as a whole class.

▪ Teachers ask challenging questions and model oral language characterised by clarity and fluency.

▪ Students prepare presentations, deliver them and listen and interact with others as they present for a variety of purposes (entertainment, information, persuasion and direction).

▪ Oral language is further developed through integrated Drama activities and performance-based ECAs.

Visual Language

- Viewing and Presenting within an internationally-minded context it is essential that our students come to appreciate the influences and nuances of media. For this purpose, we aim to create opportunities for our students to view and critically analyse media appropriate to their age and experiences.

▪ Students are presented with various media carrying a range of messages from persuasion, through aesthetic appreciation, to enticement of action etc. By viewing media from multiple perspectives, pupils are encouraged to re-evaluate their own value systems and those of others.

▪ Students are consistently asked to critically appraise presented media and engage in a process of analysis of underlying messages.

V. Additional Language Support

Embedded within our core values is a belief in inclusion. Whilst we understand that our curriculum is, for the most part, delivered in English, we also philosophically embrace the human capability to develop a language in such a way that it does become a language of life and learning. Therefore, language support, be that in the form of scaffolding or extension, is something that we aim to provide as much as possible.

The School's aim to develop bilingualism in students for whom Arabic is either a native language or a heritage language is viewed realistically when it comes to the timeframe for achievement. We realise that a language learning process is a long-term project and, therefore, accept that some students will achieve bilingualism at different stages in their language learning journeys and will attain it at varying levels of competency. As such, Arabic is taught as a two-stream programme as follows:

1. Arabic as a Native Language (Arabic A) 2. Arabic as an Additional Language (Arabic B).

English is not currently streamed at Smart Vision other than Phonics in Key Stage 1. Otherwise, instruction is differentiated within the classroom only.

OSAAT Language Programme

Smart Vision School is highly inclusive and as such, identifies early students for whom language is a barrier to learning. Teachers are trained in the "One Step at a Time" Language Programme by Anne Lock.

All students' oral English skill is screened in the first two months of the school year. Students are identified as "developing", "Delayed" or "competent" users of English. All teachers are responsible for implanting the OSAAT language intervention programme minimum four times a week. Students with delayed language receive additional intervention daily.

We believe that successful language development can occur when home and school work closely together. As such, SVS conducts regular language workshops and shares resources to empower our parents to support the programme at home

VI. Mother tongue development

Smart Vision School has as a priority the development and maintenance of the mother- tongue for all learners, wherever possible. At SVS, we support the development of mother-tongue languages, as we believe that competence in one's own language provides a platform upon which all learning can be constructed. All members of our school community (administrators, faculty, staff, parents, and students) are responsible for supporting such development of mother tongues in order to ensure that the learning process encompasses a variety of perspectives.

By encouraging the active use of mother tongues at home, school and in the community, children are better able to appreciate their own cultural origins and take action as internationally minded, global citizens.

We provide opportunities to highlight and support mother tongue languages through displays, assemblies, visitors from the community and parents in the classroom. We also aim to build our library resources to celebrate the multiplicity of languages, literature and cultures represented within the school.

VII. Value for Host Country

Smart Vision School values its host country, the United Arab Emirates; its language, its cultural identity and its legacy. The school is committed to promoting bilingualism in UAE nationals and Arab students, whilst developing the language skills of AAL learners in such a way that allows them to deepen their respect for the community in which they are living. By offering Arabic, be that in the form of native/near-native language programmes or as an AAL, we embrace the culture of inclusion and diversity that the UAE proudly upholds.

An important part of our vision is the seeking of opportunities to make links with the local community and its resources (e.g. classroom guests and visits, field trips, businesses and organisations, schools and universities and government agencies).

SVS values the local community through its efforts toward bilingualism in school brochures, daily communications, reporting, the promotion of local celebrations, school assemblies and parent workshops covering various aspects of language teaching.

VIII. Language Assessment

Language development is an ongoing process and oral (listening and speaking), written (reading and writing) and visual (viewing and presenting) strands are evaluated using both formative and summative assessments and a range of assessment methods and tools (Ref. Assessment policy).

IX. Professional Development

In order to ensure the language policy becomes a working document, the school recognises that administrators, teachers, librarians and other school staff require professional development in language learning and teaching. Teachers and other members of our school community are encouraged to take a pro-active role in their own professional development and to develop their own professional learning networks. The school also employs a comprehensive policy for staff training and development that is facilitated through in-school training, residential courses, visits to other schools, local workshops and peer-to-peer sharing of best practice.

X. Language Policy Reflection and Review

It is the responsibility of all teachers to be involved in the reflection and review of the school's language policy and to ensure that this policy is put into practice. The school's language policy will be reviewed on an annual basis taking into account new ideas and research gathered from our community of learners (teachers, students, parents and others). Upon review, the policy will be linked to the school's Assessment, Admissions and SEN policies.

The Principal and Section Heads will be responsible for implementing and monitoring this policy and for informing the school community of the review process and ways to contribute.