

Language policy

The Hermann-Böse-Gymnasium (HBG) was founded as a modern “Realgymnasium” in 1905. Today it is a grammar school (“Gymnasium”) with a distinct bilingual profile and has also achieved formal recognition both as a Europaschule and an IB World School. The HBG is a mixed school with approximately 1000 students who take their national school leaving certificate (Abitur) after 12 years of study. All classes in years 5 to 9 are taught bilingually. There are four parallel classes in each of the Middle School years 5 to 9 with 28 students in each mixed class. All classes are taught bilingually and have increased exposure to the English language. The subjects Physical Education, Geography, European Studies and Biology are all taught bilingually which helps to develop a high level of foreign language competence. In the Upper Secondary the options include bilingual standard level courses in History, Biology and Theatre as well as an advanced English course with expanded content. The systematic use of bilingual teaching, the broad range of foreign languages on offer (French, Spanish, Latin, Mandarin, Russian, Turkish, Greek, Polish, Italian, Japanese and Low German), the variety of international projects and simulations relating to European themes, and the international projects and partnerships which the school is involved in form the basis of the school’s recognition as a Europe School.

School language profile

German is the mother tongue of the vast majority of our students. Most students with an international background are second generation immigrants who mostly speak German at home, but some of them are still able to speak the mother tongue of the parents. The languages represented are above all Turkish, Russian, Farsi as well as Italian, Spanish and English but the general working language for all communication in the school is German.

Any communication with parents is usually conducted in German. However, individual interviews and counseling with parents who do not speak German fluently can be conducted in English, which has become another working language.

The main language of teaching at Hermann-Böse-Gymnasium is German. Nevertheless English is used as language of instruction in a number of classes (see above) and in the modern foreign language classes the target language is also the language of instruction.

Students at the Hermann-Böse-Gymnasium in Bremen study two foreign languages in middle school, one from year five and the second one from year six. Students can opt for a third foreign language in year 8. English is mandatory from year five onwards, in 6th grade the students can decide between French and Latin. From 8th grade onwards they can opt for Spanish. In the upper middle school students can decide between French, Spanish, Latin, Greek, Polish, Russian, Turkish, Italian, Chinese and Japanese in cooperation with other schools. In the upper school (Years 10 – 12) students have to continue studying at least one of the foreign languages picked in middle school if they have not fulfilled the criteria of studying a second foreign language (besides English) for a minimum of four years.

Hermann-Böse-Gymnasium also offers a course for German as a second language meeting the needs of our refugee students from Syria and other countries.

Exchange programmes are in place with school in France, Finland, Ireland, the United States, Cameroon, Mexico and Spain. Additional intercultural experience and opportunities for foreign language learning are offered through participation in Model United Nations (MUN) and model European Parliament (MEP). The school also takes part in national language competitions such as Bundesfremdsprachenwettbewerb and offers language certificates in English (CAE), French (DELF) and Spanish (DELE).

Language learning in the IB DP

All students have to take English Language and Literature HL (group 2) as a mandatory course. In addition they can decide if they want to take German Literature (group 1) at HL or SL. Students can also opt for a second language instead of a group 6 subject. They have the choice between French or Spanish Language B or ab initio. The development of the students towards multilingualism is reinforced through the use of English as language of instruction for every subject except for German.

In the past couple of years Hermann-Böse-Gymnasium saw increased enrollment of students from countries in a crisis situation. This led to a wider range of mother tongues and languages spoke at our school. In order to foster the individual language needs and talents of these students, we point out the possibility of school supported self-taught languages as an option. We hope that the amount of languages that can be studied in the IB track increases bit by bit like that.

Language and student admission

On account of the school language policy those seeking admission for year 5 have to be willing to put an emphasis on the study of English in additional lessons. Individual counseling is offered for students who wish to enter the bilingual track. For admission to the IB DP above average proficiency in English is expected and a minimum grade of 2 (corresponding to a B in the US-American system). The IB candidates are interviewed by the IB coordinator to evaluate their English language proficiency and their suitability for the program.

Assessment of language learning

The criteria for second language assessment are based on the levels of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages. They comprise the communicative skills (speaking, writing, reading, listening and mediation) of the student as well as their proficiency, accuracy, precision, logic of argumentation and other aspects (compare to our assessment policy). Both summative and formative means of assessment are applied. Depending on whether the students are assessed for the German Abitur or the IB Diploma the directives of the ministry of education or the IB are implemented.

Special educational needs in language learning

Special arrangement for students with specific performance deficits, especially dyslexia, are regulated by the Ministry of Education. These administrative provisions include for example

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the possibility of remedial courses as well as extension of time allowed for tests or help by technical equipment to make sure that all students can show their true potential.

Communicating and reviewing the policy

The policy is regularly reviewed as required. Possible changes are discussed in department meetings, staff meetings and communicated in staff meetings, parent-teacher meetings, in circulars and information session for students.

Revised last in May 2021.

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