“Each One Is Unique”

Lower School Handbook

International School of Helsinki
A World IB School

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Table of Contents

Introduction ................................................................. 3
  THE IB LEARNER PROFILE ........................................... 3
  ATTITUDES ..................................................................... 4
  THE VIRTUES .................................................................. 4
  ISH GUIDING PRINCIPLES ............................................ 5

The Primary Years Programme at ISH .............................. 6
  UNDERSTANDING THE PYP – A GUIDE FOR PARENTS .......... 6

School Organization ......................................................... 8
  THE LEADERSHIP TEAM ............................................... 8
  GOVERNANCE ................................................................ 8
  PARENTS’ ASSOCIATION ............................................... 8
  PARENT TEACHER ORGANIZATION (PTO) ....................... 8

Lower School – PYP Grades K1-5 ...................................... 9
  ABSENCES AND CREDIT ................................................ 9
  ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS .............................................. 9
  ADDRESSING CONCERNS ............................................ 9
  ATTENDANCE .................................................................. 11
  AUTOMOBILE DROP OFF AND PICK UP ............................ 11
  BEFORE AND AFTER SCHOOL ......................................... 11
  BOOK BAGS .................................................................... 11
  CHANGE OF ADDRESS AND PHONE ................................ 11
  COMPUTER FACILITIES ............................................... 11
  CONTACTING STAFF ..................................................... 11
  CONTACTING STUDENTS AT SCHOOL ............................... 11
  DRESS CODE .................................................................... 12
  EARLY DEPARTURE ....................................................... 12
  ELEVATOR USE .................................................................. 12
  FIELD TRIPS AND ORIENATIONS .................................... 12
  FOOD SERVICE AND NUTRITIONAL GUIDELINES ............ 12
  HEALTH AND SAFETY .................................................... 13
  HOMEWORK GUIDELINES ............................................ 14
  LANGUAGE ....................................................................... 15
  LIBRARY MEDIA CENTRE ............................................... 15
  LOST AND FOUND .......................................................... 15
  OPEN HOUSE .................................................................... 15
  PARENT-TEACHER AND STUDENT-LED CONFERENCES ....... 16
  PARTY INVITATIONS ....................................................... 16
  PERSONAL ITEMS/VALUABLES ...................................... 16
  PROMOTION AND RETENTION ......................................... 16
  SPECIAL NEEDS SUPPORT ............................................. 16
  SCHOOL HOURS AND RECESS TIME ................................. 16
  SCHOOL SUPPLIES ........................................................ 17
  SECURITY ........................................................................ 17
  SMOKE-FREE CAMPUS .................................................. 17
  SNACKS ........................................................................... 17
  SPECIAL PROGRAMMES ............................................... 17
  STUDENT WELFARE PLAN ............................................. 17
  TELEPHONE USE .......................................................... 17
  TESTING ............................................................................ 18
  TRANSPORTATION AND TAXIS ....................................... 18
  TUTORING ................................................................. 18
  VISITING STUDENTS .................................................... 18
  VISITORS ........................................................................ 18
  VOLUNTEERS ............................................................... 19
  WITHDRAWAL AND TRANSFER FROM ISH ....................... 19
Introduction

The IB Learner Profile

Those new to the International Baccalaureate Organization often wonder, “What are IB Learners?” The IB Learner Profile is the IBO mission statement translated into a set of learning outcomes for the 21st century. The Learner Profile provides a long-term vision of education. It is a set of ideals that can inspire, motivate and focus the work of schools and teachers, uniting them in a common purpose.

IB Learners strive to be:

**Inquirers**
They develop their natural curiosity. They acquire the skills necessary to conduct inquiry and research and show independence in learning and this love of learning will be sustained throughout their lives.

**Knowledgeable**
They explore concepts, ideas and issues that have local and global significance. In so doing, they acquire in-depth knowledge and develop understanding across a broad and balanced range of disciplines.

**Thinkers**
They exercise initiative in applying thinking skills critically and creatively to recognize and approach complex problems, and make reasoned, ethical decisions.

**Communicators**
They understand and express ideas and information confidently and creatively in more than one language and in a variety of modes of communication. They work effectively and willingly in collaboration with others.

**Principled**
They act with integrity and honesty, with a strong sense of fairness, justice and respect for the dignity of the individual, groups and communities. They take responsibility for their own actions and the consequences that accompany them.

**Open-minded**
They understand and appreciate their own cultures and personal histories, and are open to the perspectives, values and traditions of other individuals and communities. They take responsibility for their own actions and the consequences that accompany them.

**Caring**
They show empathy, compassion and respect towards the needs and feelings of others. They have a personal commitment to service, and act to make a positive difference to the lives of others and to the environment.

**Risk-takers**
They approach unfamiliar situations and uncertainty with courage and forethought, and have the independence of spirit to explore new roles, ideas and strategies. They are brave and articulate in defending their beliefs.

**Balanced**
They understand the importance of intellectual, physical and emotional balance to achieve personal well-being for themselves and others.

**Reflective**
They give thoughtful consideration to their own learning and experience. They are able to assess and understand their strengths and limitations in order to support their learning and personal development.
Attitudes

We also believe that students need to develop the attitudes outlined below. Like the attributes, we will focus on one or two of the attitudes each month.

We want students to develop:

- **Appreciation**
  Appreciating the wonder and beauty of the world and its people

- **Commitment**
  Being committed to their learning, persevering and showing self-discipline and responsibility

- **Confidence**
  Feeling confident in their ability as learners, having the courage to take risks, applying what they have learned and making appropriate decisions and choices.

- **Cooperation**
  Cooperating, collaborating and leading or following as the situation demands

- **Creativity**
  Being creative and imaginative in their thinking and in their approach to problems and dilemmas

- **Curiosity**
  Being curious about the nature of learning and of the world, its people and cultures

- **Empathy**
  Imaginatively projecting oneself into another’s situation, in order to understand his/her thoughts, reasoning and emotions

- **Enthusiasm**
  Enjoying learning

- **Independence**
  Thinking and acting independently, making their own judgements based on reasoned principles and being able to defend their judgements

- **Integrity**
  Having integrity and a firm sense of fairness and honesty

- **Respect**
  Respecting themselves, others and the world around them

- **Tolerance**
  Feeling sensitivity towards differences and diversity in the world and being responsive to the needs of others

The Virtues

*Love. Kindness. Justice. Service.* The Virtues are the very meaning and purpose of our lives. They are universally valued by people of all faiths and cultures. We seek ways to renew and deepen our connection with the values that give direction to our lives. We strive to mentor our children and to build a safe, caring school community where each of our students can express his/her uniqueness.

The mission of The Virtues Project is to provide empowering strategies that inspire the practice of virtues in everyday life.

> Cultivate Virtue in yourself and Virtue will be real
> Cultivate Virtue in the family and Virtue will flourish
> Cultivate Virtue in the village and Virtue will spread
> Cultivate Virtue in the nation and Virtue will be abundant
> Cultivate Virtue in the world and Virtue will triumph everywhere

~ Lao Tsu

More information about the Virtues Project can be found at [www.virtuesproject.org](http://www.virtuesproject.org)
ISH Guiding Principles

Philosophy

Education is lifelong learning which strives to maximize the potential of the individual as a responsible citizen within a holistic and global perspective. Learning is a collaborative process that promotes confident communication while respecting individuality and diversity.

Vision

The International School of Helsinki is proud to be recognized as a leader in international education where its diverse student body receives an excellent, well-rounded education, inspiring and empowering students to succeed in the world community.

Beliefs

We believe:

- Recognition and respect of diversity is essential.
- Consideration of different global perspectives is essential.
- Students have the opportunity to explore cultural diversity and their own cultural identity.
- Learning is the joint responsibility of the student, parents and teachers, with the school community built around the individual needs of the whole child.
- Through the promotion of caring and ethical behaviours, students are able to have a positive impact on the world around them.
- Learning how to learn, inquire and communicate is a lifelong process.
- The International Baccalaureate programmes provide students with a high quality education.
- Staff should be supported through a comprehensive programme of professional development, adequate resources and a recognition of their worth in the fulfilment of our mission.
- Class size is an important component to the quality of learning.
- Recognizing and celebrating achievement and growth are keys to motivation.
- We should provide opportunities and the environment to attain one’s own balance of physical, social, emotional, and intellectual elements to achieve personal wellbeing.
- It is important to encourage creativity and original thinking in striving for academic excellence.
The Primary Years Programme at ISH

The International Baccalaureate Primary Years Programme (PYP) was identified by International School of Helsinki in its strategic planning, starting in the year 2001, as a natural introduction to the Middle Years Programme and the Diploma Programme in the upper school.

The PYP provides a framework for learning that encompasses the whole child and endeavours to meet the learning needs of students at all levels of development. These needs are academic, social, physical, emotional and cultural. The essential elements of the curriculum are skills, knowledge, concepts, attitudes and action.

“The IB PYP strives for a balance between the search for meaning, the acquisition of essential knowledge and skills, the development of positive attitudes and the opportunity for positive action.”

~ Making It Happen in the Classroom, IB PYP

At the core of learning is the Programme of Inquiry which is based on six trans-disciplinary themes:

1. Who we are
2. Where we are in time and place
3. How we express ourselves
4. How the world works
5. How we organize ourselves
6. Sharing the planet

The units of study fall naturally into the various disciplines of science, history, geography, personal and social studies, as well as the application of language arts, mathematics and the arts.

Imbedded into the curriculum framework is a focus on the student profile, which is integral to the development of an international person. From the PYP perspective, an international person is one who is an inquirer, a thinker, a communicator, and a risk-taker, one who is knowledgeable, principled, caring, open-minded, well-balanced and reflective. Achieving these attributes takes more than just curriculum; it takes a conscious effort and belief that this profile is achievable and valuable to the development of the whole child.

The aim of all IB programmes is to develop internationally minded people who, recognizing their common humanity and shared guardianship of the planet, help to create a better and more peaceful world.

Understanding the PYP – A Guide for Parents

How is the curriculum developed?

The International Baccalaureate Organization (IBO) holds regular meetings to which authorized schools send representatives. These representatives serve on curriculum committees which develop the curriculum for individual disciplines, in the context of a coherent, central framework. The work of these committees is coordinated by a steering committee. Since the early stages of its development, the IBO has also worked closely with consultants and teacher trainers from different national systems.

What will my child learn?

The PYP is a trans-disciplinary curriculum which draws the individual disciplines together into a coherent whole, while preserving the essence of each subject.

Students will:

- Develop a deep understanding of important concepts
- Conduct research into knowledge which has local and global significance
- Acquire and practise a range of essential skills
- Be encouraged to develop positive attitudes towards learning, the environment and other people
- Have the opportunity for involvement in responsible action and social service

How will I know how my child is doing?
The PYP promotes the use of a range of assessment strategies which are designed to give a clear picture of each child's progress. This progress will be reported to parents regularly, both orally and in writing. Parents are encouraged to play an active role in supporting their child’s learning.

**How can I support my child’s learning?**

The PYP promotes learning as a partnership between student, parent and school. The degree of parental involvement may vary from school to school, but the fundamentals of parental support remain the same.

Parents can help their child by:

- Maintaining regular contact with the school
- Sharing books with their child
- Supporting the child’s mother tongue
- Assisting their child with research projects
- Attending curriculum information sessions at school and parent-teacher conferences
- Providing an appropriate setting and structured routine for doing homework

**After the PYP, what’s next?**

The IBO sees the PYP curriculum as an excellent preparation, but not a prerequisite, for the IBO’s Middle Years Programme (MYP) for 11- to 16-year-olds. Both curricula place a focus on critical thinking, personal responsibility for learning, student inquiry and social service. Similarly, the MYP is seen as an ideal foundation, but again not a prerequisite, for the Diploma Programme for 16- to 19-year-olds. The Diploma Programme is regarded by many as the finest pre-university curriculum available.

**Will the PYP help my child fit into another school?**

Although no school or curriculum can guarantee a perfect fit when children transfer to a new school, particularly a school in a different country, parents may be reassured by the following points.

**Transfer to schools following a national curriculum**

- Close attention is paid to a range of national curriculum when developing the PYP curriculum.
- Students transferring from international schools usually have no trouble with the standards of national schools.

**Transfer to other schools offering the PYP**

- Students in other schools implementing the PYP curriculum will have common learning experiences in terms of conceptual development, skill acquisition, positive attitudes and meaningful action. There will be less uniformity of specific content in certain areas, since schools will naturally wish to reflect the unique nature of their own locations.
- The PYP is working towards agreement on a common set of assessment, recording and reporting strategies which will facilitate the transfer of students.

**What if parents still have questions?**

Parents should not hesitate to contact their child’s classroom teacher or the PYP coordinator if they have further questions.
School Organization

The International School of Helsinki offers education to students aged four to grade 12 and is organized according to the chart below.

The Leadership Team

The head of school is the chief administrator of the school and reports to the board of governors.

The lower school principal is responsible for the leadership and administration for grades K1-5 and the upper school principal for grades 6-12.

The business manager is responsible for business and financial matters.

Governance

The board concentrates on the broad direction and control of ISH as a whole. It establishes basic policies of ISH and major programmes and delegates to the head of school the day-to-day administration and the carrying out of approved policies and programmes.

The establishment of, and of any changes to, these policies of the school is subject to the approval of the board.

The board of governors operates within the boundaries of the school bylaws and the ISH policy manual that can be found in the school library.

Parents’ Association

The education is organized by an association, which is called Helsingin Kansainvälinen Koulun Vanhempainyhdistys ry (the Parent's Association of the International School of Helsinki) with its domicile in Helsinki. The purpose of the association is to maintain and own a school called the International School of Helsinki. (Policy 1.101)

The parents or guardians of any child admitted to ISH may become a member of the Parents’ Association.

Parent Teacher Organization (PTO)

The Parent Teacher Organization (PTO) is comprised of teachers and parents whose children attend the International School of Helsinki. It aims to develop a closer connection between school and home by encouraging parent involvement. The PTO works to improve the environment at ISH through volunteer and, when possible, financial support.

The PTO encourages all parents to be active, involved members. Parents are invited to volunteer and participate by helping committees and activities. Further information regarding the PTO can be obtained from the main office of the school or by e-mailing ish.pto@gmail.com.
**Lower School – PYP Grades K1-5**

**Absences and Credit**

ISH is able to effectively educate students only to the extent that the school has contact with them. Attendance at school is mandatory except for reasons of illness, injury, bereavement or special circumstances approved by administration.

As the programme in lower school promotes active learning through hands-on investigative style, it is recommended that students do not miss any school. If a student is absent for more than eight (8) days in one trimester, his/her progress will be reviewed to see if it impacts future promotion/placement.

A student absent on a given day is not eligible to participate in extra-curricular activities on that day unless given special permission by the principal.

Parents are urged to schedule home leave, whenever possible, during one of the school holidays. It must be realized that school is a participatory process that cannot be compensated for entirely by the student taking along books and assignments to complete.

The school reserves the right to ask for a medical note from a doctor or nurse in the event that a student is absent for a major test and/or assignment due date.

Parents must realize that the learning experience is participatory and interactive, and in many cases there is no substitute for the in-class experience. **Teachers are not expected to prepare lessons and extra homework for students whose families chose to extend holidays.**

**Activities and Events**

The activities calendar produced annually highlights major school events, including information evenings, PTO events and other information relevant to the school. Parents are encouraged to keep the calendar on display at home. Adjustments and additions to the activities calendar are noted on school’s website.

**Addressing Concerns**

It is extremely important that all concerns are communicated and addressed promptly. This communication between home and school is critical. If parents have an issue they need to address, the process on the next page should be followed.
Process Flow for Parents to Address Concerns

1. **Concern or Question**
   - **E-mail the Teacher**
     - Teacher names can be found in the staffing section of the ISH website.
     - Copy the appropriate coordinator and principal.
   - **Teacher Response – 24 hours**
     - **Issue Resolved?**
       - No: Make an appointment to see the appropriate coordinator and/or principal.
       - Yes: End

2. **Make an appointment to see the appropriate coordinator and/or principal.**
   - **Teacher Contacted First?**
     - No: Issue Resolved?
     - Yes: Meet with appropriate coordinator and/or principal.
       - **Note:** Usually the teacher would be in attendance at the meeting.
       - **Issue Resolved?**
         - No: Contact the head of school in writing to schedule a meeting.
         - Yes: End

This meeting can be with all those involved present or in private if you wish. The head of school will provide you with a written response to your concerns after this meeting.

End
Attendance

Attendance is taken daily during morning homeroom time. Therefore, parents are asked to inform the school office about a student's absence first thing in the morning.

If the student arrives late in the morning, he/she should report to the main office. **Students who arrive to class after 8:50 will be marked tardy (late to class).**

Since school attendance is directly related to academic progress, it is important to minimize absences and lateness to class. Absences and being late to class impede not only the individual's progress but also the progress of the class.

Any appointments should be scheduled outside of school hours to reduce disruption to the student programme.

Automobile Drop Off and Pick Up

Parents driving their children to the school are asked to drop them off on the side street next to the school building. This is the nearest point to the school play area where the children line up each morning. It should be noted that most of the parking areas nearest the school are posted for short-term parking only.

Additionally, parents are asked to refrain from backing up in the school driveway, as this presents a serious danger to small children.

Before and After School

All students are expected to be at school on time but should not arrive before 8:30. There is no supervision prior to this time. For security and safety reasons students need to use the back entrance in the mornings. Students should be picked up from school immediately after class ends, except for official school sponsored events. **There is no supervision after school. Students not participating in a supervised activity may not remain onsite after classes are finished.**

Book Bags

Each new student from K1 to grade 3 receives a blue ISH book bag. Returning students need to keep their book bag to use each year. ISH does not replace lost book bags.

Change of Address and Phone

Parents are required to notify the school immediately when contacts change so that school database can be updated. Up-to-date information is necessary in cases of emergency.

Computer Facilities

Computers are the property of the school and only school-related work is allowed. Students are not permitted to access any websites that are inappropriate and not related to assigned school work.

Contacting Staff

Since school operations make it difficult to contact teachers during the school day, parents are encouraged to leave a telephone message at the school or send an email. ISH personnel have email addresses that are usually their first name plus last name initial @ish.edu.hel.fi – for example, JohnD@ish.edu.hel.fi. However, parents should check the school directory to make sure the addresses are correct.

Contacting Students at School

It is exceedingly difficult and time-consuming to locate a student to pass on a personal message. The school does everything possible to deliver an emergency message but cannot guarantee delivery. Parents who wish to make direct contact via mobile phone are encouraged to text, as phone calls during class time are disruptive to the teaching/learning process.
Dress Code

Parents are asked to assist the school by ensuring that their child is appropriately dressed for school. In the cold and wet weather, students need appropriate outdoor wear. This includes boots, gloves/mittens, a hat, rain pants, snowsuits and layers for the colder temperatures.

- Shoes must be worn at all times, and a pair of ‘indoor’ shoes is required.
- Hats are allowed outside only, not in the classrooms or lunchroom.

Early Departure

Students who leave school early are required to sign out at the main office prior to departure.

Elevator Use

The elevator is for staff use only. Students should not be in the elevator unless they have a pass from the nurse for medical reasons.

Field Trips and Orientations

Upon admission to ISH, parents are to give authorization for field trips. This information is found on the Student Information/Directory Form that is filled out at the beginning of the year and kept on file in the main office. This covers the frequent trips that are taken to enhance the educational experience and cultural opportunities that the greater Helsinki area offers.

Field trips are organized to take advantage of the potential for outdoor pursuits, cultural appreciation, social understanding and group responsibilities. Field trips are carefully planned educational experiences and are part of the curriculum. For some of these outings, there may be an additional charge to the parents for transport or entry fees. Information regarding field trip arrangements or procedures will be provided throughout the year as they occur. Parents will receive notification of the itinerary and other information pertinent of the trip in order to make proper arrangements.

Food Service and Nutritional Guidelines

Students who do not bring a lunch from home can purchase lunch for a fee through Sodexo, the school’s catering/food service contractor. Information about the lunch programme at ISH is given at the beginning of the school year or when registering a student for admission.

The school encourages healthy eating and has established the following objectives and recommendations for its food programme.

Objectives:

- To improve the health of students, staff and ISH families by helping to influence their eating habits and increasing their knowledge and awareness of food issues, including what constitutes healthy eating in a pleasurable environment
- To ensure that the food provision in the school reflects the ethical, cultural and medical requirements of students and staff
- To ensure students are well nourished at school and that every student has access to safe, tasty and nutritious food and a safe, easily available water supply during the school day

Recommendations:

- ISH asks all parents and staff to continue supporting ISH in promoting healthy choices for their students by providing balanced, healthy school lunches and snacks. Together we will teach, model, support, and send the message to our students that healthy nutrition is a lifelong lesson that we all need to practice. The same applies to fundraising and bake sales whenever possible.
- Special occasions, such as the annual International Celebration and class parties, are exceptions. However, healthy food choices are encouraged.
ISH encourages cultural diversity in nutrition.

Students are given the opportunity to drink water all through the day. Soft drinks and energy drinks are not allowed at school.

ISH is a nut-free school.

Parents and staff are kindly asked to consult Sodexo before organizing events involving the cafeteria and/or kitchen.

Lunchtime is a social occasion and talking quietly while eating is expected. Appropriate table manners are of utmost importance. The room should be left tidy and students should take pride and have a sense of responsibility in assisting in this matter.

Health and Safety

Dental Care

The entire population has the right to public dental care. Children receive dental care free of charge until the age of eighteen. Students at ISH are part of the dental services provided by Lauttasaari Dental Clinic (Taivaanvuohentie 6, 3rd floor). All students at the age of 7, 10, and 15 will receive an invitation from the clinic by mail. For all other students, the clinic will review each student's records and give an appointment as needed. Dentists’ primary goals are prevention, heading off oral health problems before they occur and maintenance, ensuring through proper daily care that teeth and gums stay healthy. For more detailed information, please contact the school nurse or the school office.

Emergency Closing & Safety Procedures

There are fire drills each trimester, and students are given practice in evacuating the building and staying inside with classroom doors closed in case of danger outside. In the event of a school closure, local radio is used and messages will be left on the school's answering system. Moodle will also be used to provide lessons in times of closure, and parents will receive notifications by email. In the case of a ‘lock-down’, teachers have a coded message which they use to indicate that students should be in classrooms and off the main corridors. In such a case students, would be directed by staff.

Healthcare

ISH has a school nurse who coordinates the health program. The program supplements the efforts and guidance of parents and health authorities in educating students in regular health care. The objectives are to promote good, healthy habits among the students, to stimulate a sanitary and healthy environment in the school, and to assist in detecting physical, psychological and social handicaps of students. Provisions will be made and details provided for students to receive dental check-ups and treatment through the school.

During the school year students are invited to take part in a general health check-up with the school nurse. In addition, students in grades 1, 5, 8 or 9, and 12 will have a medical examination by the school doctor. With parental permission, students may also have their basic vaccinations done at the school. Parents may also consult the school nurse or make an appointment with the school doctor regarding health-related issues concerning their child. All students with a Finnish Social Security number are covered by the National Health Service and are entitled to free medical services provided by the local health centre.

Illness

If a student is not feeling well, he or she should go to visit the school nurse. In cases where the nurse determines that the student should go home, parents are contacted.

Students sent to school should be healthy enough to participate in all activities, including recess. If conditions are such that the student is required to limit participation, parents are asked to send a note from a medical doctor explaining the condition and the timeframe for the limitation. A child who has a fever or has been vomiting may not return to school until his/her symptoms have subsided for a 24-hour period.

Parents are required to inform the school office in cases where the student will be absent due to illness.
**Insurances (Accidents)**

In an emergency, a student will be taken to the nearest medical facility in the area and the parents will be contacted. The school has health insurance to cover all students involved in an accident during school time and/or school related activities.

**Homework Guidelines**

Homework is assigned to provide opportunities for students to practice independently what has been taught or presented in class. The number and length of assignments will vary according to individual classes. Children learn good habits through homework. They learn to accept responsibility, a habit that will be important all their lives. We know also that school is only part of a family’s responsibility; therefore, we want to be reasonable in our expectations of time spent on homework.

Our homework assignments are designed to be carried out at home. We will be sure the child has been introduced to the skills necessary to do the work. Parents should not have to teach their child new material. If a child is unable to do the work, parents need to let the teacher know. We ask that parents support our efforts by making a place and time available for homework, reminding the child about homework responsibilities if necessary.

**Purpose**

Homework can provide an opportunity to finish work that was not completed in class, provide additional practice and skill building, increase student responsibility, enrich activities or allow for extended projects, and enhance student organizational skills.

**Teachers’ Responsibility**

- Have students write down assignments or hand out written assignments rather than only communicating them orally.
- Contact parents early if the student begins to develop a pattern of late or incomplete homework.
- Assess homework and return it as quickly as possible so students will be aware of their progress.
- Assure that students have the concepts and skills necessary to do the assignments.
- Be clear in informing the students that they are responsible for their work and define due dates for assignments, as well as the consequences for lateness.

**Students’ Responsibility**

- Write down assignments and make sure they are clear.
- Set aside a regular time for studying.
- Find a place to study and have all necessary materials.
- Don’t be afraid to ask questions if something is unclear or doesn’t make sense.

**Parents’ Responsibility**

- Set a regular study time for each day that will not be interrupted by others, activities or television.
- Establish a study area, away from distractions.
- Make sure all materials to complete the assignment are available (e.g., paper, coloured pencils, crayons, pencils, etc.) and a place to store them.
- Ask to see the homework assignments so progress can be monitored.
- Help when necessary but don’t do the student’s work.
- **Always contact the teacher when questions or concerns arise.**
Recommended Amount of Homework

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade Level(s)</th>
<th>Amount of Homework Expected</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kindergarten</td>
<td>Occasional Assignments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 1</td>
<td>15-30 minutes per day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grades 2-3</td>
<td>Approximately 30 minutes per day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grades 4-5</td>
<td>Up to 60 minutes per day</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Homework and Lengthy Absences

The expectation is that students will be in school. In the event of a medical absence, for an extended period of time, a parent may request homework. The teacher may provide the parent with assignments which can be worked on independently. These often include journal writing and keeping a log. However, parents must keep in mind that hands-on activities cannot be made up. It is also difficult to make up physical education, fine arts, and library work.

Language

As an International IB World School, ISH acknowledges and respects the variety of languages spoken in our community. The common language used throughout the school and for all general communications is English. Students are encouraged to practice any language they may be learning or converse in their mother tongue with others who know the same language. However, they are also asked to be sensitive in group situations and encouraged to choose a language the entire group can understand so that no one is isolated.

Library Media Centre

The ISH library media centre has an extensive collection of fiction, non-fiction and reference. In addition, the library subscribes to a number of newspapers, magazines and journals. Computers and audio-visual related materials are also available for student use.

The librarian teaches library and research skills to all grade levels. The library has study facilities, which allow students to work independently. Students are encouraged to use the library and are encouraged to take books home.

Lost and Found

Clearly labelled possessions, including lunch boxes, books, bags and clothes, are a great assistance in identifying misplaced items.

Valuable items, such as iPods, etc., are not allowed at school. Items such as wallets or other important pieces should always be kept in secure places. Mobile phones are allowed but are for emergency purposes only.

Most misplaced items are kept in the 'Lost and found' baskets located under the main stairway. Items of value are left in the main office. At the end of each month and/or before school holidays, unclaimed items cleared out and given to local charities.

If a valuable item is lost or missing, the student should report this loss to personnel in the main office. The school is not responsible for valuables lost at school.

Students will be asked to reimburse the school for lost or damaged books.

Open House

An open house is an information session about curriculum and other school programmes. The lower school schedules an open house early in the year. The date for this event is published in the activities calendar. Parents are encouraged to participate in these informative sessions.
Parent-Teacher and Student-Led Conferences

ISH recognizes the importance of communication between home and school. A vital component of a child’s normal and healthy progress in lifelong learning arises from open and productive exchange between parents and teachers. Conferences are a positive way to keep open the lines of communication between home and school and set goals for the future.

In general, a parent-teacher conference can occur at any time during the course of a school year. This can be initiated by either the parent or the teacher and should be arranged at any time there is a question concerning a student. These conferences can be arranged by telephoning the main office or by e-mail.

A formal parent-teacher conference is scheduled once a year as indicated in the activities calendar. There is also a student-led conference scheduled in the spring. It is expected that parents will make every effort to attend these conferences.

Party Invitations

If invitations are handed out in school, there should be one for each student in the class. In cases where not all children are invited, invitations need to be mailed or arrangements made in another way.

Personal Items/Valuables

Students should only bring those personal items to school which are necessary for the completion of school work. Items brought to school, including clothing and lunch boxes, should be clearly marked with the student’s name. Items that are distracting to the learning environment are not allowed in school. The school is not responsible for personal items brought to school that become lost, damaged or stolen.

Promotion and Retention

It is the intention of the school to keep children within their age groups whenever possible. The decision regarding the promotion/retention of a student shall be the sole responsibility of the head of school. Consultation with respective principals, Pupil Personnel Services (PPS), teachers, parents, and students shall be held prior to a final decision.

Special Needs Support

There are programmes in lower school to support students who require special needs support programmes. Students qualify for programmes in several ways. They may have a need that has been identified at their previous school. In these cases, the existing Individual Education Plan (IEP) is reviewed and at times modified to fit the teaching/learning environment of ISH. (Policy 7.201 Admissions)

Another manner in which students are recommended for services is through the Pupil Personnel Services (PPS) team. This team is comprised of the principal, the school nurse, the special needs teacher and the classroom teacher. They regularly review the progress of all students and may make recommendations for adjustment in student programmes.

A special needs teacher is available to support the learning of students with mild learning difficulties. This service may involve support in the classroom or on a withdrawal basis.

The school does not have personnel to do diagnostic testing or accommodate students requiring significant adjustments to programme.

School Hours and Recess Time

Generally, students are to arrive by 8:45 and depart when school finishes at 15:15 unless they participate in the optional after-school activities. **There is no supervision for students before 8:30 or after 15:30.**

There are two recesses each day at 10:20-10:40 and either 12:05-12:30 (grades 3-5) or 12:35-13:00 (K-grade 2). **Students go outside for recess in all types of weather; therefore, appropriate outdoor clothing is necessary.** Students need to follow school rules when on the playground.
School Supplies

ISH provides all basic and necessary school materials and supplies.

Security

ISH provides a secure and safe environment for its students. All visitors are required to report to the school office upon entering the building. Playground supervision by school staff is provided during school hours. Students are required to remain in the designated play areas. ISH maintains a closed campus policy for students in grades K1 through 8. Students may leave the school during school hours only if written permission has been received from the parent or designated guardian. Students must sign in and out at the front office.

The head of school and staff review the school’s emergency plans each year. Emergency evacuation and fire drills are held regularly. Evacuation procedures are frequently reviewed, and escape routes are posted prominently in every classroom and hallway.

Smoke-Free Campus

ISH is a smoke-free campus, thus smoking anywhere is prohibited.

Snacks

Each morning, before or after the recess break, students have a snack time. Children should bring a healthy snack (e.g., fruit, yoghurt, crackers, juice, etc.); 'junk food' (e.g., crisps, candy, carbonated drinks, sweets, etc.) is unacceptable. For K1 and K2 students, there is also an afternoon snack time.

Special Programmes

Finnish Mother Tongue (FMT)

Finnish Mother Tongue is compulsory for all students who are Finnish citizens and speak Finnish as their first language. The FMT programme provides classes for grades 1-5 four times a week on a regular basis. Instructional groups are small and therefore provide opportunity for individualized learning.

Finnish as a Foreign Language (FFL)

Finnish as a Foreign Language (FFL) is taught for lower school students new to Finnish language and culture. The FFL programme provides individualized learning in small classes twice a week for grades 1-5.

English as an Additional Language (EAL)

Students who may benefit from EAL support are identified initially during the admission procedure. These students are assessed by the EAL specialist and placed in the EAL programme according to aptitude, age and ability. Students may be referred by classroom teachers for EAL assessment at any time during the school year if concerns arise.

French as a Foreign Language

French as a Foreign Language is taught for lower school students new to French language and French speaking cultures. The French programme provides individualized learning in small classes twice a week for grades 3-5.

Student Welfare Plan

The International School of Helsinki follows the Finnish Educational Code, which requires a Student Welfare Plan. This covers all areas of student life, including special education, counselling and student discipline.

Telephone Use

Students are encouraged to make after-school plans before the school day begins. The school telephone in the main office is available for emergencies only. The school telephone will not be used to make social arrangements for students. Students with mobile phones must keep them turned off and secured during class time.
Testing
The teacher, in accordance with school philosophy and the direction of the International Baccalaureate Organization, assesses students regularly for academic performance on an ongoing basis. Student assessments are varied to reflect diverse student learning styles.

The school also administers the International Schools Assessment (ISA) to students in grades 3, 5, 7, and 9.

Transportation and Taxis
The school does not have a transportation programme to move students to and from school. Parents must arrange transportation at their own expense. Most students currently arrive by public transportation or family vehicles; however, taxi service is available from an outside company.

The following procedures are for those students who travel to/from school via taxi.

Pick Up
- Students should be waiting five (5) minutes before the indicated time of arrival of the taxi. Since the taxis have several other students to pick up en route, they are instructed not to wait for more than two (2) minutes for students who do not show up, as this keeps others waiting down the line.
- The taxi company is instructed to drop off lower school students at school after 8:30 in the morning. If the taxi arrives early, then the taxi must wait until 8:30 before letting lower school students out.

Return
- After school, students assemble in the cafetorium. The taxi drivers will pick up students and take them to the taxi.
- A teaching assistant (TA) monitors the departure.
- Students who will not use the taxi to go home on any given day must be signed for on the taxi driver’s clipboard by the TA. Students in grades 6 and up may sign themselves out. Students in grades K-5 must have a known adult sign for them.
- Students may only go home in the taxi assigned.
- The regular taxis may not be used to bring home friends.

General Rules
Students must wear seatbelts in the taxis. No food or drink is allowed in the taxis. The taxi drivers have been instructed to stop in a safe place and wait in the event that these rules are not followed. In cases of continued infractions, parents will be notified.

Since the contract is between the taxi company and the parents, discipline issues should be resolved first between those two parties. The school will only intervene if requested by both parties. For continued inappropriate behaviour, the taxi company may refuse to transport a student.

Tutoring
ISH faculty may be available to help students beyond the scheduled class time during regular school hours. ISH faculty may not privately tutor students in their own classes for a fee.

Visiting Students
Students not enrolled in school must have special permission to be in school during school hours. Permission to bring a guest should be obtained from the appropriate principal one week in advance. Visiting or previously enrolled students are permitted to attend the school for up to one day as long as their attendance does not interfere with the programme. Visiting students are required to wear a visitor’s badge.

Visitors
Visitors are cordially received at ISH. For security reasons, all visitors must first report to the office. Teachers welcome a telephone call in advance of a visit. Appointments should be made in advance for a formal or academic conference.
Volunteers

Volunteers are always welcome at ISH. Parents are asked to contact their child’s teacher or class parent representative. The PTO is always happy to accept help with various events throughout the year.

Withdrawal and Transfer from ISH

Parents expecting to withdraw their student(s) during the school year are asked to inform the respective principal and the admissions officer by filling in the enrollment termination form at the earliest possible opportunity. All outstanding fees must be paid, and texts, including library books, must be returned before official records of attendance and report cards are released.

Departing students will receive a letter of attendance and a progress report upon withdrawal.