European
School
Copenhagen

Guide for parents and carers: Foreign language learning at European School Copenhagen

Dear parents and carers,

Welcome to foreign language learning at European School Copenhagen. This document covers an introduction to which foreign languages we offer at European School Copenhagen, the requirements for the languages and the pedagogical foundation for teaching languages at European School Copenhagen. Learning foreign languages is a core subject in the European School system and the early starting point of learning a foreign language embeds an understanding of the core values of the European Union, binding us in cultural awareness and social responsibility.

In this document, a student's progress through their school years in foreign language learning is outlined, alongside their options and their implications.

Language sections and foreign languages

Here at European School Copenhagen, once your child is enrolled in their **language section** (either Danish, French or English) this is considered their **first language (L1)**.

In Primary 1 (P1) you will choose their first foreign language as their **second language (L2)**. Here at European School Copenhagen, we offer the three standard L2 languages: English, German, and French. Learning in L2 continues through to the end of a student's school career in Secondary 7 (S7).

When the student reaches Secondary 1 (S1), you will then choose their second foreign language as their **third language (L3)**. Here at European School Copenhagen, we offer the following L3 languages: Danish, English, French, or German. The establishment of L3 English and L3 Danish groups is guaranteed. For the establishment of L3 German and L3 French groups in Secondary 1 (S1) a minimum of 7 students is required. Learning in L3 is compulsory from S1 to S5 and optional in S6 and S7.

A third foreign language, known as the **fourth language (L4)** can be chosen as an optional subject from S4 to S7. The students can choose between Italian or Spanish.

A fourth foreign language, known as the **fifth language (L5)** can be chosen in Secondary 6 (S6). L5 is offered as a complementary subject in S6 and S7. Here at European School Copenhagen, we are currently offering Chinese.

Important considerations when selecting your child's L2 in P0

When choosing your child's L2 there are several factors of influence to be taken into consideration.

The family language profile

Here at European School Copenhagen, we have many students from bilingual households. If a student comes from a background with an existing familiarity with one of the L2 languages on offer, we would strongly advise taking up that language as their L2. This would give the student the best possible advantage for their school career in terms of their long-term future Baccalaureate exams. We acknowledge that some students arrive at Primary 1 (P1) with a high degree of mastery of their L2, please recognise that language learning spans five competencies, so while the student may have very good listening and speaking skills, they will be challenged and extended in their existing abilities and taught how to read and write in their first foreign langue as well.

Please refer to page 6 for more information as to how differentiation is encompassed in the language classroom.

Once L2 is chosen it cannot be changed.

Overview of foreign language learning choices at European School Copenhagen:

L1 = first language	section language	Danish, English or French	compulsory from Nursery to S7
L2 = second language	first foreign language	English, French or German	compulsory from P1 to S7
L3 = third language	second foreign language	Danish, English, French or German	compulsory from S1 to S5 and optional in S6, S7
L4 = fourth language	third foreign language	Italian or Spanish	optional from S4 to S7
L5 = fifth language	fourth foreign language	Chinese	complementary in S6 and S8

An outline of an individual student's language learning:

Year level	L1 Danish, English, or French	L2 English, French, or German	L3 Danish, English, French, or German	L4 Italian or Spanish	L5 Chinese
P0	✓	X	X	X	X
P1	✓	✓	X	X	X
P2	✓	✓	X	X	X
P3	✓	✓	X	X	X
P4	✓	✓	X	X	X
P5	✓	✓	X	X	X
S1	✓	✓	✓	X	X
S2	✓	✓	✓	X	X
S3	✓	✓	✓	X	X
S4	✓	✓	✓	✓ (optional)	X
S5	✓	✓	✓	✓ (optional)	X
S6	✓	✓	✓ (optional)	✓ (optional)	✓ (optional)
S7	✓	✓	✓ (optional)	✓ (optional)	✓ (optional)

Teaching and learning in L2

L2 lessons are based on the Common European Framework of Reference for Modern Foreign Languages (CEFR): Learning, teaching and assessment.

Students admitted to European School Copenhagen later than Primary 2 (P2) will be invited to a language screening. After the screening the language specialist will recommend which L2 is the most suitable for the student.

Students in Primary can choose between English, French, or German for their first foreign language (L2). The options are shown in the following table:

	L2 English	L2 French	L2 German
Danish section	✓	✓	✓
English section	×	✓	✓
French section	✓	×	✓

When learning L2, attention is paid to the following skills:

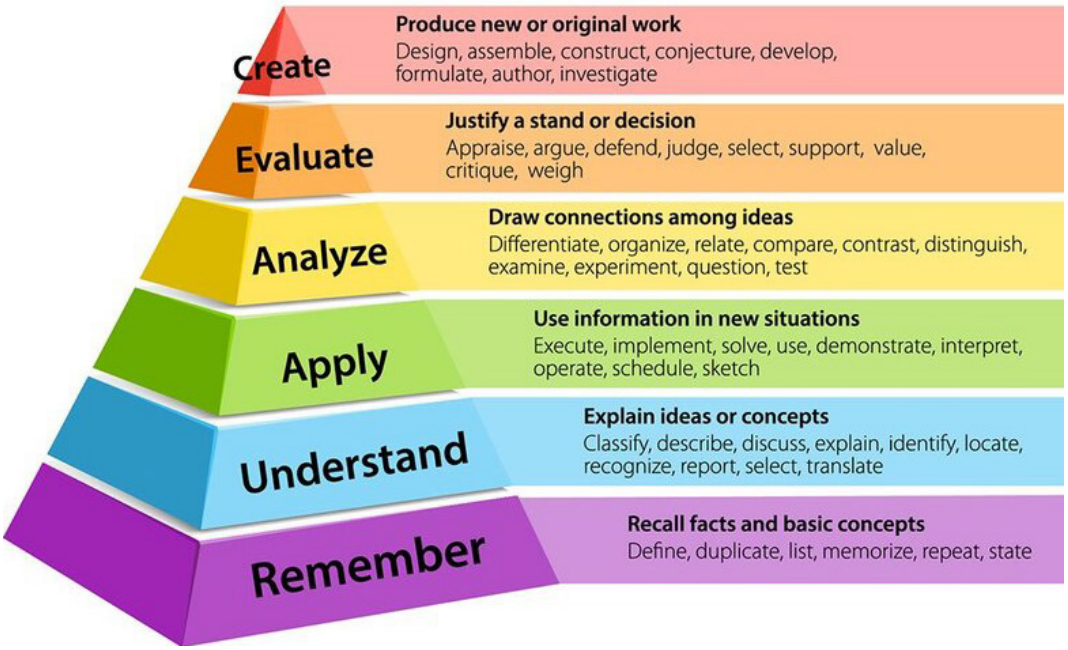
- Listening
- Spoken production and interaction
- Reading
- Writing

The classes offer a wide variety of language activities covering topics related to pupils' experiences. The levels within a year group can be diverse. This is taken into consideration by the language teachers, who use their expertise to employ a variety of pedagogical approaches and methods, to ensure every student is making progress appropriate for their age and stage. Language acquisition is seen as a continuous step-by-step learning process, with teaching and learning designed to recognise and respect the individuality of each student.

Differentiation in teaching and learning in L2

1. Content

Fundamental lesson content in L2 will cover the appropriate Common European Framework of Reference level for the age and stage of the students (hyperlink to which can be found earlier in this document). It is not unusual to have a class with vastly different levels of ability in first foreign language learning. Some may be familiar with the language; some may be brand new and some at a level of partial mastery. Lessons are designed to encompass all these levels in a variety of ways. The foundation of differentiation is based on Blooms Taxonomy (a classification of levels of intellectual behaviour going from lower-order to higher-order thinking skills) and activities are designed with the six levels of skills in mind.



The six levels are: remembering, understanding, applying, analysing, evaluating, and creating. These are applied to the 5 competencies of first foreign language learning: listening, spoken production (can you say it), spoken interaction (can you use it appropriately), reading and writing. We have chosen reading at A2 and spoken production at A1 to explain and illustrate the differentiation in a first foreign language learning environment.

Students who are unfamiliar with the L2 are usually assigned a task at the foundation level: remembering and understanding. Students with some mastery could be asked to apply and analyse the content and students with high level of mastery could be asked to perform the task in the areas of evaluating and creating.

Examples of differentiating activities in an A2 reading lesson

- Match vocabulary words to definitions
- Read a passage of text and answer related questions
- Think of a situation that happened to a character in the story and think of a different outcome
- Differentiate fact from opinion in the story
- Identify an author's position and provide evidence to support this viewpoint
- Summarise the story

Examples of differentiation activities in an A1 spoken production lesson

- Listen and repeat exercises
- Call out (in the L2) the noun on an unlabelled flashcard
- Pupils can learn and recite simple poems, nursery rhymes and songs
- Perform set dialogue/ drama pieces from learned vocabulary to demonstrate an awareness of developing spoken interaction skills

Examples of B1 writing differentiation activities in a B1 written production lesson

- Identify the main characters in a story and describe them
- Explain why something happened in the story
- Compare two characters
- Discuss the importance of an event in the story
- Create a story inspired by the studied text

2. Process

Each student has a preferred learning style, and successful differentiation includes delivering the material to each style: visual, auditory and kinaesthetic, and through words. This process-related method also addresses the fact that not all students require the same amount of support from the teacher, and students could work in pairs, small groups, or individually. While some students may benefit from one-on-one interaction with the teacher, others may be able to progress by themselves. Language teachers can enhance student learning by offering targeted support based on individual needs.

Examples of differentiating the process in A2 reading

- Provide textbooks for visual and word learners
- Provide auditory learners with the opportunity to listen to audio books
- Give kinesthetic learners the opportunity to complete an interactive assignment online

Examples of differentiating the process in an A1 spoken production lesson

- Students design and create their own flashcards to boost memory
- Break the word into syllables
- Rhyme or synonym exercises

Examples of differentiating the process in B1 spoken production

- Prepare and rehearse answers to topical questions of varied complexity
- Make cue cards
- Answer unprepared questions

3. Product

The product is what the student creates at the end of the teaching input to demonstrate the mastery of the content. This learning outcome can be in the form of long-term projects, reports, successful conversations or other activities. Students can complete activities that show mastery of an educational concept in a way the student prefers, based on their learning style.

Examples of differentiating the end product in A2 reading

- Read and write learners write an alternate ending
- Visual learners create a graphic organizer and label it.
- Auditory learners provide an oral report
- Kinesthetic learners build a diorama illustrating the story

Examples of differentiating the end product in A1 spoken production

- Word association games
- Pass the whisper, in small groups, graduating to whole class
- Saying things out loud to a stuffed animal or with a puppet
- Sentence building with a partner or small group

Examples of differentiating the end product in B1 spoken production

- Presentation to the class on a chosen topic
- Description of a picture and answer associated questions
- Recording of a podcast on a chosen topic
- Debates and speeches with varied levels of support

4. Learning environment

The conditions for optimal learning include both physical and psychological elements. A flexible classroom layout is key, incorporating various types of furniture and arrangements to support both individual and group work. Psychologically, a first foreign language learning environment should be clearly organized into zones of learning, colour coordinated so students who are less familiar have visual cues and expectations set very clearly by the teacher so familiar routines are adopted, vocabulary assimilated faster.

Examples of differentiating the environment in A2 reading

- Break some students into reading groups to discuss the assignment
- Allow students to read individually if preferred
- Have a wide variety of texts available on a range of both fiction and non-fiction topics. Add to the collection throughout the year so students will always have something new to discover
- Quiet spaces where there are no distractions

Examples of differentiating the environment in A1 spoken production

- Students record and playback their own voice (independent work)
- Students listen to and repeat recordings of their peers (from their own class, or from classes from a more advanced level)
- Outdoor learning to allow for voice exercises
- Enclosed, quiet spaces for those requiring building up confidence with their pronunciation

Here at European School Copenhagen, we have high academic expectations of our students. The language teaching and learning we provide is that of L2, it is not bilingual instruction. We teach from the approved European School syllabus for L2. By curriculum design, elements from L1 learning will never be incorporated into first foreign language teaching.

L2 levels of attainment

The L2 learning is based on the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). In Primary we use two levels to design the teaching and learning: **A1** and **A2**.

For a student following the European School L2 curriculum, from the beginning of Primary 1 they should be aiming to reach **A1** by the end of Primary 3 (this will happen sooner for some, later for others) and **A2** by the end of Primary 5 (again, sooner for some, later for others). Only a few students can reach some aspects of **B1** level in Primary, due to maturity, complexity of the required skills and ability to demonstrate them in a variety of contexts.

In Secondary they use three levels according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR): **B1**, **B2** and **C1**.

Stage	Basic proficiency level according to CEFR
Cycle 1 = S1 to S3	B1
Cycle 2 = S4 and S5	B2
Cycle 3 = S6 to S7	C1

Language activity	A1	A2	B1
Listening and understanding	Pupils can **recognize** familiar words and very basic phrases.	Pupils can **understand** phrases and the highest frequency vocabulary related to areas of most immediate personal relevance.	Pupils can understand the main points of clear standard speech on familiar matters regularly encountered in school, leisure, etc.
Spoken interaction	Pupils can **interact** in a simple way provided the other person is prepared to repeat or **rephrase** things at a **slower rate of speech** and **help formulate** of immediate need or on very familiar topics.	Pupils can **communicate** in simple and routine tasks requiring a simple and direct tasks exchange of information on familiar topics and activities.	Pupils can deal with most situations likely to arise whilst travelling in an area where the language is spoken.
Spoken production	Pupils can use **simple phrases and sentences** to describe where they live and people they know.	Pupils can use a **series of phrases and sentences** to describe in simple terms family and other people, living conditions, educational background.	Pupils can **connect** phrases in a simple way in order to describe experiences and events, **dreams, hopes and ambitions**.
Reading	Pupils can understand familiar names, words and very simple sentences.	Pupils can **independently** understand and read short, simple texts.	Pupils can read and understand a wide range of texts in a variety of formats. Pupils can identify and extract information.
Writing	Pupils can write simple words, phrases and, with support, short sentences.	Pupils can **independently** write short, simple texts **using different sources of reference**.	They can choose the appropriate form of writing for a particular task, **organising and re-drafting** content and ideas to produce a coherently and **largely accurate piece of writing**.

L2 curriculum

L2 teaching and learning is based on a common curriculum (the learning objectives) and four syllabuses (content areas), one for each of the three L2 languages English, German and French. Find them here.

L2 Primary schedule

This table shows how many minutes in total per week are spent on L2 learning in the Primary cycle, showing the increase from Primary 2 to Primary 3.

	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5
Minutes per week	150	150	225	225	225

L2 Secondary schedule

This table shows how many minutes in total per week are spent on L2 learning in the Secondary cycle.

	S1 and S2	S3	S4 to S7
Minutes per week	225	180	135

L2 Learning

Language learning is a complex and holistic process. European School Copenhagen's approach, guided by the European Schools designated curriculum, provides a framework of learning objectives encompassing the communicative, linguistic, cultural and dynamic aspects of language learning. There is progressive learning from P1 to P5 with implementation of the language in activities suited to the age range and adapted to ability.

- P1 – P2 are the Discovery Years in which lessons are about acquiring basic vocabulary and basic writing skills through games, songs, role play, and craft activities.
- P3 – P4 focusses on the Consolidation of Skills by acquiring a broader range of vocabulary, pronunciation, and some grammar points beginning to be formalised (according to language specification). This is largely done through increasingly specialised activities and the beginning of presentation-style activities.
- P5 is used to strengthen vocabulary, ensure basic language structures are known and mastered and that all students are able to work increasingly independently in preparation for Secondary school. There will be ample opportunities for students to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding in a variety of contexts.

It is important to know that the L2 content and approach will never follow an L1 curriculum or syllabus. Learning in L2 is not bilingual education, it is **acquiring a first foreign language.**

L2 progress and support

Progress will be reported to parents and carers in the form of parent/carer consultations and school reports (twice an academic year in Primary, three times in Secondary).

In Primary, teachers are available for end of level parents' consultations (end of level A1 in Primary 3 and end of level A2 in Primary 5) on both cycles of consultations (winter and by request, in spring).

In Primary, supporting your child in their L2 learning at home is outlined in the document the corresponding L2 teacher will send out to you, via Aula, once you have decided your child's L2.

If your child's L2 teacher has any concerns or information to be communicated, you will be contacted via Aula, and you could be invited to a parents' consultation if deemed required. Of course, you are welcome to contact your child's L2 teacher via Aula if you have questions or concerns about your child's progress outside these formal arrangements.

L2 homework

Students will be required to complete small, structured homework tasks in their L2 classes during the Primary years of P3-P5. This amount will increase with each year group. Students may also engage in additional language-based activities at home to further their language development.

Activities that could further support language development may include watching films or cartoons in their L2, reading books, playing games, using European School Copenhagen's online L2 resource subscriptions, researching topics of interest, etc.

For Secondary, students should receive L2 homework twice a week, each piece should take about 20 minutes to complete in S1, and the amount will increase a little with each year group. There can be a range of different tasks: vocabulary learning, grammar practice, online research, reading etc. If a task were to significantly exceed the advised amount, then a second piece would not be given in the same week.

L2 assessment

Assessment is a combination of the following

- L2 teachers carry out continuous formative assessment through the class activities completed for the 5 competencies
- L2 teachers will conduct summative assessments at their professional discretion; there are no formalised or standardised assessments in the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) learning continuum
- The students' progress, targets and next steps will be communicated to you in L2 Parent and Carer consultations and school reports

Contact information

If you have any questions regarding your child's linguistic development, please contact the relevant L2 teacher and/or L2 coordinator (and not the class teacher) via Aula.

Additional info about SWALS

SWALS students are entitled to tuition in their mother tongue/dominant language (L1), working on the assumption that the school has or can recruit a duly qualified teacher. SWALS are students who fall under admission category a.[1] and whose mother tongue/dominant language is an official language of an EU Member State (with the exception of Irish and Maltese) but for whom no language section in their mother tongue/dominant language exists in the school.

SWALS are normally enrolled in the English or French section. The language of the section is the student's L2. SWALS can also be enrolled in the Danish language section on condition that no additional costs are incurred. Their L2 should be English, French or German.

[1] Category a. students are students whose parents work for an EU institution such as the EEA. See the school's admission criteria.

Primary 1 (P1) L2 Choice

L2 is a core subject of a student's learning at the European School Copenhagen. Learning in L2 will begin in Primary 1 (P1) and continue through to the end of a student's school career in Secondary 7 (S7). From Secondary 3 (S3) Human Science will then be taught in the students' L2. From S4-S7 this will include Geography and History.

L2 is a serious commitment, please take careful consideration over the choice of L2 language. L2 will be a compulsory core subject of a student's learning from P1 all the way through to the end of Secondary learning at S7.

By design, the European School network has been established so our students are able to access their learning all over Europe, one of our students could happily integrate at a European School in Italy or France, as one of their students could here. If staying in Denmark is for the short term, it would make sense to choose the L2 that would best facilitate your child's integration with any future schooling opportunities.

The child's motivations: learning by its very nature, should appeal to the student. Keen enthusiasm is key to a child accessing their education and of course, the desire of the child should be consulted and considered.

Multilingual environment at European School Copenhagen

Here at European School Copenhagen, we celebrate our multilingual school community. Our students are incredibly lucky to be learning in a language-rich environment and on a daily basis will hear languages spoken from all around the world. In some subjects over the course of Primary (Physical Education or European Hours, for example) the instruction may be in a language different to the student's language section. They might join in French games on the playground, serve food they have made in the canteen to Danish speakers, watch assemblies and celebrations of learning given in English by their peers or listen to songs sung in German. We are exceptionally proud to be able to strengthen our commitment to the core European values in nurturing our diverse and inclusive school.

Proficiency in a foreign language, or several languages, is a significant advantage in the modern world. Knowledge of a foreign language is no longer a luxury or an additional quality which increases career advancement opportunities. Nowadays, it is a common and compulsory part of the education system and one of the basic requirements for many jobs. Knowledge of a foreign language is a great advantage in the multilingual society in which we live today.

Frequently Asked Questions

My child comes from a bilingual background, if I choose one of those languages as their L2, how will they be learning when they already speak the language?

Taking an L2 with which your child already has a high degree of mastery in, gives them the best possible advantage in their school career. We would strongly recommend this option. In their L2 learning, your child will be challenged and extended appropriately in the language classroom, please see above for examples of how differentiation is encompassed in the teaching and learning of L2.

If my child can fluently speak one of the L2 languages at home, should we choose that language as their first foreign language?

Acquiring a first foreign language is a holistic and complex process across the five competencies. Students need to build a solid foundation of knowledge and understanding of their first language (in the language section in which they are learning - Danish, English or French) and assimilate their working use of any other languages they speak.

We acknowledge that many of our students already have excellent command of an additional language. To give them the best possible advantage in their school career, it is important to remember they are also required to be able to read and write in their first foreign language. Please see above for more information on challenge and extension in the language classroom.

All L2 teachers are happy to be consulted to help you make an informed choice.

How can I support my child's learning in L2 at home?

When you have formally made the choice for your child's L2 language, you will be sent a document by the language teacher outlining how you can best support your child's learning in L2 at home.

Useful links (November 2026)

- Language Policy of the European Schools
- Common European Framework of Reference for Languages
- European Schools Second Language (L2) Curriculum