



## Language Policy

At VSC it is our goal to celebrate the diversity in our school and the 30+ languages that our students speak. German is our main language and English is our secondary language in all classes except one class where English is the main language and German is the secondary language. We also offer mother tongue classes after school hours for students who'd like to further learn and work on their home languages with a certified teacher.

All students receive English lessons in the school. The students in the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> grade German-track classes receive 2-3 hours of English per week, plus integrative English lessons in STEM club, sports lessons, choir, coding club, and music lessons. In the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> grade German-track classes, students receive 1 hour of English lesson per week and the 4<sup>th</sup> graders receive an hour of Music in English each week. The students also have integrative English lessons in STEM club, sports lessons, choir, coding club. In the English-track class, the students receive 7 hours of German lessons as well as German through sports and technic and design class. The English class is a family class with grades 1-4 altogether. The students in the English class receive a German-language test to see their level and get support based on their ability.

We adhere to the Austrian language requirements put forth by the Bildungsdirektion (Directorate of Education) Steiermark. All students in the German-track classes, must pass the MIKA-D (Messinstrument zur Kompetenzanalyse – Deutsch /Measuring instrument for competence analysis for German) test in order to go forward in their education. We provide German as a second language support (DAZ) to students who need it after evaluation. DAZ is provided by teachers certified in DAZ and German education. Students at the lowest level of non-passing on the MIKA-D test will be placed in the Deutschförderklasse where students will receive a minimum of 15 hours of German support per week. Students who receive the second level of non-passing on the MIKA-D, will be placed in the Deutschförderkurs. Students who receive the highest non-passing score are placed in DAZ lessons and receive up to 6 hours of support per week. All students in the German-track classes are integrated into the homeroom class with other German speakers and learners no matter their language level. It is our belief at VSC that students must be integrated with language in order to practice and hone their skills.

Since 2018, the legal, theoretical requirement for the support of children who do not speak German as their first language is regulated in Austria as such:

The students are first tested with a standardized test known as the MIKA-D at school enrolment which occurs in the winter semester before the registered school year, or in the fall a few weeks after the school year begins if the child is not available during the previous winter semester. This test has three possible levels as a result:

1. If the result is insufficient, the child gets the status "extraordinary pupil" (a.o.) and should be taught in a German class. This means that for 15 hours a week the child is taken out of the class and taught with other children of different ages, according to a separate curriculum. At the end of the semester there will be another MIKA-D test.

2. If the child reaches the next level "deficient" in the MIKA-D test, then he/she is also in the a.o. status but goes to a German support course (DAZ,) is taken out of the class for six hours and is taught according to his/her own curriculum.

We use "integrative support," i.e. a second teacher is placed in the class, helps those who have difficulties or takes a few children of the same level out of the class for a short time and briefly goes through the same things the others are doing or does extra language support with them in small groups.

We do the MIKA-D testing the same way as prescribed each semester. If a child is still classified as a German support class (Deutschförderklasse) child in the summer semester because the testing resulted in an "unsatisfactory" score, the child should repeat the class and fourth graders are not allowed to enter middle school or Gymnasium until they pass the MIKA-D.

In the English class, the students are allowed to choose which language they would like to do their Schularbeit (See Assessment Policy) in. They may choose English or German for their test.

We have put in a request for Language Support hours to the ministry of education for our English students. Our plan is to have language support for non-native speakers so that they also have access to the English class.

Within the context of Austria, as a public school we are confined to what the laws of the land require of us. We do our absolute best to promote and nurture multilingualism and not define the children based on their language abilities. As a school we follow the local laws and provide everything we can to provide each student the language help they need.