



ISH

INTERNATIONAL
SCHOOL OF
HELSINKI

ISH ADMISSIONS POLICY

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1. Introduction

At the International School of Helsinki (ISH), we are committed to empowering and inspiring one another to take thoughtful action. Guided by our mission and vision, ISH creates a nurturing environment where students are prepared to thrive in an interconnected and evolving world.

ISH operates on key principles that guide our approach to education and community, ensuring that we provide an inclusive, innovative, and globally engaged environment. These principles are reflected in our admissions policy, which ensures that every applicant is considered not only for their academic readiness but also for their ability to contribute to and benefit from the diverse, dynamic learning experience at ISH.

ISH integrates the principles of global citizenship and children's rights into its admissions practices, ensuring that all children are treated with dignity, fairness, and respect. This commitment aligns with international standards, including the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and the International Baccalaureate (IB) mission of fostering inquiring, knowledgeable, and caring young people who contribute to a better and more peaceful world.

Inclusion at ISH is an ongoing process to increase access and engagement for all students by identifying and removing barriers. The school is dedicated to ensuring that all learners, regardless of their background or needs, have equitable opportunities to thrive.

2. Admissions criteria

2.1 General Admissions Eligibility

We prioritize fairness, transparency, and inclusivity in our admissions process. Eligibility for admission is based on the following principles:

- The school can meet the **applicant's educational needs** within its teaching and learning programme.
- The applicant can meet the school's **attendance and behavioural expectations**.

ISH seeks to accept all eligible applicants. However, eligibility is subject to the following conditions:

- **Space Availability:** Admission is contingent on available space. The school accepts students throughout the academic year as long as adequate space is available and the student meets our admissions principles.
- **Grade-Level Placement:** Placement is determined by the student's age and prior educational experience. ISH takes a flexible approach to ensure appropriate placement for each student.
- **Minimum Enrollment Duration:** Students are generally required to enrol for at least one semester.
- **Residency Requirements:** Students must reside with at least one parent or a designated guardian while enrolled. The school requires verification of guardian arrangements to ensure student welfare and compliance with safeguarding policies.

- **Full Disclosure:** Families must share all relevant background information during the application process. Non-disclosure of relevant information may impact the school's ability to provide appropriate support and could affect the student's enrollment status.

2.2 Applicant-specific Assessment

- **Learning Support Evaluation**

ISH is committed to inclusive education and complies with Finnish legislation, which guarantees all students the right to access appropriate support for learning and well-being. The presence of learning needs does not, in itself, prevent admission when the school is legally required and appropriately resourced to provide the necessary support.

To ensure a successful transition, families are encouraged to share any relevant documentation about their child's learning, behavioural, or emotional support needs during the admissions process. This information supports effective placement, programme planning, and the identification of appropriate support measures. It is used to enable, not to restrict, access to learning.

In exceptional cases, admission may not be granted. This may occur if:

- The student's learning support needs exceed what the school can legally or reasonably provide, even after careful planning.
- A viable academic or graduation pathway cannot be established within the school's available programme structures.
- Essential information is withheld or misrepresented, preventing appropriate planning and safeguarding.
- The student does not meet programme eligibility criteria, such as minimum English language proficiency.
- There is no available space in the appropriate grade or programme, and the school has demonstrated equitable admissions practices.

ISH does not deny admission based on a diagnosed learning need, disability, or behavioural difference if the school has both the obligation and the capacity to provide the required support. Complex profiles are welcomed when supported within the school's educational and well-being framework.

Admission decisions are made through a **good-faith assessment** of the school's ability to support each applicant, based on documented evidence and professional judgment, and aligned with ISH's inclusive values and legal responsibilities.

Please refer to the ISH Inclusion Policy for more detailed information on ISH's approach to learning support, access arrangements, and inclusive practices.

- **English Language Expectations**
 - Early Years to Grade 8: The school accepts students with no prior English experience. ISH provides targeted language support to help students integrate and succeed academically and socially.

- High School (Grades 9-12): Applicants must demonstrate sufficient English language proficiency to succeed in high school. English language skills are evaluated throughout the admissions process, including a complete application and a student interview. An additional English assessment may be required.

2.3 Diploma Programme Entry Requirements

Grades 11-12 students may choose between the IB Diploma and the High School Diploma. The following factors determine admission to the IB Diploma Programme:

- Attendance records.
- Academic achievement.
- Experience with the MYP Personal Project.
- English language ability.
- Level of learning support or curriculum modifications required.

Purpose of Differentiation: Students may be admitted to the High School Diploma programme only if their prior experience or skills suggest that pursuing the IB Diploma would not be in their best interest. This ensures all students have a pathway to success.

Language Support: To foster linguistic diversity, ISH offers self-taught, school-supported language options to help students maintain proficiency in their native languages. The school's approach allows students to balance academic rigor with their personal language development goals.

Special Considerations

- Applicants for Grade 12 will be carefully assessed to ensure they have a viable pathway to graduation based on prior academic experience.
- **Learning Support (Grades 11–12 only):** ISH is committed to inclusive education and supports students with diverse learning needs in line with Finnish legislation. Admission will not be declined on the basis of a learning need if the required support falls within what the school is legally obliged and appropriately resourced to provide. In exceptional cases, where a viable academic pathway cannot be established, particularly in Grade 12, or where support needs exceed the school's capacity, admission may not be granted. Families are encouraged to share all relevant documentation during the application process to enable responsible planning and placement.

3. ISH Ethical Responsibilities in Admissions

3.1 Inclusion and Wellbeing

ISH strives to make the admissions process accessible and equitable for all applicants. This includes designing procedures and assessments that accommodate diverse needs, ensuring that every student has a fair opportunity to demonstrate their readiness and suitability for the school's programs.

Admissions processes will ensure equitable access and engagement by identifying and mitigating barriers, fostering a culture of collaboration, respect, and problem-solving.

3.2 Transparency and Honesty in Admissions

ISH is committed to transparency, fairness, and inclusive education in its admissions process. Families must provide complete and accurate information regarding their child's academic background, language proficiency, and any educational, social-emotional, or medical needs, including relevant assessments or diagnoses. This enables the school to determine its capacity to provide appropriate support and make informed placement decisions. ISH staff, in turn, uphold equitable practices and clear communication with all applicants. While the school offers structured learning support, small-group interventions, and flexible teaching strategies, admission depends on the alignment between the applicant's needs and the school's available resources and expertise.

These requirements align with:

- **The Basic Education Act (628/1998)**, Sections 3 and 29, emphasises the importance of ethical education and a safe, supportive learning environment.
- **Basic Education Decree (852/1998)**, Sections 2 and 10, which outline the need for individualized education and student welfare services.
- **General Data Protection Regulation (EU 2016/679)**, ensuring lawful and transparent handling of personal data.

Consequences of Withholding Information

If it is discovered that essential information has been withheld or misrepresented during the admissions process, ISH reserves the right to review and, if necessary, revoke the student's enrollment. This policy ensures that ISH can operate within its capacity while safeguarding all students' well-being and educational integrity.

This approach is supported by:

- **Basic Education Act (628/1998), Section 29**, mandates that education providers ensure a safe and supportive learning environment based on accurate information.
- **Section 30 of the Basic Education Act (628/1998)** establishes the duty of education providers to operate responsibly within their resources and expertise.
- **General Data Protection Regulation (EU 2016/679)** reinforces the importance of lawfully, fairly, and transparently processing personal data.

3.3 Use of Technology in Admissions

Technology plays a key role in ensuring a streamlined and transparent admissions process. ISH leverages digital tools to enhance accuracy, communication, and equitable evaluation of applications while adhering to data protection regulations.

4. ISH educational principles for parental understanding

4.1 IB Educational Philosophy

At ISH, our educational approach is guided by the International Baccalaureate (IB) philosophy, which emphasizes inquiry-based learning, critical thinking, and the development of lifelong learners. This approach differs from traditional rote learning by encouraging students to question, explore, and engage deeply with their learning.

Non-Negotiable IB Practices and Standards:

- ISH fully adheres to the IB's principles, practices, and standards. These include inquiry-based learning, conceptual understanding, interdisciplinary teaching, and the integration of the IB Learner Profile into all aspects of education.
- Families are expected to familiarize themselves with the IB philosophy during the admissions process and understand that ISH will not modify its educational programme to align with preferences that conflict with IB principles.

Parental Support and Alignment:

- The school seeks a partnership with families based on shared values and mutual respect for the IB's inquiry-driven approach.
- Parents are encouraged to attend orientation sessions, workshops, and meetings to understand better how the IB philosophy is implemented at ISH and how it prepares students for lifelong learning and global citizenship.

Addressing Expectations:

- Should concerns or misunderstandings about the IB approach arise, the school will provide opportunities for open dialogue, including information sessions and consultations.
- However, ISH remains firm in its commitment to the IB's philosophy and practices, ensuring that every student benefits from the holistic and inquiry-based learning environment the IB is designed to offer.

4.2 Global Citizenship and Inclusion

The ISH Admissions Policy reflects the IB's commitment to fostering global citizenship and principled learning. By prioritizing diversity, inclusion, and respect for cultural differences, ISH ensures that its student body represents the interconnected world in which we live. Admissions decisions are guided by principles of equity, ensuring access and opportunity for all applicants while operating within the school's resources and expertise.

ISH's policies align with Finnish legal standards, including Section 30 of the Basic Education Act (628/1998), which emphasizes equality and responsible education provision. The school actively promotes equal access to education for all students, regardless of their cultural,

linguistic, or socio-economic background, while ensuring that it can effectively meet their needs within its capabilities.

Student wellbeing remains a central focus at ISH. Admissions decisions consider how applicants will thrive in and contribute to the school's supportive learning environment. ISH also prioritizes building a globally engaged student body by fostering respect for diverse cultures and promoting multilingualism as a gateway to intercultural understanding and collaboration.

Recognizing potential barriers to learning, including language needs, cultural differences, and medical challenges, ISH works to address these through individualized support and close collaboration with families. This ensures every admitted student receives the quality of education, care, and support they need to succeed.

In addition to inclusivity, ISH supports sustainability principles in its admissions process by aligning with ecological, social, and economic development goals. By fostering a culture of responsibility and awareness, ISH prepares students to be lifelong stewards of the planet.

4.3 Use of Technology in Learning

The appropriate and purposeful use of technology is vital to fulfilling the School's Mission. The School is committed to ensuring that digital tools and platforms are utilised ethically, constructively, and in alignment with our IB educational philosophy, school policies, and local legislation.

5. Policy Alignment, Enforcement, and Review

5.1 Policy Alignment

This Admissions Policy aligns with:

- The ISH guiding statements (vision and mission).
- The philosophy of the International Baccalaureate (IB).

Academic Integrity Policy	All school policies align with our guiding statements (vision and mission) and the philosophy of the International Baccalaureate (IB). In all of these policies and positions, the student is at the centre.
Admissions Policy	
Assessment Policy	
Inclusion Policy	
Language Policy	

5.2 Policy Enforcement

ISH has established measures to address non-compliance to maintain integrity in the admissions process. Providing inaccurate information, falsifying documents, or withholding

critical details may result in the withdrawal of an admission offer. These measures reflect the school's commitment to honesty, fairness, and accountability.

This approach aligns with Finland's **Basic Education Act (628/1998)**, which emphasizes equitable access to education and the responsibility of schools to ensure they can meet the needs of their students within available resources. By requiring accurate and transparent communication during the admissions process, ISH ensures that every decision is made in the best interests of the student and the broader school community.

5.3 Policy Review Protocol

The policy is reviewed regularly by relevant stakeholders, considering the guiding statements and the changing needs of students and the wider community. Data included in this review encompasses surveys from stakeholders, staff members' practice evaluations, and current pedagogical research.

Data sources used in the review process include:

- Surveys from stakeholders.
- Staff evaluations of current practices.
- Insights from pedagogical research.
- Feedback was gathered from families during and after the admissions process.

Communication of the school policies

This policy will be listed with the other school policies on our public website.

6. References

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3. **Finlex** (1998) '*Basic Education Act 628/1998*', available at: <https://www.finlex.fi/fi/laki/ajantasa/1998/19980628> (Accessed: 23 December 2024).
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5. International School of Helsinki (2025) *Inclusion Policy*. Helsinki: ISH. Unpublished internal document.
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7. **International Baccalaureate Organization (IBO)** (2025) '*General Regulations: MYP*', available at: <https://www.ibo.org/globalassets/publications/become-an-ib-school/general-regulations-myp-en.pdf> (Accessed: 23 December 2024).
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12. **International Baccalaureate Organization (IBO)** (2025) '*The IB Guide to Inclusive Education*', available at: <https://www.ibo.org/globalassets/publications/inclusion/the-ib-guide-to-inclusive-education-en.pdf> (Accessed: 23 December 2024).
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15. **International Baccalaureate Organization (IBO)** (2025) '*Access and Inclusion Policy*', available at:

<https://www.ibo.org/globalassets/publications/inclusion/access-and-inclusion-policy-en.pdf> (Accessed: 23 December 2024).