INCLUSION POLICY

1. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to state the International School of Helsinki (ISH)'s philosophy, understandings, and beliefs regarding our inclusive mission and practice. It describes the process that ensures that each student receives an optimal and equitable education.

At ISH, our commitment to inclusive education reflects and supports the school's mission and vision. We challenge, inspire, and empower all students to become independent and engaged learners through individualized and differentiated teaching and learning. Guided by our core values, we ensure that support and care for each student are proactive, holistic, and embedded throughout all levels of school life. At ISH, we understand inclusion to be an ongoing, evolving, and collaborative process where access and engagement in learning are made possible for all students. At ISH, inclusion is a collective responsibility.

This policy aligns with the **IB's Access and Inclusion Policy (2025)** and **The IB Guide to Inclusive Education**, ensuring all students can thrive academically, socially, and emotionally. Additionally, it adheres to Finnish legal standards, including **Section 30 of the Basic Education Act (628/1998)**, which mandates equality and responsible educational provision.

2. Principles

Statement of Belonging

At ISH, we all belong in a learning community filled with diverse identities and perspectives. For each to be known, we pursue learning equity through identity-affirming practice. At ISH, we cherish our diversity and strengthen our collective commitment to honor human dignity through validating the systemic challenges faced by marginalized communities. To that end, we create developmentally appropriate spaces for community members to explore all aspects of identity. Safeguarding these conditions for belonging empowers learners to practice the personal and collaborative skills necessary for global citizenship. This work is never-ending, and we bravely pledge ongoing growth and understanding.

We:

- Nurture meaningful learning through interactions and collaborations between people of diverse and intersecting identities, including but not limited to race, skin color, ethnicity, caste, religion, gender identity, gender expression, sexual identity, national origin, citizenship status, socioeconomic status, political views, age, language, family structures, physical abilities, neurodiversity, and health.

- Self-reflect on personal values and actions in order to create space and opportunity to reduce inequality in our school and in the world.

- Empower advocates and allies to identify injustice and thoughtfully participate in creating pathways to positive change.

- Strengthen our curiosity and confidence to value diverse life experiences and identities, actively listen to new perspectives, and appreciate and respect the uniqueness of all individuals.

3. Understandings and Beliefs

Ensuring equitable learning experiences for all students is a shared responsibility of the ISH community. This commitment is grounded in the following beliefs:

- High-quality education is a **human right** for all learners.
- All students should have **equal opportunities** to engage in meaningful learning.
- Learning should focus on **student strengths, interests, and needs**.
- **Multilingualism is a right, a resource,** and a strength.
- Inclusion means **maximizing accessibility** in both physical and instructional spaces.
- **Student agency is essential** in the learning process, and students should be actively involved in setting learning goals.
- **Listening to, encouraging, supporting, informing, and working alongside parents** is essential in fostering a strong inclusion environment.
- **Respecting confidentiality and adhering to Finnish Childcare and GDPR laws** is fundamental to student support.

4. Individualised Learning

Aligned with the IB's emphasis on differentiated instruction and in active pursuit of developing training and embedded practice of Universal Design for Learning (UDL), ISH tailors learning experiences to meet the unique needs of each student.

Our educators employ a range of strategies to ensure accessibility and engagement, including scaffolding, flexible groupings, and the use of varied resources to ensure every student can access and engage with the curriculum effectively. We actively cultivate a culture where students' backgrounds, identities, and individual learning profiles are valued and integrated into the curriculum.

Through ongoing professional development, faculty collaboration, and the implementation of research-backed inclusive practices, ISH remains committed to fostering a learning environment where all students are seen, heard, and supported in reaching their full potential. Flexible learning spaces are designed to adapt to various teaching methods and learning styles, promoting engagement and accommodating diverse student needs.

Finland's education law aligns with our individualised learning principles to ensure accessibility, equity, and inclusion. We work to present information in varied formats to support diverse learning needs and preferences (e.g., diagrams, videos, storytelling, audio recordings, hands-on materials). We aim to provide diverse ways for students to demonstrate learning, allowing for creativity and individual strengths (e.g., essays, podcasts, visual art, models, multimedia presentations). We work to motivate students through different learning approaches that foster interest, challenge, and active participation (e.g., debates, journaling, role-play, collaborative projects, real-world problem solving). These principles are embedded in and guided by our High Quality Teaching and Learning Policy, which ensures consistency and intentionality in delivering inclusive and effective educational experiences.

5. Scope of Student Support at ISH

Student support at ISH includes, but is not limited to, services provided for students with additional educational needs (both to access and/or extend and enrich the learning), students acquiring English language, and students who have social, emotional and/or behavioral needs.ISH provides English as an Additional Language (EAL) instruction to support the development of academic language needed across the IB programmes. EAL and Learning Support are distinct services: EAL focuses on language development and aquisition, while Learning Support addresses specific learning needs. Social-emotional learning and counselling support are also integral to student wellbeing and aligned with the holistic, learner-centred approach of each IB programme. Although these programmes are distinct, they work in active collaboration to support holistic student development and ensure access and inclusion for all learners.

The student support team at ISH is coordinated by the Director of Student Support Services and comprises specialists who address a wide range of student learning needs. This team includes Learning Support teachers and coordinators, English as an Additional Language (EAL) teachers and coordinators, PYP/MYP/DP counsellors, and divisional leads. While all contribute to student growth and success, Learning Support and EAL functions are distinct and responsive to different learner profiles. The team also collaborates with the learning support specialist/speech and language pathologist, educational assistants, and classroom, subject area, and specialist teachers across divisions. Divisional teams meet regularly to review student progress, discuss student needs, and recommend support strategies or programme adjustments as appropriate.

Student Support Delivery Models

ISH is committed to develop support that is flexible in nature and based on the needs of the individual students at any given time. Student Support Team members work together flexibly applying support delivery models.

An individual student's program may include a combination of different types of services to provide the most balanced support possible to meet the student's individual needs. The different types of support may include:

Individualised and Differentiated Learning	All staff are responsible for ensuring that learning is individualised and differentiated to meet the student where one is at and develop strategies to support one's learning journey. The Instructional Leaders, Divisional Directors and SST Coordinators work actively to assure this through consultation, monitoring and support.
Co-planning and Co-teaching	Students may receive in-class support in PYP, MYP and DP classes as outlined by their Individual Learning Plans and/or determined by their EAL or social-emotional needs. As much as possible, co-planning and co-teaching models are used to provide optimal support.
Targeted Individualised Instruction	Targeted instruction is provided to individuals one-to-one or in small groups, both within and outside of the classrooms/subject area classes. In the PYP, students may also receive learning support

	during the language block. In the MYP and the DP, students may receive learning support during one of the language blocks in an integrated studies course designed to offer subject-specific and individualized targeted support.
Inclusive Access Arrangements/ Modifications	Access Arrangements and/or modifications may be given to students as outlined by their Individual Learning Plans, determined by their English acquisition needs or due to temporary medical or personal conditions. **Access Arrangements** ensure equitable access to learning and assessments by removing barriers while upholding IB academic standards, as documented in a student's Individualized Learning or Accommodation Plan; examples include extra time, adjusted formats, a scribe or reader, rest breaks, or a separate setting. The school accommodates students in the DP program aligned with IB guidelines. **Modifications** adjust instructional level, content, or criteria based on a student's Individual Learning Plan (ILP). While they support learning needs, they may prevent IB certification if they alter required curriculum frameworks. Under Section 20h of the Finnish Basic Education Act (628/1998; *Perusopetuslaki*)**,** modifications should only be made after exhausting all other support measures. Decisions must specify affected subjects, objectives, and reasons, with guardians informed of the changes, their impact, and appeal rights. The assessment policy further outlines the use of modification in assessing and grading students receiving this level of support.
English as an Additional Language Provision	As an IB World School, ISH recognises **multilingualism as a strength and a central component of learner identity**, in alignment with the IB Access and Inclusion Policy. Students are admitted to ISH with diverse levels of English language proficiency, as guided by our Admissions and Language Policies. The school provides English as an Additional Language (EAL) instruction to support students in developing the academic language proficiency needed for success across the IB programmes.
Social Emotional Learning and Support	Social-emotional learning and support reaches all students at ISH. The wellbeing team works actively with all students, teachers, parents and community members to integrate social emotional learning into every level of the school. This framework ranges from curriculum integration and consultation to individual responsive services and community involvement and school system support.
Speech and Language Support	Students may receive specific speech and language support provided by the school's learning specialist and speech and language pathologist. The speech and language pathologist assesses and works with students who are identified through the

	referral process as having possible communication or language difficulties (e.g. specific language processing difficulties, stuttering, cluttering, etc.) as well as learning differences such as dyslexia.
Psycho-Educational Evaluations and Support from the School Psychologist	Following a formal referral process to the student support team, a recommendation/decision may be made for a student to undergo a psycho-educational or neuropsychological evaluation carried out by our city psychologist or consulting neuropsychologist. The aim of this support is to better understand the student's specific needs as a learner and to assist in designing individualised learning plans.
Individualised Educational Options	Students may require alternative educational options specific to individual needs. These options may include linking students to resources for online courses, offsite learning and/or vocational training. Students-pursuing an ISH High School Diploma, may have individualized or modified courses designed to meet their specific learning needs.
Referral/Consultation with outside specialists	The school has the resources to connect students and families to appropriate specialists within the local community through our community counselor. These outside specialists include; occupational therapy, family therapy, neuropsychological or psychological/psychiatric assessments and therapy.

7. Social Emotional Learning and Wellbeing Support

The social and emotional learning and wellbeing of our students is foundational for effective learning and for life. ISH has made a clear commitment to supporting the social and emotional wellbeing of our students. ISH's wellbeing approach is comprehensive in scope, preventative in design and developmental in nature. The wellbeing team is composed of division level counselors, city counselors and the health/nursing team. They work in active collaboration with students, teachers, families and the community to address the academic, social and emotional growth and wellbeing of all students at ISH.

SEL Curriculum

Social emotional learning is embedded in our curriculum at every level. This can be seen within the implementation of the IB learner profile, through the approaches to learning and found explicitly within curriculum links in units of inquiry, interdisciplinary units and subject-specific courses. In addition, counselors work alongside teachers to co-teach specific lessons in grade-level classrooms in the lower school and in the upper school advisory program (see ISH upper school counseling advisory scope and sequence here). The school uses a variety of resources and programs including: school wide mindfulness program (Pawsb and Dotb), Second Steps, MooZoom, KidSkills, I see You see, and Unifrog social emotional learning, all based on the International School Counseling Associations Standards (see below).

DEVELOPING LIFE SKILLS
ISCA Student Standards

Social-Emotional
- Social and Self-Awareness
- Relationships
- Decision-Making
- Personal Safety

Academic
- Self-Awareness
- Effective Learning
- Self-Directed Learning & Agency
- Planning & Goal Setting
- School-to-Life Experiences

Global Perspective & Identity Development
- Cultural Knowledge & Awareness
- Cultural Competency
- Identity Development
- Cultural Identity
- Advocacy & Equity
- Transitions
- Adaptability

Career
- Self-Exploration
- Career Research
- Post-Secondary Career Planning

Responsive Support

The wellbeing team also uses a responsive support model to respond to the direct and immediate concerns of students and includes, but is not limited to, individual counseling, crisis counseling, play therapy, self/peer/parent or teacher referrals and consultations with other specialists. The school counselors may work directly with students in small groups or individually to address specific social/emotional issues. This work may be short-term, episodic in nature or ongoing as needed. When presenting concerns that require more long-term interventions, referrals are made to outside community mental health providers.

Transitions

At ISH we understand that students who transition frequently benefit from frameworks that promote belonging. The PYP, MYP and DP leads coordinate transitions between divisions (from early years to grade 1, lower to middle, middle to upper and into the Diploma Program). A comprehensive transition plan is also in place to support students and their families as they transition in and out of our school led by our PYP, MYP and DP counselors. The DP Higher Education Advisor provides career guidance counseling pertinent to post-secondary education decisions and opportunities. This individual student planning, documented in the Managbac provides all DP students an opportunity to understand their growth and development to take action on their next steps personally, educationally and occupationally.

School System Support

The wellbeing team provides resources to students, educators, parents and the community regarding issues related to social emotional learning and wellbeing. This may include providing links to books, articles, podcasts, websites, and organizations.

In addition, the wellbeing team actively leads workshops for students, parents and staff. The wellbeing team plays a critical role in the student support and safeguarding teams. The school supports the effective development of the wellbeing program through: leadership and advocacy, consultation, collaboration, and professional development. All ISH counselors are active members of the International School Counselors Association (ISCA) as well as the Psychological Practitioners of Finland (PPF).
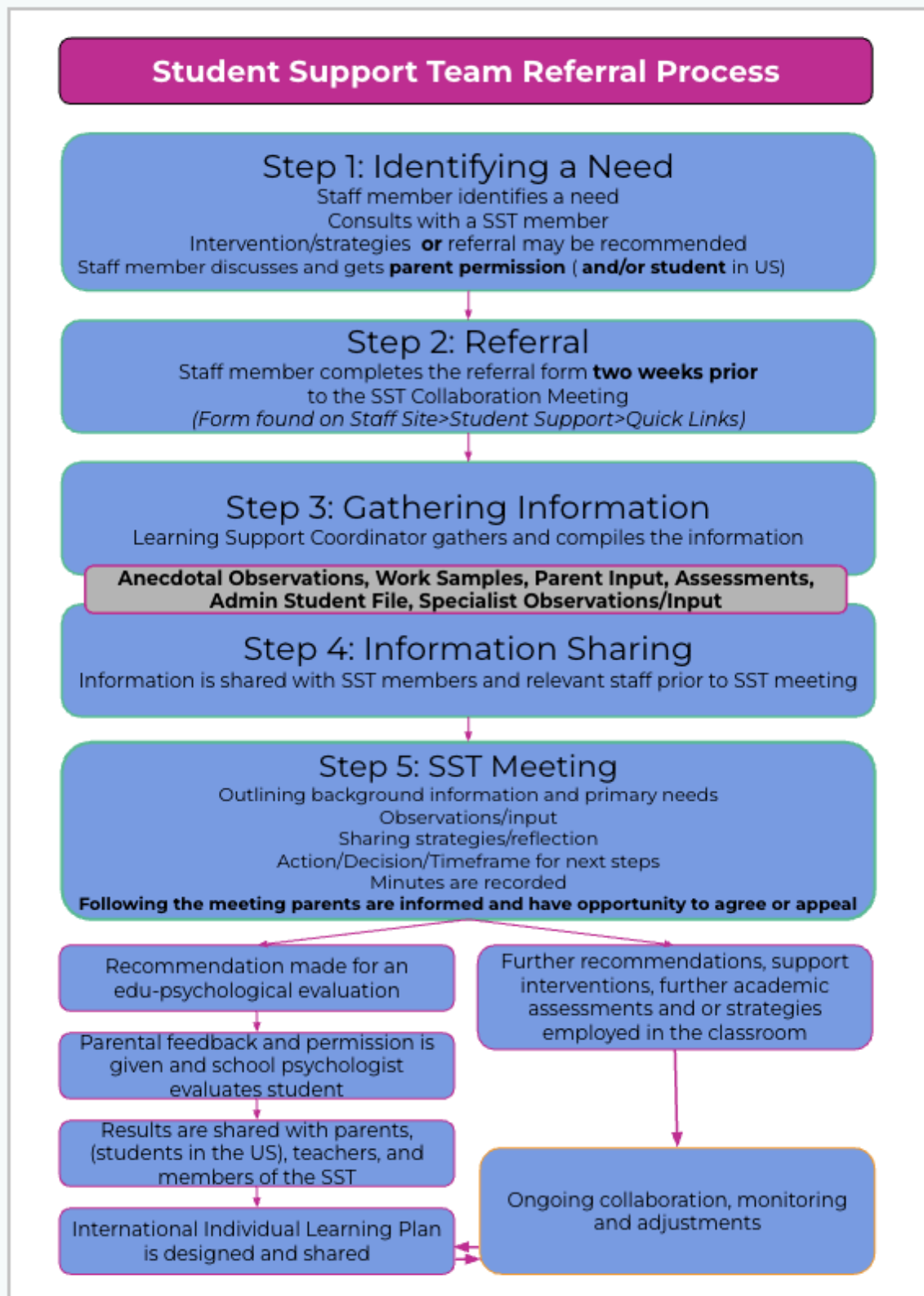
8. Learning Support

Students are identified as requiring learning support through an open and transparent referral process. The identification and admission process is conducted on an individual basis **in alignment with the Finnish Basic Education Act (628/1998) §§ 20c and 20d**. Students may also be identified based on prior support at a previous school. Each decision is made through a comprehensive and carefully considered referral process led by the Student Support Team to ensure appropriate support.

Referral and Assessment Processes

The school assesses the learning and developmental needs of students as they progress through the school. When a student is referred to the student support team, more direct and specific assessments and interventions are initiated. When assessing and supporting students' learning and developmental needs within the International Baccalaureate (IB) framework, the SST adopts a comprehensive approach that includes:

1. Review of Academic and Medical Histories: Analyzing past performance and health records to understand the student's background.

2. Observations: Conducting both anecdotal and systematic observations to gather qualitative data on the student's behavior and learning strategies.

3. Diagnostic Assessments: Utilizing formal tools and screening methods to identify specific learning needs.

4. Classroom Assessments: Evaluating progress through formative and summative assessments aligned with the Primary Years Programme (PYP), Middle Years Programme (MYP), and Diploma Programme objectives.

5. Specialist Evaluations: Engaging professionals for in-depth diagnostic assessments when necessary.

Student Support Team Referral Process

Step 1: Identifying a Need
Staff member identifies a need
Consults with a SST member
Intervention/strategies **or** referral may be recommended
Staff member discusses and gets **parent permission** (**and/or student** in US)

Step 2: Referral
Staff member completes the referral form **two weeks prior**
to the SST Collaboration Meeting
(Form found on Staff Site>Student Support>Quick Links)

Step 3: Gathering Information
Learning Support Coordinator gathers and compiles the information

Anecdotal Observations, Work Samples, Parent Input, Assessments, Admin Student File, Specialist Observations/Input

Step 4: Information Sharing
Information is shared with SST members and relevant staff prior to SST meeting

Step 5: SST Meeting
Outlining background information and primary needs
Observations/input
Sharing strategies/reflection
Action/Decision/Timeframe for next steps
Minutes are recorded
Following the meeting parents are informed and have opportunity to agree or appeal

Recommendation made for an edu-psychological evaluation

Further recommendations, support interventions, further academic assessments and or strategies employed in the classroom

Parental feedback and permission is given and school psychologist evaluates student

Results are shared with parents, (students in the US), teachers, and members of the SST

Ongoing collaboration, monitoring and adjustments

International Individual Learning Plan is designed and shared

Tiered Levels of Learning Support:

At ISH, our tiered model of learning support is designed to be responsive to a student's evolving needs. Students can move flexibly between support tiers, ensuring that interventions are tailored appropriately over time. This adaptability is achieved through data-driven, collaborative decision-making processes involving students, parents, teachers, and learning support staff. Regular assessments and progress monitoring inform these decisions.

Tier 1: Universal Support (ryhmäkohtainen tuki) – Inclusive, high-quality classroom instruction that incorporates differentiation and individualised strategies is available for all. Students receive support through varied teaching methods, classroom interventions, and accommodations designed to meet diverse learning needs. Consultation with learning support teachers is available to assist in implementing strategies that enhance accessibility and student success.

Tier 2: Targeted Support (yksilökohtainen tuki). – This support is targeted to students requiring additional support beyond differentiation and individualised learning. This may involve small-group or individual interventions, specialized instruction, access arrangements or in-class support from learning support teachers. Before receiving Tier 2 support, Administrative Act § 34 requires consultation with guardians to ensure informed decision-making. This support may be outlined on an intervention growth plan or an Individualised Learning Plan (ILP)

Tier 3: Specific Enhanced Support (yksilökohtainen tuki) – This support is provided for students with complex learning needs who need individualized, highly structured interventions. This includes one-on-one support, specialized therapies, or significant modifications to instructional methods and content. Support at this level is determined through formal assessments and outlined in an Individual Learning Plan (ILP) developed in collaboration with teachers, specialists, and parents. Before receiving Tier 3 support, Administrative Act § 34 requires consultation with guardians to ensure informed decision-making.

Learning Support Documentation

Learning support information is documented and kept in locked confidential files in lower school and upper school learning support rooms, with the school psychologist, and in confidential files shared on Google Docs accessible only to the staff members who work directly with the student. Confidential files may include the following: student support overviews, SST meeting minutes, intervention plans, student assessments/observations, psychoeducational and/or neuropsychological evaluation and Individual Learning Plans.

The Individual Learning Plan is designed to build on student strengths and address specific needs as recommended by the student support team in the lower and upper school. As stated in the **Finnish Basic Education Act (628/1998) 20e §**, to the extent that is possible and appropriate, students lead and/or are significantly involved in the development of their ILPs. The learning support teachers are also responsible for collaborating with relevant teachers and support specialists, as well as parents, for input, agreement, and development of the ILP. The ILP outlines the student's specific support program and includes:

- learner's strengths, interests, and challenges
- a summary of the learner's learning history
- related language background
- referral/assessment information
- in some cases, it may include diagnostic information and recommendations
- classroom/instructional/assessment accommodations and/or modifications
- set of targeted and measurable individualized objectives and goals
- strategies and methods used to meet targeted objectives and goals
- reported progress during the first and last semester reporting periods

The ILP is to be integrated into the student's classroom program within the context of the IB programs. ILPs are monitored frequently, reported on, and updated after each semester as needed. The ILP undergoes a full-scale review annually at the start of each school year. During transition periods (changing schools/changing sections), all documentation and files are confidentially forwarded to the appropriate staff with parent permission. Transition meetings, phone interviews, emails, and forms are completed to help with the transition process and the assurance that the students' needs will be met.

9. Ongoing Professional Development and Student Support Team Program Review

At ISH, we recognize that the effectiveness of our inclusion practices relies on the continuous growth and development of our educators. To uphold our commitment to inclusion we implement the following strategies:

- **Continuous Learning:** We provide regular professional development opportunities focused on inclusive education, differentiation and universal design for learning, ensuring that our staff remains informed about current best practices. This aligns with the IB's emphasis on fostering a culture of collaboration and mutual respect to support all learners.

- **Collaborative Practices:** Our educators engage in collaborative planning and reflection sessions, promoting shared responsibility for student success. This approach aligns with the IB's standards for creating supportive learning environments.

By investing in ongoing professional development and ongoing program review, ISH demonstrates its dedication to fostering an inclusive educational environment where every student has the opportunity to succeed.

Policy alignment

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	
High Quality Teaching and Learning Policy	

Policy review protocol

The policy is reviewed regularly by relevant stakeholders in light of the guiding statements and the changing needs of the students and the wider community. Data that is considered include surveys from stakeholders, review of practice by staff members and current pedagogical research. Additionally, this includes annual reviews of caseload data internally and externally, as well as assessment of student support staff-to-student ratios. This approach enables us to identify areas for improvement and implement necessary changes to enhance our inclusive practices.

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

References

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11. **Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture** (2021) *'VN 2021:24 Education Policy Report'*.
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