



ST. JOHN'S  
INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL



THE PRIMARY YEARS PROGRAMME (PYP)  
*at St. John's International School*



# The IB Primary Years Programme

Preparing students to be active participants  
in a lifelong journey of learning



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# 1. ST. JOHN'S MISSION, VISSION AND VALUES

St. John's is regarded by many as one of the best international schools in Europe. In order to provide the school with a platform to develop in a coherent manner, we have drawn up clear guiding statements supported by a vision, mission and values, which we believe positively differentiates us from other international schools.

## Our Vision

St. John's students live our values to impact the world.

## Our Mission

St. John's International School provides an English-language education based on Christian values, demands personal excellence and stimulates individual responsibility within a culturally diverse environment.

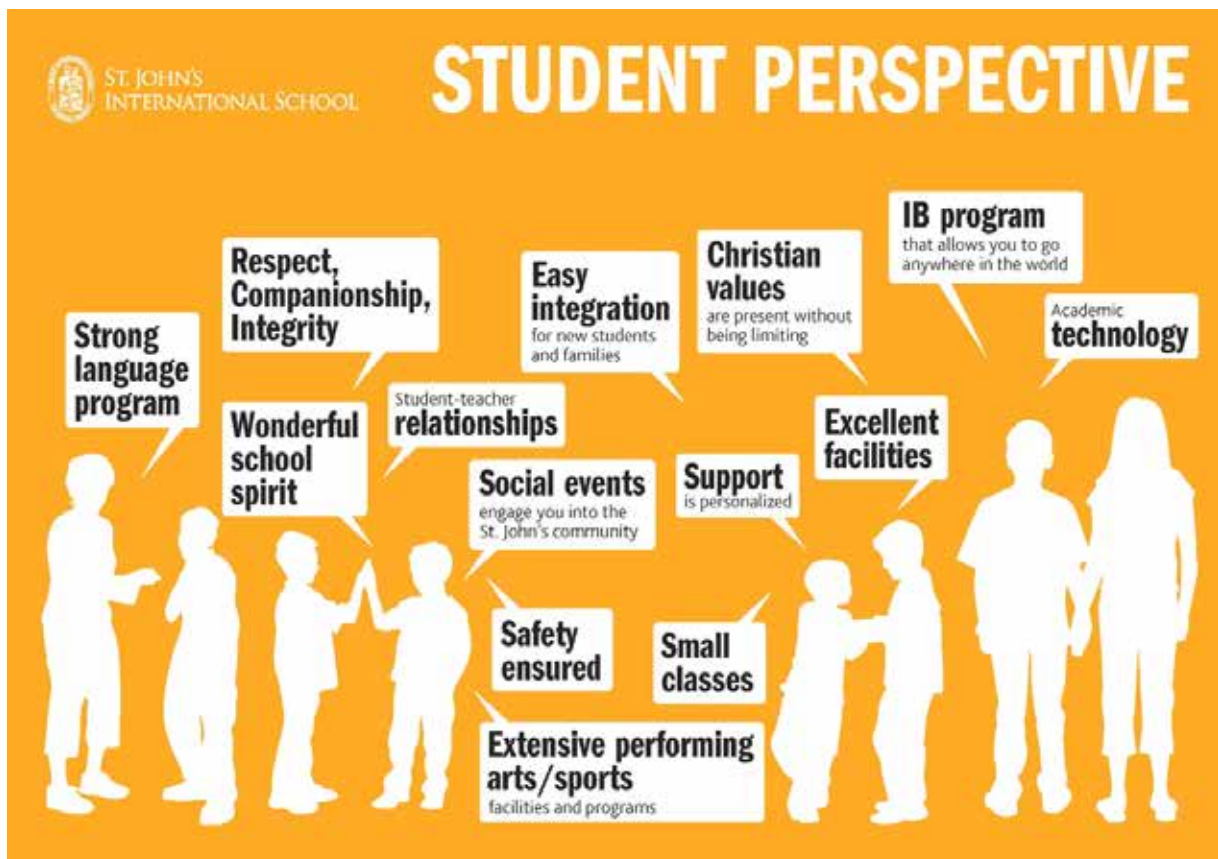
## Our Values

St. John's embraces its historical tradition and, in particular, the Christian values of:

COMPANIONSHIP – the gentleness to befriend and the strength to accompany

RESPECT – of people, languages, cultures, beliefs and values

INTEGRITY – being true to ourselves, to each other and to our world



## 2. INTERNATIONAL BACCALAUREATE MISSION

The International Baccalaureate (IB) Organization aims to develop inquiring, knowledgeable and caring young people who help to create a better and more peaceful world through intercultural understanding and respect.

To this end the IBO works with schools, governments and international organizations to develop challenging programmes of international education and rigorous assessment.

These programmes encourage students across the world to become active, compassionate and lifelong learners who understand that other people, with their differences, can also be right.

## 3. WHAT IS THE PRIMARY YEARS PROGRAMME (PYP)

At St. John's, we aim to meet the widely varying needs of our international student body. We know that our students, as well as our teachers, come from a variety of backgrounds and experiences, and bring many different beliefs and expectations to school. Our goal is to provide a program that will not only meet the needs of this diverse group, but will also benefit from the richness of that diversity.

Many years ago, a group of international educators who were working on the same problem, combined their own knowledge and expertise with the best practice from many national and international systems, and created a new way of thinking about curriculum. The Primary Years Programme, or PYP, adopted by the International Baccalaureate Organization (IBO) in 1997, was the result of their work.



The PYP is a curriculum framework created for students between the ages of 3 and 12 years.

It is an international, transdisciplinary programme designed to foster the development of the whole child - addressing hearts as well as minds and encompassing social, physical, emotional and cultural needs in addition to academic welfare.

The PYP provides guidelines and standards on what students should learn, guidance on teaching methodologies and advice on best practice in assessment. At St. John's, all our students from Pre-Kindergarten through Grade 5 participate in the Primary Years Programme.

The PYP offers a relevant, challenging and engaging educational framework for all children. It provides the best preparation for students to engage in the IB Middle Years Programme (MYP) and from there to the prestigious IB Diploma.

## 4. WHAT IS A PYP SCHOOL? THE PYP AND INTERNATIONAL MINDEDNESS

More than 1250 schools offer the PYP, in 106 countries worldwide.

A PYP school is one where, regardless of location, size or constitution, students, teachers, administrators and staff all strive towards developing an international mindset. The PYP believes that an internationally minded person is someone with the attributes and dispositions described in the IB Learner Profile (see below).

The IB Learner Profile is at the core of our program at St. John's too. We are proud to be part of this very large family of schools and to participate in a programme that is preparing students for global citizenship.



# 5. THE IB LEARNER PROFILE

## 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. They actively enjoy 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 pose 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 are accustomed to seeking and evaluating a range of points of view, and are willing to grow from the experience.

**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.

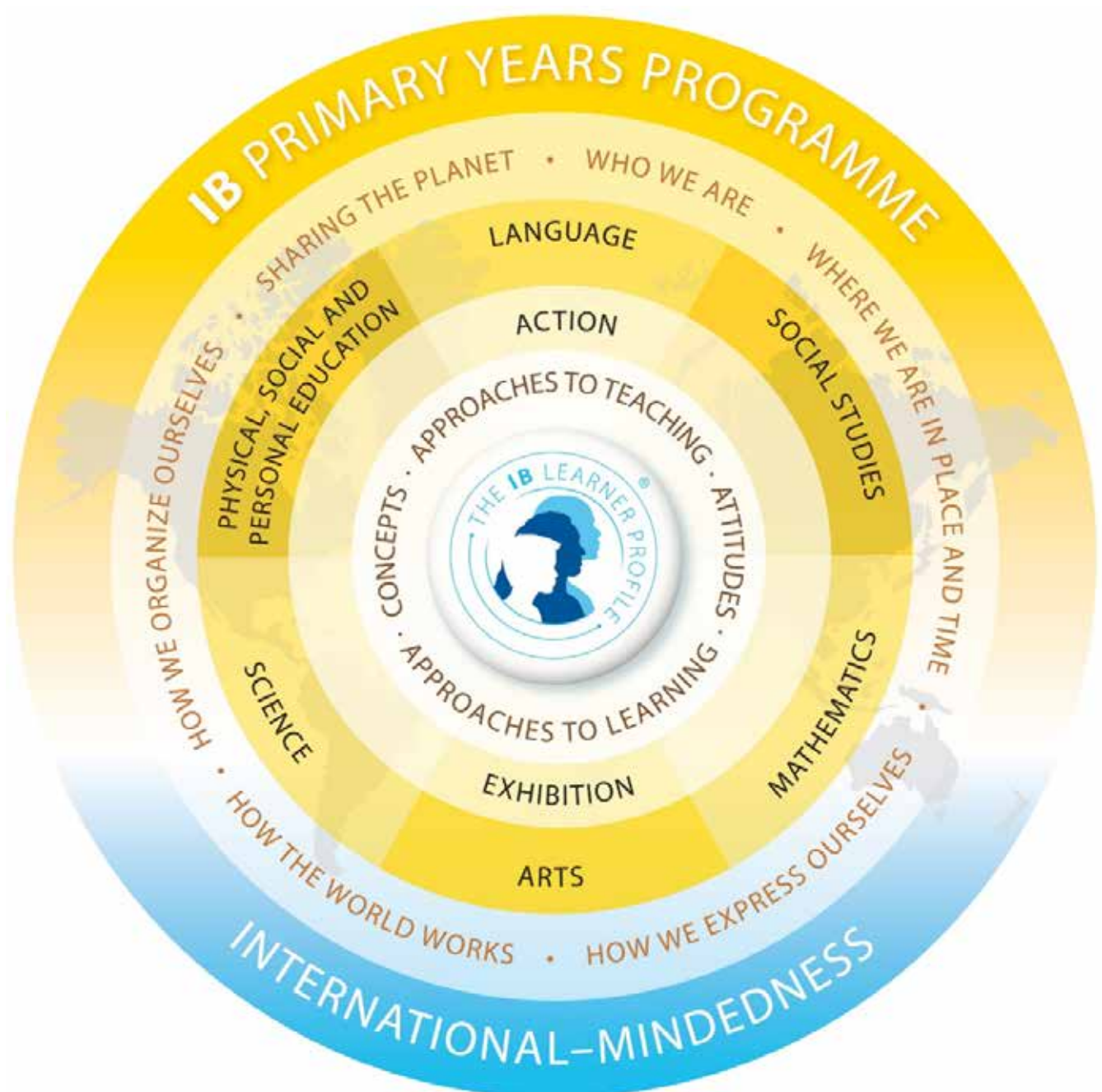
**RISK-TAKERS** They approach unfamiliar situations and uncertainty with courage and forethought, and have the independence of spirit to explore new roles, ideas and strategies. They are brave and articulate in defending their beliefs.

**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.

## 6. THE PYP CURRICULUM MODEL

The curriculum in the PYP includes what is to be learned (the written curriculum), how it is to be learned (the taught curriculum) and how it is to be assessed (the learned curriculum). At the heart of the PYP philosophy is a commitment to structured **inquiry** as the leading vehicle for learning. Six trans-disciplinary **themes** provide the framework for the exploration of knowledge. Teachers and students are guided by these themes as they design curricular units for exploration and study. These **units of inquiry** make up the St. John's **Programme of Inquiry**. Students explore subject areas through these themes. In the process, they develop an understanding of important **concepts**, acquire essential **skills** and **knowledge**, develop particular **attitudes** and learn to take socially responsible **action**.





# 7. THE WRITTEN CURRICULUM: WHAT WILL MY CHILD BE LEARNING?

The five essential elements of the written curriculum:

Concepts	Skills	Attitudes	Action	Knowledge
Form	Thinking	Tolerance	Reflect	Six transdisciplinary units of inquiry in: Language Social studies Mathematics Science and technology Visual Arts Drama Music Personal, social and health education Physical education
Function	Communication	Respect	Choose	
Causation	Social	Integrity	Act	
Change	Research	Independence		
Connection	Self-management	Enthusiasm		
Perspective		Empathy		
Responsibility		Curiosity		
Reflection		Creativity		
		Cooperation		
		Confidence		
		Commitment		
		Appreciation		

The first four essential elements: concepts, skills, attitudes and actions are relevant in and across all subject areas and provide the framework for structured and purposeful inquiry.

They can have different applications and interpretations, depending on the subject area. The fifth element – knowledge, is considered to be a holistic understanding of ideas, not merely the acquisition of facts.



### **Concepts: What do we want students to understand?**

Eight fundamental concepts expressed as key questions, propel the process of inquiry and encourage a transdisciplinary perspective. These universal concepts drive the research units - called Units of Inquiry, but they also have relevance within and across all subject areas. The concepts are:

1. Form: What is it like?
2. Function: How does it work?
3. Causation: Why is it like it is?
4. Change: How is it changing?
5. Connection: How is it connected to other things?
6. Perspective: What are the points of view?
7. Responsibility: What is our responsibility?
8. Reflection: How do we know?

### **Skills: What do we want students to be able to do?**

There are five sets of trans-disciplinary skills acquired in the process of structured inquiry: thinking, communication, social, research and self-management skills.

### **Attitudes: What do we want students to feel, value and demonstrate?**

The PYP promotes and fosters a set of attitudes that include: Tolerance, Curiosity, Respect, Creativity, Integrity, Cooperation, Independence, Confidence, Enthusiasm, Empathy, Commitment, and Appreciation.

### **Action: How do we want students to act?**

The students are encouraged to reflect, to make informed choices and to take action that will help their peers, school staff and the wider community. In this way the students demonstrate a deeper learning through service and positive action.

### **Knowledge: What do we want students to know?**

The PYP has identified six principal subject areas that are significant for all students in all cultures: Language, Mathematics, Social studies, Science, The arts (visual arts, music and drama), as well as Personal, Social and Physical Education (PSPE).

Subject knowledge is integrated using the six transdisciplinary themes – areas of knowledge, which organize the six units of inquiry taught each year from pre-school – Grade 5. The transdisciplinary themes are:

1. Who We Are
2. How the World Works
3. Where we are in Place and Time
4. How we Organize Ourselves
5. How we Express Ourselves
6. Sharing the Planet

## 8. THE TAUGHT CURRICULUM: HOW WILL CHILDREN LEARN?

At St. John's we believe that learning takes place in a meaningful context that stimulates curiosity, and encourages inquiry, reflection and critical thinking. We facilitate the development of relationships between students and teachers that engender a spirit of discovery and enjoyment in learning. We provide opportunities for children to deepen meaning and refine understanding, principally through structured inquiry, not only in the Units of Inquiry, but across the curriculum and by all teachers.



## 9. THE LEARNED CURRICULUM: ASSESSMENT

The PYP promotes the use of a range of assessment strategies, which are designed to give a clear picture of your child's progress. We use techniques for assessing children's work that take into account the diverse, complicated and sophisticated ways that individual children use to understand experience. We recognize the importance of assessing the process of learning and inquiry as well as the final results.

Assessment in the PYP is of two types, each of which has a specific function: Formative assessment is interwoven with daily learning and helps teachers and students find out what the students already know in order to plan the next stage in learning. Formative assessment and teaching are directly linked; neither can function effectively or purposefully without the other.

Summative assessment happens at the end of a unit of teaching and learning and gives the students opportunities to demonstrate what they have learned.

We use a range and balance of school-based assessment and feedback techniques, including writing samples, structured observations, and performance tasks, which are assessed by teachers and by students themselves. Students are provided with regular opportunities to reflect on their own learning.

This progress is reported to parents regularly, both orally and in writing. There are teacher-led conferences and student-led conferences scheduled during the year, as well as two formal written reports. We believe in open communication between home and the school.

## 10. THE PYP EXHIBITION

Students in the final year of the PYP carry out an extended, collaborative inquiry project, the PYP Exhibition. At St. John's, this takes place in Grade 5 and is an opportunity for students to work with other students, teachers, parents and experts to identify, investigate and take positive action on an issue that matters to them. The PYP Exhibition is a major project that allows students to apply skills from all five sets of transdisciplinary skills: communication, research, thinking, social and self- management skills. Students are expected to display the attitudes that they have been developing throughout their years in the PYP, as well as the attributes of the Learner Profile. It can also be seen as a celebration of the transition from the Primary Years Programme in the Elementary School to the Middle Years Programme in the Middle School.

Students begin early in the year to identify issues that they are hearing about, notice around them, want to know more about, or do something about, and that are personally significant.

In the second half of the year, students collaborate to deepen their understanding of the central idea and key concepts which form the focus of the PYP Exhibition. They also work together on a range of artistic projects (dance, drama, music and visual arts) which further enhance their understanding.

Towards the end of the year, the students set up interactive displays to share their learning with the rest of the St. John's community: all students, parents, as well as other community members are invited. The PYP Exhibition is one of the most powerful and memorable experiences of their primary school years for many PYP students!



# 11. FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

## **How can I support my child's learning?**

We at St. John's strongly believe that learning is a partnership between student, parent and school. You can help your child by:

- maintaining regular contact with your child's teacher and school
- sharing books with your child
- supporting your child's mother tongue through speaking, reading and writing
- assisting your child with research projects and expressing interest in what they are learning
- attending information sessions at school and parent/teacher conferences
- providing an appropriate setting and structured routine for doing homework

## **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, it is important to note the following:

### *Transfer to schools offering a national curriculum:*

Close attention is paid to a range of national curricula 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 PYP schools will have common experiences in terms of learning and teaching approaches and 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 nature of their own locations.

## **How is the PYP evaluated?**

All authorised schools are revisited and their programmes evaluated three years after the date of authorization to offer the PYP, and every five years thereafter. This service is designed to review the effectiveness of the delivery of the programme at the school. The evaluation team consists of knowledgeable professionals familiar with the programme in the school. The evaluation process does not assess individual students or teachers.

The evaluation process identifies the strengths and weaknesses of our programme and the degree of success with which we have implemented the PYP. It will follow up on any recommendations made during the authorization visit. The information provided will assist us in the further development of an effective programme and support us on the path of continuous improvement.

## **Who can I contact if I have questions?**

If you have questions regarding the PYP at St. John's, please feel free to make an appointment to discuss your questions with:

- your child's teacher
- the PYP coordinator Chris Savva (csavva@stjohns.be)
- the Elementary School Principal Susan Anderson (sanderson@stjohns.be)
- the IB website is [www.ibo.org](http://www.ibo.org)

# 10



Primary Years Programme

# Reasons

why the IB Primary Years Programme (PYP) is ideal for students to become active, lifelong learners

1



## It encourages students to inquire

The PYP fosters natural curiosity and learning in creative, supportive and collaborative environments.

2



## Understanding a complex and interdependent world

PYP students create meaning for themselves and build understanding through exploring real-world issues.

3



## PYP students are confident communicators

PYP students learn to communicate in a variety of ways and in more than one language.

4



## Learning how to learn

PYP students work collaboratively with teachers and other students to plan, present and assess their own learning.

5



## It encourages international-mindedness

Collaboration and understanding of their own and other cultures are an important focus of the PYP — students learn how to be respectful and open-minded.

6



## Seeing things from different perspectives

PYP students use critical and creative thinking to develop knowledge, understanding and skills within and across subject areas.

7



## Students take action

PYP students believe they are able to grow and succeed. They make appropriate choices and take responsibility for their actions.

8



## Thinking about issues

Creative learning gives students the agility and imagination to respond to new and unexpected challenges and opportunities in an increasingly globalized and uncertain world.

10



## Caring and responsible citizens

Students can express ideas and opinions, and they can propose solutions that make a difference in their lives and the lives of others.

9



## It involves the whole school learning community

Together we celebrate our common humanity and the belief that education can help to build a better and more peaceful world.



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