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IB Diploma Programme

IB Special Education Needs (SEN) Policy

Inclusive Practices

for Special Educational Needs Students

2026-2027

This policy is reviewed annually by the school leadership, DP Coordinator, BEST team, teachers, and parent representatives. Revisions are informed by student data, IB updates, and community feedback.

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INCLUSIVE PRACTICES AT VSCPI SCHOOL

General Philosophy

VSCPI Community School maintains small class sizes in order to identify each individual student's learning needs, strengths, and intelligences, and then create a differentiated curriculum and dynamic learning environment where all students can successfully grow and progress cognitively, socially, emotionally, and physically.

The school community is culturally, socioeconomically, and academically diverse; teachers see this as a resource in order to create a unique, dynamic, and inclusive classroom environment where all can learn from one another. VSCPI's students, parents, and teachers diversity fosters cultural awareness and open-mindedness.

In order to focus on the whole child and to assure each child's individual needs are met, grade-level teaching teams meet once per week to discuss student needs and differentiated instruction strategies. During these meetings, teachers also discuss: the overall leadership vision to help students achieve success; student information that affects learning; how best to respond to student needs; and any technology programs or devices that may aid in best practices.

Inclusive Culture

VSCPI Community School believes that all students can be successfully included in the same classroom. Within one class, all students have varied strengths and areas in need of improvement: with the school's differentiated, dual language curriculum, all students have the opportunity

to be the leader. Inclusion engages all students, offers choice and voice to the students, and positively responds to individual student needs so that all can achieve their greatest learning potential.

A learning environment that promotes “a sense of belonging, safety, self-worth and whole growth for every student” (IBO, 2020) is of utmost importance. Students are taught to respond to others' behavioral cues accurately and appropriately in order to avoid a stressful learning environment that blocks content learning and disengages students. The goal is to create a classroom environment that is an inclusive community where all languages, cultures, and learning styles, affirming the identity of all students while promoting self-esteem are valued. At VSCPI, inclusion is “a continual process of increasing learning and participation for all students.” (IBO, 2020)

Differentiated Instruction

VSCPI Community School focuses on Differentiated Instruction (D.I.). D.I. is a philosophy of teaching and learning where teachers recognize that students are different and respond to those differences in a thoughtful way. D.I. adapts the curriculum based on students' needs through identifying learning style, scaffolding, and modeling. The same expectations are maintained for all students while support is provided for those who need it. Students, as well as teachers, gain a sense of understanding of their own personal learning style and strengths through methods of differentiated instruction because the curriculum is made relevant to the learner.

A lesson can be broken down into three parts — content (what), process (how), product (show us what you know). Any one of these three

pieces to the curriculum puzzle can be adjusted based on the students' needs which connects to their readiness, interest, and learning profile. Additionally, assessment can also be adapted to include self and peer review while making it relevant to the learner; the purpose and outcome of the assessment process is the same for everyone but each individual has personal goals benchmarks.

A key ingredient to differentiated instruction is scaffolding. Scaffolding builds layers for the students in order for them to feel confident, supported and ready to

achieve academic success. Scaffolding may include using graphic organizers, visuals, demonstrations, templates, provided project/assignment structure, etc. As students become more independent, a gradual release of responsibility occurs and less scaffolding/modeling is needed. Scaffolding gives students a “leg up” rather than “dumbing down” the curriculum.

Some strategies employed at VSCPI school’s differentiated instruction include the following (not exhaustive):

- allowing students physical differences in space/flexible seating
- modeling instruction so expectations are clear
- teaching to the whole group and then reteaching to small group
- peer tutoring
- think, pair, share; think, write, share
- differentiation based on prior knowledge – when introducing a

new topic, the kids are in groups based on prior knowledge of topic; then each group does their own research and presents

- differentiating projects – list of possible tasks for a project and each task has a point assigned to it. Students can pick from whatever tasks they want as long as they add up to the same total number of points.
- reteaching with small group for content and/or language proficiency
- KWL charts
- validating different responses from students
- "turn and teach" between students
- Universal Design for Learning: provide multiple means of: representation, action/expression, and engagement

Checking for understanding in a differentiated inclusion classroom is essential. To ensure all students are engaged and participating, the following methods may be used:

- balance of informal/formal checks of understanding
- prep students who do not normally participate so they are prepared to answer
- continuing review and adaptation of goals/learning methods within a classroom
- entry and exit cards

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Rights and Responsibilities of All Members

1. School Leadership/Administration:
    - Develop and implement policies and procedures to promote access and inclusion.
    - Allocate resources to support inclusive practices and accommodations.
    - Provide professional development opportunities for staff on inclusive education.
    - Ensure that facilities and resources are accessible to all students.
2. Teachers:
    - Implement inclusive teaching strategies to meet the diverse needs of students.
    - Differentiate instruction to accommodate varying abilities and learning styles.
    - Collaborate with BEST to implement individualized education plans (IEPs) or accommodation plans.
    - Foster a supportive and inclusive classroom environment.
    - Communicate regularly with parents and guardians regarding student progress and support needs.
3. Behavior and Education Support Team (BEST) Learning Case Manager:
    - Provide specialized support services to students with disabilities or special needs.
    - Collaborate with teachers to develop and implement individualized support plans.
    - Conduct assessments and provide recommendations for accommodations and interventions.

- Offer training and guidance to teachers on working with students with diverse needs.
- Advocate for the rights and needs of students with special needs.

4. Students:
   - Respect and support classmates with diverse backgrounds, abilities, and needs.
   - Advocate for their own inclusion and access to educational opportunities.
   - Participate actively in inclusive classroom activities and discussions.
   - Communicate their needs and preferences to teachers and school administrators.
   - Collaborate with peers to create an inclusive school culture.
5. Parents/Guardians:
   - Support their child's educational goals and advocate for their needs.
   - Communicate with school staff about their child's strengths, challenges, and support needs.
   - Participate in individualized education planning meetings and decision- making processes.
   - Volunteer or participate in school activities that promote inclusion and diversity.
   - Stay informed about policies and practices related to inclusion and access in the school.

INCLUSIVE PRACTICES AND THE LEADERSHIP

The leadership team at VSCPI Community School is committed to the principles of inclusive education in the implementation of its programs. Central to VSCPI's philosophy (see image below VSCPI schoolCore) is the recognition of essential inclusive concepts, including

belonging and differentiation. Each academic year dedicated professional development time is allocated to ensure that all teachers acquire "knowledge, skills, and confidence in the use of inclusive practices to provide equal opportunities for participation, learning, teaching, and assessment" (IBO, 2023).

To fortify these inclusive practices, the school has instituted the Behavior and Education Support Team (BEST). Comprising qualified professionals, this team delivers learning and counseling services to students while maintaining constant communication and collaboration with teachers. This integrated approach underscores VSCPI's commitment to fostering an inclusive learning environment for all students.

SCHOOL ORGANIZATION

VSCPI school is committed to offering a safe space for the IB's four principles of good practice to be achieved: affirming identity, building self-esteem, valuing prior knowledge, and scaffolding and extending learning.

At the national level, VSCPI School adheres to the Bulgarian legal framework on inclusive and equitable education, primarily regulated by the Law on Pre-school and School Education (LPSE). This legislation guarantees equal access to quality education for all learners, including students with special educational needs, chronic illnesses, disabilities, as well as students with outstanding abilities, talents, and specific educational needs, from early childhood education through upper secondary education. The law applies to all

public and private educational institutions within the Bulgarian education system.

In accordance with the LPSE and related secondary legislation, the Ministry of Education and Science (MES) is responsible for developing, implementing, and monitoring national policies and programmes for inclusive education, including support for students with special educational needs and individualized educational pathways. Schools are required to establish support mechanisms, multidisciplinary teams, and appropriate accommodations to ensure students' full participation in the educational process.

In addition, VSCPI School complies with the national framework for the identification, support, and development of gifted and talented students, as regulated by the Law on Pre-school and School Education and accompanying ordinances and national programmes promoting excellence, creativity, and academic achievement within the Bulgarian educational system. At the school level, the Behavior and Education Support Team (BEST) addresses student learning diversity and socio emotional wellness with the mission "to become the main reference for student services in the region, standing out for the excellence in our quality standards and customer service. We are committed to achieving outstanding results through solid strategic planning, focused on offering an exceptional service that meets the needs of our students and contributes positively to their comprehensive well-being and human dignity."

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STUDENT SUPPORT

Behavior and Education Support Team (BEST)

The Behavior and Education Support Team (BEST) is a group of specialists that support students in academical, behavioral, and socioemotional areas. BEST is consistent with the right of each student to experience meaningful learning by

recognizing and respecting their individual differences. The school with BEST's help emphasizes the importance of employing precise and appropriate strategies to achieve constant improvement and a natural comprehensive evolution in the educational process.

BEST's approach involves close collaboration between its team members and the teaching staff to identify personalized strategies that take into account possible indicators of neurodivergence. This proactive approach seeks to understand and address the specific needs of each student, guiding the teacher in the implementation of educational practices that foster inclusive and enriching learning.

The mention of 'shared learning' highlights the importance of creating an educational environment where diversity is valued, and the specificities of each student are positively integrated. In summary, BEST's vision focuses on adaptability, personalization, and collaboration to facilitate an educational process that responds to the diverse characteristics and potentials of each student.

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Structure and Process for Student Information

Master List

The "BEST Master List" document contains detailed and updated information about students, including diagnostic impressions, educational supports, relevant comments, and care records.

Records

Quarterly, the BEST team presents updated student information sheets covering personality, development areas, and teacher recommendations.

Care Records

Care sessions in Guidance and Psychology are documented in the "ISP" (Individual Support Plan), including date of the session, objectives, tools used, and specialist comments.

Support or Intervention Plans

Support plans are developed annually to cater to individual student needs, integrating academic and socio-emotional support for comprehensive care.

Digital File

Each student has an individual Google Drive folder with subfolders for each school year, containing documents such as meeting minutes and diagnostic reports.

Student Reference: Referral Process

Teachers identify students needing support through observation and communication, followed by assessment and record-keeping. If no improvement is seen, a referral is made using the QuickSchools

Reference Form.

Reasons for Referencing

Students may be referred due to academic gaps, specific diagnoses, failure to meet objectives, persistent behavioral problems, emotional difficulties, or family/personal situations.

Consent Form for Inclusive Access Arrangements

In conjunction with the IBDP agreement, families enrolling in the program and requiring inclusive access arrangements will receive this document. It grants consent for the IBDP coordinator or any BEST member to share their information (see Appendix 1).

BEST-IBDP Teacher Survey

This document is filled out by teachers whenever they provide accommodations to students, whether during a test or any other academic task. By documenting these accommodations, the school can support requests for inclusive access arrangements before the IBO (Appendix 2).

Resources

The school supports inclusive education within the Diploma Programme through both human and built resources. In terms of human resources, students enrolled in the IBDP have access to a learning specialist and a psychologist. These professionals are available on a daily basis to work with students facing emotional or academic challenges, providing personalized support and guidance.

In addition to the human resources, VSCPI school has invested in

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built resources to facilitate inclusive education. Specially designated spaces are available for students to collaborate with the specialists when additional support or attention is needed.

As part of the resources available to the BEST team, the school applies a preventive educational approach aligned with the Bulgarian legal and regulatory framework in the field of education. In Bulgaria, preventive education has been systematically embedded in public education through the policies and programmes of the Ministry of Education and Science (MES), particularly following reforms introduced after the 1990s and further strengthened in recent years.

Preventive education in the Bulgarian context addresses not only issues with social and behavioural impact—such as bullying, discrimination, substance abuse, and early school leaving—but also operates with a clear focus on the promotion of students' holistic well-being. This approach is regulated through national strategies, ordinances, and frameworks that emphasize psychological support, inclusive practices, and the creation of a safe and supportive school environment.

This is reflected in school-based mechanisms for student support and well-being, including multidisciplinary support teams, cooperation with pedagogical counsellors and psychologists, and the implementation of programmes for personal development, social-emotional learning, and mental health. These measures are implemented in accordance with Bulgarian legislation and contribute to ensuring students' physical, emotional, and social well-being within the school community.

This is evident in the Comprehensive Well-being Circle (CBI), incorporated into interventions from this approach, encompassing fundamental areas of human development such as physical aspects

related to psychomotor skills, hygiene, nutrition, and vocational aspects that include attitudes, values, and decision-making in choosing a life path. It also covers emotional aspects referring to emotions, attitudes, and mental health, ethical-spiritual aspects integrating personal and moral values, and finally, social aspects that describe skills for interacting with the world and others, such as communication, solidarity, and respect.

In summary, the importance of academic and socio-emotional support lies in its comprehensive and preventive approach to socially relevant issues. It encourages the involvement of professionals from different fields with the purpose of assisting students and their families in making informed decisions, aiming to promote overall well-being within the learning process and eventually achieve a positive community impact.

The process of psychophysiological development and well-being, as well as addressing social issues that primarily affect students during the learning process, is an integral part of meaningful learning.

BEST is well acquainted with and integrates the guidelines outlined by the different protocols of the Ministry of Public Education (MEP) for the prevention and addressing of socio-emotional risk situations for students.

Learning Support

BEST (Behavior and Education Support Team) plays a crucial role in supporting all students, including those with learning or emotional challenges throughout their entire school journey at VSCPI. Specifically, when students transition into the Diploma Programme

(DP), BEST ensures a successful integration and provides ongoing support over the two-year DP process.

Whether individually or in group settings, DP students regularly engage with learning and emotional support specialists to cultivate essential self-management and social skills necessary for effective learning. The BEST team dedicated to DP students takes on the responsibility of communicating pertinent information and offering support to teachers regarding learning and emotional difficulties. They actively manage Individualized Support Plan (ISPs) and access arrangements for DP examinations, ensuring that the unique needs of each student are accommodated.

Moreover, BEST members actively participate in the weekly IBDP meetings, contributing their expertise to provide teachers with ongoing professional learning opportunities that support inclusive practices.

BEST conducts classroom observations to determine possible strategies that could benefit the student learning process within a previously established group dynamic. BEST academic specialists accompany students during their classes, providing unique and personalized support following the principle of inclusion. Additionally, individual attention is provided where the specialist and the student together map out pending activities, tasks, assignments, or exams, and jointly develop a plan to carry them out successfully.

BEST implements work programs that develop skills such as executive functions. Through these programs, attention, concentration, planning, organization, following instructions, and efficiently initiating activities are addressed—all crucial for successful development in the IB program. Academic specialists collaboratively analyze plans with teachers and propose strategies to enhance them, as well as suggest possible variations in content or activities that may promote learning within the educational community.

IB Diploma Programme Assessment Access Arrangements

VSCPI School follows the IB publication *"Candidates with assessment access requirements"* to ensure that students with documented learning needs, medical conditions, or temporary injuries receive appropriate accommodations during IB assessments.

Accommodations Requiring IB Authorization

The following arrangements require formal approval from the IB:

- Additional time
- Use of a computer for written examinations
- Separate or smaller examination room
- Rest breaks
- Reader or scribe
- Modified papers (e.g., enlarged print)
- Any arrangement that changes exam conditions beyond normal classroom practice

Evidence Required

Requests for IB-authorized accommodations must include:

- A recent psychological, psychoeducational, or medical report
- A statement from the school describing the student's usual classroom accommodations
- Samples of classwork or assessments demonstrating the need
- Documentation from BEST and teachers

Submission Deadline

All requests for IB-authorized accommodations must be submitted **no later than six months before the examination session**, in accordance with IB regulations.

Role of the DP Coordinator and BEST

The DP Coordinator submits all requests to the IB, while BEST gathers evidence, communicates with families, and ensures that accommodations are implemented consistently throughout the DP years.

School-Based Accommodations (Do Not Require IB Authorization)

VSCPI School provides a range of accommodations that support student learning in daily classroom practice and school-based assessments. These do not require IB approval and may include:

- Preferential seating
- Extended time for class assignments
- Use of a laptop or assistive technology
- Breaks during lessons
- Modified deadlines
- Graphic organizers or visual supports
- Reduced-distraction environment for school tests

These accommodations are implemented consistently throughout the school year and must reflect the student's usual way of working. They also serve as evidence when requesting IB-authorized arrangements.

Use of Access Arrangements in School-Based Assessments

Students approved for access arrangements use these accommodations in all school-based assessments, including quizzes, unit tests, and mock examinations. This ensures that students are familiar with the accommodations they will use during the official IB examinations and that the school can demonstrate consistent implementation, as required by the IB.

Well-being

The attention to the different challenges faced by students is not limited to learning situations, so BEST integrates a fundamental resource model within preventive education that considers various needs related

to at-risk groups, ethnic minorities, marginalized individuals,

disadvantaged groups, immigrants, etc. In this way, preventive education through guidance and psychoeducation seeks inclusion by recognizing diversity as one of the central areas of guidance.

From this awareness of human well-being, emotional education is part of the educational strategies to promote the strengthening of emotional competencies that contribute to personal and social well-being.

In preventive emotional education, in addition to the mentioned methodologies, group-oriented and psychoeducational interventions or inter consultations are conducted. The aim is to propose interdisciplinary and congruent interventions tailored to the behavior to be prevented or addressed, while respecting the well-being principle of the students. In either case, this type of guidance seeks to positively influence the development of attitudes, beliefs, values, and behaviors.

Regarding emotional education, it is important to highlight the general objectives of this approach and its applicability from a preventive perspective. These objectives include promoting the acquisition of better emotional self- management through recognizing one's own emotions and regulating them to prevent exacerbation. Additionally, the objectives involve identifying emotions in others to strengthen empathy and compassion.

The ultimate goal of emotional education is primarily related to the possibility of enhancing self-awareness, coping skills, motivation, identification of beliefs generating irrational thoughts, and social interaction skills to improve the individual's or student's relationship with

the world.

BEST acknowledges the incalculable value of emotional education in its application, as it influences multiple aspects of human development, such as conflict resolution, decision-making, prevention of substance abuse, violence, eating disorders, suicide attempts, among many others.

This includes fostering healthy self-esteem and adaptability, resulting in greater subjective and social well-being.

College and Career Counseling

The College Counseling Program at VSCPI Community School is designed to provide students in tenth, eleventh, and twelfth grades with a holistic approach to career development and post-secondary preparation.

In tenth grade, students embark on a multifaceted journey aimed at exploring and shaping their future careers. Through self-assessment, they delve into their interests, values, personality traits, and skill sets. This introspective process serves as a guiding compass, offering insights into potential career paths that align with their unique attributes.

As students transition to eleventh grade, the program takes a comprehensive approach to guide them through the college application process. During the college research and selection phase, students receive dedicated support to explore various colleges and universities. They gain insights into admission criteria, allowing them to make informed decisions that align with both their academic and

personal aspirations.

Support for Gifted and High-Achieving Students

In accordance with Bulgarian legislation and IB principles of inclusion, VSCPI School provides enrichment opportunities for students with outstanding abilities or high academic achievement.

Support may include:

- Extended or enriched learning tasks
- Participation in competitions, research projects, or advanced study
- Opportunities for leadership within the classroom
- Differentiated instruction that challenges students appropriately

Gifted students are supported through the same inclusive framework that guides all student support at VSCPI

TEACHER SUPPORT

IBDP teachers meet weekly as a team to establish a common understanding and curricular and assessment alignment in both campuses, to develop and design units that meet program requirements and are aligned in both campuses, to design projects, laboratories, and/or learning experiences for subjects in both campuses, to jointly assess and grade the internal assessments of each campus, and to examine and discuss the assessment criteria for each component of the subject to ensure a common understanding and uniform application. Likewise, discussions related to individual education plans are held during these times.

APPROACHES TO TEACHING

VSCPI Community School fosters effective relationships within its

learning community through initiatives such as Big Buddies and Little Buddies activities, as well as the advisory program. These programs aim to create opportunities for students with diverse abilities and identities to interact positively, cultivating an environment of belonging.

In terms of assessment, IBDP students at VSCPI school receive continuous support throughout their academic journey. Tailored options are provided based on individual needs. The school follows a designated timeline to guide the necessary actions that must be taken in response to students' academic requirements. This approach ensures that students receive the assistance and accommodations necessary for their success in the International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme.

Big Buddies and Little Buddies

CGLOs (Cross Grade Learning Opportunities) are at the heart of the VSCPI school learning experience as they represent a balance of both socioemotional and academic learning, offering students the enriching opportunity of learning/teaching/collaborating with each other across grade level. Students have the opportunity to share language and academic content with different age groups, as well as making socioemotional connections through working together on a shared goal or task. Teachers have the opportunity to collaborate in designing the shared goal or task for the students, fostering a sense of community and unity. The CGLO experience is often an unforgettable opportunity for students, allowing the creativity of both teacher and student to flourish while also fostering unique bonds and memories across grade levels.

The school implements this curricular element through intentional

planning: teachers collaborate across grade levels to identify curricular overlaps so different grades join together to teach, learn and share a common objective or skill. Teachers are trained to create meaningful connections related to content or socioemotional skills with different grade levels, and through creative scheduling, they help students to work together. There are also non-curricular opportunities for this collaboration through sports, special activities, community meetings, and a big/little buddy program.

Some examples of Cross Grade Learning Opportunities are: 11th graders helping 10th graders to write thesis statements in English and German; 12th graders demonstrating a Science experiment to 9th graders; 11th and 12th graders sharing what they both learned about landforms during their Land and Sea unit. Other opportunities include: when each grade passes their grade level Anchor Project to the grade below; the Beach Olympics when students participate on mixed-grade level teams; and other special events where students read under the Guanacaste Tree together, attend Community Meetings together, or go on an excursion together. Additionally, our big/little buddy program intentionally unites/assigns an older student

and a younger student for the entire school year. These buddy pairs meet monthly to participate in activities together, such as reading, creating projects, practicing gratitude or other activities to unite and collaborate.

Timeline for IBDP Inclusive Access Arrangements

10th Grade

Level	Trimester	Deadline	Actions	Responsible
10th	I Trimester	December 1	• Identify students that need support in the IBDP.	BEST specialists IBDP teachers
			• Begin the counseling process with BEST students to make the best decision regarding the IBDP.	BESP specialist
			• Request external assessments for students who need updated documents or students who do not have an assessment.	BEST specialist
10th	II and III Trimester	June 30	• Guide students to choose the IBDP path that best suits their interests.	BEST specialists IBDP coordinator
			• Receive approval from parents regarding IBDP decision.	
			• Identify the support that the students will need in the IBDP.	
			•	

11th Grade

Level	Trimester	Deadline	Actions	Responsible
11th	I Trimester	October 30	• Identify the support needed for new students in IBDP classes.	BEST specialists IBDP teachers
			• Update existing supports for IB classes.	
			• Planning the fading of the provided supports (if necessary).	
			• Identify non-significant supports for the IB that students may require (it is not necessary for these supports to be referred to the service to coordinate them).	
		All through the school year	• Collect evidence of student performance with and without available support	BEST specialists IBDP teachers

Level	Trimester	Deadline	Actions	Responsible
\\11th	II and III Trimester	July 15	• Review agreed-upon supports, assess which ones have been successfully faded, and which ones still require support.	BEST specialists IBDP coordinator
			• Update student intervention plans.	BEST Specialist
			• Create a descriptive report detailing the academic performance of the student with selected supports and compare it with the student's performance without agreed-upon supports.	
			• Train students who require non-significant IB supports in their use through	BEST Specialist IBDP Teachers

			simulations.	

12th Grade

Level	Trimester	Deadline	Actions	Responsible
12th	I Trimester	September 30	• Identify support for new students	BEST Specialist IBDP Teachers
			• Request evaluation for new students if needed.	BEST Specialist
		October 30	• Request inclusive access arrangements before the IBO.	BEST Coordinator IBDP Coordinator
		December	• Plan mock testing scenarios for students to use their arrangements.	BEST Specialist
	II Trimester	Beginning of the trimester	• Train students who require non-significant IB supports in their use through simulations.	BEST Specialist IBDP Teachers

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