



Friday September 20th 2024,

Dear parents,

Living and working internationally has been both a pleasure and a privilege for my family and I for a number of years now, and this continues to be the case during the first half-term of my time in the beautiful setting of Malaysia. What I also know about leading schools in multilingual, international locations, of course, is that it is essential that we place high priority upon developing students' literacy skills and English language proficiency.

With this in mind, we have explained to students in school so far this term that English is the language of learning in Straits International School Rawang. At all times in school – other than in MFL lessons – our expectation is not only that students will be speaking English but also that they will be conversing with both teachers and each other in high standards of spoken English. This is important because students will need to be experts of the English language if they are to engage effectively with their IGCSE exams in Year 11, all of which will be in English. Even in Maths papers, there is a considerable element which requires high standards of English in terms of understanding questions and providing appropriate written responses. Practising English at every opportunity and even during earlier stages of school life, therefore, may well be key to future success in this regard. What this doesn't mean, of course, is that students' home languages are banned – far from it. Indeed, we are proudly international in terms of community demographics, and we very deliberately celebrate multilingualism, but high standards of English are necessary for students to make the most of their time in our school.

We are also implementing a number of strategies this term which are designed to support the development of high standards of English language usage in our students. Currently, our teachers are compiling reading lists for students in different key stages which will be published to parents in a couple of weeks. There will be no obligation for parents to buy any of the books, and the titles listed will simply be recommendations from teachers. However, because we know that gaining mastery of the English language unlocks academic potential in

all subjects, and not just in English, we would ask for parents to support us in encouraging the young people in our collective care to become lovers of literature outside of school. Reading for pleasure at home will support extremely high standards of English language development, and for this reason choosing books from our reading lists would be a highly effective strategy. In line with this belief, you may note that all teachers and other professionals who work in our school now have a line under their email signatures which announce which books they are currently reading. This is intended to stimulate discussion around books, and – more specifically – reading for pleasure. If parents could replicate such discussions at home with their children, that may also help us to achieve our collective literacy aims.

Classrooms in all areas of our school are also being adorned with key vocabulary posters. Again, our incredible teachers are playing a key role in implementing this strategy by highlighting the key words and terms which students must understand and use regularly if they are to experience academic success in their respective year groups and specialist subjects. There will be consistency in the terms that are used across both our primary and secondary phases so that transition from year to year feels as if it is the seamless continuum of learning which it is meant to be. Parents can play a role here too by asking their children about the words and terms learned in school and then insisting that such key vocabulary is also used outside of school, where appropriate. As teachers, we know that we can never dumb down our language, because to do so is to lower our expectations of students in terms of their language development.

Finally, we will also be introducing a Reading Buddies scheme this term, with more details to follow in due course. We have a perfect zone already in our school – the area under the indoor ramp – which we will repurpose solely for our Reading Buddies aim. We want our students to feel positive about reading and to look forward to opportunities to engage in reading, and we feel that this particular strategy is likely to help us a great deal.

Yours sincerely,



Steven Miles.

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