

# Vienna Bilingual Schooling Vision Statement

The multifaceted Vienna Bilingual Schooling (VBS) programme, which takes different forms at various levels of the Austrian school system, prepares Austrian and international pupils, at least until 2030, to play a major role in shaping an increasingly globalized society.

## Vienna Bilingual Schooling Mission Statement

**A commitment to global citizenship:** In a globalized society in which international contacts have become a matter of course, mastering the English language is not just an advantage, it has become a social and cultural necessity. It is increasingly becoming a prerequisite for active participation in society and the labour market. The VBS schools in Vienna enable young people to react appropriately to this challenge. Building upon the students' language skills, almost all subjects of the curriculum are taught and tested in the two working languages, German and English.

**Vienna as a cosmopolitan city:** As an important location for international organisations, universities and globally-active corporations, the Vienna Board of Education launched the VBS programme. The VBS educational offer includes elementary schools, secondary schools, AHS and BHS locations. Thus, it enables a continuous school education from primary school entry to university admission. VBS schools are therefore an essential factor in Vienna's international orientation.

**Cultural diversity as added value:** The international experiences of foreign-language-speaking children and adolescents enrich the learning environment of Austrian pupils. In return, the intensive German lessons enable the recent immigrants to participate in the cultural and social life of their new place of residence. The cosmopolitan attitude in the VBS classes is founded upon respect and tolerance.

**Education as a human right:** With Vienna Bilingual Schooling, the Vienna Board of Education has created a unique, free public school programme which is, in many ways, equivalent to expensive private schools. This factor contributes to increasing equal opportunities. The VBS programme also enables children and adolescents coming from abroad to enter the Austrian public education system, which ensures the quality and continuity of their education.

**The promotion of talent:** Bilingual teaching is an opportunity for the promotion of talent, being that the use of two working languages is more demanding for both pupils and teachers. Teaching English in spoken and written form from the 1st class of primary school onwards enables continuous acquisition of skills up to first language proficiency by the *Reifeprüfung* (final examination). Furthermore, in a teaching situation known as "partial immersion" cognitive skills are increasingly developed and promoted. Special emphasis is placed on scientific terminology in all disciplines. Pre-scientific papers written in English on an elective topic are an ideal preparation for the tertiary educational sector.

**An international outlook among teachers and pupils as a prerequisite:** The cooperation of Austrian teachers with qualified native-speaker teachers ensures the balanced use of both languages as well as a high degree of diversity in the selection of suitable teaching materials and pedagogical approaches. Team teaching leads to the further professionalisation of all teachers involved. In addition, the use of international teachers sharpens the understanding of different cultures and points of view.

**A standard of excellence:** VBS schools follow the Austrian curriculum. The final AHS and BHS examinations entitle students to study at any Austrian university and are also recognised by international universities. Many of our graduates study at renowned universities in Austria and abroad. The VBS programme prepares them for this with high-quality standards. This is ensured and evidenced by the ongoing review of educational standards and the standardized final examination.

**Diversity as enrichment:** The international composition of the VBS classes - based on literacy in German or English - gives our students the opportunity to get in close contact with people who speak different languages, feel connected to different cultures, and also form lasting friendships. They are given the invaluable opportunity to view their own habits and views not as irrevocable truths, but as possible approaches to reality.

In this way, our students acquire the critical thinking competence to absorb external influences, deal creatively with new ideas and values, and to incorporate them into their lives and work. In this sense, VBS schools can make an important contribution to international understanding and cooperation both in and beyond Vienna.