



INTERNATIONAL BACCALAUREATE ORGANIZATION

Primary Years Programme

School guide to the authorization visit

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Introduction

This *PYP school guide to the authorization visit* should be read in conjunction with:

- *PYP guide to school application*
- *PYP application form part B*
- *Application procedure for candidate schools*
- *Rules for authorized schools: Primary Years Programme*
- *General regulations: Primary Years Programme*
- *Programme standards and practices*
- *IB learner profile booklet*
- *Making the PYP happen*
- *PYP coordinator's handbook*.

Further information can be found in *Schools' guide to the Primary Years Programme* (<http://www.ibo.org>).

Candidate schools applying for formal authorization to offer the Primary Years Programme (PYP) of the International Baccalaureate Organization (IBO) are required to host an **authorization visit**, conducted by an IBO visiting team, after the school has prepared itself for at least one year and preferably longer.

The **authorization visit** is intended to ensure that the candidate school is genuinely committed to the pursuit of excellence in international education. The IBO visiting team also ascertains the school's preparedness to offer the programme and verifies that the school's planning has been both systematic and comprehensive.

The subsequent **authorization visit report** makes a series of professional judgments about the preparedness of the school to offer the PYP and, where necessary, indicates matters warranting attention and improvement. After receiving the report, the IBO director general notifies the school whether or not it has been authorized to offer the programme.

The purpose of authorization visits, more generally, is **not** to appraise or assess individual teachers or school administrators. Rather, it is to ensure that the educational philosophy and practices on which the PYP is founded will be maintained and furthered by the candidate schools.

This *PYP school guide to the authorization visit*:

- explains the rationale for the visit
- states the principles to be observed
- provides details of each stage of the process and practical advice
- provides an outline of the issues that the school should have addressed during preparation for the implementation of the programme, that is, during the consideration and candidate phases.

Aims of the visit

The IBO visiting team will check that the criteria and conditions for schools to be authorized to teach the PYP have been or will be met, within an established period of time, by the school. The aims of the authorization visit, and the subsequent authorization visit report, are to:

1. evaluate the preparedness of the candidate school to continue to implement the PYP
2. determine whether or not the school is committed to the philosophy, aims, objectives, and standards and practices of the PYP
3. obtain a clear overview of how the philosophy of the PYP compares with the educational philosophy of the school
4. convey clearly in the report to the regional office a series of:
 - commendations (of good practice)
 - recommendations (items to which the school is asked to respond, but which will not be mandatory for authorization to proceed)
 - matters to be addressed (aspects warranting attention and improvement within a certain time for authorization to be maintained)
5. assist the school management in making appropriate decisions concerning the ongoing implementation of the programme.

As stated in the introduction, the aim of the authorization visit is **not** to appraise or assess individual teachers or school administrators. The role of the IBO visiting team is intended to be supportive. It is important that those involved in the visit do not perceive the process as an assessment of any individual.

Criteria and conditions for authorization

These criteria and conditions apply to the Primary Years Programme and are supplementary to those outlined in the legal document *Rules for authorized schools*. (Please also refer to articles 3, 5 and 6 of *Application procedure for candidate schools*.)

1. Primary Years Programme (PYP) candidate schools shall accept and promote:
 - a) the importance of transdisciplinary and disciplinary inquiry in the PYP as a means to student learning
 - b) the commitment to achieving a balance between the search for meaning and understanding, and the acquisition of essential skills and knowledge
 - c) the emphasis given to the overall development of students as expressed in the *IB learner profile booklet* and through the IBO's mission statement
 - d) the involvement in IBO-approved PYP training and other relevant professional development for PYP teachers, coordinators and heads of schools.
2. Schools shall demonstrate to the IBO that they will have the required teaching faculty, administrative staff and other resources with which to implement the PYP successfully. Since the IBO is conscious of the vast disparities in resources available to schools in different parts of the world, agreement on this issue shall be a matter of consultation and guidance, if necessary over an extended period of preparation. Any matters to be addressed noted at the time of application, or during the authorization visit, will be explained in writing by the IBO and a timetable for their correction will be agreed upon.
3. Schools shall demonstrate their legal status and financial viability on the basis of appropriate documentation. Schools may be asked to furnish proof to the IBO that their application to participate in the PYP has the approval of their local, regional or national authorities.
4. Schools shall formally agree to bind themselves to full acceptance of all IBO requirements, encompassing the effective conduct of the PYP, with particular attention to curriculum development within the framework provided, the appointment of a PYP coordinator and the prompt payment of all fees and other charges as billed.
5. Schools shall be open to visits from members of the IBO administration or their delegates to advise and to review programme performance: a written report will be sent to the school. Evaluation of a school's programme by the IBO is mandatory and will be carried out three years after authorization to teach the PYP has been granted, and at regular intervals of five years thereafter.
6. Each school, or campus of a school that is located on two or more sites, is admitted as a separate entity. This policy is reflected in the payment of all fees. See article 5 of *Application procedure for candidate schools* for exceptions to this rule. Schools are authorized to teach their own students only.
7. Schools participating in the PYP shall be committed to the promotion of international understanding through education as expressed by the objectives in *Making the PYP happen* and as expressed by the IBO's mission statement. The IBO will also take into consideration factors that include:
 - the extent to which plans are in place for the school to achieve the standards and practices of the programme
 - the degree to which the teaching and learning at the school supports students in developing the attributes listed in the *IB learner profile booklet*
 - how the school's organizational structure supports the implementation of the programme and philosophy of the IBO

- what the school can bring to its own community and that of the IBO
 - the school's relationship with other schools in the local community.
8. New schools should normally have been in existence for at least three years before they can be authorized.

The IBO reserves the right to deny authorization to any school whose philosophy, policies, standards or practices are judged to be inconsistent with those of the IBO.

Authorization to offer the Primary Years Programme may be withdrawn if the IBO is not satisfied that the PYP is being implemented within its pedagogical and administrative guidelines. In all such instances, due consideration shall be given to protect the interests of students already enrolled in the PYP.

Only authorized schools are entitled to use the IB World School logo, or advertise themselves as an IB World School, and only in connection with the IB programme(s) they have been authorized to teach.

The process of the visit

Following receipt of the completed *PYP application form part B* with accompanying documentation and the application fee, the IBO will arrange with the school when the authorization visit is to take place. Each visit normally lasts two days, but this may vary according to the size of the school.

Note: The PYP application forms and appendices should be completed electronically and returned to the appropriate regional office. In consultation with the regional office, any supporting documentation should be supplied on CD-Rom(s) wherever possible. Where this is not possible, hard copies of the documents should be provided. Please ensure that the school is clearly identified in all correspondence.

Before the visit

The school will ensure that the teaching staff have undertaken IBO-approved professional development and that the materials required for the IBO visiting team have been prepared. Visiting team members will receive a copy of the original application (*PYP application form part B*) and supporting documents.

After the formal application is processed, an agenda for the visit is arranged by the school, in consultation with the regional office. The IBO selects and appoints the visiting team, keeping members informed about the arrangements for the visit and the preparatory work required.

The dates for the visit are decided in consultation with the candidate school.

During the visit

The focus of the visit is formal interviews and informal dialogues with individuals, teams or groups; as many as possible of those involved in the school's programme should be included in the process. The IBO visiting team will primarily:

- meet with administrators, teachers, parents and students
- view the school's facilities
- assess resources and instructional materials
- gather information leading to the visit report
- visit classes.

After the visit

After the visit, the visiting team produces an authorization visit report and this is sent to the regional office; the regional director then makes a recommendation to the IBO director general who will make a final decision and inform the school directly. Authorized schools are expected to:

- submit a response to any matters to be addressed indicated by the director general, in a time frame to be established with the regional office
- submit a response to any recommendations made by the regional office in connection with the authorization visit
- demonstrate an ongoing commitment to professional development.

A second visit may be required.

The IBO visiting team

Composition of the team

The IBO invites suitably qualified practitioners and administrators of the PYP to be trained to conduct authorization visits and to participate as members of visiting teams. The regional offices appoint a visiting team leader and team members (two to three, depending on the size of the school).

Staff from the school being visited cannot be members of the visiting team. Normally, members of the team may not visit schools where they have recently taught, or with which they otherwise have, or have had, a close relationship. If it presents a potential conflict of interest, team members should not visit a school in close proximity to their own.

Responsibilities and training

When visiting a candidate school, members of the visiting team are required to be fully aware of the aims of the visit and to follow the procedures for conducting the visit as described in this guide. Their role is **not** to appraise or assess individual teachers or school administrators.

The regional offices are responsible for the training and induction of new visiting team members. Team members are expected to be available to make a number of authorization visits and may be asked to assist in training new team members.

Reimbursement of expenses

The candidate school will be required either to pay a fixed amount or to reimburse the expenses of visiting team members through the appropriate regional office/regional representative, or to make local arrangements at no cost to the visiting team. Expenses incurred in such visits include:

- travel (including visas where necessary)
- accommodation
- subsistence.

The IBO provides visiting team members with an expenses claim form and guidance on the type of expenses that will be reimbursed, for example:

- responsibility for payment if a visiting team member arrives early or stays later than the scheduled visit
- advice on minimizing travelling costs
- guidance on what additional expenses are acceptable.

No honorarium is paid to team members.

Preparation for the visit

The best possible use can be made of the time available if the visit is planned carefully and both the visiting team and the candidate school are fully prepared. This is achieved by the exchange of information and consultation between the IBO, the school and the visiting team members.

School preparation

The candidate school should have completed the *PYP application form part B* and provided a sufficient number of copies of the supporting documentation, as specified by the regional office. Those at the school who will be involved in the authorization visit should have read the guidelines and prepared particularly for the issues that will be considered by the visiting team.

Note: The PYP application forms and appendices should be completed electronically and returned to the appropriate regional office. In consultation with the regional office, any supporting documentation should be supplied on CD-Rom(s) wherever possible. Where this is not possible, hard copies of the documents should be provided. Please ensure that the school is clearly identified in all correspondence.

The school may be asked to assist with practical arrangements concerning such matters as accommodation and local transport in sufficient time for team members to be kept informed by the IBO. The school's responsibilities are:

- the logistics of arrival and departure
- arranging single-room hotel accommodation for each team member
- proposing an agenda for the visit
- organizing transportation between the school and the hotel
- making available, in the school, a room for the use of the team throughout the visit where all necessary documentation required by the team will be available
- providing meals during the school day (for example, lunch in the workroom).

One informal staff/team gathering may be organized by the school. An initial gathering has been found to work well as this introduces the team, before the work of the visit begins, to those in the school involved in the programme and to the wider community.

IBO preparation

The IBO regional office:

- liaises with the candidate school and visiting team members so that all are aware of the practical details and are informed of their specific functions during the visit
- has studied in detail the *PYP application form part B* and supporting documentation to decide if the candidate school is ready for an authorization visit
- decides the length and dates of the visit, and the number of team members
- considers the school's proposed agenda items and, after consultation with the school, approves the final agenda.

Meetings

The visiting team leader, in consultation with the school, decides which visiting team members and representatives of the school should attend which meetings. Specific meetings with teachers or visits to classes will be with the agreement of individual teachers.

Preparation of the authorization visit report can begin after the first day of the visit, allowing the visiting team to:

- discuss and clarify findings
- begin the writing of the report
- agree on major commendations, recommendations and matters to be addressed
- consider whether or not to recommend authorization.

The visit agenda

Draft agenda

Details of the agenda are determined by the school, in consultation with the regional office, before the visit. The visiting team leader may revise the agenda slightly on site if the need arises and the school is able to accommodate the request.

In setting the agenda for the visit, decisions about school staff attending meetings outside normal school hours are left to the school; the IBO cannot insist that staff attend.

Any visits to classes should be arranged in consultation with the school and only with the consent of the teacher(s) concerned.

Agenda items

All agendas for authorization visits have items in common. These items will provide the visiting team with sufficient evidence and information from the visit to write the authorization visit report, and should include:

- formal interviews with the school administration, the PYP coordinator, teachers, groups of students, governors/school board members, parents and others who will be involved in the programme
- informal dialogues with teachers, students, administrators, librarians
- visits to classes
- a tour of school facilities, with particular attention to those areas intended to support the PYP
- access to displays, presentations and student work (as appropriate), and conversations with those involved in their production.

Sample agenda

As stated, details of the agenda are determined and confirmed before the visit. The precise agenda will depend on factors such as the size of the school and the information provided by the school prior to the visit. Sample agendas adapted to different types of schools can be obtained from the regional office.

Issues for consideration

The following questions are typical of those that may be posed by the visiting team; they may form the basis of dialogues during the visit. Most often, meetings with various members of the school community will take place separately, but similar questions will be addressed. In this way, each person's/group's understanding of, and commitment to, the PYP can be ascertained.

School administration/district administration

- What are your main reasons for wishing to offer the PYP?
- How are the philosophy and objectives of the school compatible with the philosophy and objectives of the PYP and with the IBO's mission statement? Are there any differences?
- What will be the organizational structure of the programme and how will it be managed? How much time will be provided for the coordination of the programme? What will be the role of the school administration in the programme?
- Is there a strategic/action plan for the implementation of the PYP, identifying staff responsibilities for:
 - head of school
 - primary school principal
 - PYP coordinator
 - grade-level/year coordinators (if applicable)
 - subject coordinators (if applicable)
 - others involved in the programme?
- Is the strategic/action plan supported by appropriate budgetary projections?
- How actively is the school principal involved to ensure the success of the programme?
- Are the qualifications, experience and training of the teachers sufficient to ensure successful implementation of the programme?
- Does the school have a systematic approach to curriculum planning, including a commitment to collaborative planning, with appropriate adjustments to workloads and scheduling?
- As the PYP curriculum is revised and developed, will there be opportunities for teachers to receive further IBO-approved training? Will teachers be able to participate in training sessions that allow them to be exposed to the international dimension of the programme?
- Is there a professional development plan in place to support this training? What funds will be provided for professional development?
- What funding is available for any additional resources that may be required to further the implementation of the programme, for example:
 - induction and training of new staff
 - appropriate non-teaching time for the PYP coordinator
 - additional library/resource centre and classroom resources
 - collaborative planning time for teachers?

- How have teachers been involved in the decision to adopt the PYP? What has been the role of parents and the governors/school board in the decision?
- How has the implementation of the PYP affected the school's timetable? How will the transdisciplinary programme of inquiry be revised? How are the subject areas addressed? How will students be assessed?
- If other IB programmes are offered, have issues of articulation been addressed?
- Is your teaching staff committed to:
 - the central role of the IB learner profile in teaching and learning
 - an inquiry-based approach to teaching and learning?
- Do the school literature, advertisements and promotional activities accurately represent the status of the school?
- Are administrators/teachers aware of the MYP? How many students go on to the MYP?

PYP coordinator

- What is your role as defined in the PYP coordinator's job description? What other responsibilities do you have?
- How do you ensure that you have access to, and are conversant with, all necessary PYP publications?
- How is the staff kept informed about relevant correspondence from the IBO?
- How much time will be provided in your schedule for PYP coordination and administration?
- How will you ensure that international-mindedness permeates the programme?
- How much collaborative planning time do teachers have and how is it scheduled?
- What types of meeting are organized for teachers? How often do these take place?
- How do you support and guide the staff in its implementation of the programme, such as the development of **unit planners** and the transdisciplinary **programme of inquiry**?
- What methods will be used to assess and record student progress in the programme?
- How do you ensure that sufficient resources are available for students to undertake inquiry-based learning, including independent research?
- What plans exist or are proposed for the PYP exhibition?
- What practical needs do you have in order to oversee the administration and delivery of the PYP effectively? Which of these needs is the more important?
- Is the school committed to an involvement with its surrounding community? Who is responsible for organizing this at present?
- Are you aware of the online curriculum centre (OCC), the IBO's web-based resource for teachers? Are you prepared to administer the distribution of passwords for PYP teachers to access this site?

PYP teachers

- How were you and your colleagues involved in the decision to offer the PYP? How will the programme benefit your students?
- How much time is provided for teachers to plan together? How is it ensured that the time is spent productively?

- Has appropriate provision been made for the orientation and training of existing and new staff members to acquaint them with the aims and nature of the programme in general and its implementation in the school?
- How is the relevant PYP documentation made available to teachers? In particular, do teachers have access to *Making the PYP happen* and the *Programme standards and practices*?
- Are teachers familiar with the contents of the *IB learner profile booklet*? Are students being given appropriate opportunities to develop the attributes listed in the profile?
- How often do teachers across the grade levels meet for curriculum planning? Have teachers been involved in developing a coherent, articulated programme of inquiry?
- Are teachers fully aware of the assessment requirements of the programme? What assessment structures are in place at the school?
- How will teachers be involved in promoting the IBO's mission statement? Do teachers have an understanding of the international dimensions of the programme?
- Is there a commitment, on the part of the teachers, to encourage and facilitate the school's involvement with the community?
- How will the PYP exhibition be developed and supervised? What plans are there to support students in their preparation for the exhibition?
- What professional development opportunities have been provided for teachers with respect to the PYP? Have they visited other IB World Schools authorized to offer the PYP? What PYP IBO-approved training have they attended? What plans are in place for future professional development opportunities?
- How are teachers involved in the continuing implementation of the PYP in the school?
- How has the programme impacted upon the students, the teaching staff and the administration?
- What is the evidence, in classrooms and in records of student work, of inquiry-based learning, and of both independent and collaborative work?
- What resources are available in classrooms to facilitate inquiry-based learning?

Teachers' assistants and support staff

- How are teachers' assistants and support staff informed about the PYP?
- How are teachers' assistants and support staff involved in developing the PYP?
- What time will be provided for teachers' assistants and support staff to meet with teams of teachers to contribute to the development of the curriculum and to coordinate links within the PYP?
- What types of support services are available to students?

Parents and students

The principal aim of meeting with parents is to share information and to answer any questions they may have about the PYP as it might operate in the school and worldwide. Parents are asked to comment on aspects of the programme and to evaluate their experiences with the PYP at the school this far. In addition, it is important to ascertain their involvement or role in the programme, as well as their understanding of the various components of the programme: philosophy, requirements, objectives.

Meetings with students are similar in that it is important to elicit their direct response to the programme. What do they know about the programme? Do they understand its objectives? Are they aware of its international dimension?

Students should have an opportunity to reflect on experiences, academic and otherwise, that they have found rewarding and/or challenging, and team members should ascertain their understanding of the PYP. In addition, it is important for students to identify their responsibilities within the programme, and for the visiting team to be aware of any outstanding needs students may have in order to achieve success.

Tour of school facilities

- Are there adequate facilities and resources to support the programme (gymnasium, outdoor playing areas, library/resource centre, rooms for the arts, computers, audio-visual equipment, teacher and student resources)?
- What plans are in place for additional resources and facilities?

The library/resource centre

- Does the library/resource centre adequately serve the requirements of the PYP and encourage both student and staff use?
- Is there appropriate budgeting and planning for the maintenance of, and additions to, the resource collections?
- Are there sufficient and up-to-date reference materials, in the language(s) of instruction, to facilitate individual student inquiry and learning?
- How will librarians work with PYP teachers and students?
- Does the library/resource centre contain books, resources and periodicals in the mother tongue(s) of the students?
- Is the library/resource centre equipped with computers and CD-Roms? Is Internet access easily available?
- Do students have access to other libraries in the local community?
- What access do students have to the library/resource centre (operating hours, access during the school day, etc.)?
- Does the library/resource centre contain books, resources and periodicals for staff professional development?
- Does the library have sufficient multicultural resources, including an international collection of children's literature?
- Have the library/resource centre staff received appropriate professional development and are they aware of contemporary developments?
- Is the library/resource centre staff involved in planning for the needs of the programme?

Outcome of the authorization visit

Exit interview

During the exit interview, and based on the visit and on the review of the submitted application and documentation, the visiting team provides the school with its initial observations in the form of commendations, recommendations and matters to be addressed (as appropriate). The school must attend to any matters to be addressed in order for authorization to proceed.

The visiting team will also share orally the observations made during the visit. The team should comment on noteworthy practices as well as concerns that were observed. This should also be the final opportunity for visiting team members to check their facts and to ensure that the subsequent authorization visit report accurately depicts the school setting and its plans for the PYP.

At this time, the visiting team will **not** provide the school with a definitive response regarding the school's prospects for authorization but should explain that the authorization visit is but one part of a larger process. The IBO director general will make the final decision regarding full authorization or denial of authorization. The regional office will notify the school of any postponement of authorization.

The visiting team should stress to the school representatives that the team members will continue discussions among themselves after the visit and that adjustments to their oral report may be made. The visiting team will then complete a written report for the regional director. After consideration of the document and any changes, the regional director does one of two things.

- The regional director decides on the postponement of authorization, in which case the school will be informed in detail with a future date for a second visit at the school's expense.
- The regional director forwards a report, with a recommendation for action, to the director general, who then notifies the school directly of the final decision.

After the exit interview

The visiting team leader will compile the report that will be circulated to all members of the team for their consideration and comments. The completed report will then be forwarded to the regional office with a recommendation from the visiting team regarding the readiness of the school to be authorized.

Possible outcomes

1. **Authorization is granted** and the school is informed in a letter from the IBO director general. The school may be required to complete further teacher training, to improve some facilities or resources, and so on. In such cases these will be listed in the director general's letter as "matters to be addressed" and the school will be required to send a report to the regional office by a certain date. Failure to implement such requests will result in a school's authorization status being put at risk and the withdrawal procedure (see article 9 of *Rules for authorized schools*) may be put into effect. Also, the school will receive a letter from the regional director, indicating the commendations and recommendations, based on the visiting team's report.

2. **Authorization is postponed** if there are matters to attend to which involve significant changes, but it is obvious that the school is committed and has a specific plan in place to accommodate the deficiencies. Upon fulfillment of the necessary conditions, the school is required to submit, by a specified date, an extensive report to the appropriate regional office and, in some cases, a return visit at the school's expense will be scheduled. If the IBO is satisfied that the conditions have been successfully met, authorization is granted.
3. **The school is not granted authorization** to offer the Primary Years Programme. The school administration and staff are not adequately prepared to deliver the programme. It will be the decision of the school community whether the school will continue to prepare for authorization to offer the PYP or not. A school cannot reapply for PYP authorization until a period of at least two years has elapsed since the previous application, and the normal application fees and expenses apply.