

Access and Inclusion Policy

The Ramallah Friends School is committed to the IBO and Quaker values, affirming an inclusive, holistic, academically excellent, socially responsible, and egalitarian learning environment. Inclusive access arrangements aim to remove or reduce barriers students may face during teaching, learning, and assessment. Optimal access arrangements are carefully planned to remove or reduce learning barriers to a level equal to the student's requirements.

Philosophy of Access and Inclusion - The Learning Support Program:

The Philosophy of Access and Inclusion at Ramallah Friends School (RFS) is rooted in the school's mission, Quaker principles, and values. RFS is dedicated to providing all students, regardless of their backgrounds, needs, or challenges, with an academically rigorous, balanced, engaging, and inclusive learning environment, emphasizing collaboration and Quaker values. The Learning Support Program at RFS acknowledges and respects the rights of children with diverse abilities to actively participate in natural settings, thereby enhancing education for all students. RFS recognizes the importance of inclusion in elevating educational standards and strives to foster a caring and trusting environment for every student. The school embraces various options to promote inclusive education, viewing schools as inclusive communities where all children can learn and thrive. RFS also recognizes each student's unique needs and challenges, adapting the curriculum accordingly.

The Learning Support Program at RFS was first established in 1995; it has evolved into a pioneering model of inclusive education in Palestine, aligning with the school's philosophy and commitment to equality and inclusivity. It is guided by an inclusive philosophy, recognizing and upholding the rights of children with diverse abilities to participate in natural settings actively. By meeting the needs of children facing challenges, the program improves the overall quality of education for all students in the classroom. Considering the limited resources available, the school believes that inclusion is essential for raising educational standards and strives to create a caring and trusting environment.

Objectives of the Access and Inclusion Policy:

1. Ensure full access to the curriculum for students with learning needs.
2. Foster a culture of shared responsibility and collaboration among staff, including classroom teachers, in supporting the Learning Support policy.
3. Implement departmental policies that explicitly address support for all students and those with learning needs and challenges.
4. Provide equitable opportunities for students with learning needs and challenges in the classroom and during exams.
5. Promote collaboration and communication among teachers, support staff, students, and parents.
6. Cultivate respect, empathy, and understanding within the school community.

7. Ensure adherence to differentiated instruction through staff agreement on implementing a broad, balanced, relevant, and differentiated curriculum.
8. Offer ongoing professional development opportunities for teachers and staff.
9. Regularly evaluate and improve inclusive policies, practices, and resources.
10. Collaborate with external agencies and specialists to access additional support and resources.
11. Involve parents and guardians as active participants in their child's education.
12. Ensure personalized education plans are developed for students with special needs, incorporating individual education plans (IEPs) and actively involving parents and students in the collaborative planning and implementation process.

Admissions, Inclusion, and Learning Support at RFS:

1. RFS Admission Policy prioritizes a positive learning environment where all students, regardless of their backgrounds, needs, and challenges, are given fair opportunities to demonstrate their abilities.
2. Inclusive access arrangements at RFS adhere to principles of equal opportunities, maintaining standards of excellence, and reflecting students' usual ways of working.
3. The confidentiality of student information is ensured, and the integrity of assessment for all students is maintained.
4. Collaboration among teachers, administrators, parents/guardians, and support staff is fostered to identify and address learners' needs.

General Considerations Regarding Students with Identified Learning Needs:

1. Diagnosis documentation may be requested, including recent and up-to-date formal professional documentation.
2. Specialist evaluation may be required to ensure the accuracy and reliability of assessments.
3. Updated documentation may be requested during transitions between programs (PYP, MYP, DP) or levels within the school.

Inclusive Assessment Arrangements:

All students must be allowed to take their assessments under conditions that are as fair as possible. Where standard assessment conditions and procedures would put candidates at a disadvantage and prevent them from demonstrating their skills and knowledge adequately, reasonable access arrangements may be authorized.

Candidates eligible for inclusive assessment arrangements are those with individual needs such as:

- a. learning disabilities.
- b. Multiple disabilities and physical, sensory, neurological, medical, or mental health issues,
- c. Difficulties writing due to specific learning challenges such as visual processing or fine motor skills.
- d. Communication and speech difficulties.
- e. Autism spectrum disorders.
- f. Social, emotional and behavioral challenges.
- g. Specific Learning difficulties.

Guidelines and Procedures:

1. Inclusive access planning begins early, individualizing support based on observations and professional diagnoses.
2. Requests for inclusive access arrangements for IB examinations require approval from the Diploma Program Coordinator and the Head of the School.
3. Requests must be submitted six months before the DP examination schedule.
4. RFS takes responsibility for making arrangements for required students and technology.
5. Requests for inclusive access must be accompanied by (a) evidence from a language test or a psychological/psycho-educational/medical report; and (b) educational evidence from RFS. For detailed requirements, see the *IBO Access and Inclusion Policy* (February 2022) Section 2.5 "Evidence Required (supporting documentation)."
6. Some inclusive arrangements on IB assessments are at the discretion of RFS's DP Coordinator, while others require authorization from the IBO.
7. IBO authorization for inclusive access is necessary for specific conditions mentioned in the *IBO Access and Inclusion Policy*. See the *IBO Access and Inclusion Policy* (February 2022) Sections 4-6.

Adverse Circumstances:

Unusual situations beyond a candidate's and school's control that negatively affect a candidate's performance may be considered under the IBO Adverse Circumstances Policy. For a complete description of mitigating arrangements for adverse circumstances and how to apply them, see the *IBO Adverse Circumstances Policy* (August 2021) Sections 2-3.

Primary Years Program The PYP Coordinator and Learning Support Coordinator must be informed of students who may require inclusive assessment arrangements.

Middle Years program The MYP Coordinator and Learning Support Coordinator must be informed of students who may require inclusive assessment arrangements. For a student to be granted inclusive assessment arrangements, detailed documentation from an educational psychologist and doctor must be considered. School Leadership will then decide based on that documentation. Depending on the nature of the learning support requirement, inclusive assessment arrangements can include, but are not limited to, extra time in written assessments, using a word processor and a reader, and using a calculator.

Diploma Program The IB Diploma Coordinator and Learning Support Coordinator must be informed of students who may require inclusive assessment arrangements at least six months before the examination. For a student to be granted inclusive assessment arrangements, detailed documentation from an educational psychologist and doctor must be sent to the IB by the school. The IB will then make their decision based on that documentation. Depending on the nature of the learning support requirement, inclusive assessment arrangements can include, but are not limited to, extra time in written examinations and using a word processor and a reader.

Resources to support the policy:

RFS offers a range of resources and services to facilitate the academic success and well-being of students regardless of their challenges. These include special education programs, individualized education plans (IEPs), provides learning support specialists, assistive technology tools, one-on-one or small group instruction, and counseling services. The school's commitment to inclusion extends to accessible facilities, ongoing professional development for staff in inclusive education strategies.

Review Process:

This policy document will be constantly monitored. It will be reviewed when Program coordinators deem it necessary, but certainly by five years from the publication date. Program coordinators will ensure its implementation through planning meetings and classroom visits. It is shared with all School stakeholders.

Date:

- September 9, 2019 (Previous version)
- October 2, 2021
- February- May 2023
- September 2023 by Head of School, program coordinators, academic council, and teachers.

