

**American International School
of Rotterdam**



**Elementary
Student/Parent Handbook
2014-2015**

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Dear Students and Parents,

Welcome to the American International School of Rotterdam Elementary School! On behalf of the entire staff, I would like to extend a warm welcome to all returning students as well as to students new to AISR this year. As your principal, I look forward to getting to know you as we work together throughout the year.

AISR offers an engaging curriculum to challenge students for future success in life. Students are involved in authentic learning opportunities where they develop problem solving skills and a natural curiosity for the world around them. This combined with our small class sizes and individual support for students ensures student success.

Our dedicated elementary school teachers and support staff create a caring, supportive, and challenging learning environment for their students. Our staff believes in working together with parents to help students achieve excellence. It is this partnership with parents that makes each child's learning the focus of everything that we do at AISR.

Thank you for choosing the American International School of Rotterdam and for your support of the Elementary School. I would like to encourage parents to share any concerns or questions they may have or drop by to say 'hello'. I look forward to a wonderful year of learning and growing.

Yours sincerely,

Jacki Ludgate
Elementary Principal

AISR SCHOOL PHILOSOPHY

The American International School of Rotterdam is committed to providing a high quality English language education. The curriculum is American in nature, modified to provide an international perspective, for students from a wide range of nationalities and cultural backgrounds.

The School pledges to continuously strive for educational excellence with a focus on learning. As a community of learners, AISR is further committed to developing students who will interact positively with others.

CURRICULUM

Reading, language arts, and mathematical skills and concepts form the foundation of the educational process at the elementary level. Science, social studies, music, art, computers, modern languages, physical and health education make up the remainder of the elementary curriculum. One of the primary objectives of the elementary curriculum is to integrate subjects in order to give students an opportunity to identify relationships that exist between disciplines.

What to Expect in Kindergarten

Children learn about reading through:

- Listening to stories -- This helps children become familiar with written sentence structure, predicting events and different types of vocabulary.
- Shared Reading -- Children observe the teacher and take part in reading an enlarged text.
- Guided Reading -- Children work in small groups using texts that are matched to the children's individual ability and are then also practiced at home.

Children learn about writing through:

- Learning about the relationship between written symbols and spoken sounds e.g. the beginning sounds, consonant blends, endings and vowel blends.
- Writing clusters or letters to represent words or convey a message.
- Learning common words by heart and becoming familiar with spelling patterns, e.g. rhyming words.

Native Languages

In addition to the Dutch Foreign Language (FL) education we provide at AISR, we also offer Native Language (NL) instruction. The Elementary School 'Native Language Program' takes place daily for 45 minutes. This program is designed for those students who already converse in their native language and are in PreK1 through grade 5. It cannot unfortunately cater for those who hold the nationality but as yet do not speak the language. Based on a wealth of educational research, recognition of a child's home culture and native language is an important feature of any language learning approach. Provision for the maintenance and further development of the native language also helps to address many social, emotional and academic needs of the language learner. We strongly encourage students to continue the development of their mother tongue by taking part in these classes.

At AISR, most students study their mother tongue during the school day and the classes are arranged according to need. At present, we have mother tongue classes in the following languages: Dutch, German French, Italian, Spanish, Japanese and Mandarin. Every effort will be made to provide mother tongue classes for other languages as the need arises. Students who are not enrolled in a Native Language class go to Dutch Foreign Language class.

AISR defines a Native Language as:

- A language used by the student as a language of communication (or as one of two languages of communication, in the case of bilingual students) outside the school environment and/or in his/her family.

- A language with which the student feels comfortable, and in which he/she intuitively, grammatically and correctly describes the world, his/her feelings and emotions.
- A language that ties a person to his/her cultural identity.

Fluency in a Native Language is assessed by our language department to determine whether or not students qualify for the program. Each case is individually decided with the Head of Modern Languages, Marga Akerboom (marga.akerboom@aisr.nl).

The International Primary Curriculum (IPC)

AISR uses the International Primary Curriculum (IPC), a “world class, brain-friendly, comprehensive and practical curriculum, delivering subject, personal and international knowledge, skills and understanding.” The IPC provides the support teachers and students need to help primary and elementary children learn as 21st century international citizens. The IPC focuses on academic and personal development, and the development of a global awareness. Learning is active, engaging, and above all meaningful to children.

Homework

Homework is assigned so that students can expand on the skills and concepts taught in class, and gain a more thorough understanding from additional independent study. Assignments to be completed at home vary according to grade level, subject area and student needs. The main goal is to develop good study habits, so that assignments can be accomplished independently.

At AISR, we believe that homework provides an opportunity for students to learn how to be responsible and to experience the success of independent learning. It reinforces and extends class work and consolidates basic skills and knowledge, establishing habits of study, concentration and self-discipline, which will serve students for the rest of their lives.

In Kindergarten, students should do 10 minutes of homework per night. This homework may include: reading small early reader books that the child has already read at school during guided reading, learning first spelling words or doing a math activity. This homework will be clearly outlined by the child’s teacher and will be relevant to the weekly classroom program. It is recommended that reading take up about half of the child’s weekly homework time.

Handwriting Policy

Neatness and clarity in all written work is emphasized whether it be in cursive or printing. Students in Grades 1 through 5 use the D’Nealian style of printing. This style facilitates the transfer to cursive writing in the later grades.

Physical Education Classes and Swimming

This is an activity-based program and requires all students to participate. The program includes: games, gymnastics, fitness, dance and swimming. Students are asked to have a separate pair of sneakers for inside activities (no black soled shoes that will mark the gym floor) and outdoor activities (sneakers for playground and fields). Students in Grades 2-5 wear a P.E. uniform. This consists of shorts and a t-shirt. The uniform can be purchased from Mr. Stuart Brown (P.E. Office) at the beginning of the school year. The total cost is 40 euros.

The school swimming program continues to work in the same way for the upcoming school year, 2014-2015. The students who have already received their diplomas will work with Mr. Brown in a separate program, while their classmates continue to work on their A and B diplomas. The program has 4 main elements: stroke work, water safety, pool games and activities, and basic life-saving skills. The children are required to bring a towel and a swimsuit (no long or baggy shorts for boys) in a drawstring bag. The children may not wear jewelry in the pool.

Parents are asked to send an e-mail to the class teacher to excuse students from a particular activity due to illness.

Testing

The school administers standardized and individual tests to aid in individualizing instruction, evaluating the educational development of students, identifying those needing special help, program and curriculum development, and helping pupils make educational choices which coincide with their academic strengths.

The school administers Measures of Academic Progress (MAP). Students in Kindergarten through Grade 10 are tested three times per year in math, reading, and language usage. Educators use the growth and achievement data from MAP to develop targeted instructional strategies and to plan school improvement.

In cases where the school suggests the need for psychological testing, the school will solicit the approval of the parents prior to testing. The cost of such tests will be the responsibility of the parents if they cannot be administered by the learning support teacher. Results of such testing will be discussed with parents. The tests themselves will remain in the confidential folder of the child.

Reporting Student Progress

A student's progress and achievement is reported to the parents through the use of formal and informal conferences as well as through report cards. A schedule of open house and parent-teacher conferences is printed in the school calendar and is distributed to parents at the beginning of each school year.

Communication between home and school is vital. Therefore, parents are encouraged to contact the teacher via e-mail if they have any questions.

We ask that parents respect the schedules of teachers, teacher aides, and students, and NOT interrupt them while they are in class.

Parent teacher conferences are held after the 1st quarter on the November 5-6 2014. 'Request only' conferences are held on the March 11-12, 2015. This means that a conference will only be scheduled if the parents or teacher requests it. If you need to speak to a teacher at any other time during the year, please do not hesitate to call the school or email them and an appointment can be made.

Gardening Program

Grade 3 students are involved with a gardening program sponsored by the City of Rotterdam. The program is taught by a horticulturist at the school gardening plots. Students learn about gardening with a hands-on program of planting and tending to their crops in the spring. In the fall, Grade 4 students harvest their own crops.

Field Trips and Excursions

Parental permission is given for participation in field trips at the time of enrollment. A notice regarding the field trips is sent home to parents by teachers prior to each excursion. All Field trip arrangements and schedules must be approved by the Principal in advance.

School transportation, if available, will be used. On all school-sponsored trips involving students, provision will be made for proper supervision by School employees. Parents may be asked to assist in such supervision. Parents will be asked to pick up their children at school if the students arrives back after 3:05 p.m.

ACTIVITIES

The school sponsors many activities and events during the school year. In addition to the holidays mentioned below in the Celebrations Policy, these events might include:

- A seasonal program (December)
- Creative arts evening (May)
- AISR field day (May or June)
- An elementary musical/play

Other important events are listed in the school calendar published on the school website (www.aisr.nl) so parents know when they will occur.

Musical Activities

- All students in grade 4 are required to purchase a recorder.
- All students in grade 5 have the opportunity to learn a band instrument. This is part of the program.
- There is also an opportunity (optional) to learn an instrument, and advice is available when requested.
- Students will be encouraged and expected to take part in musical activities throughout the year.
- After school orchestra is offered to all elementary students who have at least 6 months experience.

Sports

Students in grade 5 are eligible to participate on the U12 sports teams competing in the NECIS sports league. Information about interschool competitions will be furnished by the AISR athletic director, Mr. Rob Zeilstra.

Celebrations Policy

There are several events during the year that all staff and students in the Elementary School will celebrate:

- Fall:**
- Halloween, October 31:** Organized by the classroom teacher and room parent(s). Each class will attend the Halloween Parade.
- Thanksgiving, November 26:** A Thanksgiving lunch is organized by the PTSA. The students present a short musical interlude prior to the lunch. (November 27-28 is Thanksgiving vacation)
- Winter:**
- Sinterklaas, December 5:** This is organized by the Dutch language teachers. Sinterklaas visits the school, and all the students welcome him in the gym with a program of songs and dance.
- Seasonal Celebration, December 18:** This will be celebrated in each class in December. Teachers may coordinate this with the room parent(s) or parent volunteers.
- Spring:**
- Valentine's Day, February 14:** The Secondary Student Council organizes the sale of roses during the week leading up to February 14..
- Easter:** An Easter activity is optional and may be organized by the classroom teacher.
- Summer:**
- End of Year:** There are several events to mark the end of the school year
1. Signing of yearbook (usually takes place the day before the last day of school between 2:00 and 3:00)

2. All students attend the End of Year Program (the last day of school). All students receive an ice-cream before going home

Room Parents

Many teachers like to have room parents to assist in planning for parties and various activities throughout the year. Not all teachers require the assistance of room parents. For parents interested in volunteering, please contact your child's teacher.

Birthday Party Policy

The school asks that invitations for birthday parties held out of school be distributed at school only if invitations are given to all students in the class.

Please ask the classroom teacher if you would like to hold a party in the classroom – this should be at the teacher's discretion due to schedules and potential academic interruptions.

A pleasant Dutch custom for the "birthday boy or girl" is to provide a little treat for the class on their birthday. Students are welcome to adopt this tradition if they wish. Please contact the teacher in advance if you want to do this.

STUDENT SERVICES

Nurse's Office: Please be sure that you fill in a health form when your child first enters AISR. If there is any change in circumstances e.g. update of vaccinations, etc. during the year, the nurse should be informed.

The nurse's office is staffed by Mrs. Laurence Chambers, a registered nurse, and is open throughout the school day. A student who needs to go to the nurse's office must check first with his/her classroom teacher before leaving the classroom. Parents will be notified in the event that a student needs to return home due to illness or in cases of emergencies. No student will be permitted to leave school on his/her own. Parents must inform the office if their child is taking medication so that it can be properly administered and monitored. The medications must be handed in to the nurse's office.

The school nurse and the class teacher need to be informed of any relevant health problems such as allergies, asthma, diabetes etc. If your child has to use medicine daily, e.g. asthma inhalers, epi-pens, it is advisable to leave one with the school nurse.

Please be sure that you fill in a health form upon your arrival in school. If there is any change in circumstances e.g. update of vaccinations etc during the year, the school should be informed.

We want to do everything in our power to ensure your child's well being while he/she is at AISR.

Student Council

The elementary school is one of the important first steps in a lifelong journey of learning. Students learn vital skills that will prepare them for advanced learning later in their education. The elementary school student council presents a unique opportunity for young students to learn organization, leadership and teamwork skills and prepares them for later student government positions. The main goal behind this very exciting project is to provide activities for the elementary students both inside and outside the school day, for example:

- Movie afternoons
- Games
- School dances
- Spirit days or weeks
- Talent shows
- Fund raising events

Cafeteria

The cafeteria operates 5 days a week to provide a nutritious meal for students. The lunch program is optional for all students. Students participating in the hot lunch program need to have a lunch ticket. Lunch tickets may be purchased in the cafeteria. Each ticket is good for 10 lunches and milks. In addition to the regular hot lunch option there is a vegetarian as well as a sandwich option. Lunch cards will be put out on the class table in the cafeteria prior to lunch each day. Parents are notified +/- 3 days prior to a lunch ticket expiring. If any lunches or milk remain at the end of the year, a refund will be made or the ticket can be used the following year. **Students in elementary school may not purchase cookies, candies, etc. during the school day.**

Cafeteria Rules

The rules for the cafeteria are very simple. Parents can also practice these rules with their child/children at home. Students are asked to:

- sit at their appropriate table
- talk quietly
- stay seated while eating lunch
- go to recess only when instructed by the duty teacher in the cafeteria

Buses

All school and contracted buses have seat belts for student safety. Parents are reminded to be sure that their child is aware of the need to have seat belts fastened at all times and to obey the directions of the driver. Buses will only carry the number of passengers for which the bus was designed.

The prime concern of the school is safe transport to and from school. Each student is entitled to have a safe, comfortable and pleasant ride between home and school. To achieve this goal, there must be cooperation on the part of parents, teachers, and drivers.

Riding the buses is a privilege and not a right. If a child does not obey the rules of the bus, uses inappropriate language/behavior or is habitually late in the morning or afternoon, the bus riding privilege may be revoked.

In cases where students do not exhibit expected behavior, the following actions will be taken:

- The student will be warned, and the student's parents will be notified.
- Further occurrences of unacceptable behavior will result in suspension of the student's bus riding privilege.
- Continued unacceptable behavior may result in a total loss of transportation privileges.

In extreme cases, a student's bus privilege may be suspended without prior warning.

Any questions or concerns regarding the bus transportation policy should be addressed to the transportation coordinator.

Parents must inform the transportation coordinator Ms. Betty Mooring **prior to 9:00 a.m.** for any changes in their child's normal afternoon route at transportation@aisr.nl

In the event of a bus breakdown or delay along the route, the driver will, as quickly as possible, notify the school office via mobile phone so appropriate steps may be taken to ensure the prompt and safe arrival of the students.

Students will not be left at an unattended home. If a parent or guardian is not at home when a child is dropped off, the driver will return the student to school and the parents are then responsible for collecting their child.

Please remind your child not to leave books or personal belongings on the bus. Students are requested not to eat or drink on the bus.

Lost and Found

Students who find lost articles are asked to return them to the office. Valuable articles will be kept under lock and key until they are claimed. Less expensive, more commonly lost articles will be placed in the lost and found area next to the cafeteria.

LIBRARY

The AISR Library is for our AISR Community. Come and read with your children during our library hours. We also have computers for our AISR community to use. Our hours are M-F 8:00-3:30.

Library Classes

The library classes are a time where lifelong readers are nourished and where informational skills are taught. Elementary students have scheduled classes in the library once a week. Students in Pre-K1 begin their weekly visits in the second month of school. During library time, students will be read an interactive story and/or practice information and research skills, and choose book(s) to borrow.

Library Books

We strongly encourage parents to read/browse the library books with their child in addition to class time in the library.

The number of books a student is allowed to borrow depends on his/her grade:

PreK1-PreK 2	1 book
Kindergarten	2 books
Grades 1-2	3 books
Grades 3-5	5 books

The Online Library Catalog (Access-IT) can be browsed online at:
www.aisr.nl>learning>library>online resources>Access it

Library books must be returned within 2 weeks or renewed for further reading. Overdue notices are sent out monthly. Please help your child locate their missing book(s). Invoices will be sent home for very late or lost books. If you cannot find the book(s), you will need to pay a fee to cover replacement costs. If you do find the book(s) after you've made a payment, you will receive your money back.

Library Bags

Library Bags are provided for each student when they enter AISR.

No Bag, No Book Policy

In order to keep library books in great condition for current and future AISR students, there is a No Bag, No Book Policy for all elementary students. If your child does not bring their bag to school (even if they have their book to return), they will not be allowed to check out a new book.

Parents are welcome to have their own library card. The best time for visits are first thing in the morning or towards the end of the school day.

The Library is committed to doing its best to reach and inspire every reader. We have an *AISR Elementary Reads Month*, two Book Fairs per school year, author Skypes and various activities to promote and celebrate reading.

BEHAVIOR POLICY

Computer Use

Most AISR computers are networked to the Internet. Therefore, all students must follow the appropriate rules governing computer and Internet use. A copy of the adopted rules and procedures are provided to all students in their computer classes.

AISR'S Digital Citizenship Program is the concept of educating students (and all technology users) about how to use technology appropriately. This involves using technology effectively and not misusing it to disadvantage others. Digital Citizenship consists of numerous themes including appropriate online etiquette, literacy in how digital technology works and how to use it, an understanding of ethics and the law as it relates to technology, knowing how to stay safe online, and advice on health issues relating to the use of technology.

Digital Citizenship education brings together these themes and provides a framework for schools and parents to educate students about their rights and responsibilities when interacting with other people through digital technology. It begins the first time they interact with online technology, such as the first time they use the Internet, send an email or text message, or sign on to an game service.

Electronic Games/Portable Music Players

The elementary school staff recommends that any electronic games and portable music players be left at home. The elementary faculty does not consider it educationally sound for these items to be brought to school. If a child brings one of these items to school, it will be held by the teacher and given to the child at the end of the day to be taken home.

Telephones/Mobile Phones

Students are not allowed to use the phones/mobile phones at school unless there is an emergency. All students are instructed that they are to make arrangements for special after school activities with their parents prior to arriving at school. If parents and students discuss after school activities before leaving for school there should be no need for a student to ask to use the phone. ***Students are not permitted to use mobile phones during school hours.***

Playground Rules

Playground rules are simply based on safety. Students are asked to:

- Be gentle
- Be kind and helpful
- Play well with others
- Remember the safety rules
- Do not hurt others
- Do not hurt anybody's feelings
- Take care of the playground and have respect for the equipment
- Do not spoil others' games
- Have a happy recess

Harassment

Harassment on the basis of race, national origin, religion, sex, age, or disability in any form, is not be tolerated. Such harassment includes unsolicited remarks, gestures, or physical contact, display or circulation of written materials, or pictures derogatory to either gender, or to racial, ethnic, religious, age, or disabled individuals or groups. Students who believe they are the victim of harassment should report the conduct to appropriate staff/administrators. Procedures to resolve the problem will then begin as soon as possible. The parents of both students will be contacted by the school. No student will be subject to any form of coercion, intimidation, retaliation, or discrimination for reporting harassment. Any student who is found, after appropriate investigation, to have

engaged in harassment of a member of the school community, will be subject to appropriate disciplinary action, including detention, suspension or recommendation for expulsion.

Theft/Stealing

AISR strongly believes in respecting the property and possessions of students and school personnel. The school has a right to search a student, his/her possessions, and locker if there is a reasonable suspicion that he/she has committed a theft. The administration urges students not to bring valuables, such as expensive watches or electronic equipment, or large amounts of money to school because these items are the most common targets of theft. Stealing will result in a student being suspended for up to 3 days. Repeated offenses or major incidents of theft may lead to expulsion. Full restitution is required prior to returning to regular class and only after a parent conference.

SCHEDULE

Official Hours

Official school hours for students in Grade K-5 are 8:15-3:05

On several Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays throughout the year, the school day will end at **11:25**. Early dismissal days are used by the staff to concentrate on curriculum development and other professional activities. The dates are noted on the school calendar.

The office is open daily 8:00-5:00.

Each student in grades K-5 has recess periods during the day as well as a minimum 45-minute lunch/recess period. Students may bring a snack to eat during their morning break. We ask you NOT to send candy or soft drinks with your child but, instead, provide healthy snacks for them to eat such as: fruit, granola bars, or carrot sticks, along with a juice to drink.

Attendance

It is very important that students are in school every day. Regular school attendance is essential to the progress and achievement of the student. The school has a very generous vacation policy. We ask parents **not** to extend the period of time students are away from school except in emergencies. Worksheets and extra assignments cannot take the place of a quality education in a collaborative environment. If a child should be absent for more than 20 school days during the year, he/she has missed too much material that could cause gaps in the child's education. The staff and administrators will determine whether the child should be promoted to the next grade.

It is the responsibility of the parents to contact the school between 8:00 a.m. and 9:00 a.m. at **attendance@aisr.nl** if a student is going to be absent on that day. Only parents may notify the school of a student's absence.

It is important that parents contemplating a vacation should try to arrange the time to coincide with the vacation period of the school calendar. ***If this is not possible then the parents must make a written request to the Principal, at least two weeks in advance for their child(ren) to be excused for a holiday outside of the school's vacation periods.***

Tardies

We encourage parents to ensure that their children are on time for school. Coming to school late is both embarrassing for your child and inconvenient for everyone involved. Students who are tardy for classes in the morning on a regular basis are usually late as a result of parents not understanding the consequences. What parents may not realize is that late students interrupt the class, frustrate the teachers, bother other students and cause an inconvenience to the office staff because they must account for all tardies.

It is important for you to note that if after several attempts to encourage parents to deliver their children on time, the problem is not resolved, we will contact the parents to arrange an appointment with the school administration.

Hopefully these policies will create a positive climate in which students are able to grow and learn in a manner which best suits their individual personalities and also enables them to learn the importance of responsible habits and attitudes

Picking Up/Dropping Off Students

Parents should be prompt when collecting children after school or from after-school activities. ***The school does not provide a 'baby sitting' service.*** If parents are continually late in picking up a student, the student may be asked not to continue in the activity.

Between 7:45 and 8:15, teachers are busy preparing for the school day. Parents who bring their children to school are requested to stay on the playground until the teacher comes out to pick up the students. Parents are requested to follow the same procedure at the end of the day.

Leaving School Grounds

For the safety of the students, at no time may any elementary student of AISR leave school grounds during the school day without a parent or guardian picking them up at the school. Please try to schedule appointments outside of the school day. Taking children out of school early disrupts the educational process and is inconvenient for everyone involved. The school highly discourages this practice. Parents need to notify attendance@aisr.nl and the classroom teacher if their child must leave campus during the school day. Then the teacher can dismiss the student at the appropriate time.

Emergency Closure

The Director/Principal is authorized to announce the closing of school if actual or potential hazards threaten the safety and well being of students or employees. The decision to close the school shall be made by the Director/Principal upon consultation with members and/or the Chairman of the Board (when feasible), professional staff, and/or other community agencies responsible for the safety and well being of the community.

Parents will be notified prior to a school closure via email, and if possible, by telephone.

Parents are urged to make decisions about the safety of their children during any potentially dangerous situation. The safety of students is of prime importance and parents should make final determination as to whether or not to send a child to school during a potentially dangerous situation.

RETENTION

The school believes that all possible efforts need to be made by the school and the parents to ensure that students are properly placed. When academic or developmental questions arise, the school will inform parents of these problems and assist the parents in developing an action plan for their child.

There may be cases when the school questions the appropriateness of a student moving on to the next grade. If this occurs the homeroom teacher will refer the student's case to the administration for review. They will conduct a series of tests as well as collect information regarding the child's present performance. This information will be reviewed and a decision will be made. The policies listed below are in effect with regard to retention.



AISR
Verhulstlaan 21
3055 WJ Rotterdam
+31 (0) 10 422 53 51
www.aisr.nl