



TWENTY-FIVE YEARS  
OF



DANILO KUMAR INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL  
LJUBLJANA



JUNE 2019



This year marks the 25th anniversary of Danila Kumar International School. It has been a great honour and pleasure for me to be the head of DKIS for 23 years. From a very humble beginning with 17 students, 6 teachers and combined classes, our school has become a complex high quality educational institution with around 200 students, 45 members of staff and programmes from K1 to grade 8.

Our ability to create an active and supportive learning environment with effective, challenging academic and enrichment programmes has been made possible by the financial support of the Slovenian Ministry of Education, the City of Ljubljana and by partnership with the IB organisation and its two programmes: Primary and Middle Years Programmes.

However, to prepare students for active and successful professional and personal futures, we depend on our team of highly qualified and passionate teachers and staff - the team that drives the programme and makes success possible. I believe that our school is a real learning community, scaffolding all holistic elements.

DKIS never rests on its laurels. Over the years our school has strived to strengthen the quality of teaching and learning to support our students in facing challenges and opportunities brought about by globalisation and continual development in all areas of life. Our school has given our students a nurtured and balanced growth between academia and extracurricular activities.

DKIS is my second home, my family and our students are my children. I am really happy and proud when I hear about our recent and former students' achievements and when I hear that they are happy, healthy, enthusiastic, positive and successful.

I am sure that the seeds we have planted in their hearts contribute at least a little towards international understanding and striving for a better world and future for humanity.

Irena Šteblaj MA

Head



The international department was a vision implemented by my predecessor, Mr Boris Zupančič. Although IB programmes are offered by additional national schools in Slovenia today, our school is the only one that offers nationally recognised IB PYP and MYP programmes for elementary students. Our school also incorporates two international kindergarten groups.

The quality of our programmes is always confirmed by various national and international evaluations. Undoubtedly, the credit for this also goes to Ms Irena Šteblaj MA who has been the Head of the International school for many years, and with her foresight, personal dedication and enthusiasm has lead and facilitated the application of the IB programmes at Danila Kumar International School. Throughout the years she has built and developed an excellent team of educators who have the knowledge and ability to direct their students on the path of discovery and of building new learnings and understandings.

Celebrating the 25th anniversary of Danila Kumar International School, I proudly look back at all the achievements of our international department and look forward to seeing many more in the future.

Congratulations to the head, teachers, colleagues and students on the anniversary!

Ms Mojca Mihelič MA  
Headmistress

The idea for opening an international school emerged in the year 1990, based on the wish to increase Slovenia's cooperation with the evolved parts of Europe, continue the creative development of schooling and enable the schooling of children whose parents live in Slovenia, but are from other countries. The initiative came from Gimnazija Bežigrad, which began to prepare the first group of our students for International Baccalaureate in 1990. The Ministry of Education, Science and Sport chose the school which would add the International School to their programme, based on its success in carrying out educational programmes, the suitability of its personnel and the appropriateness of its facilities, and so this honour was given to Danile Kumar Elementary School.



The International Department began operating in November 1993. At that time, 17 students began their schooling at the International Department, and they came from the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Russia, Macedonia, Albania and Italy. They were taught by 5 teachers in the form of combined classes (they were first divided into only 3 grades). All classes were in English and had an adjusted curriculum, the basis for which was the National Curriculum, which followed the principles of an international programme in the last grade and combined the students from grades 6 to 8. As part of the programme, the students were also taught the basic elements of the Slovenian language and joined their Slovenian peers at extracurricular activities.

The first teachers were: Irena Sikirica, Ljubica Zornik, Mojca Brecljnik, Olga Toboljevič and Mojca Malovrh, with Nevenka Vomer as the Head and Coordinator of the International programme.

In March 1994, the school gained accreditation to carry out the international Middle Years Programme (MYP). During the first years, the programme was funded entirely by the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport, but parental contributions (tuition fees) were gradually introduced. Gimnazija Bežigrad had a special mentoring role in implementing the educational programme, first meant for foreign children.



In the year 1994/1995, the number of students attending the International School grew to 50 and they were divided into 5 grades. The classes were still combined, with the first and second grade having individual classes, and the third and fourth, fifth and sixth, and seventh and eighth having them together.



In the next school year (1995/96), 47 students were enrolled into the programme and divided into 8 grades. The students came from 20 different countries. Combined classes were cancelled and from then on, each grade had separate classes.

The number of enrolled students grew in the school year 1996/97 as well – 56 students from 22 countries were enrolled and divided into 8 grades. That school year, a poll was carried out in February, to determine whether the school's name should be changed. After 93,8% of the votes were against the motion, it was determined that the name (OŠ Danile Kumar) will remain the same.



The number of students in the International Department continued to grow, as well as the number of teachers. By the school year 1997/98, 18 teachers were teaching at the International Department.



Since the beginning, we have organised socialising events in September or October for the students, parents and teachers of the International Department, with the purpose of all of those participating in the educational process to get to know each other better and thus enable the pedagogical work to run smoother. We have explored a different part of Slovenia each year, from Karst, Vremščica, Lipica, to Styria, Žička kartuzija, Prekmurje and more.

In June 1998, the school gained the accreditation to carry out the international programme for younger students, the Primary Years Programme (PYP).

In the school year 1998/99, 66 students were enrolled into the International programme. We have also implemented a class of the Afternoon Programme, which 12 students attended. This was the year that the school became a regular member of the International Baccalaureate Organisation (IBO), with its main office in Geneva, which carries out the international curriculum.

In October 1999, the first Middle Years Programme evaluation took place. We have passed the inspection with flying colours and were very proud of the commendable report on the work of our school.

The year 2000/2001 was not only the turning point of the millennia, but also the turning point for our department – 40 new students came to the school, with a high enrolment rate in the first grade, in which 18 new students were enrolled. The overall number of enrolled students has, for the first time, surpassed the even 100. We have also implemented a few novelties, such as an improved ESL programme (English as a Second Language) in both the PYP and MYP programmes, which meant more

individual lessons in small groups with a teacher who was an ESL specialist. The other novelty were the general parent teacher meetings (first organised in April 2001), where the students present their own work, their portfolio (so-called "Portfolio night"). The parents' and students' responses were very good.



Next year (2001/2002), we have enriched the time that the students spend in the Afternoon Programme by organising some additional activities in the English language: sports games, badminton, karate, computer club, and artistic activities, such as pottery, flute class, dancing and drama club.

From 26<sup>th</sup> to 28<sup>th</sup> November 2001, an evaluation of the PYP programme was in process at the school. We have done well at the demanding inspection and our school has proven that our programme meets all of the IBO standards.

This was the year that the school celebrated a big anniversary – it celebrated 40 years since it first opened its doors to all seeking knowledge. The International Department diligently participated in preparing the Open Doors Day in December and the accompanying exhibitions. Our department performed an English version of *The Wizard of Oz*, in which the students of the International Department participated.

The celebration continued in style, with the opening of renovated sports facilities (May 2002). Vika Potočnik, the mayor of Ljubljana, employees of the municipal administration of education and the representatives of the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport all attended the celebration.

With the increasing number of students enrolled in the International Department, and with it the increasing number of teachers, the number of nationalities represented by our school has increased as well – in the year 2002/03, our students came from 35 different countries. But the most diverse structure of our student body occurred in the school year 2005/06, when the students came from a staggering 41 different countries.



We have organised a Science Fair in February, where the students can present their research and their final products to their parents in the form of research papers. The Science Fair caught on and we still carry it out today, if in a slightly altered way (in the form of presentations of the students' Community and Service Projects).



Ever since the early beginnings of the International Department, we conclude each school year by organising an International Day, focused on the celebration of the students' learning achievements and the concluding socialising event of the year for the students, parents and teachers. The parents participate by preparing food, which gives us the opportunity to taste and learn about the culinary specialities from different parts of the world. The students and the teachers are in charge of the socialising part of the programme, which takes place at different locations in nature (such as Kamp Šobec, near Bled), and usually develops into a relaxed get-together for the perfect ending of every school year.

The school implemented the so-called Curriculum Nights in 2003/04, at which the students and teachers present the programme and the school's philosophy. The purpose of this event is to acquaint the parents with evaluation strategies and the elements of learning, so that they can have a better understanding of the schoolwork and its demands. In this year, our school also hosted a 4-day international IBO conference for the PYP and MYP programmes, which was an important and organisationally challenging event.

The students' parents were very active – a special workshop was organised for them, where different ways of reading and telling stories were presented. The parents generously used their acquired knowledge at literary evenings, where they read books to the students. The Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) still regularly meets at the so-called PTA Meetings.



The school makes sure that the teachers are further educated every year. They regularly attend seminars in Slovenia and abroad. We are aware of how important it is for the teachers to keep in touch with the novelties in educational work, and to constantly perfect their competences (for example, workshops organised by the IBO and the European Council of International Schools - ECIS). The teachers have been meeting at regular meetings since the beginning of our department, at which the whole department meets once a month and PYP and MYP meetings are organised every other week, where teachers discuss new events. In the beginning, the teachers from Gimnazija Bežigrad also attended these meetings.



The school year 2004/2005 brought with it the implementation of the Reading Badge, with which we wanted to encourage the students to read more and discover new worlds in literature.

The year 2005/06 introduced quite a few novelties. Two kindergarten grades moved from Kindergarten Poljane to our school and became a part of the Primary Years Programme. The year was dedicated to the quality of learning and teaching, adapting to the learning styles and needs of the students (internal differentiation) and to the evolving of the school's culture. We have developed and perfected the monitoring and grading of the students' work according to IBO criteria and developed the methods and the recording of knowledge. We continued to implement the elements of the IB philosophy into our work, directing special attention to personality and health and social education.

In October 2006, we have again successfully passed the IBO evaluation of our PYP programme and received good results for the materials that we have sent for the appropriateness of grading in the MYP to be examined, according to IBO criteria. We have begun to publish a Newsletter, with notices for parents and students, and the parents were given a brochure with instructions in the beginning of the school year, while the students were given an agenda to help them keep track of their schoolwork.





We have also received an MYP evaluation visit from the International Baccalaureate Organisation in the following year of 2007/08, which we have again passed with flying colours. The evaluator, Mr. Tim Cunningham, was very pleased with our programmes and documents.

We also did our best to take care of the parents facing parenting problems, and prepared workshops and presentations for them on the topic 'Growing up'.

The common thread of the school year 2008/09 was upskilling and improvement. We have been upgrading our competences in various areas, organised a workshop about teaching a language in the PYP and teaching in the MYP, to which we have also invited teachers from our partner schools in Zagreb, Athens and Bratislava, whom we regularly work with. As many as 15 teachers attended an international ECIS conference in Nice, and some teachers attended workshops in Paris, Geneva and Amsterdam. Our Headmistress, Department Head and both Coordinators attended the conference for the headmasters and coordinators of IB schools and had a presentation on the grading in the International Department and the activities that support and evolve the active workings of students in their environment.

Our school also participated in the international partner project Comenius, due to which 4 teachers visited our partner school Costeas – Gaetonas in Athens, where Mrs. Irena Šteblaj prepared a 3-day workshop on participatory learning and the development of a student's accountability. In the International Department, we have strived towards developing the elements of research work during lessons and differentiation, throughout the entire year. The Department Head and the Coordinators observed classes, analysed them with the teachers and prepared materials and monthly workshops for the teachers. Our school was also visited by several co-workers from abroad (Germany, Canada, Bratislava).



Along with the rising number of enrolled students, the number of students who were in the Afternoon Programme also increased. For several years now, we have had four, or five, grades of the Afternoon Programme, in which students attend various afternoon activities, which help them develop their potentials in different areas (learning foreign languages, sports, music, dancing...). Since 2010, the students can also attend ballet lessons, which are carried out by a private ballet school.

In the school year 2009/10, we have organised an exchange with the Greek school Costeas Geitona from Athens. The exchange was financed by the Moro Foundation.

From 6<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> November 2010, a regular IBO evaluation of the MYP programme was carried out. The committee visited lessons, had meetings and discussions with the students, parents, teachers and administrative workers, based on which they evaluated the work of our MYP programme.

In the school year 2010/11, OŠ Danile Kumar celebrated its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary. The milestone was celebrated with various presentations and workshops, which covered the areas of culture, art, sports and natural sciences. A concert was also organised, where famous names from the Slovenian music scene performed.

This was also the first year when we hosted three students from the University of Minnesota. The students were a part of the school's everyday activities, participated in working with the students and covered the following areas of study: social science, mathematics and primary years classes.

With the financial support from the Moro Foundation, the school bought 30 computers for school use and thus upgraded the school's equipment with more modern ICT equipment.





Five years have again passed since the last evaluation of the PYP programme and so it was time for the committee to again look through all of the documentation, visit lessons, talk to the students, teachers, parents and the counsellor's office, to determine whether the programme meets the necessary IB standards. The evaluation was in process from the 14<sup>th</sup> to the 16<sup>th</sup> of November 2011. The report shows that a positive climate prevails at our school, that language teaching is extremely good, the teachers are very qualified for the work that they do, and that the strategies of teaching are diverse and differentiated.

Students from Minnesota again participated in lessons and activities in the following school year. Throughout the entire school year, 22 students participated in the PYP and MYP programmes and in the educational work, for approximately two months. Cooperating with the University of Minnesota has turned out to be very constructive and is still being carried out today. The students are natural-born speakers and by participating in classes, they, among other things, enable the students to get to know the American culture and language first-hand.

In April and May, the school also hosted three students from St. Mary's College of Maryland.

The time during breaks was enriched with activities, such as dancing, singing, crafts and others. The purpose of active breaks is to enable the students to relax in an appropriate way and to get them to activate themselves and thus cease the activities that require them to remain seated, which they are already overly exposed to.

This was the first year that we picked the best class (separate for each programme). The winning class followed the rules of proper behaviour, built upon their social skills and interpersonal relations, and has shown respect and a positive attitude towards schoolwork. 3M and 5M won in the PYP programme and 7M won in the MYP programme.





In the time between 8<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> November 2014, a regular MYP evaluation visit was carried out, at which the programme's standards were inspected. The IB team that was in charge of the evaluation, two observers, looked through the documentation that was sent in advance, visited lessons, talked to students, teachers, parents, leadership, administration and the members of the School Council. They commended the current state of the MYP programme. It was confirmed that the programme was ready for the implementation of new elements. A special praise was directed towards our encouraging school climate.

We have also gathered funding for the covered multipurpose field. The activities were carried out in March and June, in the form of a charity fair, at which it was possible to buy clothes, shoes, fashion accessories, toys, books... In order to organise the fair, we cooperated with MYP students, who prepared the exhibition space and participated in the sales, as part of their Community and Service Projects.



In the school year 2015/16, the number of students enrolled in the International programme (from Kindergarten to the 8<sup>th</sup> grade) surpassed 200 for the first time (207 students enrolled that year). In the spirit of this positive expansion, we have also expanded our pallet of extracurricular activities to 23 different activities.

The year also brought some administrative novelties. Most of the paper documentation was replaced by electronical management through the program eAsistent. The grades, lesson journals and the extracurricular activity journals in the International Department, were all kept through eAsistent for the first time.

The school year in the International Department was concluded with a 100% pass rate. One student from eighth grade successfully passed the exam for improving his grades in June, as he needed better results to enrol into Gimnazija Bežigrad's International Bacalaureate programme.

Next school year (2016/17), the number of enrolled students grew by one more (208 students). The high enrolment rate was the reason for opening another grade. The students were thus divided into 11 grades all together (2 of which were in the International Kindergarten), with 69 of the students also included into 5 grades of the Afternoon Programme.

Raising funds for the covered multipurpose field has proven to be fruitful and, on the 15th September, we had a festive opening of the tent for sports activities and events. After a short cultural presentation, the dome (covered outdoor field) was handed over to its purpose. Both the students and teachers of the National and International Department were participating, with Mr. Zoran Janković, the mayor of Ljubljana, also in attendance, and even participating in the soccer game between the teachers and students.





In the time between 30<sup>th</sup> November and 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2016, a regular IBO evaluation visit by two evaluators was carried out in the PYP programme. A complete evaluation was carried out, the results were excellent, and the students and teachers were very proud.

We have also had a varied set of activities throughout the school year from the International Department's very beginning: students diligently upgrade their school work with different activities, such as cultural, sports and science days, and how to be smart about going into nature, which they learn about during their longer trips (outdoor learning), which mostly occur in the CŠOD centres (Centres for School and Outdoor Education). They sharpen their literary skills with reading events and poetry evenings and help their community by doing community service work - activities such as raising money for a primary school in Ghana by selling products they themselves have made, visiting a retirement home and helping younger students with their studies. With the charity operation where students help other students ("Pomoč sošolcu"), the students raise money for the students from socially disadvantaged families and take care of the environment with their cleaning operations. The students have the option of attending excursions of other language working groups (for example, excursions to Austria, Germany, France), at which they get to know other countries and cultures.





A lot of the students show their knowledge at competitions, such as the mathematical Kangaroo competition, English language competition and the World Scholars' Cup (WSC). The WSC regional competition has taken place at our school for a number of years, with the world WSC competition usually taking place in Asian countries. Our students love participating in the Moro Foundation's contests that are prepared under a different title (different topic) each year. Their purpose is to have the students deal with current topics in creative ways. Informal get-togethers strengthen the bonds between students, teachers and parents, and we have a lot of opportunities for them: The Family Social Event, International Day, Halloween and the Masquerade.







## *Danila Kumar International School*

The summary of the school's chronicles for the International Department's 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary was written by:

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