



Winchester House School EAL Policy

Version 1

Responsible Governor: n/a

Created: 9th February 2020 (SL)

Adopted by Governors: n/a

Reviewed: 13th December 2024 (AVM)

Next review: 13th December 2025(AVM)



EAL POLICY

The key to supporting new EAL arrivals is providing a whole-school inclusive culture, welcoming induction, differentiated classrooms, appropriately timed and on-going assessment (formative, summative and contextual), tailored support strategies and parental involvement.

The government's definition of an EAL learner includes anyone who has been exposed to a language other than English during early childhood "and continues to be exposed to this language in the home or the community". Many EAL learners are UK-born.

Initial meeting with parents

We should meet with parents as soon as possible and remember their understanding may be better than their spoken English. Equally they may need additional support to understand the information we put out. We should seek to understand the languages spoken and when. We should encourage the family to speak in English when on the school site as much as possible. We should seek to understand any cultural differences which may need to be observed, or which can be supported in the classroom. We should also consider any religious needs, holidays/festivals which will be observed.

Assessment

It is key to establish a real understanding of the learner's competencies and abilities through assessment. Observation and informal assessment can be carried out from day one, but any formal testing of the pupil's English should be postponed for two to three weeks. Once they have had a chance to settle, we then consider conducting a standalone baseline initial assessment of their English proficiency using appropriate assessment tools (standalone initial assessment tasks/tests are available – mostly from EAL or ex-EAL departments of local authorities – but at present there is no DfE-approved or widely recommended initial assessment).

A best-fit judgement of a pupil's English proficiency level can be arrived at by using an evidence-based assessment framework, such as The Bell Foundation's EAL Assessment Framework for School. The Framework supports the teaching and learning of EAL pupils: it is designed so that English proficiency can be easily assessed within the context of the curriculum. The level descriptors can also act as targets for pupils to progress to the next level. For every proficiency band, there is a set of strategies and recommended resources for supporting pupils within that band.

Using the pupil's home language

Learning should not wait for a pupil to acquire English. If possible, we will arrange for the pupil to have some support from a same-language adult in the school, class buddy and/or, at times, older pupil. Online translation tools can be useful and can help a pupil to participate in class activities, but we are aware that we may get some inaccurate translations for some longer chunks of language.

We may use the speaker button on Google Translate and involve the pupil in doing the same. We will encourage older pupils to research topics online in their home language. We will provide dual language books for the pupil to read in class and to take home.

Adult support

In the short term, “new to English” new arrivals can benefit from short, regular and frequent sessions outside the classroom for learning English basics, including daily social greetings/exchanges, making/responding to requests, school and classroom vocabulary and phrases, and language for expressing lack of understanding. However, it is important to ensure that provision for new arrivals is not separate but integrated into all subject areas. During the initial transition, submersion within the language can have a positive impact.

Whenever possible, we will make use of additional support from a teaching assistant (or other adult) in the classroom – even if it is only for a few minutes of pre-teaching vocabulary or a quick sketch on a mini-whiteboard to aid understanding (see further information for more classroom support ideas).

If there is already adult support for SEND pupils, sometimes the same/similar resources and support will benefit an EAL pupil, but we are aware that EAL is not an underlying learning difficulty. We will not always group new-to-English EAL learners with SEND learners. If we think an EAL learner may also have an underlying SEN, we may arrange for a home-language assessment and involve the SENCO and a speech and language therapist in monitoring their progress.

Why EAL assessment?

EAL learners are doing two things at the same time. They are learning the English language at the same time as learning the curriculum through English.

Assessing EAL is not the same as assessing Literacy

Literacy assessment focuses on specific age-expected outcomes of the literacy curriculum (such as writing stories or newspaper reports). EAL assessment focuses on the development of English in Listening, Speaking, Reading and Viewing and Writing for all purposes within the school context.

EAL assessment helps both teachers and pupils

If teachers understand the English language needs of their pupils, they can help pupils to access the language of the curriculum and develop their English at the same time.

Pupils need to know uses of language to be able to succeed in school subjects

For example, if pupils don't know how to use “if [this] ..., then [that] ... or the modals would, should, could, might, may, they will struggle with expressing themselves in History or Science. Different areas of the curriculum make use of English in different ways.

EAL assessment spotlights the learner's needs in a particular area of language

An EAL learner may appear to be ‘fluent’ because they can converse easily with their peers and teachers, but this ‘fluency’ can be deceptive. The proficiency profile of an EAL learner can vary across the four strands of language use in different curriculum areas. For instance, a pupil may

be fluent in everyday spoken English but may find giving an oral report on a science experiment challenging. Some may find writing more demanding than listening and reading, and so on.

EAL assessment helps teachers teach all EAL learners

EAL assessment is not just for the new to English learners but is important for all EAL/bilingual learners who still need to develop their academic English to succeed at age-related expectations.

EAL assessment is fair and inclusive

Appropriate assessment recognises a learner's potential and affects their life chances. Inappropriate assessment can lead to pupils being given unhelpful advice and being placed on the wrong pathway for their future learning.

Every EAL learner has a unique profile

EAL learners are a heterogeneous group and each EAL learner has a unique profile that reflects the influence of the following factors:

Age

Age should be considered because it strongly influences the kind of cognitive operations and/or communicative uses of language that it is reasonable to expect of a child at particular stages, other things being equal. A pupil first entering English-medium education at age five is likely to have very different social and curriculum communication needs to a pupil entering at age 14. EAL assessment should capture this in its performance descriptors.

First language educational history

EAL pupils arrive in the UK at different ages and with different life experiences. They may have studied to a level where they understand much of the content of a school subject and may also be familiar with the notion that academic subjects adopt modes of discourse. A pupil's first language educational history can be seen as an indication of first language development (see First language literacy below) and prior curriculum attainment.

First language literacy

If EAL pupils are literate in their first language, this will likely facilitate acquiring literacy in English. EAL assessment should make every effort to gather information on pupils' first language literacy, which can be used to inform expectations of progress.

Academic track record

Like all pupils, EAL pupils will vary in their academic track record, in general and in relation to particular subjects. On starting school in the UK, their academic track record should be evaluated as far as possible taking account of any language difficulties. This information can help teachers make informed decisions on target setting and programmes of work.

Individual and family circumstances

EAL pupils' propensities for learning can be influenced by a variety of individual and family circumstances within the local community context. EAL assessment should take account of

information on relevant issues such as giftedness, Free School Meal, and Special Educational Needs & Disability where appropriate; these issues can impact on pupils' academic performance and language learning. EAL assessment should also track pupils' dispositions towards learning over time as an important aspect of a pupil's profile.

Initial profiling

The above section listed the key features of the profile of an EAL learner. Most of these can be established initially through interview, with the learner and/or a parent (with interpreter support where appropriate); current state of English language proficiency might be determined by a suitably trained teacher, with reference to performance exemplars and descriptors, as well as through more formal assessment. Previous academic track records in particular subjects should be evaluated as far as possible taking account of language differences and/or difficulties.

Informing expectations

The initial profiling should reveal strengths as well as areas of need. It should provide the school with a clear expectation of what the pupil can achieve and what specific issues to address. Over time, careful observation of the trajectories of EAL pupils with particular profiles, facilitated by an appropriate assessment framework, should enable better understanding of what can be achieved, and setting of appropriate targets.

Orientation

As already noted, any assessment framework must provide an orientation for both pupils and teachers as to each EAL pupil's starting point, current level and possible goals: where did we start, where are we now and where are we going? This is essential information for pupils if they are to take responsibility for their learning. It requires that there are clear criteria for assessment and decision-making, ensuring that pupils' use of English can be evaluated in terms of real-world communicative abilities.

Feedback into learning

A fundamental purpose of an assessment framework is to bring about better learning. The rating scales should provide indicators of the pathways of development. These pathways should inform feedback at various levels, to individual pupils and to teachers. This feedback should distinguish language issues from conceptual /content issues and indicate where individuals might best focus attention. Evidence should inform teachers in terms of possible progression to assist pupils in becoming better at learning and more autonomous.

In-class support

EAL is not a subject, like history, maths or Spanish. EAL learners have a double job to do: learn English and learn through English at the same time. The following are realistic and feasible teaching and learning strategies for teachers drawn from on-going differentiation in the classroom. They are primarily aimed at new arrivals in Band A – “new to English” in primary school. However, many of the strategies are recommended for more advanced EAL learners and can be used for the language development of all learners.

- Prepare visual support – visual timetables, multilingual instruction mats, “survival” fans (e.g. I need the toilet; I feel sick), word banks, writing frames (EAL Nexus has

curriculum-related visual support; you can create visual word banks and frames using software such as Communicate in Print).

- Provide an EAL picture dictionary (such as Collins First English Words) and an age-appropriate bilingual dictionary (such as from Mantra Lingua).
- Sit the learner near you where they can see your face straight on.
- Use your own face, voice and body as a resource – gestures, mimes, exaggerated facial expressions.
- Speak clearly and slowly, avoiding idiomatic language.
- Sit the learner next to pupils who are supportive language role models.
- Give single-step instructions. Repeat same instructional phase.
- Point to what you are talking about (key word/picture).
- Target the learner daily for simple differentiated “Yes/No” questions.
- Allow the learner thinking time before answering questions.
- When going round class, have a mini whiteboard or notebook to hand for quick drawings, to create “choices” to prompt a response (liquid/solid?) or to reinforce key words.
- Plan for, teach and model vocabulary and language structures needed for the task/subject (see the teaching notes accompanying each teaching resource on the EAL Nexus website).
- Teach key words and phrases (see the EAL Nexus Great Ideas pages).
- Use Directed Activities Relating to Text (DARTs): sorting, matching, sequencing, labelling, gap-fills, writing frames, substitution tables (see EAL Nexus Great Ideas pages).
- Communicate with home: keep parents informed of topics being covered in class (to research and discuss in their home language) and give parents useful websites, such as the British Council’s Learn English Kids and BBC Bitesize KS1.
- Homework: regularly send home visual vocabulary flashcards starting with school and classroom language (available from the British Council’s Learn English Kids website). Pupils should practice these at school with an additional adult or language-model buddy.

References and resources

- EAL Nexus: <https://ealresources.bell-foundation.org.uk/> (free curriculum-linked resources, information and guidance).
- EAL Assessment Framework for Schools: <http://bit.ly/EALassess>

- Ideas for offering additional support in the classroom, The Bell Foundation: <https://ealresources.bell-foundation.org.uk/teachers/additional-support-classroom>
- The National Association for Language Development in the Curriculum offers information, publications and resources. NALDIC also organises an annual EAL conference with workshops: <https://naldic.org.uk/>
- Twinkl: <http://www.twinkl.co.uk/resources/english-as-an-additional-language-eal> (some free).
- Mantra Lingua: <http://uk.mantralingua.com/>
- Learn English Kids: <http://learnenglishkids.britishcouncil.org/en/> (free)
- BBC Bitesize: www.bbc.com/education
- For a useful article with video clips on using Google Translate in the primary classroom, see <http://bit.ly/2w83tm4>
- Flashcards from the British Council's Learn English Kids website: <http://learnenglishkids.britishcouncil.org/en/flashcards>

Ref: The Bell Foundation & Headteacher Update EAL: Supporting new arrivals in your primary school