



Esland North Limited

ED0026 - English Additional Language



Introduction

A number of learners and their families have English as an Additional Language (EAL). As is documented across all educational settings, the proportion of learners and families with EAL continues to grow, and the range of home languages spoken by learners in the UK or their families is increasingly diverse.

This diversity is viewed positively by all at our Esland Schools as an opportunity to open up learners, staff and families to new cultural experiences and break down social barriers. We recognise the additional support needs that may exist for learners and families with EAL and aim to address these proactively.

Definition

The Department for Education records a pupil as having EAL "if they are exposed to a language at home that is known or believed to be other than English." This encompasses children who are fully bilingual and all those at different stages of learning English.

It is important to note that EAL is a measure of exposure to another language, not a measure of a learner's proficiency in English, nor a proxy for recent immigration. Learners who use EAL are a highly diverse group with a wide range of prior educational experiences and levels of English.

Learners who use EAL may be:

- newly arrived from a foreign country and school;
- newly arrived from a foreign country, but from an English-speaking school;
- born abroad, but moved to the UK at some point before starting school;
- born in the UK, but in a family where the main language is not English; or
- seeking asylum or hold refugee status.

Learners who use EAL will need varying levels of provision so that they can access all aspects of the curriculum.

Being a learner who uses EAL is not, in itself, a special educational need or disability (SEND). All learners at our Esland Schools have SEND; however, staff must take care not to mistake the normal process of acquiring English for a learning difficulty, and equally not to overlook a genuine SEND by attributing it to EAL. Where a learner uses EAL, assessment must carefully distinguish between language-acquisition needs and SEND, in line with the SEND Code of Practice (2015) and The Bell Foundation's guidance on EAL and SEND, so that each learner receives the right support.

Legal and Regulatory Framework

This policy is delivered within the following legal and regulatory framework.

Equality Act 2010

As an independent school, Esland is bound by the schools provisions of the Equality Act 2010 (Part 6). We must not discriminate against, harass or victimise any pupil or prospective pupil because of a protected characteristic. The characteristics most relevant to this policy are race – which includes colour, nationality and ethnic or national origins – and religion or belief, alongside disability. These duties apply to admissions, the provision of education and access to any benefit, facility or service, and to exclusions and sanctions.

For disabled pupils we also have a duty to make reasonable adjustments (including the provision of auxiliary aids and services) to avoid substantial disadvantage, and to prepare and implement an accessibility plan. Where a learner uses EAL and is disabled, adjustments must address both needs together.

The Public Sector Equality Duty (section 149 of the Act) applies to maintained schools and academies rather than to independent schools. Nonetheless, the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 require us to actively promote respect for other people, paying particular regard to the protected characteristics set out in the Equality Act 2010. We therefore embed equality of opportunity for learners who use EAL across the life of the school as a matter of both principle and standard.

Data protection

Some of the information we gather to support EAL learners – in particular ethnicity and religion – is special category data under the UK GDPR and the Data Protection Act 2018 (as amended by the Data (Use and Access) Act 2025). We collect and use it only in line with our Data Protection Policy and the Privacy Notice issued to pupils, parents and carers, and we explain how families can provide this information voluntarily (see “Data gathering” below).

Guidance and good practice

There is no separate national curriculum for EAL; the Department for Education expects effective provision to be delivered through the National Curriculum. Much of the DfE’s earlier EAL-specific material has been archived, so our practice is informed by current, evidence-based guidance, principally that of The Bell Foundation, together with the SEND Code of Practice (2015) and statutory safeguarding guidance (*Keeping Children Safe in Education*), which is particularly relevant when welcoming newly arrived, asylum-seeking or refugee learners.

Our Key Principles

- All learners are entitled to equal access to the curriculum.
- Forming and maintaining strong links with parents and carers is fundamental to our learners’ development and learning.
- Learning and using more than one language is an asset and opens up learning opportunities for our learners and staff.
- Promoting development in a learner’s home language has a positive impact on their development in other languages, including English.
- We hold high expectations of learners who use EAL and provide the language support they need to meet them.
- Being a learner who uses EAL is distinct from having a SEND, and each learner’s needs are assessed and met on that basis.

Teaching children with EAL and autism

Distinguishing English-language difficulties that are consistent with typical EAL development from those that represent disordered communication development is essential. Whether or not they use EAL, most learners in our Esland Schools experience some form of communication impairment, consistent with their diagnosis. Accurate assessment of a learner’s receptive and expressive language skills must take into account EAL status and good-practice guidelines, including The Bell Foundation’s guidance on EAL and SEND.

We support learners with complex needs and EAL to understand the language of the classroom and to express their wants, needs, feelings and opinions. Learners who use EAL may have English-language difficulties that affect their ability to understand instructions, information or conversation, and to express themselves clearly to English-speaking adults and peers. All of our learners have special educational needs and related communication difficulties, which may be compounded by learning EAL. Many of the methods used to develop communication skills across the whole school will also support learners who use EAL.

Families of children with additional needs may have encountered outdated advice about stopping use of the home language. All staff at our Esland Schools must reassure families that current guidance is that they should provide the best language model by speaking the language in which they are most fluent, as maintaining the home language supports rather than hinders the development of English.

A child who uses EAL is best supported when families and carers and the school work together, and we constantly strive to maintain, develop and strengthen our links with families and carers. When working with families who use EAL, existing language barriers must be addressed in order to optimise the learner's progress.

How we will support our EAL families and learners

Data gathering

As part of the entry procedure to an Esland School, parents, guardians and carers will be invited to share, on a voluntary basis, their child's ethnicity, home language, first language and religion. This helps the school support families and the learner in the best way possible, and supports our equality monitoring under the Equality Act 2010.

Ethnicity and religion are special category data. Providing this information is optional, and a family's decision not to share it will not disadvantage the learner in any way. We handle it securely and only for the purposes described in our Privacy Notice and Data Protection Policy.

Respecting diversity

Our Esland Schools place great value on each child developing as an individual according to their religious, cultural and personal beliefs, and aim to work with children and their families to support this. We develop understanding and awareness of learners' own and others' linguistic and social cultures through a range of activities, including:

- cultural theme weeks in school;
- culturally diverse assemblies;
- trips to culturally significant places in the community (for example local temples, synagogues and mosques);
- working closely with parents and carers to understand their perception of special educational needs within their culture;
- displaying learners' work from theme weeks so that learning about different languages and cultures is showcased across the school; and
- ensuring that resources used in class activities reflect a range of ethnicities and cultures (for example a library that includes books in a range of languages).

Recruitment

The school employs staff irrespective of their home language, and staff are not required to disclose their home language. All staff are interviewed prior to employment, at which point it is ascertained whether their proficiency in English is suitable for the post. Some staff use EAL themselves and may be able to converse with a child, family or carer in another language if needed. They can act as positive role models for children who may be self-conscious that English is not their first language.

Interpreting and translation services

Where required, the school uses a professional interpreting and translation service.

Professional interpreters should be used for key and sensitive meetings – for example admissions, annual reviews and any safeguarding matter. Family members or friends, and automated online translation tools, should not be relied upon for important or sensitive communications, as accuracy and confidentiality cannot be assured.

Prior to the admission of a learner who uses EAL, a library of resources will be developed, including a range of leaflets in the learner's language. Parents, guardians and carers are also welcome to involve personal translators (professionals, friends or family members) in supporting their child; such translators may accompany families to annual reviews and parents' evenings to support communication, alongside a professional interpreter where the matter is formal or sensitive.

Supporting learners with special educational needs and EAL day to day

In supporting children who are developing English as an additional language within the classroom, many of the strategies recommended by advisory bodies are similar to those of good SEND practice. Esland SchoolsThe Bell Foundation provides current, evidence-based guidance and an EAL Assessment Framework describing strategies to teach language meaningfully, from the early stages of language development through to complex linguistic concepts. These themes are in line with the strategies used across our Esland Schools as part of daily planning and delivery.

Examples of the recommended strategies include:

- **Use of gesture, visuals and objects:** a range of appropriate visual supports is used to enhance learners' understanding and learning. Visual systems using both symbols and photographs are in place throughout the school and do not rely on a child's understanding of a specific language.
- **Modelling social conventions:** social skills are a focus of each learner's daily experience. Teachers proactively plan for social-learning opportunities, and all staff capitalise on naturalistic events to make social learning ongoing and meaningful. Social Stories are also created and used with individuals or groups to develop understanding of social rules.
- **Differentiating to each learner's language capability:** given the wide range of cognitive and communicative needs of our learners, staff differentiate lessons for all learners through their planning. Teachers use a range of multisensory approaches to enable a learner to access a lesson through means other than verbal language.

For further strategies, staff should refer to The Bell Foundation's current classroom guidance, "Effective Teaching of EAL Learners", and its EAL Assessment Framework. (The Department for Education's 2012 guidance "Supporting children learning EAL" has since been archived.)

Provision

Learning support encompasses differentiated curriculum planning and resources to enable children to access the curriculum and make progress in their learning. School resources, including books and equipment, reflect cultural diversity and are available in a variety of languages.

Monitoring and Recording

It is the responsibility of the class teacher to maintain up-to-date records of the EAL learners in their class while they are in their care. Progress in English is assessed and tracked using an EAL-appropriate framework, such as The Bell Foundation's EAL Assessment Framework, across listening, speaking, reading and writing, and is kept distinct from the assessment of SEND. A record of progress is collated and reviewed with the learner's parent or carer on a termly basis. Where a parent speaks little or no English, a professional interpreter should attend the meeting to translate.

Links with other policies

- SEND & Inclusion Policy
- Teaching and Learning Policy
- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy
- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Assessment Policy
- Data protection Policy
- Privacy Notices Policy

Policy Review

Date	Action (s)
13/07/2026	Reviewed to reflect the Equality Act 2010, current Department for Education and Bell Foundation guidance, the SEND Code of Practice, and UK data protection law.
