English as an Additional Language (EAL) Policy

Harlescott House School – Specialist SEN Provision

Last reviewed: 8 May 2026

Head Teacher | Chair of Proprietor

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Statement of intent

In this policy, the term 'English as an Additional Language' (EAL) refers to pupils whose home language is a language other than English. In our specialist setting, some pupils may also have complex communication needs and may use alternative or augmentative communication (AAC). EAL support therefore sits alongside each pupil's wider communication profile and their individual SEND provision.

Pupils with EAL may experience barriers to learning, accessing the curriculum and demonstrating what they know and can do. In a school for children with complex needs, these barriers can be compounded by additional factors such as speech, language and communication needs (SLCN), autism, learning difficulties, sensory processing differences, physical or medical needs, and anxiety associated with change or unfamiliar routines. Many pupils will be learning in and through another language while also developing functional communication, attention and interaction skills.

This policy sets out how we identify and support pupils with EAL so that they can participate fully in school life, feel safe and included, and make the best possible progress. Support will be personalised, informed by assessment, and coordinated with each pupil's Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) where applicable, and with therapy or specialist input.

Our school aims to:

- Value and celebrate the cultural, linguistic and lived experiences that pupils and families bring to our school community.
- Remove barriers to learning by providing accessible communication, reasonable adjustments and consistent routines that support pupils with complex needs.
- Enable pupils with EAL to build functional English (and, where appropriate, develop literacy) alongside their preferred communication approaches so they can express needs, make choices and engage in learning.

Our strategic objectives are to:

- Create a calm, welcoming and predictable induction for newly arrived pupils with EAL, using visual supports, social stories and key-person approaches where needed.
- Assess pupils' communication strengths, language exposure and English development in ways that are appropriate for complex needs (e.g., play-based observation, sensory-aware approaches, AAC-informed assessment).
- Gather accurate information about pupils' backgrounds, cultural expectations, previous schooling, medical needs and communication methods, working closely with parents/carers and interpreters.
- Equip teachers and support staff with strategies, resources and training to support EAL within a specialist SEND curriculum (including intensive interaction, TEACCH-informed structure, and communication-friendly classrooms).
- Promote consistent use of total communication (spoken language, visuals, symbols, objects of reference, signing, AAC devices) so pupils can understand and be understood.
- Use all available resources and multi-agency expertise (e.g., Speech and Language Therapy, Occupational Therapy, Educational Psychology) to raise engagement, participation and attainment.
- Systematically monitor progress across communication, interaction, wellbeing and curriculum outcomes, adapting provision and targets accordingly.
- Ensure pupils' languages, cultures and identities are represented in classrooms and across the school, and that anti-racist and inclusive practice is embedded.
- Recognise and celebrate pupils' strengths in their home languages and preferred communication, valuing bilingualism and multilingualism as assets.

Legal framework

This policy has due regard to legislation and guidance including, but not limited to, the following:

- Education Act 2002

- Children Act 1989
- Children and Families Act 2014 (SEND)
- Equality Act 2010 (including the Public Sector Equality Duty)
- The UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR)
- Data Protection Act 2018
- DfE (2025) 'Keeping children safe in education' (statutory guidance)
- DfE (2026) 'Working together to safeguard children' (statutory guidance)
- DfE & DHSC (2015, updated 2024) 'SEND code of practice: 0 to 25 years' (statutory guidance)
- DfE (2018) 'Equality Act 2010: advice for schools'
- DfE (2026) 'Data protection in schools' (guidance)

This policy should be read in conjunction with the following school policies:

- Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Policy
- Admissions Policy
- Anti-bullying Policy
- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy

[Updated] Roles and responsibilities

The proprietor will have overall responsibility for the implementation of this policy and will ensure that the school meets its statutory duties in relation to equality, SEND and inclusion for pupils with EAL, including those with complex needs.

The Headteacher will be responsible for:

- Ensuring that all staff who teach or work with pupils with EAL understand pupils' communication profiles and have arrangements in place to meet needs arising from EAL and complex SEND.
- Ensuring that staff use communication-friendly practice, including visuals, simplified language, consistent routines, and reasonable adjustments.
- Appointing a member of staff to lead on the school's approach to supporting pupils with EAL (the EAL/Communication Lead), working closely with the SENCO and therapy teams.
- Providing sufficient time, training and administrative support to enable staff to fulfil their responsibilities, including maintaining individual communication plans and resources.
- Ensuring that policies, procedures and the day-to-day running of the school do not directly or indirectly discriminate against pupils with EAL and/or SEND.
- Ensuring curriculum planning includes how learning is made accessible through adaptive teaching, specialist provision and the use of AAC where appropriate.

The EAL/Communication Lead will be responsible for:

- Planning and coordinating the induction of newly arrived pupils, including accessible communication and sensory-aware transition.
- Coordinating initial and ongoing assessment of English development in ways appropriate to pupils with complex needs.
- Supporting staff to implement total communication approaches (spoken language, visuals, symbols, signing, objects of reference, AAC) consistently across the school.
- Providing targeted teaching, small group or individual support where appropriate, and modelling strategies in class.
- Liaising with teaching staff, the SENCO and therapists to ensure EAL targets complement EHCP outcomes, therapy programmes and behaviour/wellbeing plans.
- Advising on differentiation and reasonable adjustments to reduce language load while maintaining ambition and appropriate challenge.

- Working with families and interpreters to support home–school communication and to value home language development.
- Supporting staff development through training, coaching and sharing resources.
- Maintaining appropriate records, communication passports and resources on pupils' profiles in line with data protection requirements.
- Working closely with the SENCO to develop and review individual transition plans tailored to the specific needs of children with complex needs.

All staff members will be responsible for:

- Using clear, supportive language and modelling communication consistently, including through total communication approaches.
- Planning and delivering learning that reduces unnecessary language barriers through visuals, demonstrations, concrete resources and structured routines.
- Supporting pupils to communicate understanding in different ways (e.g., symbols, pointing, AAC, objects, photos, practical outcomes) and valuing these equally.
- Ensuring pupils with EAL and complex needs are included, safe and able to participate meaningfully in all aspects of school life.
- Identifying when a pupil may need additional support beyond EAL (e.g., possible SLCN, hearing/vision needs, cognition and learning needs) and escalating concerns via the SENCO/EAL Lead.
- Working in partnership with families and other professionals to support consistent approaches and successful transitions.

Support

Where a pupil with EAL is assessed as having little to no functional English, support will begin with a personalised induction. In our specialist setting this may include short, supported sessions that build familiarity, reduce anxiety and establish key routines, using visuals, objects of reference, now/next boards and key vocabulary. The length of induction will be flexible and based on individual need and progress rather than a fixed timescale. Where appropriate, pupils will still access highly practical or sensory-based learning opportunities (e.g., PE, art, outdoor learning, maths through concrete resources) from the start.

In-class support, small-group teaching and 1:1 interventions will be introduced as soon as the pupil can be successfully supported within their class group. Support will focus on functional communication, understanding key concepts and vocabulary, and enabling participation. For pupils who use AAC or signing, staff will ensure systems are available, charged, programmed and modelled consistently (e.g., aided language stimulation).

Other methods of support the school may provide include:

- **Interpretation and translation support** (e.g., interpreters for meetings, translated key documents, supported phone calls)
- **Visual and symbol-supported communication** (e.g., Widgit/PCS symbols, communication boards, timetables, social stories)
- **AAC and assistive technology** (e.g., speech-generating devices, apps, switches, adapted access)
- **Home language inclusion** (e.g., key words in home language, bilingual books, culturally familiar resources)
- **Multi-agency input** (e.g., Speech and Language Therapy, Occupational Therapy, specialist teachers) to align language support with wider needs

Inclusion

We promote inclusion through respectful, communication-friendly practice that supports belonging, wellbeing and learning for pupils with EAL and complex needs. Our approach is underpinned by the following principles:

- Limited English does not indicate limited ability. Pupils may demonstrate understanding through behaviour, play, problem-solving, practical outcomes, or AAC.
- Communication development is everyone's responsibility. All adults model and respond to communication consistently using agreed systems.
- We work together across teams (class staff, EAL/Communication Lead, SENCO and therapists) to plan, deliver and review support.
- We value diversity and ensure classrooms are socially inclusive, predictable and sensory-considerate so pupils can feel safe and ready to learn.
- Teaching is adapted to reduce language load while keeping learning ambitious. Staff pre-teach key vocabulary, use visuals and demonstrations, and revisit learning frequently.
- Where groups of pupils share a home language, we encourage positive peer support while also promoting wider interaction and shared communication systems to enable inclusion.

Initial assessments

When pupils first join the school, we will complete a timely initial assessment to understand their communication strengths, home language exposure and English development. In our specialist setting, assessment will be flexible and accessible, using observation, play-based interaction and pupil-preferred communication methods, and will avoid making the pupil feel isolated or judged.

The assessment will be carried out using the form provided in Appendix 1, adapted as needed to reflect the pupil's age, cognitive profile, sensory needs and communication method (including AAC or signing).

Initial assessments are coordinated by the EAL/Communication Lead in consultation with the SENCO and, where appropriate, Speech and Language Therapy. Completed assessments are stored securely on the pupil's profile.

Teachers and relevant support staff will have access to the assessment to inform adaptive teaching and individual planning. Parents/carers may view the assessment at any time, and information will be shared in an accessible way (e.g., through interpreters, simplified summaries, visuals) where needed.

Classroom practice

Teachers have high expectations of all pupils and plan for success through adaptive teaching.

Learning activities will be matched to pupils' needs and abilities and will include visual, practical and sensory supports where appropriate. Staff will consider regulation needs (e.g., movement breaks, sensory tools, calm spaces) so pupils are ready to communicate and learn.

Teachers will anticipate language barriers and misunderstandings by explicitly teaching key vocabulary, using consistent symbols and visuals, and checking understanding through demonstration and supported response options (e.g., pointing, choosing, matching, AAC).

Where appropriate, the following practices will be used to support communication and literacy development:

- Using the pupil's home language knowledge and cultural references where this supports engagement and understanding.
- Providing writing frames, sentence stems, word banks and symbol-supported text where appropriate.
- Using concrete objects, photos, props and real experiences to anchor meaning.

Language and communication skills will be developed through:

- Structured opportunities for interaction (e.g., intensive interaction, turn-taking games, shared attention activities).
- Regular feedback and communication-rich routines (e.g., snack, greeting, choice-making, reflection).

- Consistent modelling by adults and peers, including modelling on AAC systems (aided language stimulation).

Active participation will be encouraged by:

- Carefully structured grouping that supports communication (e.g., supported peer interaction, adult-facilitated small groups, flexible grouping based on needs).
- Providing supported ways to contribute (e.g., choice boards, talk buttons, symbols, objects, switch access) so every pupil can take an active role.

Classroom displays will reflect cultural and linguistic diversity and will use accessible formats (e.g., symbols, photos, objects) to support understanding.

Assessment approaches will enable pupils to show learning in different ways (e.g., practical tasks, demonstrations, matching, photographs, AAC responses, work samples) across all curriculum areas.

Where helpful, bilingual dictionaries, symbol-supported materials and dual language resources will be available. Staff will use visuals and translation support appropriately, ensuring that reliance on translation does not replace the development of functional communication and understanding.

Before any targeted 1:1 or small-group support, the pupil will be prepared in an accessible way (e.g., visuals, objects of reference, now/next) so they understand what will happen and why, helping to reduce anxiety and support engagement.

Access to the curriculum

The needs of pupils with EAL are considered by teachers when planning lessons. In our specialist setting, planning will also consider pupils' EHCP outcomes and complex needs so that language, communication and curriculum learning develop together. When planning, teachers will ensure that:

- The language and communication demands of learning are identified and scaffolded (e.g., pre-teaching vocabulary, chunking instructions, modelling, repetition).
- Visual, practical and sensory supports are used to develop understanding of key concepts.
- Opportunities are created for pupils to use their home language and preferred communication methods to support meaning-making and wellbeing where appropriate.
- Support requirements are identified and put in place, including reasonable adjustments, adult support, AAC access, and therapy recommendations.

Working with parents and carers

Working in partnership with parents/carers is vital to supporting pupils with EAL and complex needs. Families are experts in their child and provide essential information about communication, culture, routines and wellbeing. To strengthen home–school partnership, we will:

- Create a welcoming environment and offer flexible ways to communicate (in person, phone, home–school communication book, email) tailored to family preferences.
- Provide interpreters for meetings and key conversations when needed, and offer translated or symbol-supported information where appropriate.
- Use clear, jargon-free language and check understanding, providing summaries and visuals as needed.
- Co-produce targets and strategies (including communication plans, behaviour support and therapy programmes) with families wherever possible.
- Share and model strategies that families can use at home (e.g., visuals, key vocabulary, consistent symbols/signs) while respecting home language use.
- Encourage and support parental participation in reviews, events and workshops, making reasonable adjustments (e.g., timing, childcare, interpretation) to enable access.
- Plan activities in ways that are inclusive and respectful of religious, cultural and community commitments.

Pupils with SEND

A pupil is not regarded as having SEND solely because their home language differs from the language of instruction. However, in our specialist SEN setting many pupils will have identified SEND and may also have EAL. We must therefore take care to understand whether barriers relate to English exposure, underlying communication needs, sensory needs, or a combination of factors.

Assessment and identification will be carried out in a holistic way, drawing on observation over time, information from families, and specialist input (e.g., Speech and Language Therapy, hearing/vision services, Educational Psychology). Where appropriate, we will consider assessment in the pupil's home language and the use of interpreters to avoid misidentification.

Support will be planned on an individual basis and recorded within the pupil's EHCP outcomes, Individual Education Plan (IEP) or provision map as appropriate, in line with the school's SEND Policy. EAL strategies will complement, not replace, SEND provision and will be embedded in everyday practice.

The school will ensure that parents/carers are able to contribute their views throughout assessment and planning processes and are informed at every stage in an accessible way (e.g., interpretation, plain language summaries, visuals) so they can take part meaningfully.

Monitoring and review

The Headteacher will review this policy on an annual basis, considering feedback from staff, families and professionals on the effectiveness of support for pupils with EAL and complex needs. The review will take account of progress information (including communication and EHCP outcomes), safeguarding considerations, and any changes to legislation or statutory guidance.

The next scheduled review date is 08/05/2028.

Appendix 1: Home Language and Communication Assessment (Specialist SEN)

Pupil's name	
Assessed by	
Language	
Date	

Is the pupil's social/linguistic behaviour age-appropriate?	**Y/N**
Does the pupil understand a range of questions, instructions and a story, told in their first language?	**Y/N**

Is the pupil's speech clearly articulated?	**Y/N**
Is the pupil able to speak accurately at a social level?	**Y/N**
Is the pupil's vocabulary appropriate/sophisticated/limited?	**Y/N**
Does the pupil use correct grammatical structures?	**Y/N**
Can the pupil talk about the past, present and future using correct verbal forms?	**Y/N**
Do you have any concerns?	**Y/N**
Do you have any comments regarding the pupil's social interaction with you during the assessment?	**Y/N**
Can the pupil read and write in their first language?	**Y/N**

Can the pupil complete age-appropriate mathematics tasks with limited language context?	**Y/N**