

English as an Additional Language (EAL) Policy



St Benignus NS, Balscadden

1.0 Introduction

This policy will assist teachers in our school in meeting the language and learning needs of the child for whom English is an additional language in our school, so that s/he can access all areas of the Primary School Curriculum. The phrase 'English as an additional language' recognised that English is the language used in teaching that child and that where possible, the child will also learn Irish. The teaching of English will build on the language and literacy skills which the child has attained in his/her home language to the greatest extent possible.

This policy was developed using the NCCA's English as an Additional Language in Irish Primary Schools: Guidelines for teachers.

2.0 Aims

The aims of this policy are to:

- Provide information regarding children's language acquisition so that teachers can come to a greater understanding of the processes involved in learning a new language and how this affects the learning needs of the child in both language and literacy.
- Identify how the school can contribute to meeting the language and learning needs of the child.
- Identify strategies to meet the learning needs of the child.
- Outline assessment and support procedures for pupils who are learning English as an additional language.

3.0 Acquiring an additional language

The child's acquisition of additional languages occurs in developmental stages. The child who is learning English for the first time utters one or two phrases before s/he develops more fluency in the language. The child has to develop a sense of how English works internally before s/he can overcome the challenges associated with speaking or writing. Sometimes this means that the child does not communicate orally in class for some time. This non-communicative period is known as 'the silent phase' of language learning. The 'silent phase' is a natural part of the language learning

process. During this phase of learning, the child takes time to become familiar with the words and rules of the new language, and to observe and take in information about the new environment.

In English, the child develops listening skills before speaking skills and reading skills before writing skills. The errors made at this stage of language acquisition are a natural part of learning.

The child's oral and written work will help the teacher to determine his/her needs and the support required. Children who are literate in their home language should be encouraged to sustain the development of this literacy. It is important for the child to continue to develop his/her language and literacy skills in the home language. An increasing number of libraries provide books in a variety of languages and these may be used by parents to support the child's language and literacy skills in the home language. Families may have satellite access to radio and television programmes in their home language.

4.0 Teaching English through the curriculum

The teacher can help to develop the child's language and his/her engagement with the curriculum by:

- Using gestures to illustrate actions and activities (pointing, miming)
- Using visual cues to support the development of oral interaction (photographs, posters, pictures)
- Displaying printed phrases that are commonly used by teachers and children (flashcards)
- Writing and sounding out words and phrases the child can use to look for clarification (e.g. Can you explain that again please?)
- Simplifying texts that contain complex sentences and ideas.
- Providing opportunities for children to create their own monolingual or bilingual dictionaries and enabling the child to use dictionary skills where appropriate
- Displaying flip charts and posters used to record new words, groups of words or word structures
- Setting aside time for independent and guided reading
- Asking questions about errors that the child has made during the writing process and discussing with him/her how the errors might be corrected

Children acquire greater fluency in the language when they have opportunities to use it and to reflect on how it works. Teachers can help to raise the child's awareness of language including words, grammar and the conventions of genres which are particular to the English language, using the above strategies.

5.0 Developing Language Awareness

5.1 Using the child's oral and written work, the teacher can understand how the child develops second language literacy. The teacher may notice similar errors made by children who share the same first language.

5.2 Whatever the child's home language s/he will be able to transfer some of the skills learnt in acquiring it to learning English. However, grammatical conventions and the phonological system may differ greatly between the home language and English. If this is the case, the child may

experience an extended silent phase before speaking or writing in English. Additionally, if the script and the directionality of reading and writing in the child's home language differ from English, s/he may have to develop the spatial strategies necessary for reading from left to right. The teacher should encourage the child to use knowledge of his/her home language:

- To determine meaning of words
- To explore the similarities and differences in sounds between English and the home language
- To explore where possible grammatical conventions in the home language that may be the same or different from English
- To make comparisons between the script and letter sound relationships used for the home language and that of English.

5.3 The child's awareness of English can be developed at a number of levels by:

- Examining the relationship between letters, sounds and words (building phonological awareness)
- Exploring the relationships between different words within sentences (sentence structure awareness)
- Investigating how texts change according to their functions as reflected in different genres (genre awareness)

As the child's language proficiency develops, s/he will benefit from opportunities to think and talk about the language used in oral, visual or written texts. For example, when looking at a text during the SESE: History class, the teacher may ask all children to think about how the auxiliary verb 'would' is used in a sentence like 'in times gone by, we would all walk to school'. Raising awareness of how language works will help develop literacy skills and can be incorporated into the teaching and learning of all subjects in the curriculum.

6.0 Developing cultural competence

The child who has recently arrived in a school may not be familiar with classroom roles and responsibilities. It is important for teachers to introduce the child to the cultural norms of the school and the classroom. The child should be enabled to access all subject areas of the curriculum including the Irish language. However, if the child enters school in more senior classes s/he may be exempt from learning Irish, according to the terms of Circular 12/96, as the school deems it more appropriate for this child to concentrate on learning English, the medium of instruction.

7.0 Curriculum Planning

The following are suggestions for teachers to address the needs of children for whom English is an additional language:

- Be cognisant of the centrality of language and literacy to learning across the curriculum.
- Ensure that the child is in an –age appropriate class so that his/her cognitive and language development is enhanced through interaction with peers.
- Focus on planning for the progression of the child's language and literacy and learning over time and between classes

Appendix 12

- Adopt a cross curricular approach to teaching and learning, so that children may be enabled to use the same language in different contexts in the classroom
- Draw on experiences and examples taken from the local environment and extending the child's learning from the immediate and known to the unfamiliar and unknown
- Develop appropriate oral, aural, written and ICT resources to assist the child in his/her language learning.

8.0 Other useful procedures and practices

The following procedures and practices might be of assistance to children who are learning English as an additional language:

- Establishing buddy support systems that enable the child to rely on support from another member of the child's class
- Facilitating access to the school or classroom library so that the child is encouraged to read as much as possible
- Involving parents from a variety of linguistic communities in the school as much as possible within the life of the school
- Sourcing or creating teaching materials, including rhymes and stories written in English about aspects of the child's culture or origin.

9.0 Assessment and support teaching

Pupils who are learning English as an additional language will be assessed by class teachers using the framework outlined in the school's Assessment Policy for all pupils. Where deemed appropriate selected pupils will be further assessed using specially selected tests.

Supplementary teaching may be deemed appropriate following a review of teacher assessments. Supplementary teaching for pupils learning English as an additional language will be provided under the General Allocation (GAM) model. All procedures and practices regarding supplementary teaching under the school's Learning Support and Special Needs Policy will apply in the case of EAL pupils.

10.0 Evaluation and Review

This policy will be reviewed as part of the Learning Support and Special Needs policy.