



ORANGE TREE SCHOOL

ENGLISH AS AN ADDITIONAL LANGUAGE (EAL) POLICY

2026–2027

Independent School Standards: Part 1, paragraph 2; Part 2, paragraph 5;
Part 3, paragraph 7; Part 8, paragraph 34



Document Details

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Policy Summary

Purpose

Orange Tree School is committed to ensuring that pupils who use English as an additional language can access an ambitious, broad and balanced education, participate fully in school life and make strong progress from their individual starting points.

This policy sets out how the school identifies, assesses and supports pupils with EAL while recognising multilingualism as a strength. It also explains how EAL needs are distinguished from SEND, how families are involved, and how provision is monitored across the Main Site and Ridgeway Hospital Provision.

Core principles

- Multilingualism is an asset and should be respected and celebrated.
- Pupils with EAL are entitled to the same ambitious curriculum and high expectations as their peers.
- Language development is the responsibility of all staff and should be supported across the curriculum.
- EAL is not, in itself, a special educational need or disability.
- Assessment must take account of prior education, language history, SEND, trauma, anxiety and communication differences.
- Families should be supported to understand and participate in school life, including through interpretation or translated information where reasonably required.
- Safeguarding concerns must never be overlooked or attributed solely to language difference.

Key expectations

- EAL needs are identified at admission and reviewed as the pupil settles into the School.
- Teachers plan explicit language support alongside subject learning.
- Classroom practice includes clear modelling, visual support, vocabulary teaching and structured opportunities to speak, read and write.
- Pupils are not withdrawn from curriculum entitlement unnecessarily.
- Progress in English proficiency and across the curriculum is monitored using a range of evidence.
- Staff work with parents, carers, home schools, Local Authorities and other professionals where appropriate.

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1. Introduction

Orange Tree School is a specialist independent school for pupils with Education, Health and Care Plans. The school recognises that some pupils may use one or more languages in addition to English and may be at different stages of developing proficiency in spoken and written English.

The school values linguistic and cultural diversity. Pupils who use English as an additional language bring knowledge, experiences and language resources that enrich the school community. They should not be viewed through a deficit model or assumed to have low ability because they are still developing English proficiency.

At the same time, the school recognises that learning through an additional language can create barriers to curriculum access, communication, emotional expression, safeguarding disclosure and participation. Provision must therefore be personalised, ambitious and responsive to the whole pupil.

At the time of publication, the school anticipates supporting its first pupil identified as using English as an Additional Language. This policy establishes a clear framework to ensure appropriate support is in place from admission onwards and will continue to guide future provision as the school develops.

This policy applies whether or not the school currently has pupils identified as EAL. It ensures that clear arrangements are in place whenever a pupil or family requires language support.

2. Legal and Regulatory Framework

This policy has been developed with regard to:

- The Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014, particularly Part 1 relating to curriculum and teaching, Part 2 relating to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, Part 3 relating to welfare, health and safety, and Part 8 relating to leadership and management;
- The Equality Act 2010;
- The Children and Families Act 2014 and the SEND Code of Practice: 0 to 25 years;
- Keeping Children Safe in Education (current edition);
- Working Together to Safeguard Children (current edition);
- Department for Education guidance and research relating to pupils with English as an additional language; and
- The Data Protection Act 2018 and UK GDPR.

The Independent School Standards require the school to provide a written curriculum policy supported by appropriate plans and schemes of work, to enable pupils to acquire speaking, listening, literacy and numeracy skills, and to ensure teaching enables pupils to make progress

according to their abilities. This policy supports those requirements by setting out how pupils with EAL will access the curriculum and receive appropriate teaching.

3. Definitions

English as an Additional Language (EAL)

A pupil is considered to use English as an additional language where English is not the first language to which they were exposed during early development and they continue to use or have access to another language. This definition does not indicate the pupil's level of English proficiency, academic ability or need for additional support.

First language / home language

The language or languages first learned or most used within the pupil's home or family. A pupil may have more than one first or home language.

English proficiency

The pupil's developing ability to understand and use spoken and written English for social interaction and academic learning. Social fluency may develop before the more complex language needed to access the curriculum.

New to English

A pupil who is at an early stage of learning English and may have limited understanding or use of spoken or written English. This does not imply limited knowledge, intelligence or prior learning.

4. Identification and Admissions

EAL needs will be considered as part of the school's admissions and transition arrangements. EAL alone will not be a reason to refuse admission whereas the School can otherwise meet the pupil's needs.

Information gathered at admission should include, where relevant:

- languages used by the pupil and family;
- which language the pupil understands, speaks, reads and writes most confidently;
- length of time learning through English;
- previous countries of residence and educational history;
- interrupted or limited prior schooling;
- current and previous curriculum experience;
- family preferences regarding communication and interpretation;
- known SEND, communication, sensory, emotional or medical needs;
- any safeguarding, refugee, asylum, trauma or displacement considerations; and
- whether translated information or an interpreter is required.

The school will avoid using pupils, siblings or family friends to interpret sensitive, safeguarding, medical, complaints or formal decision-making conversations. A suitable adult interpreter or professional translation service should be considered where accuracy and confidentiality are important.

5. Initial Assessment and Ongoing Review

Assessment will establish what the pupil knows and can do, rather than focusing only on what they cannot yet express in English. Where possible, assessment will draw on information from parents, carers, previous schools, home schools, Local Authorities and other professionals.

Initial and ongoing assessment may consider:

- listening and understanding;
- spoken interaction and expression;
- reading fluency and comprehension;
- writing, spelling, grammar and vocabulary;
- confidence in social and academic communication;
- prior attainment and subject knowledge;
- preferred ways of communicating;
- use of visual, technological or bilingual support;
- progress over time and response to teaching; and
- the impact of anxiety, autism, trauma, selective mutism, speech and language needs or other SEND.

No single test will determine provision. Teachers will use a range of evidence, including classroom observation, work samples, pupil voice and progress information. Assessment arrangements will be proportionate to the pupil's needs and reviewed as English proficiency develops.

The Teaching and Learning Lead will coordinate initial assessment and, where appropriate, seek advice from external EAL services to ensure appropriate provision is established.

6. EAL and SEND

EAL is not, by itself, a special educational need. A pupil should not be identified as having SEND solely because they are learning English.

Equally, genuine SEND must not be overlooked or attributed only to EAL. Orange Tree School will consider the pupil's development across all languages, educational history, rate of progress, communication profile and response to appropriate teaching and support.

As all pupils at Orange Tree School have EHCPs, staff must consider the interaction between EAL and each pupil's identified SEND. For example, limited spoken English may coexist with autism, speech and language needs, anxiety, selective mutism, sensory processing differences or trauma. Assessment and provision must consider both areas without confusing one for the other.

Where concerns remain, the school may seek advice from the SENCO, Speech and Language Therapy, Educational Psychology, the Local Authority EAL service or other relevant professionals. Parents and carers will be involved in discussions and decision-making.

7. Curriculum Entitlement and Teaching Practice

Pupils with EAL are entitled to an ambitious, broad and balanced curriculum. They should learn alongside peers wherever appropriate and should not be routinely removed from subject teaching in order to complete low-level or unrelated language activities.

Teachers will maintain high expectations while adapting teaching so that pupils can access new knowledge and demonstrate understanding. Effective practice may include:

- clear, concise language supported by accurate modelling;
- explicit teaching of subject-specific and general academic vocabulary;
- visual timetables, images, diagrams, demonstrations and concrete resources;
- checking understanding without relying only on "Do you understand?";
- additional processing time and opportunities to rehearse responses;
- careful grouping and structured peer interaction;
- sentence stems, writing frames and model answers;
- pre-teaching and revisiting key concepts;
- links between new learning, prior knowledge and the pupil's home language where helpful;
- use of bilingual dictionaries, translation tools or assistive technology where appropriate;
- opportunities to listen, speak, read and write for meaningful purposes; and
- feedback that develops both curriculum understanding and accurate use of English.

Adaptations should support access without reducing cognitive challenge. Staff should avoid giving pupils simplified work that prevents them from developing subject knowledge or participating in the full curriculum.

8. Language, Literacy and Communication Support

Language development is a whole-school responsibility. Every subject has its own vocabulary, sentence structures, ways of reasoning and forms of communication. Teachers will make these features explicit.

Where targeted support is required, it may include short-term individual or small-group intervention, additional vocabulary teaching, reading support, phonics where developmentally appropriate, structured speaking and listening, or support from an appropriately skilled adult.

Targeted intervention should:

- be based on assessed need;
- link directly to classroom learning and curriculum access;
- avoid unnecessary separation from peers;
- have clear aims and review points;
- promote increasing independence; and
- be evaluated for impact.

The school supports families to maintain and develop home languages. Strong home-language knowledge can support identity, family relationships and the learning of English. Parents should not be advised to stop using their strongest language with their child.

9. Assessment, Progress and Qualifications

Pupils with EAL will be assessed against appropriate curriculum expectations and individual starting points. Staff will distinguish between subject knowledge and the English required to demonstrate that knowledge.

Reasonable classroom adjustments may include additional processing time, visual prompts, bilingual resources or alternative ways of demonstrating understanding. Any formal access arrangements for public examinations must be based on evidence of need, normal way of working and current examination regulations; EAL alone does not automatically entitle a pupil to access arrangements.

Progress will be monitored in both English proficiency and curriculum learning. Where progress is slower than expected, leaders will review the quality of teaching, attendance, prior education, SEND, wellbeing, safeguarding and any need for additional specialist advice.

10. Safeguarding, Welfare and Inclusion

Pupils and families who have limited English may face additional barriers to understanding school systems, seeking help or making a disclosure. Staff must remain professionally curious and ensure that communication difference does not prevent concerns from being heard or acted upon.

Staff will:

- ensure pupils know how to seek help and identify trusted adults;
- use accessible communication, visuals or interpretation where needed;
- consider whether apparent silence, agreement or non-compliance may reflect limited understanding, anxiety or communication difficulty;

- avoid asking another pupil to interpret a safeguarding disclosure;
- report concerns to the Designated Safeguarding Lead without delay;
- consider culture and language sensitively while maintaining the same safeguarding standards for every pupil; and
- record the pupil's own words accurately, including where an interpreter has been used.

The school will promote belonging and challenge racism, xenophobia, discriminatory language and assumptions about ability, culture, nationality, migration status or language. Pupils' names will be pronounced and recorded respectfully, and their linguistic and cultural identities will be valued.

11. Partnership with Parents and Carers

Positive partnership with parents and carers is central to effective EAL provision. The school will seek to make communication clear, respectful and accessible.

This may include:

- checking the family's preferred language and method of communication;
- providing translated key information where reasonably practicable;
- arranging interpretation for important meetings where needed;
- explaining school routines, curriculum, attendance expectations, safeguarding and support arrangements;
- valuing information about the pupil's language, culture, education and experiences;
- encouraging continued use and development of home languages; and
- ensuring parents can contribute meaningfully to reviews, EHCP processes and decisions.

Automated translation may be useful for routine communication but should not be relied upon for complex, confidential, legal, medical or safeguarding matters without appropriate checking.

12. Main Site and Ridgeway Arrangements

12.1 Main Site

At the Main Site, support will be integrated within the pupil's personalised curriculum, EHCP provision, individual risk assessment and transition arrangements. Staff will promote classroom participation, relationships and increasing independence while providing targeted language support where required.

12.2 Ridgeway Hospital Provision

At Ridgeway, assessment and provision will take account of the pupil's home-school curriculum, length of admission, medical and emotional presentation, prior attainment and communication

with clinical teams. The Key Teacher will seek relevant information from the home school and family and ensure that language needs are reflected in the personalised education plan.

Where a pupil is newly arrived in England, has interrupted education or requires interpretation, Ridgeway staff will work with the home school, Local Authority, family and hospital professionals to support continuity, safeguarding and reintegration or onward transition.

13. Staff Training and Professional Expectations

All staff share responsibility for supporting pupils with EAL. Training and professional development will be provided according to need and may include:

- understanding EAL and multilingual development;
- distinguishing EAL from SEND;
- language-supportive classroom practice;
- assessment and monitoring;
- working with interpreters and translated information;
- cultural inclusion and anti-discriminatory practice; and
- safeguarding pupils and families where language may create barriers.

Staff are expected to seek advice where they are unsure, share relevant observations, follow agreed support strategies and avoid assumptions based on accent, fluency, nationality, ethnicity or family background.

As the School currently has a small number of pupils with EAL, training will be provided according to emerging need and reviewed as pupil numbers change.

14. Roles and Responsibilities

Advisory Board

- provide strategic oversight and assurance that the School meets the Independent School Standards;
- monitor equality, curriculum access and the effectiveness of provision; and
- ensure leaders have appropriate resources and systems in place.

Headteacher

- ensure this policy is implemented across both sites;
- promote an inclusive culture with high expectations for multilingual pupils;
- ensure responsibilities are allocated and staff receive appropriate guidance; and
- report significant issues or trends to the Advisory Board.

SENCO

- coordinate identification, assessment and provision where EAL needs are present;

- support staff to distinguish EAL from SEND and understand their interaction;
- advise on individual plans, interventions and external support;
- liaise with families, Local Authorities and professionals; and
- monitor progress and evaluate provision.

Teaching and Learning Lead and Subject Leaders

- ensure curriculum planning and quality assurance consider language demands;
- support teachers with vocabulary, modelling, literacy and adaptive teaching; and
- monitor the quality of classroom provision and professional development needs.

Teachers

- plan ambitious, language-supportive lessons;
- assess both curriculum learning and language development;
- implement agreed strategies and reasonable adjustments;
- communicate concerns and celebrate progress; and
- work collaboratively with support staff, families and professionals.

Learning Support Assistants and Support Staff

- support communication, participation and independence under teacher direction;
- use agreed strategies consistently;
- avoid over-support or speaking for the pupil unnecessarily; and
- share observations that may inform assessment and planning.

Designated Safeguarding Lead

- ensure language and communication barriers are considered in safeguarding practice;
- arrange appropriate interpretation where required; and
- ensure concerns are recorded, escalated and responded to without delay.

Pupils

- be encouraged to use all of their language knowledge as a resource for learning;
- participate in learning and ask for help in accessible ways; and
- contribute their views about the support that helps them.

Parents and Carers

- share relevant information about language, education and family circumstances;
- continue communicating with their child in the language in which they are most confident;
- work in partnership with the school; and
- raise concerns or request support where communication is unclear.

15. Monitoring, Evaluation and Review

The Headteacher, SENCO and Teaching and Learning Lead will monitor the implementation and effectiveness of this policy. Monitoring may include:

- admission and language information;
- progress and attainment from individual starting points;
- lesson observations, learning walks and work scrutiny;
- quality and impact of targeted support;
- pupil and parent voice;
- attendance, engagement and participation;
- safeguarding and equality information;
- effectiveness of communication with parents where English is an additional language;
- staff confidence and training needs; and
- reintegration and transition outcomes at Ridgeway.

Where the School has no pupils currently identified as EAL, leaders will retain the policy and ensure that admissions, safeguarding and curriculum systems remain capable of responding promptly when the need arises.

This policy will be reviewed annually, or sooner where there are changes to legislation, statutory guidance, pupil need or school arrangements.

16. Related Policies

- Admissions Policy
- Curriculum Policy
- Teaching and Learning Policy
- SEND Policy
- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy
- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- Relationship and Regulation Policy
- Assessment Policy
- Attendance Policy
- Data Protection Policy
- Complaints Policy
- Accessibility Plan
- Ridgeway Hospital Provision procedures

