



St Mary's School CAMBRIDGE

English as an Additional Language (EAL) Policy

This policy is the responsibility of the Deputy Head: Data and Operations.

Last full review: February 25

Next review: February 26

Context

St Mary's School, Cambridge currently has 589 students on roll, of whom 69 are taught English as an Additional Language (EAL), receive English language support and/or support in their subject classes. The Department for Education defines a pupil as having English as an Additional Language if:

“...she/he is exposed to a language at home that is known or believed to be other than English. It is not a measure of English language proficiency or a good proxy for recent immigration.” [1]

Although many of our pupils with English as an Additional Language are already proficient users of English, having lived in Britain or studied in English for several years, some are admitted with English at Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) level A2, B1 or B2. These students are taught EAL or receive support from EYFS to Key Stage 4, as outlined in Sections 3 and 4 below. Our international Sixth Form students are prepared for the IELTS examination to meet the English language requirements of their university applications, as outlined in Section 4.6.

Aims of the School for pupils with EAL

St Mary's School, Cambridge (the School) seeks to enable each EAL pupil, from EYFS to Sixth Form to develop the language skills needed

- to pursue her subject studies to the best of her ability and in doing so to be able to engage in both spoken and written discourse with clarity, precision and fluency
- to benefit from the wide range of opportunities St Mary's offers to engage in extracurricular activities and work experience placements
- to develop strong relationships with those around her, including teachers and pupils of other nationalities
- to use English-language media to broaden her knowledge and understanding of the world
- to provide a sound basis for the continuation of her studies in further or higher education
- to pass external English Language examinations, such as IELTS in the Sixth Form, with the grades necessary to access her chosen course in the UK or English-speaking institutions of higher education abroad.

Junior School Procedures and Teaching

At the first meeting with prospective parents, the pupil's first language(s) are discussed to help determine their current level of English. Entrance Examination and Interview help identify the likely support needed upon entry to St Mary's Junior School.

From entry onward, English language support is provided as follows:

- Immersive classroom approach:

Drawing on research that shows language learning is most effective before puberty; we believe that keeping children fully immersed in the classroom environment is the best method for acquiring English. This immersive setting ensures that English is continuously modelled and reinforced through everyday interactions.

- Adaptive in-class strategies:

For pupils with little or no understanding of English, all staff are trained to use clear communication techniques such as speaking slowly, employing visual cues, and incorporating gestures to support comprehension. Classrooms and key areas are clearly labelled to aid navigation, and staff actively encourage social interactions during playtime to strengthen language development.

- Targeted language instruction:

In addition to immersion, targeted strategies are implemented to support language acquisition. This includes pre-teaching essential vocabulary, engaging pupils in structured talking activities, reviewing grammar and spelling, and, where necessary, providing phonics instruction to reinforce sound-letter associations.

- Timetabled EAL provision:

EAL support is scheduled as one dedicated period per week on a rota basis. If additional support is required, adjustments may be made that could result in the pupil temporarily missing Modern Foreign Languages (MFL) lessons. The expectation is that support can be slowly withdrawn.

- Parental involvement and translation support:

When necessary, a parent or approved translator is invited into the school to assist with translation during sessions. Parents also receive materials and resources to support their child's English language development at home, with the level of assistance tailored to the family's needs.

In alignment with our core values of Freedom, Joy, Justice, Love, and Truth, and our H.E.A.R.T. learning habits—Hard work, Empathy, Adaptability, Responsibility, and Thoughtfulness—opportunities are provided for pupils and/or parents to share aspects of their home language and culture with the wider school community. This practice enriches our learning environment, fosters mutual understanding, and reinforces our commitment to celebrating the richness of our varied cultural backgrounds.

Senior School Procedures and Teaching

Pre-arrival assessment

International students

The application procedure for international students who do not have English as their home language is as follows:

Students for Years 7 – 10 take the Quest ATOM online test, the Linguaskill Reading and Listening test, submit a sample of their writing in response to an essay title, which is assessed in school by the Head of EAL, attend an interview and upload their most recent school report. If their current school teaches an English curriculum, we also obtain a Head’s reference.

Students for Year 12 take the Ukiset [2] online test, submit a sample of their writing in response to an essay title, which is assessed in school by the Head of EAL, attend an interview and upload their most recent school report. If their current school teaches an English curriculum, we also obtain a Head’s reference.

Based on this information, the Head of EAL will make a recommendation to Admissions as to whether the applicant has sufficient English language competence to access the teaching in all subjects at St Mary’s, Cambridge, in the year group for which she is applying. The Head of EAL may also recommend additional English language support, if required, or may advise that the candidate’s English is potentially strong enough to meet the demands of studying mainstream English Language and Literature. In the latter case, a joint decision is made with the English Department. Students who meet the required level will be given a poetry and creative writing task, followed by an interview with the Head of English.

Students applying from within the UK

On application, all home students notify the School of their home language and sit the Senior School’s entrance examination. If English language issues are evident for home students with English as an Additional Language, the Head of EAL is informed and offers guidance as above.

English language level guidelines

The language level required varies by year group and guidance is given below using the widely recognised Council of Europe CEFR levels, which also benchmark the Cambridge English Language Examinations (see Appendix A). On occasion, we accept students who may not meet these standards, but who demonstrate potential. This is more likely to be the case in Year 7 and Year 8, as the students have more opportunity to improve their English before KS4. However, we also consider students at a high A2.2 level who show promise for entry to our Year 9 Accelerator course.

<i>Year of entry</i>	<i>CEFR Level</i>
<i>Years 7 and 8</i>	B1.1 (low B1)
<i>Year 9 Accelerator</i>	A2.2 - B1.1 (strong A2 to low B1)
<i>Year 9</i>	B1.2 (strong B1)
<i>Year 10</i>	B2.1 (low B2)
<i>Year 12</i>	B2.2 (strong B2)

Monitoring on arrival

EAL students from Year 9 to Year 13 sit our International Students Test (IST). This test is based on standardised external examination materials and is taken each year. The IST fulfils several aims:

- to monitor student progress year on year
- to indicate where students may need extra support or differentiated learning
- to provide an initial indication of an EAL student's potential for mainstream English
- to cross-check the application screening test results of a successful applicant.

EAL in Year 7 and Year 8

Students with EAL entering the school in Year 7 and Year 8 are normally integrated into mainstream English classes with a specialist EAL teacher to support them in the classroom. Separate EAL teaching in place of mainstream English may be provided if it is not detrimental to the students to withdraw them from the mainstream English route.

EAL Support in Years 9 to 11

Students with EAL in Years 9, 10 and 11 who do not take mainstream (KS3 or GCSE/iGCSE) English are taught EAL.

Year 9 students either follow a Cambridge B2 First for Schools course or follow the Year 9 EAL Accelerator course at B1 Preliminary level, which includes an additional, compulsory, grammar programme and a literature programme tailored to a lower English language level.

Year 10 students prepare for the Cambridge B2 First examination.

Year 11 students take the Cambridge C1 Advanced examination at the same time as other students take GCSE English.

Some students who come to St Mary's for less than an academic year, from countries such as Germany and Spain, may take one of these examinations early if they wish to return home with an English language certificate.

English Language Support and In-class Subject Support (Years 7 to 11)

From Years 7 to 11, separate English Language Support (ELS) may be provided, with the specific aim of working with each student on their subject class work, coursework or homework. This is particularly helpful for subjects which are linguistically demanding, such as History or Religious Studies, but it may also be valuable to go through terminology and its pronunciation in maths or science subjects, or to help with projects such as geography presentations or portfolio annotations in creative practical subjects such as Textiles, Art and Photography. ELS also provides those students with lower-level English with the extra time and support needed to research and process content in English.

The EAL Department liaises with the Head of English, and with Heads of Department and subject teachers, to co-ordinate support for individual students. Additional EAL support in KS3 and KS4 subject classes may be made available, subject to timetable availability.

If the School, student or parents feel that a student is not best placed in ELS, the Head of EAL will then liaise with subject teachers and the Director of Studies to check that work is being completed to a sufficient standard and to check timetabling options. Permission will be sought from the student's parents or guardians for a move to another subject.

In addition, the Head of EAL collaborates closely with the Mary Ward House boarding team and may on occasion attend prep at Mary Ward House to see individual students.

The EAL Department are always available by appointment to help international students not taking EAL or ELS lessons, if language difficulties are affecting their subject studies.

EAL teaching in Sixth Form

Lower Sixth students are prepared for IELTS. This internationally recognised qualification assesses a student's listening, reading, writing and speaking skills [3]. Some Lower Sixth Students take the IELTS examination in June or earlier, and do not attend further classes if they have achieved the score they need for their university courses. Others

continue into the Upper Sixth with the aim of achieving better results or giving themselves more time to improve. Many Sixth Form international students see IELTS classes as useful preparation for the demands of speaking and writing in higher education.

It is EAL departmental policy that both Lower and Upper Sixth IELTS students are supported with presentations for special events, such as the whole school assemblies, or with competition entries such as the John Locke Institute essay competition. IELTS students receive two specialised masterclasses on the UCAS process and personal statement writing. Upper Sixth students routinely submit their UCAS personal statements for proofreading and comment. International students called for interview – for example, at Oxbridge, or for medical or veterinary school - are also offered additional interview practice.

EAL students accessing mainstream English: Additional notes

Although GCSE English and English Literature may not be core GCSE subjects for EAL students who will be applying to university in the UK as international students, the School policy is to ensure each student is taking the course which will most benefit and best suit her circumstances. The EAL students who take GCSE English Language and English Literature rather than the EAL option may also have some EAL support. Most go on to take the IELTS qualification in the Sixth Form, since this international examination not only satisfies the English language and visa requirements for international students for university entry in the UK, but is also widely used by universities in Canada, the US, Australia and New Zealand, and an increasing number of English-medium university courses in Europe.

GCSE English Language and English Literature can be particularly challenging for EAL students with weaker English. It is worth noting that all students who have been in mainstream English since Year 7 have studied a range of Shakespeare (in the original language and in full); several novels, including 19th-century novels by writers such as Charlotte Bronte, Jane Austen and Charles Dickens – again, unabridged and unmodernised – and a range of poetry, mainly from the 19th and 20th centuries. This prepares them for the very detailed and demanding study of Shakespeare, other drama, poetry and novels at GCSE level.

The School will bear in mind the interests of any student whose home language is not English wishing to access the GCSE course, alongside their parents' wishes, the view of the class teacher, and matters such as timetabling.

The protocol for access to GCSE English for EAL students who show significant language potential is as follows:

- Within two weeks of arrival, these students will sit the poetry and creative writing assessment set by the English Department.
- Those students who pass this screening will be interviewed by the Head of English.
- In collaboration with the Director of Studies, their parents will be informed by email of the invitation to move to GCSE English and of the potential benefits and downsides of such a move.
- The student would move to mainstream English, if parental consent is given.

EAL students and SEND

The Head of EAL works in collaboration with the Head of SEND. If an EAL student's English language development does not progress as expected, the EAL Department, in collaboration with the SEND Department and subject teacher observations, may monitor for indications that the student might need additional support. Monitoring is often initiated by the submission of an EAL/ SEND Initial Referral form to the SEND Department. The EAL Department use the Bell Foundation's *EAL and SEND: A Framework for Ind Provision in Schools*.^[4] The EAL Department is mindful of cultural sensitivities to SEND issues. The SEND Policy can be found here:

EAL Senior School Teaching Objectives

Linguistic

1. To enable students of all abilities to understand and use English effectively for communication in a range of contexts. This involves being able to understand and use a range of registers, both formal and informal; gaining mastery of the skills of listening, reading, speaking and writing; being able to use grammar flexibly and accurately; and developing strong vocabulary. Contexts include but are not limited to working in the academic school environment, applying for work experience and university places, participating in voluntary work or challenges such as the Duke of Edinburgh's Award, a Model United Nations conference, or an English-Speaking Union debate, and developing good everyday friendships and relationships.
2. To provide students with examination preparation for the Cambridge B2 First, Cambridge C1 Advanced and IELTS examinations which will enable them to achieve according to their capabilities.
3. To provide positive, effective and enjoyable learning experiences which will give students confidence in their ability to make English an alternative means of communication and way of being themselves, and not just a means to an end.
4. To broaden students' experience of the world by encouraging them to access English language news, information and the arts from a wide variety of sources including print and web-based media.
5. To help students overcome errors that they may have developed in other learning contexts.
6. To develop language learning skills that will enable them to continue learning beyond school.
7. To promote learning skills of a more general application e.g. promoting automaticity, developing arguments, drawing of inferences, analysis and evaluation.

Cultural / Social

1. To promote inclusivity and celebrate diversity, enabling students to acquire an appreciation of and respect for their own and other cultures in a way that promotes, joy, harmony and tolerance between different cultural traditions.
2. To help students appreciate that in becoming very able users of English they need not forfeit their own national identity but should aspire to span two (or more) cultures and be at home in both (or all).

Methodological

1. To set up learning activities which provide
 - a. opportunities to build confidence
 - b. intellectual stimulation and challenge
 - c. enjoyment.
2. To provide students with formative feedback on their work, encourage self-reflection on their learning process, and foster a growth mindset.
3. To encourage and stretch students of all abilities to fulfil their potential for English language learning by using a variety of media as well as teaching and learning styles, adapting materials and activities to different levels of ability.
4. To use ICT to reinforce students' learning by drawing upon and developing their skills to produce clear notes, effective presentations, and aesthetically pleasing presentation of their written work, to give them the

opportunity to record and improve talks and discussions and to encourage the use of suitable online learning resources.

Study Skills

1. To develop the ability to research, plan and organise their work and to work independently wherever possible.
2. To develop the ability to understand, present and evaluate arguments for and against controversial issues and to arrive at a defensible position both in speech and in writing.
3. To develop a pride in achievement through the encouragement of a methodical and responsible attitude to their work.
4. To ensure that, if students are working remotely online,
 - a. each student is aware of where they can find lesson recordings and copies of lesson materials
 - b. each student has the facility to store their digital work in Teams when appropriate
 - c. each student is aware of the need to participate in lessons using their microphone and video camera as much as possible, where parental consent for video has been granted.
5. To familiarise students, where appropriate, with a range of online lexical reference sites such as the Cambridge Learner Dictionary, which they can use at school, at university and beyond.

Review of Policy

This Policy is the responsibility of the Head of English as an Additional Language in the Senior School in conjunction with the Language and Learning Coordinator in the Junior School and the Head of Learning Support.

Appendix A

CEFR Reference Scale

PROFICIENT USER	C2	Can understand with ease virtually everything heard or read. Can summarise information from different spoken and written sources, reconstructing arguments and accounts in a coherent presentation. Can express him/herself spontaneously, very fluently and precisely, differentiating finer shades of meaning even in more complex situations.
	C1	Can understand a wide range of demanding, longer texts, and recognise implicit meaning. Can express him/herself fluently and spontaneously without much obvious searching for expressions. Can use language flexibly and effectively for social, academic and professional purposes. Can produce clear, well-structured, detailed text on complex subjects, showing controlled use of organisational patterns, connectors and cohesive devices.
INDEPENDENT USER	B2	Can understand the main ideas of complex text on both concrete and abstract topics, including technical discussions in his/her field of specialisation. Can interact with a degree of fluency and spontaneity that makes regular interaction with native speakers quite possible without strain for either party. Can produce clear, detailed text on a wide range of subjects and explain a viewpoint on a topical issue giving the advantages and disadvantages of various options.
	B1	Can understand the main points of clear standard input on familiar matters regularly encountered in work, school, leisure, etc. Can deal with most situations likely to arise whilst travelling in an area where the language is spoken. Can produce simple connected text on topics which are familiar or of personal interest. Can describe experiences and events, dreams, hopes & ambitions and briefly give reasons and explanations for opinions and plans.
BASIC USER	A2	Can understand sentences and frequently used expressions related to areas of most immediate relevance (e.g. very basic personal and family information, shopping, local geography, employment). Can communicate in simple and routine tasks requiring a simple and direct exchange of information on familiar and routine matters. Can describe in simple terms aspects of his/her background, immediate environment and matters in areas of immediate need.
	A1	Can understand and use familiar everyday expressions and very basic phrases aimed at the satisfaction of needs of a concrete type. Can introduce him/herself and others and can ask and answer questions about personal details such as where he/she lives, people he/she knows and things he/she has. Can interact in a simple way provided the other person talks slowly and clearly and is prepared to help.

Global Scale – Table 1 (CEFR 3.3): Common Reference levels, Council of Europe,

<https://www.coe.int/en/web/common-european-framework-reference-languages/table-1-cefr-3.3-common-reference-levels-global-scale>

(Accessed 27th February 2025)