

WESTONBIRT SCHOOL

English as an Additional Language (EAL) Policy

Supporting international boarding pupils to thrive academically, socially and pastorally

Policy Title	English as an Additional Language (EAL) Policy
Policy Owner	Head of EAL
Approved By	Deputy Head (Academic) / Senior Leadership Team
Date of Policy	September 2026
Date of Next Review	September 2027 (or earlier if regulatory guidance changes)
Related Policies	Admissions Policy; Boarding Principles and Practice; Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy; SEND and Learning Support Policy; Teaching and Learning Policy; Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy; Anti-Bullying Policy; Examinations Access Arrangements Policy
Applies To	All teaching staff, boarding staff, tutors, and all pupils for whom English is an additional language

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1. Aims and Ethos

This policy sets out how the school identifies, assesses, teaches, monitors and pastorally supports pupils for whom English is an additional language (EAL), so that every international pupil can access the full curriculum, participate fully in boarding and school life, and make progress in line with their potential.

Our aims are that every EAL pupil will:

- Be identified and assessed accurately on arrival, and thereafter, so that provision is matched to genuine need.
- Receive dedicated, timetabled EAL teaching in addition to full access to the mainstream curriculum.
- Be known personally by every teacher who teaches them, through a clear, shared understanding of their linguistic starting point, learning profile and personal background.
- Be supported holistically — academically, linguistically, socially and emotionally — recognising that EAL pupils at Westonbirt are, without exception, also boarders living away from home and, in many cases, their home country.
- Make measurable progress in English proficiency and in subject attainment, monitored through robust mock test assessment in January and with the external Cambridge English exam in June.
- Be safeguarded effectively, with language ability never acting as a barrier to a pupil being heard, understood or protected.

This policy should be read alongside the school's Teaching and Learning Policy, SEND and Learning Support Policy, Boarding Principles and Practice, and Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy. EAL is not a special educational need; the great majority of our international pupils are highly able learners whose need is for language acquisition support, not learning support, and this policy is written to reflect that distinction throughout.

2. Legal and Regulatory Framework

This policy has been written with reference to:

- The Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014, as amended, and the Independent School Standards (ISSR).
- The ISI Framework and Handbook for the Inspection of Association Independent Schools (effective from 1 September 2023, updated September 2025), under which schools are judged against five key standards, with safeguarding underpinning all areas of evaluation, including leadership and governance, quality of education, and pupils' wellbeing.
- The National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools (NMS), given that all EAL pupils at Westonbirt are boarders.
- Keeping Children Safe in Education (statutory guidance, latest edition).

- The Equality Act 2010, under which pupils must not be discriminated against on the grounds of race, nationality or ethnic origin, and reasonable adjustments must be considered.
- Guidance from the British Association for International and Intercultural Education (BAICE) and the National Association for Language Development in the Curriculum (NALDIC) on best practice in EAL provision.
- Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ) regulations on access arrangements, in particular the specific provisions relating to EAL candidates (e.g. use of bilingual dictionaries, and the distinct and more limited range of arrangements available to EAL candidates compared with those with a specific learning difficulty).

3. Roles and Responsibilities

3.1 The Head and Senior Leadership Team

Hold overall responsibility for ensuring the school meets its statutory duties to international and EAL pupils, for resourcing EAL provision adequately, and for ensuring EAL is embedded within whole-school teaching, learning and safeguarding policy.

3.2 Head of EAL / EAL Department

- Oversees the identification, assessment, teaching and progress-tracking of all EAL pupils.
- Administers initial and ongoing assessment using the Password diagnostic testing software.
- Produces the individual Learner 'Pupil Passport' for every EAL pupil and distributes it to all relevant teaching staff via Teams.
- Timetables and delivers weekly EAL lessons, and coordinates any additional support.
- Liaises with subject teachers, tutors, boarding houseparents and the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) regarding individual pupils.
- Maintains EAL records, monitors progress data, and reports to SLT and, where relevant, to parents and guardians.
- Keeps the department's practice under review against current inspection and regulatory expectations.

3.3 Subject Teachers

- Read and act on each pupil's Learner 'Pupil Passport' before or at the start of teaching them.
- Differentiate teaching, resources and assessment appropriately for EAL pupils within their subject.
- Use EAL-friendly strategies as a matter of routine good practice (see Section 7).
- Flag concerns about a pupil's progress, wellbeing or understanding promptly to the Head of EAL, form tutor and, where appropriate, the DSL.

3.4 Boarding Staff and Houseparents

- Provide day-to-day pastoral care and act as a consistent, familiar presence for pupils living away from their home country.
- Support pupils' wellbeing, cultural adjustment and social integration within the boarding house.
- Communicate regularly with the EAL department and DSL regarding any concerns, including signs of homesickness, isolation or difficulty communicating needs.

3.5 Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)

Ensures that language barriers never prevent a pupil from being able to raise a concern or be understood, that appropriate interpreting arrangements are in place when needed for safeguarding conversations, and that staff are alert to the additional vulnerabilities that can affect international boarding pupils.

3.6 Guardians and Parents

Overseas parents and, where appointed, UK educational guardians are kept informed of academic and pastoral progress and are partners in supporting the pupil's transition and wellbeing.

4. Admissions, Identification and Initial Assessment

Westonbirt operates a thorough admissions and onboarding process for all international applicants, designed to ensure that provision is planned before a pupil arrives rather than reacted to afterwards.

4.1 Pre-Arrival

- Prior academic and language history is gathered as part of the admissions process, including any previous school reports, examination results and existing English qualifications where possible and if available (e.g. IELTS, TOEFL, Cambridge English).
- Where possible, an initial indication of English proficiency is obtained before arrival to inform early planning of timetable and support.

4.2 On Arrival — Diagnostic Testing

Every international pupil undertakes a full diagnostic assessment using the Password EAL assessment software during induction. This provides a standardised, evidence-based baseline across the key strands of English proficiency (reading, writing, listening, speaking and grammatical accuracy) and generates a level against a recognised proficiency scale. Results are used to:

- Determine the amount and type of EAL support each pupil requires.
- Group pupils appropriately for EAL teaching.
- Identify any pupil whose needs may extend beyond language acquisition alone, triggering a referral to the SEND and Learning Support Department for further assessment where indicated.
- Establish a baseline against which future progress is measured.

4.3 The Learner Pupil Passport

As part of induction, the EAL department works with each international pupil to complete a personal Learner Pupil Passport; offering a concise, pupil-authored introduction of themselves as a learner. This typically includes their language background, how long they are at Westonbirt for, strengths, learning preferences, confidence levels in English, and anything they would like their teachers to know about them. The Head of EAL shares this Pupil Passport with every teacher who will teach that pupil before, or in the first week of, term, so that:

- No teacher meets an international pupil as an unknown quantity.
- Teachers can plan differentiation and seating, questioning and grouping from the pupil's first lesson.
- Pupils feel seen and known as individuals, not simply categorised by a proficiency level.

5. Provision and Curriculum Access

5.1 Dedicated EAL Teaching

Every EAL pupil receives a minimum of one hour of timetabled, dedicated EAL teaching per week, delivered by a specialist EAL teacher in either 1:1 format or small groups matched by proficiency level for the Cambridge English examination pathway or IELTS course for sixth form. Lesson content focuses on academic English; reading and vocabulary building, extended writing, and the oracy and confidence pupils need to participate fully in mainstream lessons and boarding life. Also a Cambridge grammar book is sourced matching the student's level will make up part of the EAL weekly commitment to complete one to two units per week will be expected as self-study work. Additional hours are provided where diagnostic assessment or ongoing monitoring indicates greater need, for example for pupils in examination years or those who arrive with lower starting proficiency and need a particular subject specific support.

5.2 Access to the Mainstream Curriculum

EAL pupils are full members of their teaching sets and are not withdrawn from the mainstream curriculum beyond their timetabled EAL lesson(s), except where a bespoke, time-limited arrangement is agreed with SLT and parents/guardians on educational grounds. Subject teachers are responsible for ensuring the curriculum remains fully accessible, using the strategies set out in Section 7.

5.3 Examination Access Arrangements

Where appropriate and permitted under JCQ regulations, EAL pupils may be considered for access arrangements such as the use of a bilingual dictionary in examinations. The Head of EAL, working with the Examinations Officer, identifies eligible pupils, and any arrangement is put in place well in advance of assessments, in line with JCQ deadlines and evidence requirements. Staff and pupils are reminded that EAL access arrangements are distinct from, and more limited than, those available for a specific learning difficulty, and the two should not be conflated.

6. Assessment, Monitoring and Progress

- Password diagnostic testing is at the start of the academic year, with an interim check-point in January to measure progress objectively and to inform any change in level of support.
- The Head of EAL maintains a central record of every EAL pupil's proficiency level, progress and provision, shared with SLT.
- Subject teachers' ongoing assessment data is monitored alongside EAL-specific data, so that language progress and academic progress are considered together.
- Progress is reported to parents/guardians at normal school reporting points, with an additional EAL-specific comment where relevant. If there are any problems during the school term in between reporting points communication will be made to discuss if EAL provision needs to be increased.
- Where a pupil's progress in English is significantly slower than expected, the Head of EAL convenes a review involving the tutor, relevant subject teachers, boarding staff and, where appropriate, the SEND department and parents/guardians, to agree next steps.

7. Teaching and Learning — Strategies for All Staff

All teaching staff are expected to apply the following as routine good practice when teaching pupils with EAL, informed by the individual's Learner Pupil Passport and assessed proficiency level as well as highlighted in the document handed to all staff at the beginning of term; seen here in the link <https://canva.link/qlv7mpjdqb0qtig>

- Pre-teach or pre-flag key subject vocabulary ahead of new topics.
- Use clear, unambiguous language, checking understanding rather than assuming it from a nod or smile.
- Provide visual support (images, diagrams, writing frames, word banks) alongside verbal instruction.
- Allow additional processing and response time in questioning and discussion.
- Model extended writing and provide structured scaffolds for longer tasks.
- Pair or group EAL pupils thoughtfully to support both language development and social integration.
- Avoid idiom, sarcasm and culturally specific references without explanation.
- Recognise that quietness or hesitancy in class is very often a function of language confidence, not ability, effort or engagement, and should not be misread as either.

8. Pastoral Care and Boarding Support

Because every EAL pupil at Westonbirt is also a boarder, academic and pastoral support are treated as inseparable. The EAL department works in close partnership with boarding houses and the pastoral team so that support is genuinely wraparound.

- The EAL department maintains an open-door approach and is available to pupils and to teaching and boarding staff beyond timetabled lessons for language, wellbeing or cultural queries.
- Houseparents and tutors are briefed on each pupil's Learner Pupil Passport and proficiency level so that pastoral conversations, house meetings and evening routines are pitched appropriately.
- New international pupils are supported through a structured settling-in period, including peer buddy systems, to ease the transition into boarding life, British culture and the academic environment.
- Staff are alert to the particular pressures that can affect international boarders — homesickness, time-zone separation from family, cultural adjustment, and the pressure of learning and living in a second language simultaneously — and respond with sensitivity and, where needed, referral to the school's wellbeing or counselling provision.
- Festivals, food and cultural celebrations important to our international pupils are actively recognised within the boarding community to support a sense of belonging.

9. Safeguarding Considerations Specific to EAL and International Boarders

- Staff are trained to recognise that a pupil's limited English should never be treated as a barrier to disclosure being taken seriously; where a pupil struggles to express a concern in English, staff must slow down, check understanding and seek support rather than assume there is no concern.
- Professional interpreting arrangements (never a fellow pupil) are used for any formal safeguarding conversation where language is a genuine barrier to a pupil being fully understood. However, all of our students have at least a strong A1/A2 English language proficiency level and hence a student will unlikely have such limited English that would require this service.
- The DSL maintains oversight of any additional vulnerability factors relevant to international pupils, including immigration/visa status, guardianship arrangements, and travel plans during holiday periods, in line with the school's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy and the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools.
- All staff working with international pupils receive safeguarding training that includes specific reference to the indicators and additional vulnerabilities that can affect this pupil group.

10. Working with Parents, Guardians and Agents

- Clear, accessible communication is maintained with overseas parents and UK guardians, using simplified communication where helpful and practicable.
- Parents/guardians receive information on their child's EAL provision, proficiency level and progress at the beginning of term and at each reporting point.
- Where agents are involved in the admissions process, the school ensures accurate information about EAL provision is shared with families prior to enrolment so that expectations are correctly set.

11. Staff Training and Development

- All new teaching and boarding staff can access on isams the Password assessment information and proficiency level, and will receive a Pupil Passport as an introduction to each international student in their class.
- The Head of EAL provides documentation to support whole-staff CPD on practical strategies for supporting EAL pupils in the classroom and boarding house such as the document attached <https://canva.link/qlv7mpjdqb0qtiq> One to one department follow ups are then the general progress for specific department/teacher CPD requiring support.
- EAL specialist staff maintain their own professional development through relevant external training and membership of professional bodies such as TEFLIS which meets annually in May/June.

12. Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

Westonbirt School values the diversity that our international pupils bring to the school community. EAL provision is made available on the basis of assessed need, without regard to nationality, and is designed to remove barriers to access rather than to single pupils out. Pupils are actively encouraged to see their bilingualism or multilingualism as an asset, and opportunities to celebrate linguistic and cultural diversity are built into school and boarding life.

13. Monitoring, Evaluation and Review of this Policy

- The Head of EAL reviews the effectiveness of this policy annually, drawing on Password assessment data, examination outcomes, pupil and staff voice, and feedback from boarding houses.
- This policy is formally reviewed by the Senior Leadership Team at least every two years, or sooner in response to changes in regulatory or inspection requirements.
- This policy is available to staff, parents, guardians and inspectors on request, in line with the school's published policies.

14. Links to Other Policies

This policy should be read in conjunction with: Admissions Policy; SEND and Learning Support Policy; Teaching and Learning Policy; Boarding Principles and Practice; Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy; Anti-Bullying Policy; Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy; and the Examinations Access Arrangements Policy.

Appendix A: Overview of the EAL Support Pathway

Stage	What Happens
Pre-arrival	Prior academic/language history gathered; indicative proficiency established where possible.
Induction	Full Password diagnostic assessment completed; Learner Pupil PAssport created with the pupil and shared with all teachers; settling-in and buddy support begins.
Ongoing	Minimum one hour/week dedicated EAL teaching; full access to mainstream curriculum with in-class differentiation; regular pastoral contact via boarding house and EAL department.
Review points	January mock test; progress reviewed alongside subject data/feedback from teachers; reports to parents/guardians; provision adjusted as needed.
Examinations	Eligibility for JCQ EAL access arrangements e.g. bilingual dictionary - assessed and applied for in good time with Ms Cook exams administrator.

Appendix B: Policy Review Record

Date	Reviewed By	Summary of Changes	Next Review Due
September 2026	Head of EAL / SLT	New policy written and approved.	September 2027