ST SWITHUN'S SCHOOL

ENGLISH AS AN ADDITIONAL LANGUAGE POLICY (SENIOR SCHOOL)

Policy History	
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EAL policy contents

1. **Introduction** **Page 2**
2. **Aims** **Page 2**
3. **Context** **Page 3**
4. **Principles for second language acquisition** **Page 3**
5. **EAL teaching and learning** **Pages 3-4**
6. **Planning, monitoring and assessment** **Page 4**
7. **Learning support and most able pupils** **Page 4**
8. **Resources and staff development** **Pages 4-5**

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Introduction

St Swithun's welcomes a diverse range of students from around the world, many of whom speak English as an additional language.

Students who are not expert users of English, either because it is not their first language or because they have experienced significant exposure to a language other than English, for example at home, may have English as an Additional Language (EAL) lessons. These lessons aim to develop increasingly effective use of the English language, either enabling and then enhancing access to and engagement with the curriculum.

Our approach is to integrate students fully in all aspects of school: they are expected to follow all curriculum subjects and participate fully in co-curricular life. Students are encouraged to use English wherever possible, as this contributes to creating an inclusive environment in which everyone is able to communicate with everybody else, both in the classroom and in boarding houses. We also support the use and development of students' first languages in appropriate contexts, recognising that this is an essential part of each person's identity and enriches our community.

Aims

The EAL department aims to help students develop their understanding of language, the world around them and themselves, so that they become increasingly competent, confident, compassionate communicators. Classroom activities differ depending on each student's priorities but typically include the following:

- Extending vocabulary to enable increasingly precise, creative use of language;
- Strengthening and extending grammatical control, using self-regulation and perseverance to promote accuracy;
- Exploring topical issues through articles and discussion, encouraging engagement with the wider world and thoughtful, confident articulation of ideas;
- Developing reading comprehension by engaging analytical and imaginative skills to deepen understanding of texts and increase sensitivity to language use;
- Providing opportunities to practise and automatise the language and skills required for curriculum subjects, especially English;
- Developing an approach to writing as a process which includes readiness to generate and select ideas, planning and editing in order to achieve the desired effect.

Although addressing aspects of language will generally dominate, EAL lessons also feature pastoral and cultural input where and when appropriate. Care is taken to introduce aspects of British culture and values while celebrating students' own backgrounds. Due to the small-scale nature of the lessons, staff are also alert to feelings such as homesickness, culture shock or stress. While in some cases this may only require a reassuring chat, in others communication with both academic and boarding staff may be required in order to ensure that the student is happy and safe at St Swithun's.

Context

EAL students at St Swithun's are usually international boarders who have chosen to study in the UK. Some may have already studied at other UK schools, many will have attended international schools where English is the medium of instruction, and for others it will be their first experience of both boarding and studying in an English-speaking environment.

Students' first languages should be recorded as being other than English if they were 'exposed to the language during early development and [continue] to be exposed to this language in the home or the community' (DfE School Census Guide, 2016-17, p63). The majority of our EAL students will be moving from competence to fluency on the DfE language proficiency scales. At St Swithun's, even though many students may have experienced the majority if not all of their education in English before they join the school, they may still require EAL support if there is evidence of interference from other languages. The school's Admissions policy requires that competence in the use of English appropriate to a student's age and key stage is demonstrated.

Principles for second language acquisition

Students will maximise opportunities to develop their use of English through a combination of exposure to the naturally rich linguistic environment in which they find themselves, and lessons focused on developing their linguistic awareness, control and flexibility in key areas. Students' understanding or ideas in any subject may exceed their English communication skills, therefore staff across the school work to enable everyone to access course content, for example by liaising with the EAL department. On the other hand, being registered as having EAL does not automatically mean a student requires support; many reach an excellent level of proficiency and are able to stop lessons, or may never need them.

EAL teaching and learning

We want every student to be able to access the curriculum fully and with minimal support, and to be able to thrive in the wider school community. To this end EAL applicants are asked to provide proof that they have achieved a level of proficiency that will enable this (approximately B2 on the Common European Framework of References for Languages, depending on the entry point). Students who are working towards proficiency have EAL lessons to facilitate this. Those who have reached a suitable level may choose to discontinue these lessons, although those who choose to continue in order to refine their skills still further are more than welcome.

Most students attend one individual or small group lesson per week during a study period where possible or at lunchtimes. Teachers are expected to check the EAL register to identify students in their classes whose first language is not English. Lessons should be scaffolded to ensure that EAL students can participate. Guidance and support for teachers is provided through INSET, shared information and collaboration with individual teachers/departments.

Perhaps most importantly, teachers are expected to communicate with the EAL department whenever they feel that linguistic factors are inhibiting a student's learning.

If a more substantial issue is identified, the department will try to provide as many lessons as necessary to support the student in question, although these may be at an additional cost. The EAL teacher of any pupil experiencing particular difficulty liaises with subject teachers in order to identify areas for improvement and suggest strategies to help the student progress.

Due to the personalised, largely one-to-one nature of the lessons, the EAL department is also well positioned to stretch pupils to use increasingly ambitious language and understand gradually more challenging texts. Not only does this make them better communicators, it can also help to develop knowledge beyond the curriculum, hone thinking skills and creativity, and foster a spirit of collaboration and compassion.

As well as supporting students with their academic curriculum and their general English, sixth formers can prepare for the IELTS if they are likely to require it as part of their university applications. These lessons follow a flexible scheme of work depending on the individual's priorities and existing skills.

Planning, monitoring and assessment

At the start of each academic year an initial academic plan is devised in collaboration with each student based on previous learning experiences, individual priorities and data showing the current level of linguistic and curricular attainment gathered from a range of sources. Students are assessed continuously throughout each academic year using a variety of strategies, which may include admissions tests, formal written assessments (at least once annually), monitoring of work from curricular subjects, informal observation in lessons, feedback from other members of staff, and self-reflection and target setting. These are designed to identify needs and to check progress. Where necessary, the number of lessons may be increased or decreased, or the focus of lessons changed depending on the student's performance.

Learning support and higher-performing pupils

Having English as an additional language is not the same as requiring learning support. Please see the separate learning support policy. If there is crossover between the EAL and learning support departments in working with an individual pupil, the two departments liaise closely to decide on the best ways to support that pupil.

EAL students are also identified and well represented on the school's register of higher-performing pupils.

Resources and staff development

The EAL Register lists students for whom English is not a first language and identifies those who are in need of EAL support. It is available on the EAL SharePoint site, along with the EAL timetable, student profiles and information on strategies for supporting EAL students.

By maintaining communication between students, EAL staff, subject teachers and boarding staff, we aim to build a full picture of a student's progress and wellbeing that enables us to devise coherent support strategies. Regular involvement in a range of CPD opportunities helps to ensure that the teaching and learning approaches we use promote successful language development and a growing awareness of effective learning strategies, and foster curiosity and compassion for the world around us.