

**Teaching English as a Additional Language (EAL)**

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Please read in conjunction with:

* Special Educational Needs
* Equality and Diversity Policy
* Safeguarding Policy
* Admissions Policy
* Curriculum Policy

# Overseas Students and English as an Additional Language

Students at Bloxham come from many different countries and several require varying levels of EAL support. Each academic year there are usually between 15 and 20 students in the EAL department from Third Form to Sixth Form. When they come to Bloxham most students have been learning English for about three or four years – the same length of time, or less, as most English students have been learning a Modern Language before taking GCSE.

Students arriving at Bloxham have a minimum CEFR level of B1 which means that they are able to express themselves in a limited way in familiar situations and can cope with information that is presented in a clear and concise manner. They are also able to describe experiences and give opinions along with their reasons for holding them. They will, however, struggle with abstract ideas and have difficulty making inferences from texts very difficult.

Students in 3rd – 5th Form will usually have EAL support timetabled in place of the second language. Support is very bespoke and will depend upon the specific learning needs of each individual at that point in time. Teachers should liaise directly with the EAL department if there are specific issues within their subject for which additional help to the student or advice for the teacher would be beneficial. Students staying for one year are entered for an appropriate ESOL examination depending on their standard of English, which they take in the last term of the school year.

6th Form students will receive support at a suitable point in their timetable and those who join the Sixth Form will sit the International English Language Testing system (IELTS) exam at the end of the Lower sixth to prepare them for University entry requirements at the end of Upper sixth.

**Some common problems faced by overseas students learning English**

**Asian pupils** have to learn English verb tenses as their own languages do not have them. “Modifiers” (e.g. yesterday, last year, next week, last month, ten years ago) are used with what we would call the Present Simple Tense. E.g. Last year I go to Spain for my holiday. Next week I write a letter to my parents. Two years ago my grandmother die.

**Chinese pupils** have to learn to use plurals effectively as nouns do not change to a plural form in their languages, a number word is placed before the singular noun giving the plural. Another difficulty is that there are no gender specific pronouns in Chinese languages which means that Chinese students may confuse the English pronouns.

**Spanish pupils** find that are many words in English and Spanish that look similar and some have similar meanings. This means that Spanish pupils may believe they understand a word when they do not. An amusing example is confusion between embarrassed and embarazada (pregnant). Another difficulty is that Spanish does not have two words for ‘make’ and ‘do’ so pupils may use the English verbs incorrectly.

**Russian, Bulgarian and Bosnian pupils** struggle with articles in English as do not have any in their languages. Slavic languages do not use the verb ‘to be’ either so our pupils with those as a mother tongue will often omit the verb that is used so often in English. Because of the use of suffixes in Russian, the word order is much more flexible than it is in English and pupils from this background often put adverb phrases in the middle of sentences rather than at the beginning or end.

**Understanding specialist terms** in academic subjects can pose difficulties. E.g.

Biology with words of Latin and Greek origin; Mathematical terms such as “Solve the following equation” or “Select at random” which need to be explained; Geographical words such as “sedimentary, erosion, population density”; English Literature terms such as “stanza, imagery, plot, characterisation”. Some English pupils probably experience difficulty with some of the terms mentioned above but they may have heard the word(s) before and have a vague idea of what they mean whereas to the foreign pupil the words are completely new.

**Handwriting** can be very difficult for foreign pupils to read. They may have to decipher the individual letters of writing on the whiteboard or a hand-written instruction/ information sheet before they can interpret the meaning.

**Irregular spellings and pronunciation** of English words may pose problems. E.g. cough, bough, through, ought, rough. Silent letters and unstressed syllables also affect student pronunciation when speaking or reading aloud.

**Definite and Indefinite Articles**. Learning when to use “a” and “the” before a noun is not easy for most foreign pupils. The basic rules are as follows:

The use of the **Definite Article** “the” implies that the noun:

a) has already been referred to and/or is already known.

b) is the only one of its kind or a special example.

The use of the **Indefinite Article** “ a” implies that the following noun was previously unknown and is being introduced for the first time. E.g. I had a sandwich and an apple for lunch. The sandwich wasn’t very good but the apple was tasty. English learners will often omit the article as in “I often listen to radio” or “I went to cinema last night” or put one in where it is not needed as in “I had a lunch in a very nice restaurant.” The rules are complex and take time to learn.

**Phrasal verbs** are difficult for all foreign pupils to learn. Learning which preposition is used and how each preposition can change the meaning of the verb takes time. In many instances there is more than one meaning for any given phrasal verb. E.g. get by = to pass by and get by = to survive.

**Some examples of Phrasal Verbs.**

Get by, get on, get over, get to, get through, get off, get along with, get away with, get out of, get up to, get down, get on with, get round, get across, get in.

Look at, look for, look into, look out, look out for, look up, look up to, look down, look down on, look over, look after.

**Dependent prepositions**

English speakers are very familiar with the correct prepositions that follow verbs, nouns or adjectives but as there are no fixed rules for non-English speakers, they are required to learn them as they go. This leads to some confusion when the different prepositions give a different shade of meaning. The list of dependent prepositions is very long and will take a long time to learn.

**Some examples of dependent prepositions**

‘Angry with’ suggests anger towards a person while ‘angry about’ suggests anger towards a situation. A common mistake is: “I am good in maths” instead of ‘good at’. Students also frequently say that they “listen music” rather than “listen to music”.

**Idioms** and their meaningsare also difficult to learn. English is a very idiomatic and metaphorical language and students learning the language will find some of our expressions difficult to understand.

**Some examples of idioms:**

On the spur of the moment, in the nick of time, second-hand, longwinded, all-round, dog- eared, cold-blooded, pull someone’s leg, catch red-handed, turn over a new leaf, take (someone) for a ride, put one’s foot in it, on the cards, flash in the pan, the last straw, red tape, old hand etc.

**How you can help**

* Make sure that specialist terms are repeated clearly and written legibly on the board.
* If possible, give handouts with specialist terms just before the topic begins. This allows English learners to familiarize themselves with the vocabulary before they have to use it in context.
* Where possible use flashcards for new vocabulary so English learners can understand the concept more easily and quickly. Many subject glossaries now have power point presentations to help students.
* Try to express instructions and questions on worksheets in a clear, unambiguous way. Ask the student to repeat the instruction/question to you to ensure comprehension.
* Please correct grammatical structures and spellings in the course of marking your EAL pupils’ work, both in written work and spoken English. This will help to reinforce what is being done in the EAL department. However, try not to interrupt them in midsentence, but rather wait until they have finished and gently draw their attention to the error. Likewise, endeavor not to cover their written work in too much correction markings if fraught with grammatical errors. When correcting written work be as specific as possible by noting whether it is the tense, word order or another issue that has caused the error.
* Be aware that the international pupil(s) in your set may be reluctant to ask for help even though they do not understand. Please also be aware that just because an international student finds it difficult to explain a concept in English, it does not necessarily follow that he or she does not understand it. They may be able to draw it or find it online in their own language if given the time.
* Encourage the logging of new vocabulary onto cue cards or equivalent which pupils can carry around in a pocket. Likewise, encourage the use of a dictionary in class. When new vocabulary has a different meaning or word class in your subject area encourage students to write sentences showing the different meanings. For example: *I* ***force*** *myself to study* (force is a verb). *Gravity is a* ***force*** *that keeps us attached to out planet* (force is a noun).
* Whenever possible, please give students samples of high-scoring pieces of work so they have a tangible example of what they are trying to achieve in terms of layout, tone and vocabulary.