

The assessment of pupils learning English as an additional language

Key Stage 3 National Strategy

The assessment of pupils learning English as an additional language

Section 1: Principles of assessment

'Assessment for learning has been defined as "the process of seeking and interpreting evidence for use by learners and their teachers to decide where the learners are in their learning, where they need to go and how best to get there".' (Ofsted 2003)

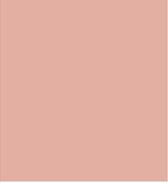
The following four principles underpin the Key Stage 3 National Strategy:

- expectations;
- progression;
- engagement;
- transformation.

These are key to effective assessment for all pupils.

This document focuses on pupils learning English as an additional language (EAL). It offers guidance to schools on the effective assessment of their EAL learners so that they may make rapid progress during Key Stage 3. The focus is on how data gathered through assessment of learning can be used formatively and feed back into classroom planning, teaching and learning. Some of the case studies also include helpful assessment for learning models which are also significantly contributing to pupil attainment in these schools. As stated in QCA's publication *A language in common*, effective assessment for all pupils should:

- recognise what pupils can do and reward achievement;
- be based on different kinds of evidence;
- be a valid reflection of what has been taught or covered in class;
- be reliable in terms of enabling someone else to repeat the assessment and obtain comparable results;
- be manageable, both in terms of the time needed to complete the task, and in providing results which can be reported or passed on to other teachers.



This document explores the additional issues teachers need to bear in mind when assessing learners of English as an additional language through exemplifying some of the most successful practice in this area. It is hoped that schools will compare their own systems to those described and integrate suitable aspects of the highlighted practice into their own work. Further helpful advice on the assessment of EAL learners can be found in the following key publications:

- *A language in common: Assessing English as an additional language* (QCA 2000)
- *More advanced learners of English as an additional language in secondary schools and colleges* (HMI 2003)
- *Training materials for the foundation subjects* (DfES 2002)
- *Assessment in mathematics toolkit to support pupils for whom English is an additional language* (DfES 2003)

Section 2: Making sense of data

'To show progress schools need to record entry levels of pupils for whom English is an additional language and compare them with levels at the end of a significant period.' (QCA 2000)

As we have already stated, any assessment system should be manageable and have a clear purpose. All of the data gathered should support this process and aid teachers in focusing on 'where next' in terms of their planning for EAL learners. Gathering of this data should be rapid, efficient, regular and exemplified with, for example, work samples and observations, so that underachievement may be identified. Included below is an extract from one school's monitoring form which is used to record the progress of EAL learners, in this case those in Year 7.

Gender	Name	Ethnicity	Schooling pre-UK	Years in UK	First Lang.	Literacy in L1	KS2 SATs Eng. Ma Sci	English level (QCA/NC) Level R W S	CATS score (Y7) v q non-v
M	A	Indian	5	1	Kutchi	Yes	3 4 4	3 4 3	98 121 111
M	B	Bangla	?	2	Sylheti	No	3 4 4	3 3 2	78 95 90
M	C	Black other	5	2	English	Yes	3 4 4	3 3 3	90 95 90
F	D	Bangladeshi	-	11	Bengali	Yes	4 4 4	4 3 4	107 112 96
F	E	White Euro	4	1	Dutch	Yes	3 4 4	3 3 2	64 81 81
M	F	Any other	unknown	6 months	Korean	No	- - -	1 step 2 step 2 step 1	- - -
F	G	Korean	2	4	Korean	Yes	4 5 4	4 4 3	107 116 122
F	H	Pakistani	-	8	Mirapuri	No	4 4 4	4 4 3	107 96 90

Points to note about the data:

- The data for each pupil provides a clear picture of their language and educational history, including whether the pupil is literate in their first language, a key issue to be borne in mind when setting targets and planning for progression for EAL learners across the school curriculum.
- The Key Stage 2 National Curriculum levels are recorded for each core subject, which can reveal uneven patterns of attainment, as evidenced by the data on all the pupils except pupil D. Whilst patterns such as these are not unusual for EAL learners, they are noteworthy as they highlight where lack of fluency in English may be resulting in underachievement.
- The fact that the levels for reading, writing, speaking and listening in English are recorded separately ensures that differences between the levels of attainment are noted. For example, the higher reading levels attained by pupils A, E, G and H would indicate that work planned for these pupils should focus on oral rehearsal and the teaching of writing as opposed to reading.
- Although close analysis of Key Stage 2 data and regular monitoring of pupil progress will reveal important information about uneven performance, it may sometimes be useful to refer to other available attainment data, such as CATS scores (shown above) which may help to prevent low expectation. For example, pupil A's results suggest that he may be underattaining in mathematics, given his high quantitative and non-verbal CATS scores.
- Most importantly, a school needs to collate all pupil data and records of progress, and translate this information into curricular targets in order to maximise progress for EAL learners. Some examples of effective ways of using pupil data are given in the following sections.

Section 3:

Using data to inform teaching and learning

'...the data provide a baseline to monitor and review individuals' progress – especially to identify signs of underachievement or unusual potential ...' (Ofsted 2003)

'Setting targets will not, on its own, raise standards of achievement. This will depend on the timely and skilful intervention by teachers and other professionals, and the support of parents.' (Ofsted 2003)

The following two case studies show how two schools are using data to plan interventions and to monitor and track the progress of targeted pupils learning EAL.

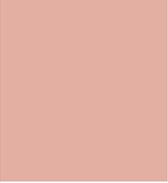
Case study school A

(An inner city school with large numbers of pupils learning EAL and regular new arrivals)

All teachers are provided with data on all pupils for the classes they teach. In addition to the essential support provided for new arrivals, the school has prioritised the majority of its EAL resources on Year 7 and in providing support in English lessons in particular this year. This approach will be monitored and reviewed. All incoming pupils are set minimum targets for the end of each of the three years at Key Stage 3, setting a trajectory for progress towards end of key stage targets in the core subjects. These are reviewed each term. To this end, in this school, National Curriculum levels are divided into 'insecure', 'competent' and 'confident', based on the raw scores in English on the Key Stage 2 tests.

Using a range of data, pupils in each Year 7 tutor group are identified by the EMA team. These pupils are clearly highlighted on tutor group lists given to all teachers. EMA teachers also disseminate information regarding the pupils' home language competence to all mainstream staff. This ensures that the progress of all pupils for whom English is an additional language is monitored, including more advanced learners who may still require support, particularly with writing.

Support is monitored using an intervention sheet that describes the type of support given. A writing analysis is carried out each half-term and is used to set three individual targets which are agreed with the pupil. EMA teachers then set up an individual file for each targeted pupil containing the analysed writing samples and reviewed targets. These are also available to other Year 7 tutors and teachers on the school intranet.



In lessons where support is allocated, assessment is carried out by both the mainstream and EMA teacher throughout the year. Both teachers mark work (split 50/50) and write profiles using National Curriculum levels for reading, writing, speaking and listening for all pupils in the class. Partnership teaching has enabled English and EMA teachers to see the improvements that can be made, particularly through a word and sentence level focus. Aspects of the Key Stage 3 Strategy and an explicit focus on the teaching of language skills are now accepted as good practice and are being applied more widely across subjects and year groups.

In addition to the day-to-day targeted support, the EMA team has sampled and analysed the writing of a group of insecure National Curriculum level 4 pupils across the curriculum at word, sentence and text level to identify common difficulties. The next stage of their work is to turn these into literacy targets and support colleagues in addressing common literacy needs in lessons where there is currently no available support.

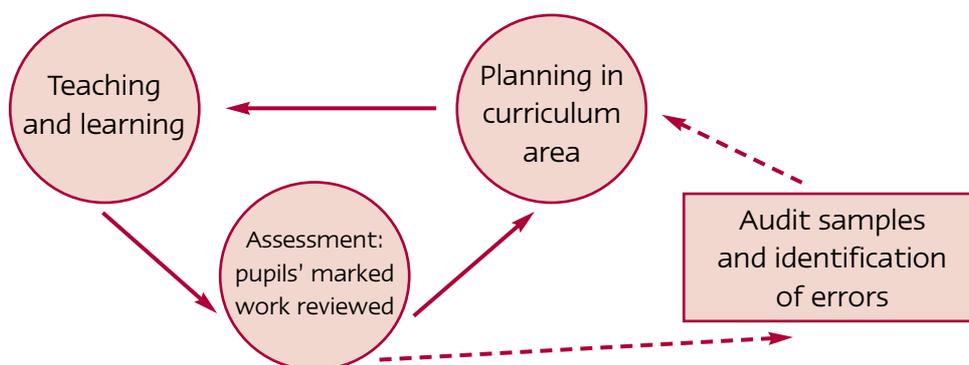
Case study school B

(An inner city school with a high percentage of pupils learning EAL although most pupils are UK born and have full primary experience)

The EMA team is aware that many pupils learning EAL need continuing support with their English in order to maximise their attainment even though many may have reached level 4 on entry. The data from CATS used by the school shows clear discrepancies between low verbal scores and higher quantitative and non-verbal scores for many pupils.

EMA teachers have attempted to identify able but underachieving pupils for targeted support, noting particular problems with reading comprehension as well as difficulties with writing in English. Through a detailed analysis of the written scripts of these pupils, the team has identified 14 areas of difficulty and common error and have linked these to text, sentence and word level objectives of the Key Stage 3 Strategy English Framework.

Figure 1 Assessment cycle for targeted support



They have developed a matrix identifying four levels of development (adapted from the West Australian *First steps* materials) and use samples of writing to monitor the individual progress of targeted pupils against the 14 identified difficulties, highlighting and dating the relevant features demonstrated. They include comparatives and superlatives, countable and uncountable nouns, agreement of subjects and verbs, use of passive voice and tenses (see the examples from the grid below).

EMA staff are now beginning to work alongside subjects other than English to audit writing samples related to the identified areas of difficulty on the matrix so that specific language features can become a focus within the teaching in various subject areas.

Use of ...	Beginning	Developing	Consolidating	Extending
Tenses (text level).	Present simple and past tense: switching between the two. Difficulty with maintaining tense within a piece of writing.	Inappropriate use of a newly learned tense/ structure. Common irregulars. Use of all basic tenses but confusion as to when to use them, even within a sentence.	Use of all tenses with more clarity as to their use. Can distinguish the three ways of forming the future tense. Tenses not mixed up.	Most tense forms are used correctly.

Section 4: Assessing and tracking new arrivals

'There is every reason to expect that literate older pupils, even those starting school with "no English", may leap the early National Curriculum English levels within the first term of schooling.' (QCA 2000)

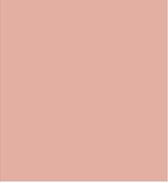
A growing number of schools admit pupils new to English throughout Key Stage 3. It is particularly important that these pupils' needs are accurately and rapidly assessed so that their learning opportunities can be appropriately planned for. In addition, their progress needs to be closely monitored to ensure that their progression is maintained. What follows is a short description of one successful school's practice in working with new arrivals, in addition to the support provided to all pupils learning English within mainstream classrooms.

Case study

On admission to school, EAL learners' performance in reading and writing is assessed during a short assessment interview. They also undertake an 'initial period assessment' within two weeks of arriving in school which provides background information and assesses writing levels using QCA steps or National Curriculum writing levels as appropriate. This rapid assessment ensures that pupils' curriculum offer and support is carefully targeted to meet individuals' needs.

Support is systematically allocated depending on pupils' levels of English language. Pupils who are assessed as having reading and/or writing skills below level 2 are placed on an induction timetable which closely shadows the mainstream Key Stage 3/4 curriculum offer. Once pupils reach level 2 in reading and/or writing, they are placed on a regular school timetable but are supported in class by the EAL department with limited additional support lessons for specialist teaching.

The majority of pupils are admitted into the mainstream timetable immediately and some spend less than two weeks in the induction group; these are pupils who are able to draw on existing literacy skills in their first language and so make rapid progress in English. Half-termly assessments are completed for all these pupils by the EAL department and shared with teaching staff. This ensures that their progress is maintained and teaching is appropriately targeted. The few pupils requiring longer than six months in the induction group are also referred to the learning support department for special needs assessment.



Other support available from the EAL department before and after school and at lunchtimes includes:

- Year 7 support group;
- Year 9 SATs support group;
- Key Stage 4 partnership teaching (EAL specialist teacher and subject specialist);
- Key Stage 4 option support (2 periods of withdrawal per week for specialist EAL input).

Section 5: Using all the evidence

'... considerable evidence that once proficiency in English was achieved, the progress for pupils with EAL across the curriculum was rapid and their attainment on a par with or higher than that of their monolingual peers.'
(Ofsted 2001)

As seen in the case studies above, consistent monitoring and tracking of pupils' progress should be part of a cyclical process that leads to raised attainment.

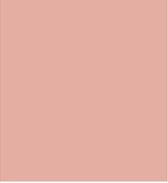
A language in common (QCA) defines the additional issues that teachers need to bear in mind when assessing learners of English as an additional language. It states that teachers should:

- be clear about the purpose of the assessment, distinguishing summative, formative and diagnostic aims;
- be sensitive to the pupil's first or main other language(s) and heritage culture;
- take account of how long the pupil has been learning English;
- focus on language, while being aware of the influence of behaviour, attitude and cultural expectations;
- recognise that pupils may be at different levels of attainment in speaking, listening, reading and writing.

Pupils learning EAL are not a homogenous group and consideration of the full range of factors that are likely to affect the rate of progress for individual pupils learning in English will be relevant.

In a **minority** of cases where pupils do not make expected progress, despite evidence of appropriate planning, teaching and assessment for learning, further investigation may be necessary to pinpoint any special educational needs. It is important that any such underlying learning difficulties are recognised so that appropriate support can be given.

Where assessment of a pupil's English suggests an underlying difficulty with language, it will be essential to cross-check with specialist bilingual teachers, community contacts and teachers of special needs. A clearer identification of underlying difficulties may be made through the process of asking questions, collecting evidence and planning support. Better assessment decisions will result when fuller information about the pupil's learning at school, at home and in the community is considered.



Hypothesis theory is a way of raising questions based around a set of hypothetical ideas about why a pupil learning EAL may be failing to make the expected progress in learning in English. It relies on information gathered by the school to test, support or discount each hypothesis and forces a consideration of the full range of academic, linguistic, cultural and environmental evidence that may provide alternative reasons for the pupil's apparent failure to achieve at school, before assumptions are made that the pupil has special educational needs. A more detailed description of hypothesis theory can be found in *Assessing the Needs of Bilingual Learners*, D Hall (1996).

First language assessment, where a pupil has previous school experience in another country, can provide useful evidence as it can provide information about prior academic attainment and prevent low expectations. This can be particularly useful in mathematics, science and ICT.

Section 6: Ten key points to inform practice

'Overall, the purpose of assessment is to improve standards, not merely to measure them.' (Ofsted 1998)

Finally, here are ten key points for schools, departments and individual teachers to bear in mind when developing assessment systems for pupils learning English as an additional language at Key Stage 3:

- Analyse and use Key Stage 2 data effectively; this will reduce the need for further assessment of pupil attainment at the start of Year 7.
- Gather and record a range of background data and evidence which can be interrogated to monitor the attainment of specific groups of pupils, for example, new arrivals, advanced bilingual learners, etc.
- Use the data available to formulate challenging targets for all pupils learning EAL (group and individual targets, where appropriate).
- Include EAL learners in regular review of targets and ongoing assessment of their learning during lessons.
- Create a forum for setting and sharing these targets with pupils, ensuring that they understand what they will need to do to achieve them.
- Ensure that existing school/department assessment systems are clear, manageable and consistently applied by all teachers across the curriculum.
- Align assessment systems for EAL learners with that of the rest of the key stage to ensure that continuity and progression is maintained for this group of pupils.
- Encourage all departments/teachers to implement regular assessment for learning and assessment practices that **immediately** inform planning and teaching.
- Update school, class and individual data regularly to ensure that progress is closely monitored and late entrants to the school are appropriately supported and targeted.
- Analyse and use end-of-year summative test information to inform the following year's teaching and planning.

Appendix 1

Bibliography

Section A is a list of the texts quoted and referred to in the document. Section B lists other key documents on the assessment of pupils learning English as an additional language.

Section A

A language in common: Assessing English as an additional language (QCA 2000)

More advanced learners of English as an additional language in secondary schools and colleges (HMI 2003)

Training materials for the foundation subjects (DfES 2002)

Assessment in mathematics toolkit to support pupils for whom English is an additional language (DfES 2003)

Assessing the Needs of Bilingual Learners, D Hall (1996)

Good assessment in secondary schools (Ofsted 2003)

Managing Support for the Attainment of Pupils from Minority Ethnic Groups (Ofsted 2001)

Secondary education 1993–7: a review of secondary schools in England (Ofsted 1998)

Section B

Aiming High: Raising the achievement of minority ethnic pupils, London: HMSO (DfES, 2003)

Learning to read in a Second Language: Fact and Fiction, S Dernack, D Drew and M Grimsley (2000)

Writing in English as an additional language at Key Stage 4 and post-16 (Ofsted 2003)

Refugee children in the classroom, J Rutter (2003)

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank S. Wiles (HMI), Janet White (QCA) and Kate Daly (DfES) for their advice and support in the compilation of this document.