
The role of heritage languages within the educational landscape

Hampshire EMTAS position statement

This Position Statement from Hampshire EMTAS focusses on the general good practice principle for schools and other educational providers to take account of the multilingual backgrounds of their pupils and families. It highlights considerations for schools with respect to policy, practice and provision.

‘Every child has the right to learn and use the language, customs and religion of their family, whether or not these are shared by the majority of the people in the country where they live.’

Article 30 UNCRC

Key considerations

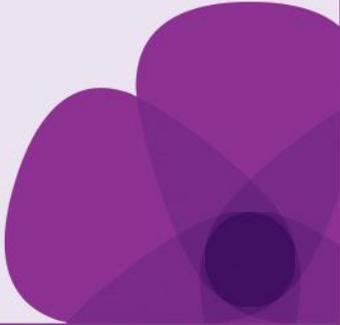
This paper aims to establish:

- that there are considerable benefits to all learners, including those with additional SEND, of maintaining and developing one or more languages beyond English
- that there is a need for accurate assessment of pupils’ proficiencies in first and other languages
- that additional care will be required to identify and meet the needs of learners of EAL who also have an identified SEND
- that schools need to encourage and empower pupils to use their heritage languages as a tool for learning across the curriculum
- the value of drawing upon the linguistic diversity of the whole school community (pupils, parents/carers, staff and visitors) as a facet of Fundamental British Values
- the significant benefits for children who enrol in a formal language ambassador programme such as The Young Interpreter Scheme®
- the tangible benefits of entering young people for their heritage language GCSE.



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Maintenance of first (L1) and other languages

Parents should be advised to maintain use of their heritage language(s) within the home and the community as there is clear evidence that acquiring more than one language *'brings a range of educational benefits, including cognitive advantages, enhanced communication skills and an openness to different cultural perspectives'*, CILT (2006)

The guidance around maintaining L1

- pertains equally to children born in the UK and those arriving from abroad at any point thereafter;
- is recommended, even where one or more parents or the pupil themselves is/are as proficient in English as native users;
- is equally relevant to children with underlying SEND.

It is recognised that families will make pragmatic decisions about their multilingual practices related to their specific context eg which languages are used, when they are used and for what purpose(s). It is important that where parents have different 'first languages' and may or may not share a third, neither parent becomes linguistically isolated from their children. Additionally, EMTAS advises that parents should continue to use their strongest language(s) with their children rather than switching to English, especially if their skills in English are limited. This avoids children being exposed to insecure modelling of English.

It is possible that learners of EAL may have had limited exposure to their heritage languages as they have grown up because a family decision has already been taken to use English exclusively at home. In this circumstance, EMTAS recommends that parents are given information around the benefits of reintroducing their heritage language(s) eg being able to communicate more effectively with family members, nurturing a sense of cultural identity and supporting the child's wider learning across the curriculum.

Complementary (sometimes called 'supplementary') language schools/classes

Community-based organisations in some areas of Hampshire offer formal and informal support to families for continuance of first and other languages in after school or Saturday/Sunday language classes. Participation is a way for children to socialise with peers who speak the same languages and to share their experiences of their own traditions and cultures.

EMTAS recommends that schools signpost parents to any relevant language classes that are available in the local area. Schools might want to consider hosting a language school, particularly if the school has a significant population of same language speakers, but also because it would contribute to the school's multilingual and intercultural credentials.

Further information can be obtained from The National Resource Centre for Supplementary Education (NRCSE):

<https://www.supplementaryeducation.org.uk>

Assessment of proficiency in first and other languages

At whatever point children and young people first make contact with the UK education system, it is important that an assessment of their proficiencies in their heritage language(s) be conducted. EMTAS Bilingual Assistants will normally assess proficiency in first and other languages as part of their profiling for new starters. Where EMTAS Bilingual Assistants do not share a common language, they will draw upon their personal experience in acquisition of additional languages and employ a range of contextually appropriate strategies to gather important information. Further guidance on how to assess proficiency in a language outside a user's own repertoire can be found in the EMTAS First Language Assessment e-learning unit, freely available to all staff in Hampshire maintained schools. Email EMTAS@hants.gov.uk to request a log-in.

As pupils often have spikey profiles with variation in their skills in speaking, listening, reading and writing, an assessment of proficiency in a heritage language will ensure that schools put in place the most relevant strategies for their pupils. For example, understanding when and how to encourage and enable pupils to draw upon their first language proficiencies to support their learning across the curriculum. This process can also help identify potential SEND where there is an unexplained delay in acquisition of oracy and literacy in a pupil's strongest first language.

Pupils learning EAL who have SEND

Advice and guidance around use of heritage languages and school practice and provision remains broadly the same for pupils who may have underlying SEND, whether diagnosed or not. It is important to stress that:

- best practice needs to be maintained for the EAL needs of learners, whatever their SEND;

- pupils learning EAL should not be given restricted timetables or be denied pathways into learning languages because of a suspected or diagnosed SEND;
- children and families should not be encouraged to drop heritage languages within the home, even for children with a diagnosed Speech and Language Disorder (Lowry, 2012) or those who are mildly to profoundly deaf (NDCS, 2019);
- teaching staff should still encourage pupils to use a stronger first language to help with their learning, where appropriate.

Find out more about identification of SEND for pupils learning EAL - [Special Education Needs/Disabilities \(SEND\) or bilingual?](#)

Capitalising on the power of bi/multilingualism for teaching and learning

EMTAS staff champion the notion that all languages are of equal value and bi/multilingual individuals will naturally draw upon the totality of their linguistic repertoire to enrich their social, emotional and academic lives.

Hesson, Seltzer & Woodley (2014) state:

Translanguaging refers to both the discourse practices of bilinguals, as well as to pedagogical practices that use the entire complex linguistic repertoire of bilingual students flexibly in order to teach rigorous content and develop language practices for academic use.

Translanguaging as pedagogy refers to any instance in which the students' home language practices are used to leverage learning. In some cases, the teacher plans those translanguaging spaces actively and supports them through teacher-led specific activities. In other cases, the teacher allows those translanguaging spaces to happen moment-to-moment, as [they engage] bilingual students in learning and students themselves make choices about their language use. (p.3)

Schools should capitalise on the multiliteracies of their pupils to support learning across the curriculum. This may include:

- enabling pupils to discuss their learning in a shared language
- supporting pupils to demonstrate their learning through talk in their strongest language
- sourcing translated texts & literature for pupils who are literate in their L1
- sourcing audio-enabled material for pupils who are not literate in their L1

- encouraging pre-reading of curriculum-based materials in L1
- highlighting important vocabulary in texts in English so that pupils can translate into their stronger language for homework ahead of the lesson
- urging pupils to create their own dual language glossaries
- encouraging annotating and drafting in L1 (with the potential to use translation tools to facilitate conversion to English)

Find out more in the e-learning module Perspectives on multilingualism E-learning. Email EMTAS@hants.gov.uk for a log-in.

Use of translation technologies and tools

EMTAS advises that when used appropriately by adults and bi/multilingual pupils, translation tools are sufficiently well-developed to support learning across the curriculum, translate newsletters and produce multilingual labels for displays. Consider asking students and their parents to check the quality and accuracy of these sorts of translations. Remember, however, that using these tools for more formal translations (legal/medical, for example) is not recommended. Read a relevant EMTAS Blog [Aren't digital translation tools only useful for keywords?](#)

Study Skills Programme for pupils

It is important for pupils to understand how best to capitalise on their proficiency in first and other languages to support their wider learning and schools can be instrumental in empowering pupils to do this. Hampshire EMTAS has developed a training programme which supports learners of EAL to use existing L1 skills to more independently access the curriculum. The aims of this programme are:

- to boost students' confidence and self-esteem;
- to gain experience of different tools and strategies they can apply in their lessons/homework;
- to provide opportunities for continued development of first language in meaningful contexts.

For more information about the EMTAS Study Skills Programme, see [The EMTAS study skills programme \(for pupils\) | Hampshire County Council \(hants.gov.uk\)](#)



Heritage language GCSEs

Where a student has well-developed skills in their first language and where there is a GCSE available in that language, EMTAS recommends the student is entered for the exam. Passing a GCSE in a heritage language is cognitively beneficial, enhances self-esteem, nurtures an individual's sense of identity and boosts career prospects. Taking a heritage language GCSE is beneficial because it accredits a young person at a time when they may be unable to fully access many other GCSE options due to their current Proficiency in English. When taken early it may also be the first experience of a statutory examination that will help prepare pupils for any future GCSE entry. Passing a language GCSE at grade 5 and above contributes to the EBACC and indicates a clear propensity for wider learning to anyone involved in the next stage of that young person's life, whether studying at college, following a training pathway or in work.

EMTAS recommends that schools actively prepare young people for the exam and offers a wide selection of [support packages](#) for this purpose.

The multilingual learning environment

'Excellence and Enjoyment' guidance materials from The DfES (2006) state,

'The physical environment plays an important role in how valued children from diverse backgrounds feel in school. Children are more likely to feel valued and develop a sense of belonging when their ethnic, cultural, religious and linguistic background is reflected positively in the displays in their classroom and around the school.'

Schools that develop their multilingual environment will send a clear message to all parents/carers about the value of maintaining heritage languages and in turn children will feel more empowered to use their languages as a tool for learning across the curriculum. Bi/multilingual adults affiliated with the school have a useful role to play in raising the profile of the linguistic diversity within the whole school community.

For more information about developing the multilingual, intercultural dimension in schools, contact [The Rights and Diversity Education \(RADE\) centre](#).

Watch a [Videoscribe](#) about use of first language as a tool for learning at home and school.



Relevant EMTAS e-learning units:

Culturally Inclusive School

Perspectives on multilingualism

Email EMTAS@hants.gov.uk for a log-in.

The Young Interpreter Scheme® (YIS)

Hampshire EMTAS has pioneered an award-winning scheme that offers training for learners aged 5-16 to develop the skills needed to help new arrivals with English as an Additional Language. Trained Young Interpreters help newly-arrived pupils feel welcome and settled in their new school environment. Research has highlighted that the YIS develops the confidence, communication and leadership skills of the Young Interpreters. For schools it is also a way of valuing multilingualism whilst acknowledging and celebrating the skills of their learners. Young Interpreters can be speakers of English only or speakers of other languages. Together they use a range of inventive ideas modelled during their training to communicate with their new classmates. Find out more about [The Young Interpreter Scheme®](#)

Safeguarding pupil interpreters

For a variety of reasons, it is not always appropriate to use child interpreters eg interpreting in confidential situations. There are also potential pitfalls in using pupils as a peer support for academic learning.

Further guidance can found here - [Pupil interpreters | Hampshire County Council \(hants.gov.uk\)](#)



Summary and Top Tips

1. Find out as much information as you can about the languages used by pupils and parents/carers within the family and community.
2. Always encourage families to maintain use of first and other languages in the home and community. This has clear benefits for individuals and, at macro level, can be nurtured by a whole school ethos in which linguistic diversity is valued.
3. Do consider what types of school communication/documentation could be made more accessible in a heritage language for those families who need it.
4. Try to establish a pupil's proficiency in speaking, reading and writing in first language and disseminate the findings to relevant staff – EMTAS bilingual assistants can usually assist with this.
5. Encourage parents/carers to use their strongest shared language(s) to help their child with home learning; this is likely to include languages beyond English. Signpost appropriate resources and links to support parents/carers to do this.
6. Send home lists of upcoming topic words so that parents/carers can discuss them with their child as a pre-learning strategy.
7. Enable children who have a shared first language to discuss academic learning in the classroom if it is useful to them.
8. Empower children with strong literacy to read curriculum-based material and/or watch YouTube videos with subtitles in first language as a pre-learning activity or for class-based support.
9. For those children who have L1 literacy skills, allow note-taking and drafting in first language; this can be the final outcome for children at early stages of acquiring English, whereas it may be an intermediary stage for children who can then use translation tools to help conversion into English.
10. For those children with little experience of literacy in L1, build in opportunities for learning to be demonstrated orally in L1 and capture this on recording devices.
11. Consider training children to learn how to use their first language skills more effectively as a tool for learning across the curriculum. See the EMTAS Study Skills Programme for pupils [The EMTAS study skills programme \(for pupils\) | Hampshire County Council \(hants.gov.uk\)](#).
12. Prepare for new arrivals by introducing The Young Interpreter Scheme®.





13. Consider entering older students for a heritage language GCSE/A level.

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Links

Hampshire EMTAS

<https://www.hants.gov.uk/educationandlearning/emtas>

Hampshire EMTAS on X (formerly Twitter)

@HampshireEmtas

EMTAS Study Skills Programme

<https://www.hants.gov.uk/educationandlearning/emtas/primary-secondary-phase/first-language>

Culturally Inclusive School e-learning:

<https://emtas.hias.hants.gov.uk/enrol/index.php?id=35>

First Language Assessment e-learning:

<https://emtas.hias.hants.gov.uk/course/view.php?id=36>

Perspectives on multilingualism e-learning:

<https://emtas.hias.hants.gov.uk/course/view.php?id=54>

Use of First Language (EMTAS Guidance Library):

<https://emtas.hias.hants.gov.uk/course/view.php?id=61>

Resources for parents to support home learning (EMTAS Distance Learning Library): <https://emtas.hias.hants.gov.uk/course/view.php?id=57>

The Young Interpreter Scheme® (YIS):

<https://emtas.hias.hants.gov.uk/course/view.php?id=30>

The Rights and Diversity Education (RADE) centre:

<https://www.hants.gov.uk/educationandlearning/hias/curriculum-support/resource-centres/rade-centre>

The National Resource Centre for Supplementary Education (NRCSE):

<https://www.supplementaryeducation.org.uk>





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UNCRC Summary (Unicef)

https://downloads.unicef.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/UNCRC_summary-1_1.pdf

