



EMTAS Position Statement: Bell EAL Assessment Framework

The Bell Foundation EAL Assessment Framework was published early 2017 and is available to schools as a free download [here](#).

The Bell framework can be used to support school staff in their assessments of their EAL cohorts. It may also be useful for formative and summative assessment purposes more generally, and for next-steps target-setting for EAL pupils.

Key Features and considerations

With which pupils should the Bell framework be used?

- The Bell framework is suitable for use with **all** EAL pupils from early stage learners to more advanced EAL learners.
- DfE definition of EAL:

'A first language, where it is other than English, is recorded where a child was exposed to the language during early development and continues to be exposed to this language in the home or in the community.' (School Census Guide 2016-2017, DfE, 2016 p63)

- For more information about first language and home language, important when recording a pupil's linguistic heritage at admission, see the [First language/home language](#) EMTAS leaflet for parents.

What are the Bands used in the new framework and DfE Proficiency Scale?

- The framework uses the same Bands as the DfE Proficiency Scale and comprises Bands A-E.
- Band A is for early stage EAL learners, progressing through Bands B, C and D to Band E which describes EAL Learners whose English is as well-developed as their monolingual English-only peers.
- Within each Band, there are 10 assessment descriptors. Although these do not indicate that language acquisition is a linear process, broadly speaking the first 3 descriptors are considered to be easier than the last 3 within each Band.
- There are separate descriptors for Primary and Secondary Phase to allow for differences in the curriculum at different phases.
- The Bands cover the 4 key skills in English of:
 - Speaking
 - Listening
 - Reading and Viewing
 - Writing.
- Using the Bell framework to inform assessment decisions, spiky or uneven profiles for pupils can be recorded and progress tracked



through to full academic proficiency across a range of curriculum subjects and other contexts for language use.

- The descriptors in the Bell Framework can be used not only for summative assessments but also for formative assessment and next-steps planning.

What is the expected timescale for progression from Band A to Band E?

- Generally speaking, younger pupils who start to learn English in Key stage 1 take between 7 and 10 years to acquire full academic proficiency in their use of English across the curriculum. Older pupils with better-developed language and literacy skills in their first languages take between 5 and 7 years to achieve full academic proficiency.
- Generally speaking, pupils with well-developed first language skills tend to make more rapid progress in their acquisition of English than pupils with less well-developed first language skills. Literacy in first language is an indicator of likely success in acquiring an additional language, providing the support provided is appropriate to the needs of the individual EAL learner.
- When considering a pupil's progress and attainment in relation to the Bell Framework Bands, school staff should be aware that oral fluency in a pupil's use of everyday English is not the same as 'proficiency' as used in the DfE Proficiency Scale and in the Bell Framework and that Assessment should take into account pupils' developing language use and literacy across a range of subjects.

What other information should schools routinely collect about their EAL pupils?

• Background information remains an important component of a pupil's unique profile. Each EAL learner's profile will reflect the influence of:

- age
- previous educational experience (L1 and English-medium)
- first language skills
- competence socially and academically in L1
- factors that could affect learning eg trauma, racism, SEND
- First language literacy
- English language proficiency
- Academic track record
- Family and community circumstances

Schools should routinely collect and record background information and make sure that this is shared with staff, especially when a pupil transitions from one class to another.

Hampshire EMTAS Teacher Team
January 2023