

Position Statement on withdrawal provision for learners of EAL

This Hampshire EMTAS Position Statement provides an overview of best practice guidance relating to the withdrawal of learners with English as an Additional Language (EAL) from the mainstream classroom.

Key Features and Considerations

Withdrawal

Withdrawal is a form of intervention in which learners are typically removed from the mainstream classroom either for 1:1 or for small group work. With learners of EAL, withdrawal is often used to develop learners' skills in English or to build knowledge in a particular curriculum subject area.

The fundamental principle that the most effective learning takes place when there is continued access to good models of written and spoken English should be kept in mind. Indeed, the principle that a learner's proficiency in English will increase more quickly alongside accurate, fluent users of English, is widely accepted. According to research from the Bell Foundation (2017):

'Give the EAL learner opportunities to work with peers who can provide good models of English (in pairs or groups). This is crucial for understanding and using the vocabulary and structures expected by the curriculum, and particularly for developing academic language' (The Bell Foundation, 2017, p.17)

The mainstream classroom setting is the best place to facilitate learners' access to positive language models. Learners of EAL should be appropriately placed in middle to higher ability groups where they will have opportunities to hear and see language being modelled - a vital part of language learning. The mainstream classroom setting will also facilitate multiple opportunities for learners of EAL to rehearse and use subject-specific vocabulary.

With regards to withdrawal, Franson (2007, p.1107) noted:

'Teachers continue to use a range of strategies that may be less than appropriate, including the withdrawal of pupils from lessons... [the] Ofsted report... noted the ineffective use of... support by withdrawing EAL pupils from mainstream classes. Despite the emphasis in the past decade on integrating EAL into mainstream curriculum pedagogy, a new generation of teachers is making other, potentially less informed choices.'



Furthermore, Travers (2011, p.474), concisely summarised:

‘By its very nature [as a result of withdrawal] the pupil loses out on something in the mainstream class...there is an obligation to ensure that the benefits of the withdrawal outweigh the losses’

This guidance seeks to outline the limited circumstances in which it might be deemed appropriate to offer withdrawal sessions to learners of EAL, such that the benefits outweigh any potential disadvantages. Further, it sets out key considerations staff in schools should keep in mind when making such decisions.

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Assessment of EAL learners

When deciding if withdrawal might be appropriate for learners of EAL, it is important to keep in mind the possible timescales for EAL learners to achieve full Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP) in English:

- Generally speaking, younger learners who start to learn English in Key Stage 1 take between 7 and 10 years to acquire full CALP in their use of English across the curriculum. Older learners with better developed language and literacy skills in their first languages may take between 5 and 7 years to achieve CALP.
- Generally speaking, learners with well-developed first language (L1) skills tend to make more rapid progress in their acquisition of English than learners with less well-developed L1 skills. It is therefore important for a learner’s L1 skills to be assessed, using a Bilingual Assistant or Interpreter, to help provide an insight into their language skills and their likely trajectory.
- An EAL Assessment Framework should be used as a way of assessing and monitoring the progress of an EAL learner in their acquisition of English. When considering a learner’s progress and attainment in relation to the [Bell Foundation EAL Assessment Framework](#) Bands A-E, school staff should be aware that oral fluency in a learner’s use of everyday English is not



the same as 'proficiency' as used in the EAL Assessment Framework and that Assessment should take into account learners' developing language use and literacy across a range of subjects.

See the [EMTAS Position Statement on the Bell Foundation EAL Assessment Framework](#) for the full Hampshire EMTAS guidance on the use of the Assessment Framework.

Standardised tests should be avoided for early stage learners of EAL and results from such tests should not be used to inform any decisions relating to the withdrawal of learners of EAL. See the Hampshire EMTAS guidance on [Standardised testing and EAL learners](#) for a more detailed explanation of why standardised tests are not appropriate for use with learners of EAL.

When assessing learners of EAL and when making any decisions relating to withdrawal, schools should collect and consider a range of information. Background information remains an important component of a learner's unique profile.

Each EAL learner's profile will reflect the influence of:

- age
- previous educational experience (in L1 and English-medium)
- first language skills, competence socially and academically in L1 and L1 literacy
- factors that could affect learning eg trauma, racism, SEND
- English language proficiency
- academic track record
- experiences of different pedagogical approaches
- any gaps in knowledge (particularly subjects taught in the UK but not in country of origin)
- family and community circumstances.

The importance of appropriate cognitive challenge

It is important that the activities and tasks offered to learners of EAL are appropriate to their cognitive ability and language-learning needs. Thus, for example, asking an EAL learner to read from a storybook created for younger learners may be counter-productive. Although the language demand may be lower, the images and concepts may be inappropriate, serving to demean rather than help.

Tasks for learners of EAL should be cognitively challenging; language is best acquired when there is a clear and accessible context within which the new language and content is being delivered and rehearsed.

This idea is in line with Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), defined as:

'the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem-solving under adult guidance, or in collaboration with more capable peers' (Vygotsky, 1978, p.86).



Vygotsky suggested that as long as a learner is within the ZPD for a given task, if they are given the appropriate support and assistance, they are likely to be able to achieve a successful outcome. Support for learners includes having models who are knowledgeable and skilful, opportunities for social interactions with peers or teachers to allow learners to observe and practise skills, and appropriate scaffolding activities to support learners as they work within the ZPD. Such opportunities can all be provided and facilitated within the mainstream setting.

General principles in relation to the withdrawal of learners of EAL

First and foremost, the vast majority of provision for all learners of EAL, including those new to English, should happen within the context of the mainstream classroom where they have access to strong models of spoken and written English.

Chen (2009, p.58) concisely sums up what a supportive mainstream classroom environment looks like for learners of EAL:

'Children in a classroom that was ideally supportive (1) would feel that their first language made a contribution to the classroom, (2) would have frequent opportunities to interact with the teacher and similarly, (3) with their peers, and (4) they should feel that the general objective of the classes is to make them bilingual and bicultural'

Focus on provision within the mainstream setting is important, as, according to Chen (2009, p.69):

'inadequate language support in class actually causes severe exclusion in the sense that the children are very withdrawn in the lesson, and their confidence is dampened'

It would therefore be pertinent to carry out a review of the practice and provision within the classroom, to ensure that appropriate teaching and learning strategies that facilitate the learner to access curriculum content are in place.

Where it is decided to offer withdrawal sessions to learners of EAL, any such decisions should be taken on an individual basis and sessions should be planned to support the individual needs of each learner. [The Education Endowment Foundation](#) stipulates that:

'Small group tuition is most likely to be effective if it is targeted at pupils' specific needs.'

All forms of withdrawal should be in line with principles of inclusion and school policy.





Considerations relating to content delivered in withdrawal

Withdrawal should not, in the most part, be delivered in isolation from the curriculum; wherever possible, provision in withdrawal should be clearly linked to the context of the learning taking place in the mainstream classroom.

On the whole, withdrawal should be short-term and time limited. The impact of withdrawal should be reviewed on a regular basis to determine if it is effective and should continue or if it should be adapted in any way to meet the needs of the individual learner more appropriately.

For withdrawal sessions used to focus on specific aspects of language, sessions should be linked to the specific language needs of learners. Where possible, whoever delivers the support should ensure that planning is shared with the class teacher(s), to ensure a joined-up approach and so that key strategies used during the withdrawal can be replicated in the mainstream setting. For more on this, see Smyth (2003).

Considerations relating to the delivery of withdrawal

For any form of withdrawal, it should be carefully considered who should deliver it, whether that be a teacher, teaching assistant or peer. The skills or experience needed to effectively deliver the intervention should be the focus of any such decision. Furthermore, [The Education Endowment Foundation](#) states:

'Training and support are likely to increase the effectiveness of small group tuition.'

Chen (2009, p.66) has highlighted some of the potential benefits of carefully considered, planned withdrawal:

'working in a small group provides a tremendous opportunity for dialogues between teachers and children, through which children benefit from teachers' immediate attention. This creates meaningful interaction in language learning'

Note that Chen advocates the potential to increase learners' access to teachers in withdrawal provision. Furthermore, Slavin (1986) noted how some of the benefits of withdrawal group work for learners of EAL might include greater opportunities for peer teaching and group investigations.

Another consideration when planning any form of withdrawal should be the grouping of learners of EAL. For example, where possible, learners of EAL should be grouped with learners with strong oral or written skills. However, in some cases, depending on the focus of the withdrawal, it might be appropriate to group learners of EAL together, such as when supporting learners with how to use their first language(s) to help access the curriculum and accelerate their learning in the mainstream classroom.

Any likely benefits should be weighed up with the potential stigma of withdrawal and the possibility of learners of EAL falling behind in the curriculum as a result of withdrawal from the classroom because they are missing key input in the mainstream classroom (Baker, 2001).





Considerations relating to the scheduling and siting of withdrawal sessions

To avoid the same lesson in the classroom being missed each week for a session of withdrawal, the timing of any withdrawal sessions should be rotated weekly. In secondary settings, withdrawal sessions should not always be planned to take place during tutor periods. There are important messages and activities that take place during these sessions, including pastoral needs, careers and social skills.

One further consideration needed is where withdrawal sessions take place. According to Wardman (2003, p.661), schools '*should be considering the negative effects of teachers and children being forced to conduct sessions in corridors and reacting to that where at all possible*'.

Furthermore, any resources used during the withdrawal sessions should be age-appropriate, high quality and not decontextualised. There should be equal access to ICTs, comparable to what would be available in the mainstream classroom.

Considerations relating to the impact of withdrawal provision

The progress of learners taking part in withdrawal sessions should be monitored closely, as a way of ensuring that the provision is appropriate. Also, the views of learners should be sought to determine how they feel the support is helping them (keep in mind that this might need to be done in L1).

These are important factors in making any further decisions about the withdrawal, whether it should continue in the current form or if it should be adapted in any way or, ultimately, stopped.

Support from Hampshire EMTAS Bilingual Assistants

When learners have support from Hampshire EMTAS Bilingual Assistants, first and foremost this should take the form of bilingual support in the mainstream classroom, helping learners to access the curriculum through first language.

Withdrawal support should only be provided for a time-limited, specific purpose, agreed in advance with the Class Teacher and/or EAL Lead. Circumstances where withdrawal provision might be appropriate could include delivery of the Hampshire EMTAS '[Accessing the curriculum through first language: student training programme](#)' or mentoring support.

For more information on the support available from Hampshire EMTAS Bilingual Assistants, please see our [website](#).





Withdrawal of learners of EAL in primary settings

Some of the circumstances in which withdrawal might be appropriate in primary settings are considered below.

- where there is a need to focus on early literacy skills, because there is not age-appropriate literacy in L1
- to support pupils whose first language uses a different script from English
- to address a specific language support need for more advanced learners of EAL, such as different tenses or the use of commas
- to help to fill particular gaps in learning in a particular subject area or topic
- to help those who lack the confidence or who are particularly anxious about the English-speaking classroom environment (this could be on a 1:1 basis or in a small group context)
- to provide opportunities for pupils to learn (pre-teaching) and practise using subject specific academic vocabulary, linked to the curriculum being taught in the mainstream classroom
- to help pupils to use translation tools so that they are able to use them independently in the mainstream setting
- to help pupils to think about how they can use skills in their first languages to support their learning. See the EMTAS 'Accessing the curriculum through first language: learning skills programme'. This programme seeks to help pupils to access the curriculum independently, aiming to boost their confidence and self-esteem, through encouraging the continued use of L1 in meaningful, curriculum-linked contexts
- to provide mentoring sessions or ELSA support (as would be the norm for monolingual pupils)
- to provide specific support with unfamiliar forms, styles and genres of writing
- to support pupils with understanding terminology used in tests (particularly for those pupils who start school just before KS2) and to help pupils with how to respond to exam questions
- to support pupils to become accustomed to different pedagogical practices, such as group work
- for pupils with very little experience of ICT, limited withdrawal sessions might help with these new skills. It might also be worthwhile supporting pupils with access to portals, such as websites used for homework or home learning
- to signpost to pupils websites they can use to access resources or for revision
- to provide appropriate induction for pupils, such as how to use the library, opportunities to meet their teacher(s) etc.



Withdrawal of learners of EAL in secondary settings

Some of the circumstances in which withdrawal might be appropriate in secondary settings are considered below.

- where there is a need to focus on early literacy skills because there is not age-appropriate literacy in L1 or where students have not had access to schooling in their country of origin
- to support students whose first language uses a different script from English
- to teach reading or writing to those students who are not literate in their first languages
- to support those students who do not have basic numeracy skills
- to support a specific language need for advanced learners of EAL, such as different tenses or the use of commas
- to help to fill particular gaps in learning in a particular subject area or topic, particularly for GCSE subjects where exams are approaching
- to help those who lack the confidence or who are particularly anxious about the English-speaking classroom environment (this could be on a 1:1 basis or in a small group context)
- to provide opportunities for students to learn (pre-teaching) and practise using subject specific academic vocabulary, linked to the curriculum being taught in the mainstream classroom
- to help students learn to use translation tools so that they are able to use them independently in the mainstream setting
- to help students to think about how they can use skills in their first languages to support their learning. See the EMTAS '[Accessing the curriculum through first language: student training programme](#)'. This programme seeks to help learners to access the curriculum independently, aiming to boost their confidence and self-esteem, through encouraging the continued use of L1 in meaningful, curriculum-linked contexts
- to provide mentoring sessions or ELSA support (as would be the norm for monolingual students)
- to provide specific support with unfamiliar forms or styles of writing
- to support with understanding terminology used in exams (particularly for those students who start school in KS4) and to help students with how to respond to exam questions
- to support students to get used to different pedagogical practices, such as working in groups
- for students with very little experience of ICT, limited withdrawal sessions might help with these new skills. It might also be worthwhile supporting students with access to portals, such as websites used for homework or home learning
- to signpost to students websites they can use to access resources or for revision
- to provide appropriate induction for students, such as how to use the library, opportunities to meet their teacher(s) etc
- to help a student prepare for a Heritage Language GCSE, particularly if the language is not ordinarily one offered in the school setting
- to facilitate attendance on an ESOL course or suitable course at a college
- to provide careers advice or to support with post-16 progression, particularly where students have missed the opportunities given to other students in the school setting. This might include support and guidance with writing a CV or completing an application form.



First language (L1) as a tool for learning in the mainstream setting

Research by Cummins (1984, 1996) highlights the interdependency of a learner's academic skills in L1 and their other language(s) – known as common underlying proficiency.

Later research from Rosamund, Bhatti, Sharieff and Wilson (2003) suggests:

'This common underlying proficiency allows some aspects of cognitive/academic or literacy-related skills to transfer across languages, including: conceptual knowledge, subject matter knowledge, higher-order thinking skills, reading strategies and writing composition skills' (Rosamund et al., 2003, p.20)

Indeed, planned and purposeful use of L1 for a learner of EAL can help with access and engagement with the curriculum, alleviating many of the common concerns in relation to a learner's lack of proficiency in English in classroom settings, therefore possibly preventing the need to contemplate offering withdrawal sessions. For example, learners of EAL in the early stages of acquiring English might find it beneficial to demonstrate their understanding in a form other than written or verbal English. This might be, for example, by writing an essay response in L1 or by using gestures or non-verbal responses to show their understanding.

Watch the [EMTAS First Language videoscribe](#) to find out more about this cross-phase teaching and learning strategy. EMTAS has also produced an [aide memoire](#) highlighting different ways of using first language as a tool for learning.

The distinction between SEND and EAL

Fundamentally, withdrawal interventions for SEND are not appropriate for learners of EAL, unless there is a specific SEND being addressed.

Schools should bear in mind the distinct needs of learners with EAL in contrast to the needs of those with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) who do not have EAL. Research from The Bell Foundation (2015) highlights how it *'...seems as though EAL learners are too often considered to be 'learning disabled' and/or classified as SEN[D] rather than simply being less proficient in English'* (The Bell Foundation, 2015, p.98).

The distinction between EAL and SEND is explicitly stated in the Children and Families Act 2014, section 20 (4):

'A child or young person does not have a learning difficulty or disability solely because the language (or form of language) in which he or she is or will be taught is different from a language (or form of language) which is or has been spoken at home.'

Indeed, learners of EAL are no more likely to have SEND than any other learner. Learners of EAL should not therefore be automatically placed in withdrawal groups with learners with SEND. Specific withdrawal groups for SEND would not meet the language-learning needs of most learners of EAL. For further information on the distinction between EAL and SEND, see the [EMTAS website](#).





Furthermore, placing a learner of EAL in a withdrawal group with learners who have SEND or with learners who are not as academically able as the learner of EAL is likely to be demeaning and demotivating, having an adverse impact on engagement, progress and attainment.

Involving learners and parents/carers in decisions

When deciding whether to provide withdrawal sessions, schools should keep in mind the need to involve learners and their parents/carers in any decisions made as much as possible.

Regular review sessions, in which the views of learners are sought, can help to ensure that decisions on withdrawal are, and continue to be, appropriate. For older learners, for example, withdrawal could well have an impact on the options they can choose in Key Stage 4, such as if withdrawal sessions are regularly planned during a particular subject. Ultimately, this could have wider implications on their chosen pathway upon leaving school. Facilitating regular review sessions, such as with a tutor or Head of Year, can help those learners to feed into the decision process and ensure that their views are listened to and that their needs are met.

Parents/carers of learners of EAL may be unfamiliar with the UK education system and with how decisions about withdrawal are made. Schools should therefore be prepared to explain any decisions to parents/carers, listen to their views and answer any questions they might have.

Schools should be aware that parents/carers may need an interpreter to assist with communicating information about withdrawal and/or be provided with translated explanations of the UK school system (available from [The Bell Foundation](#)).





Recommendations

- 1) Ensure that learners of EAL have access to a range of positive models of written and spoken English in the mainstream classroom. This is a fundamental principle of language learning.
- 2) Use accurate and appropriate assessment of learners' academic and cognitive ability, including skills in L1 and prior educational experiences, to inform any decisions about withdrawal.
- 3) Ensure that any withdrawal is time-limited, appropriate to meet the purpose of the withdrawal.
- 4) Make sure that any withdrawal is appropriately cognitively challenging and that any resources used are age-appropriate, high quality and not decontextualised. There should be equal access to ICTs, comparable to what would be available in the mainstream classroom.
- 5) Regularly review the impact of withdrawal to determine whether it should continue or if it should be adapted in any way to meet the needs of the individual learner more appropriately.
- 6) Wherever possible, make sure that the content of the withdrawal sessions is clearly linked to the context of the learning taking place in the mainstream classroom.
- 7) Consider who learners of EAL are grouped with in withdrawal sessions, closely linked to the purpose of the withdrawal. Where possible, learners of EAL should be grouped with learners with strong oral or written skills. However, in some cases, it might be appropriate to group learners of EAL together, such as when supporting learners with how to use their first language(s) to help access the curriculum.
- 8) Carefully consider when withdrawal sessions take place in order to avoid the same lesson or subject being missed each week.
- 9) Make sure that withdrawal sessions take place in an appropriate environment, conducive to learning.
- 10) Ensure that the member of staff delivering the withdrawal has the appropriate experience, support and training to deliver the focus of the withdrawal.
- 11) Consider how students' use of first language could help them to access the provision in the setting of the mainstream classroom.
- 12) Avoid placing learners of EAL in withdrawal groups with learners with SEND, unless the learners of EAL also have SEND. If unsure whether a learner with EAL also has SEND, see the guidance [here](#).
- 13) Involve learners and their parents/carers in the decision-making process as much as possible. Seek the views of learners and provide regular opportunities for review. Be prepared to explain any decisions to parents/carers and provide opportunities for them to ask any questions they might have.





- 14) Seek training from EMTAS for school staff to help to determine when withdrawal might be appropriate and for support with teaching strategies which could be deployed in the mainstream setting. Full details of the training from EMTAS can be found on our [website](#).

Contact emtas@hants.gov.uk for further support and guidance. One of our Specialist Teacher Advisors will be able to provide advice for specific circumstances.

Hampshire EMTAS Teacher Advisor team
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Reference list

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Further reading from Hampshire EMTAS

Hampshire EMTAS blog: <https://emtas.hias.hants.gov.uk/blog/>

Hampshire EMTAS Moodle: <https://emtas.hias.hants.gov.uk/>

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