

# 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. The intended audience includes Senior Leadership, EAL Coordinators, Inclusion Managers, Governors with responsibility for EAL/inclusion and mainstream teaching staff.

## What is withdrawal provision?

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 sometimes used with the aim of developing learners' skills in English or building knowledge in a particular curriculum subject area. However, it may not always be the most effective strategy for learners of English as an Additional Language (EAL) (Franson, 2007).

## Is withdrawal appropriate for learners of EAL?

Being fully integrated in the 'life of the classroom' has many advantages for learners (The Bell Foundation, 2020) because this is where they have access to strong models of spoken and written English and many opportunities to rehearse and use subject-specific vocabulary. According to research, the opportunity to work with peers 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).

However, there are circumstances in which withdrawal from the mainstream classroom can be very beneficial:

*'for some newly arrived children, a short daily withdrawal program may still be valuable, provided that the focus language in these classes is related to the mainstream curriculum. Students new to the school and to English, or who are very shy or traumatized, may gain confidence and become familiar and comfortable with their new surroundings more easily.'*

Gibbons (2002, p.119)

Bearing in mind these two perspectives, *'there is an obligation to ensure that the benefits of the withdrawal outweigh the losses'* (Travers, 2011, p.474).

This guidance seeks to outline the limited circumstances in which withdrawal sessions might be appropriate for learners of EAL and offers advice about how these decisions should be made.

## Which factors contribute to successful withdrawal provision?

Where intervention is deemed necessary, particularly any requiring withdrawal from a lesson, it should be short-term, well-planned, and delivered by appropriately trained staff. There should be clear intentions and the outcomes should be measurable (The Bell Foundation, 2020).

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 because they are missing key input in the mainstream classroom (Baker, 2001).

To this end, the Bell Foundation (2020) suggests there are several factors to consider when a school is planning specific interventions:



### Which students?

How will the students be identified? How many students will be in the group? Are they from different school classes? Do they speak different languages? Are they at similar proficiency levels? Do they have similar language needs?



### What?

What are the learning objectives of the series of sessions? What are the language areas that need to be taught? How are the objectives linked to the curriculum? Will there be opportunities for developing all the skills areas? Will the content be cognitively challenging? How will learning be assessed? How will it be clear that the objectives have been achieved?



### When?

Will the learners be withdrawn from a lesson or from a form period for example? Which lesson will they be removed from? How often? How will they catch up with any work missed? For how long will the withdrawal programme run?



### Where?

Is there a suitable space for withdrawal provision? Is this environment conducive to learning? Does it have appropriate furnishings and resources such as ICTs. Will learners feel comfortable or exposed?



### Who?

Who will plan and lead the withdrawal provision? Are they confident with and trained on EAL pedagogy? Are they confident with curriculum content in order to link the two? Can they speak the pupils' home language(s)? Are the withdrawal lessons planned with the regular classroom teacher?

## What could withdrawal provision be used for?

### Induction and study skills

- to provide appropriate induction for learners, such as how to use the library, opportunities to meet their teacher(s) etc.
- to help learners use translation tools so that they are able to use them independently in the mainstream setting
- to help learners understand how to use skills in their first language (L1) to support their learning
- to help learners become accustomed to different pedagogical practices, such as group work
- to provide access and introduction to portals or platforms used for home learning
- to signpost learners to websites needed for resources or revision.

### Addressing skills gaps

- to teach reading or writing to older learners who do not have literacy skills in their L1, or where the English alphabet is less familiar to them
- to support learners who do not have basic numeracy skills
- to address knowledge gaps in a particular subject area or topic, or where learners have not had access to any schooling in their country of origin
- to support learners with very little experience of ICT.

### Pre-teaching

- to provide opportunities for learners to learn and practise using subject specific academic vocabulary, linked to the curriculum being taught in the mainstream classroom
- to address a specific language support need for more advanced learners of EAL (such as understanding the structures or conventions of a type of writing covered in class)
- to provide specific support with unfamiliar forms, styles and genres of writing.

### Exams and assessments

- to support learners with understanding terminology used in tests and how to respond to exam questions
- to help learners prepare for a [Heritage Language GCSE](#), particularly if the language is not one offered in the school setting.

### Mentoring or emotional support

- to help those who lack 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 mentoring sessions or ELSA support (as would be the norm for monolingual learners).

### Next steps

- 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 learners have missed the opportunities given to other learners in the school setting. This might include support and guidance with writing a CV or completing an application form.

## What information is needed for decision-making?

### Background information

Before making any decisions about withdrawal, schools should collect and consider a range of background information as part of a learner's unique profile:

- 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.

### Testing

Standardised tests should be avoided for early stage learners of EAL. The 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 more detailed guidance.

### Literacy and language proficiency

It is important to keep in mind the possible timescales for EAL learners to achieve full Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP) in English. Any programme of withdrawal interventions will only play a small role in a process which takes years rather than weeks or months. Generally speaking, younger learners who start to learn English in Key Stage 1 may 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 L1 may take between 5 and 7 years to achieve CALP. Learners with well-developed 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 to help provide an insight into their level of ability and their likely trajectory. A Bilingual Assistant or Interpreter may be able to assist with this language assessment.

### Assessment framework

An EAL-specific Assessment Framework should be used as a way of assessing and monitoring the progress of an EAL learner. It is also an important tool when considering the purpose of any withdrawal provision. When using 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' in English. 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.



## Who should be involved in decision-making?

When deciding whether to provide withdrawal sessions, schools should involve learners and their parents/carers in decision-making as much as possible. Regular review sessions can help to ensure that decisions on withdrawal are appropriate. For older learners, withdrawal could have an impact on their Key Stage 4 options, especially if sessions are regularly timetabled during a particular subject. It is therefore particularly important for these learners to feed into the decision process so their views are listened to and their needs 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](#)).

## Are phonics interventions appropriate?

Withdrawal for phonics may be a normal part of teaching and learning in many Primary settings. However, phonics interventions are not recommended for early-stage learners of EAL because these learners do not have the vocabulary to make such interventions meaningful. As Gibbons (2002) points out, letters and sounds are meaningless when taught in isolation, and this is particularly the case for learners of EAL. These learners need the context of familiar texts to aid their understanding.

## Are SEND interventions appropriate?

Withdrawal interventions for Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (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 SEND who do not have EAL. Research from The Bell Foundation (2014) 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, 2014, p.98).

The distinction between EAL and SEND is explicitly stated in the Children and Families Act 2014:

*'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 as these would not meet their needs. It is also likely to be demeaning and demotivating, having an adverse impact on engagement, progress and attainment. For further information on the distinction between EAL and SEND, see the [EMTAS website](#).





## Can EMTAS support withdrawal?

When learners have support from Hampshire EMTAS Bilingual Assistants, this will often involve bilingual support in the mainstream classroom, helping learners to access the curriculum through their L1. However, appropriate support might also include withdrawal to deliver the EMTAS [study skills programme](#) or mentoring support.

Any withdrawal provision supported by a Bilingual Assistant should be time-limited and for a very specific purpose agreed in advance with the Class Teacher and/or EAL Lead.

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

## What are the alternatives to withdrawal?

The best way to avoid the need for withdrawal is to ensure that provision in the mainstream classroom meets the needs of learners of EAL. High quality teaching and access to good role models of English will help learners make the best possible progress. [Hampshire EMTAS](#) and [The Bell Foundation](#) are among a large number of organisations providing access to ideas and resources which will benefit all learners, not just learners of EAL.

### Use of first language (L1)

Planned and purposeful use of a learner's L1 can help learners engage with the curriculum and potentially negate the need for withdrawal provision. 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, p.20) 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.'*

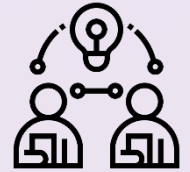


## Recommendations for withdrawal provision



As far as possible, keep learners in the mainstream classroom with access to positive models of written and spoken English.

Consider how teaching and learning strategies and use of L1 could improve the provision in the mainstream setting.



Where possible, group learners of EAL with learners who have strong oral or written skills. Sometimes learners of EAL might be grouped together, such as when supporting learners with how to use their L1 as a tool for learning.

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](#).



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.

Seek training from EMTAS to help determine when withdrawal might be appropriate and how to improve provision in the mainstream setting. Full details of the training from EMTAS can be found on our [website](#).



Ensure the content of the withdrawal sessions is clearly linked to the learning taking place in the mainstream classroom.

Ensure withdrawal sessions take place in an appropriate environment, conducive to learning.



Ensure the withdrawal is appropriately cognitively challenging and offers age-appropriate, high quality, contextualised resources as well as equal access to ICTs.

Ensure that the member of staff delivering the withdrawal has the appropriate experience, support and training to deliver the focus of the withdrawal.



Carefully consider when withdrawal sessions take place to avoid the same lesson or subject being missed each week.

Ensure that any withdrawal is time-limited and subject to review.



Involve learners and their parents/carers in the decision-making process as much as possible.

images: Flaticon.com

Contact [emtas@hants.gov.uk](mailto:emtas@hants.gov.uk) if you require further support and guidance. One of our Specialist Teacher Advisors will be able to provide advice for specific circumstances.

Hampshire EMTAS Teacher Advisor team  
May 2023

## Further reading

Baker, C. (2001) *Foundations of bilingual education and bilingualism*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.

Chen, Y. (2009) 'Language support for emergent bilinguals in English mainstream schools: an observational study', *Language, Culture and Curriculum*, 22 (1), pp. 57-70.

Cummins, J. (1984) *Bilingualism and Special Education: Issues in Assessment and Pedagogy*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.

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Education Endowment Foundation (2023) *Teaching and Learning Toolkit*. Available at: <https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/education-evidence/teaching-learning-toolkit> (Accessed: 22 May 2023)

Franson, C. (2007) 'Challenges and opportunities for the teaching profession' in J. Cummins, (ed.) *International handbook of English language teaching*. Boston: Springer, pp. 1101–1112.

Gibbons, P. (2002) 'Learning language, learning through language, and learning about language: Developing an integrated curriculum' in *Scaffolding Language, Scaffolding Learning: Teaching Second Language Learners in the Mainstream Classroom*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, pp. 118-138.

Rosamund, S., Bhatti, I., Shariieff, M. and Wilson, K. (2003) *Distinguishing the difference: SEN or EAL?* Birmingham: Birmingham Advisory and Support Service.

Slavin, R. (1987) 'Small group methods' in M. Dunkin, (ed.) *The international encyclopaedia of teaching and teacher education*. Oxford: Pergamon Press, pp. 237-43.

Smyth, G. (2003) *Helping Bilingual Pupils to Access the Curriculum*. London: David Fulton Publishers

The Bell Foundation (2014) *School approaches to the education of EAL students*. Available at: <https://tinyurl.com/26ecmw7v> (Accessed 15 June 2023)

The Bell Foundation (2017) *Classroom Support Strategies: Working with EAL learners in primary settings*. Available at: <https://tinyurl.com/mrxmheky> (Accessed 15 June 2023)





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Travers, J. (2011) 'Teachers' organisational practices and their perceptions of the benefits of support by withdrawal for mathematics in Irish primary schools', *European Journal of Special Needs Education*, 26 (4), pp. 461-477.

Vygotsky, L. S. (1978) *Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press

Wardman, C. (2013) 'Interactions between EAL pupils, specialist teachers and TAs during withdrawal from the mainstream in UK primary schools', *Education 3-13*, 41 (6), pp. 647-663.

### Further information from Hampshire EMTAS

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

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

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