



**First Thought
Independent School**

FIRST THOUGHT CARE SERVICES

English as an Additional Language Policy

2026-2027

Table of Contents

STATEMENT OF INTENT.....	3
LEGAL FRAMEWORK	3
ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES	4
SUPPORT	4
INCLUSION	5
INITIAL ASSESSMENTS	5
CLASSROOM PRACTICE	5
ACCESS TO THE CURRICULUM	6
WORKING WITH PARENTS.....	6
PUPILS WITH SEND	6
MONITORING AND REVIEW	6
APPENDIX 1: INFORMAL INITIAL EAL ASSESSMENT FOR PUPILS WITH SLD, AUTISM, AND COMPLEX NEEDS.....	7
A. <i>Pupil Details</i>	7
B. <i>Session Log</i>	7

Statement of Intent

In this policy, the term 'English as an Additional Language' (EAL) refers to pupils whose main language at home is a language other than English.

Pupils' proficiency in English will vary widely, but many will need to develop their skills in English while also learning curriculum content. For these pupils, English is both the subject of learning and the vehicle for learning other subjects.

At our school, pupils are of primary age and have severe learning difficulties (SLD), autism, and complex needs. All pupils have Education, Health and Care (EHC) plans. Many already experience significant challenges with communication, interaction, and language development. For pupils with EAL, these existing needs can compound the task of acquiring and using English effectively. They may require additional, highly individualised support to access learning, engage socially, and make progress across the curriculum.

In addition, some may come from different cultural backgrounds to their peers, with differing expectations of language use, education, and learning, which may influence communication styles and responses in the classroom. This policy has been established to ensure all pupils with EAL at the school are given the best chance possible to reach their full potential.

First Thought Independent School aims to:

- Welcome the cultural, linguistic and educational experiences pupils with EAL contribute to the school.
- Ensure strategies are in place to support pupils with EAL.
- Enable pupils with EAL to become confident, and to acquire the language skills needed to reach their full potential in a way that is developmentally appropriate to their needs.

Our strategic objectives are to:

- Provide a welcoming atmosphere for newly arrived pupils with EAL.
- Assess the skills and needs of pupils with EAL in ways that are sensitive to their SEND profiles.
- Gather accurate information regarding children's backgrounds, cultures and abilities.
- Equip teachers and support staff with the necessary skills, resources and knowledge to support pupils with EAL.
- Use all available resources to raise the attainment and communication skills of pupils with EAL.
- Systematically monitor pupils' progress, and adapt policies and procedures accordingly.
- Ensure all children's languages, cultures and identities are represented in classrooms and throughout the school.
- Maximise opportunities to model the fluent use of English and other forms of communication (e.g. Makaton, PECS).
- Ensure pupils with EAL are acknowledged for their skills in their own languages.

Legal Framework

This policy has due regard to all relevant legislation and statutory guidance including, but not limited to, the following:

- Childcare Act 2006
- Education Act 2002
- The UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR)
- Data Protection Act 2018
- DfE (2014) 'The Equality Act and schools'
- DfE (2018) 'Promoting the education of looked after children and previously looked after children'
- DfE (2018) 'Equality Act 2010: advice for schools'
- DfE (2018) 'Mental health and wellbeing provision in schools'

This policy operates in conjunction with the following school policies:

- Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Policy
- Supporting Pupils with Medical Conditions Policy
- Admissions Policy
- LAC Policy
- Anti-bullying Policy
- Safeguarding Policy

Roles and Responsibilities

The governing board will have overall responsibility for the implementation of this policy.

The headteacher will be responsible for:

- Ensuring that those who are teaching or working with pupils with EAL are aware of their needs and have arrangements in place to meet them.
- Ensuring that teachers monitor and review pupils' progress during the academic year.
- Appointing a member of staff to lead on the school's approach to supporting pupils with EAL.
- Providing the EAL lead with sufficient administrative support and time away from teaching to enable them to fulfil their responsibilities.
- Ensuring that procedures and policies for the day-to-day running of the school do not directly or indirectly discriminate against pupils with EAL.
- Ensuring that the approach to the curriculum includes how it is made accessible for pupils with EAL.

The EAL lead will be responsible for:

- The induction of newly arrived pupils.
- Conducting initial assessments of pupils with EAL.
- Teaching small groups of pupils with EAL and providing classroom support.
- Liaising with teaching staff on support for pupils with EAL.
- Advising on strategies to support and include pupils with EAL and on ways to differentiate work for pupils with EAL.
- Encouraging and supporting pupils to maintain and develop their first language.
- Facilitating pupils' use of first language national examinations.
- Developing relationships between the school and parents of pupils with EAL.
- Securing and providing training to ensure staff development.
- Acting as consultants to staff on language-related issues and equal opportunity and race equality issues.
- Ensuring continuity of support and maintaining contact with other professionals involved, as well as parents and pupils.
- Working closely with the SENCO to develop individual transition plans tailored to the specific needs of children with additional needs.

Support

Where a pupil with EAL is assessed as having little to no English, support will be provided in the form of highly individualised communication and language programmes. These may focus on functional, everyday English alongside visual communication aids, symbols, signing, or augmentative and alternative communication (AAC).

In-class support and small group work are used as soon as the pupil can be meaningfully engaged in group settings, with careful attention to sensory regulation and communication readiness.

Additional methods of support will include:

- Use of total communication approaches (speech, signs, symbols, AAC) to reinforce English vocabulary and concepts.
- Pre-teaching and overlearning of key words and concepts using multisensory strategies tailored to each child's EHCP targets.
- Incorporating familiar routines, visual schedules, and personalised objects of reference to aid comprehension and reduce anxiety when learning in English.

Inclusion

The school utilises a strategy of inclusion and the positive and effective use of language. There is an understanding throughout the school, for both staff and pupils, that a limited knowledge of English does not reflect a lack of ability or knowledge. Appreciating a pupil's ability to communicate in their first language is essential for building confidence and self-esteem.

The language development of pupils is the responsibility of the entire school community. Diversity is valued and classrooms are socially inclusive.

Teachers will be knowledgeable about pupils' abilities in English and use their knowledge to inform lesson planning. Schemes of work may be rewritten to accommodate low levels of English, whilst maintaining the subject content and level of challenge.

Where large groups of pupils with EAL speak the same language, the school encourages wider integration to promote inclusion and to improve pupils' understanding of English.

Initial Assessments

When pupils first join the school, they will undertake a timely initial assessment to gauge pupils' English abilities in an informal manner that does not make the pupil feel isolated or inferior.

The assessment will be adapted to the developmental level of each pupil, focusing on functional communication, engagement, and preferred modes of expression, rather than relying solely on spoken English. The assessment tool is provided in Appendix 1.

Initial assessments are carried out by the EAL lead, and completed assessments are held on the pupil's profile. Teachers of the pupil will be allowed access to the assessment to inform their teaching and lesson planning. The pupil and their parents may view the assessment at any time.

Classroom Practice

Teachers have high expectations of all pupils. Classroom activities will be matched to pupils' needs and abilities with visual supports being utilised where possible.

Teachers will consider common misconceptions and language barriers and clarify meanings accordingly.

Where possible, the following practices will be utilised to improve pupils' literacy:

- Utilisation of the pupil's first language expertise.
- The provision of writing frames.
- The use of props.

Language skills will be developed through collaborative activities involving spoken communication, feedback opportunities and conversations, and good models provided by peers.

Active participation will be encouraged by grouping pupils in mixed ability groups to develop language skills and ensuring 'expert' readers and communicators are present in each group to model language.

Classroom displays will reflect cultural and linguistic diversity. Assessment methods will allow pupils to show what they can do in all curriculum areas.

Bilingual dictionaries and dual language textbooks will be available and used where possible.

Prior to any private tuition or one-to-one support, the pupil is informed of the purpose of the session and the objectives.

Access to the Curriculum

The needs of pupils with EAL are considered by teachers when planning lessons. Teachers will ensure that:

- The language and learning demands of the curriculum are analysed and support is provided.
- Visual support is utilised to provide greater understanding of key concepts.
- There are opportunities for pupils to use their first language in the classroom.
- The support requirements of pupils with EAL are identified and the support is made available.

Working with Parents

Liaison with parents is vital to the creation of a strong home and school partnership. To aid this partnership, the school will:

- Actively seek to put parents at ease by providing a welcoming environment.
- Provide interpreters for meetings when needed.
- Ensure the language used in letters to parents is clear and straightforward.
- Where appropriate, have teachers read through the letter with pupils before sending the letter home.
- Where necessary, ensure translations of school documents are provided.
- Encourage parents to attend parents' evenings and participate in school functions.
- Invite parents to school to help with class activities where appropriate.
- Encourage parents to become involved with homework through shared reading schemes and language-based homework.
- Plan activities in a way that ensures they do not clash with religious/community commitments.

Pupils with SEND

In this school, all pupils have SEND and an EHC plan. EAL considerations are therefore always addressed alongside each child's identified needs and EHCP outcomes.

Assessments of language and communication are completed jointly by the EAL lead, SENCO, and relevant therapists. Where appropriate, assessment may be carried out in the child's first language with support from an interpreter or bilingual professional.

Strategies for EAL pupils will be integrated into the child's personalised provision plan.

Monitoring and Review

The head of education will review this policy on an annual basis, considering feedback from practitioners and in light of changes to the law or statutory guidance, and will make any changes necessary.

APPENDIX 1: INFORMAL INITIAL EAL ASSESSMENT FOR PUPILS WITH SLD, AUTISM, AND COMPLEX NEEDS

Purpose

To establish a pupil's communication profile, preferred modes of expression, and baseline English comprehension and production in a supportive, non-intrusive way.

Format

Conducted over several short sessions during familiar routines and activities, preferably with a familiar adult present.

Assessor Guidance

- Use the child's preferred communication modes (speech, signs, symbols, AAC, gestures).
- Embed checks within play, sensory regulation, and daily routines.
- Avoid test-like questioning; observe and model language in context.
- Work with parents and interpreters to validate observations in the first language.

A. Pupil Details

Field	Entry
Pupil name	
Date of birth	
Year group / Key Stage	
Assessor	
First language(s)	
Home language use (contexts and who with)	
Interpreter used (name/role)	
EHC plan focus for communication	
Preferred communication modes	
Sensory or regulation considerations	

B. Session Log

Use the log below to record your notes each time you carry out an observation. Ideally you should carry out 5–6 short observations

- Across different times of day
- Including at least one home–school link input (parent/carer report, video, or conversation about communication at home)
- Covering both familiar and new activities

Assessment	Assessor	Activity / Setting Observed	Notes on Each Assessment Area	Summary of Strengths	Suggested Strategies / Next Steps
Preferred Communication Mode(s) – e.g., speech, signing, symbols, AAC, gestures, vocalisations.					
Understanding of Key Everyday Words in English – e.g., names of familiar people, basic instructions (“come here,” “stop,” “finished,” “more”).					
Use of First Language – observed during play, interaction with family, or when prompted with familiar objects/photos.					
Response to Visual Supports – follows symbol, photo, or object cues.					
Ability to Express Basic Needs – through any mode, in English or first language.					
Engagement with Songs, Stories, or Routines in English – attention, participation, enjoyment.					
Receptive Vocabulary in Context – recognition of common classroom					

items, actions, and people.					
Expressive English Vocabulary – words, signs, or AAC selections in English.					
Interaction Style – initiates, responds, or requires prompting					

C. Assessment Areas

After completing 5 – 6 observations and completing a log like the above each time, use information from those logs to make your assessment. Use the rating key if helpful: **0** = not yet observed, **1** = emerging, **2** = developing, **3** = consistent.

Assessment Area	Notes/Evidence	Rating (0 – 3)
Preferred communication mode(s)		
Understanding of key everyday words in English		
Use of first language		
Response to visual supports		
Ability to express basic needs		
Engagement with songs, stories, or routines in English		
Receptive vocabulary in context		
Expressive English vocabulary		
Interaction style		
Cultural factors influencing communication		

D. Summary and Next Steps

Using all the information you have so far – the logs and the assessment sheet – complete the table below. This is the information that the EAL Lead will use to plan each pupil's support. This information will be shared with all staff.

Field	Notes
Summary of strengths	
Barriers and needs observed	
Key vocabulary known in English	
Priority targets (linked to EHCP)	
Suggested strategies and classroom supports	
Home-school collaboration notes	
Interpreter or bilingual support needed	
Review date	
Summary of strengths	

