St. Joseph's R.C. Primary School

Nursery policy for EAL (English as an additional language)

September 2026

Review: November 2028

Policy Review
This policy will be reviewed in full by the Standards, Safeguarding and Curriculum Committee.

The policy was last reviewed and agreed by the Standards, Safeguarding and Curriculum Committee in September 2026

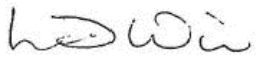
It is due for review in November 2028.

Hayley Francis Date: September 2026

Head Teacher



Lindsay Wise Date: September 2026
Chair of Governors



1. What is EAL?

EAL stands for **English as an Additional Language**. The term is used when referring to children who speak a language, or languages, other than English at home.

At our nursery, we recognise and value the linguistic and cultural diversity that children and their families bring to our setting. A child who is learning English as an additional language may already have well-developed communication and thinking skills in their home language. Learning English is an additional process and should not be viewed as an indication of a child's overall ability or understanding.

Our aim is to support children to develop confidence and competence in English while continuing to value and encourage their home language.

2. Our Five-Stage Model of Language Acquisition

Children acquire an additional language at different rates. The following five-stage model is used to help staff understand children's developing English and identify appropriate support.

Stage 1 – New to English (Beginner)

A child may:

- Use their first language for learning and communication.
- Remain silent or use very little English in the setting.
- Copy or repeat some English words and phrases.

- Understand some familiar everyday English expressions.
- Have minimal or no English literacy skills.
- Rely heavily on visual, contextual and non-verbal support.

Support required: Significant support through modelling, repetition, visual prompts, gestures and opportunities to communicate through play.

Stage 2 – Early Acquisition (Beginner to Intermediate)

A child may:

- Follow familiar day-to-day social communication in English.
- Begin to use spoken English for social purposes.
- Understand simple instructions, particularly when supported by gestures or visuals.
- Follow simple stories and narratives with visual support.
- Begin to develop early reading and writing skills.
- Become familiar with some topic-specific vocabulary.

Support required: A high level of support, including modelling language, repetition, visual prompts and opportunities to practise new vocabulary in meaningful contexts.

Stage 3 – Developing Competence (Intermediate)

A child may:

- Participate in learning and play activities with increasing independence.
- Express themselves orally in English, although grammatical and structural inaccuracies may still be evident.
- Continue to require support with literacy, particularly understanding texts and developing writing.
- Understand increasingly abstract concepts and more complex language.
- Use an increasing range of vocabulary.

Support required: Ongoing targeted support to enable the child to access learning and communicate effectively.

Stage 4 – Competent (Advanced)

A child may:

- Use oral English confidently and engage successfully in activities across the setting.
- Read and understand a wide variety of texts appropriate to their age and stage.
- Use increasingly developed written English, although this may lack complexity.
- Continue to demonstrate some grammatical errors.
- Understand most everyday and learning-related language.

Support required: Support to understand subtle differences in meaning, develop more sophisticated vocabulary, refine grammatical structures and develop abstract language.

Stage 5 – Fluent

A child at this stage can:

- Communicate confidently in English across a range of situations.
- Access learning and play opportunities independently through English.
- Understand and use age-appropriate vocabulary and language structures.
- Communicate at a level broadly comparable with children who have English as their first language.

Support required: Children should continue to have opportunities to extend and enrich their vocabulary, communication skills and understanding.

3. Teaching and Learning

In Early Years, staff provide an inclusive, language-rich environment where children learning EAL can develop their communication and language skills through meaningful interactions and play.

Teachers and practitioners support EAL learners by:

- Providing a wide range of opportunities for children to develop speaking and listening skills with both adults and peers.
- Using storytelling, songs, rhymes, role-play and small-group activities to develop communication.
- Building on children's experiences and language from home.
- Working positively with parents and carers to understand and value children's home languages.
- Using clear, simple and consistent language when communicating with children.
- Providing visual support, including photographs, symbols, objects and gestures.
- Using staff lanyards displaying photographs of the daily routine and simple key vocabulary. This helps children anticipate transitions and ensures that staff consistently model important words and phrases.
- Repeating and modelling new vocabulary within meaningful contexts.
- Expanding children's spoken language by repeating and extending what they say.
- Providing opportunities for children to learn through play and develop communication skills naturally.
- Providing targeted interventions where appropriate, particularly for children who are new to English or require additional support.
- Supporting children to develop the language they need to participate confidently in all aspects of nursery life.
- Ensuring that staff receive regular EAL training and that the setting remains a communication-friendly environment.

4. Supporting Home Languages

We recognise that maintaining and developing a child's home language can support their overall communication, language and cognitive development.

Staff will:

- Show respect for and interest in children's home languages.
- Encourage parents and carers to continue using their home language with their child.
- Use information from families to understand key words and phrases that are meaningful to the child.
- Where appropriate, incorporate children's home languages, cultures, songs and stories into the nursery environment.
- Encourage children to communicate in whichever language they are most comfortable using while providing opportunities to develop English.

5. Assessment

All children are assessed when they join the nursery to establish their individual starting points. This information is used to identify children's strengths, needs and next steps.

For children learning EAL, staff consider:

- The child's level of understanding and use of English.
- Their communication skills in both English and, where known, their home language.
- Their ability to communicate with adults and peers.
- Their participation in play and learning activities.
- Their developing vocabulary and understanding.
- Their progress against the appropriate stage of language acquisition.

Key workers complete regular **Talking Matters** assessments (please see appendix 1) to monitor children's communication and language development and identify appropriate next steps.

Children's progress is reviewed regularly and, where appropriate, termly. Staff consider the impact of any additional support or interventions and adapt provision according to the child's changing needs.

Assessment is used to ensure that EAL children are supported to make progress while recognising that acquiring an additional language takes time and that children progress at different rates.

6. Partnership with Parents and Carers

Parents and carers are valued as important partners in supporting children's language development.

Staff will:

- Communicate regularly with parents and carers about their child's progress.
- Ask families about the languages spoken and used at home.
- Share appropriate strategies and activities that can support communication and language development.
- Encourage families to continue talking, singing, reading and sharing stories with their child in their home language.
- Celebrate children's cultural and linguistic backgrounds within the nursery.

7. Staff Responsibilities

All staff have a responsibility to:

- Recognise, respect and value children's home languages, cultures and individual communication needs.
- Provide positive and consistent language models through everyday interactions, play and learning experiences.
- Use clear, age-appropriate and consistent language when communicating with children.
- Support children's communication through visual, verbal and non-verbal strategies, including gestures, facial expressions, objects, pictures and other appropriate resources.
- Observe and identify children who may benefit from additional communication, language or EAL support, and ensure appropriate strategies are put in place.
- Observe, record and monitor children's communication and language development and progress.
- Work collaboratively with parents and carers to understand each child's language background, communication needs and experiences.
- Share relevant information with colleagues and, where appropriate, work with external professionals to support children's communication and language development.
- Attend relevant training and professional development relating to EAL, communication and language development and inclusive practice.
- Ensure that the Nursery provides an inclusive, welcoming and communication-friendly environment in which all children are encouraged and supported to communicate.

Appendix. 1

Early Communication and Language

Herefordshire Council NHS Herefordshire

Stage	Listening and Attention	Understanding (Receptive Language)	Talking (Expressive Language)	Social Communication
0-11 months	Turns toward a familiar sound then locates range of sounds with accuracy. Listens to, distinguishes and responds to intonations and sounds of voices. Quietens or alerts to the sound of speech. Fleeting Attention – not under child's control, new stimuli takes whole attention.	Stops and looks when hears own name.	Gradually develops speech sounds (babbling) to communicate with adults; says sounds like *'baba, nono, gogo'.*	Gazes at faces and copies facial movements, eg. sticking out tongue. Concentrates intently on faces and enjoys interaction. Uses voice, gesture, eye contact and facial expression to make contact with people and keep their attention.
8-20 months	Concentrates intently on an object or activity of own choosing for short periods. Pays attention to dominant stimulus – easily distracted by noises or other people talking. Moves whole bodies to sounds they enjoy, such as music or a regular beat. Has a strong exploratory impulse.	Responds to the different things said when in a familiar context with a special person (e.g. '*Where's Mummy?', 'Where's your nose?*'). Understanding of single words in context is developing, e.g. *'cup', 'milk', 'daddy'*	Uses single words. Frequently imitates words and sounds. Enjoys babbling and increasingly experiments with using sounds and words to communicate for a range of purposes (e.g. *teddy, more, no, bye-bye)*	Likes being with familiar adult and watching them. Developing the ability to follow an adult's body language, including pointing and gesture. Learns that their voice and actions have effects on others. Uses pointing with eye gaze to make requests, and to share an interest.
16-26 months	Listens to and enjoys rhythmic patterns in rhymes and stories. Enjoys rhymes and demonstrates listening by trying to join in with actions or vocalisations. Rigid attention – may appear not to hear.	Selects familiar objects by name and will go and find objects when asked, or identify objects from a group.	Beginning to put two words together (e.g. '*want ball', 'more juice*') Uses different types of everyday words (nouns, verbs and adjectives, e.g. *banana, go, sleep, hot)* Beginning to ask simple questions.	Gradually able to engage in 'pretend' play with toys (supports child to imagine another's point of view). Looks to others for responses which confirm, contribute to, or challenge their understanding.
22-36 months	Single channelled attention. Can shift to a different task if attention fully obtained – using child's name helps focus. Listens with interest to the noises adults make when they read stories. Recognises and responds to many familiar sounds e.g. turning to a knock on the door, looking at or going to the door.	Identifies action words by pointing to the right picture, e.g., *"Who's jumping?"* Understands 'who', 'what', 'where' in simple questions (e.g. *Who's that/can? What's that? Where is.?).* Developing understanding of simple concepts (e.g. *big/little*)	Learns new words very rapidly and is able to use them in communicating. Uses action, sometimes with limited talk, that is largely concerned with the 'here and now' (e.g. reaches toward toy, saying *'I have it).* Uses a variety of questions *(*e.g. *what, where, who).* Uses simple sentences (e.g.' *Mummy gonna work.*') Beginning to use word endings (e.g. *going, cats)*	Uses language as a powerful means of widening contacts, sharing feelings, experiences and thoughts. Holds a conversation, jumping from topic to topic. Enjoys being with and talking to adults and other children. Interested in others' play and will join in. Responds to the feelings of others.
30-50 months	Listens to others in one to one or small groups, when conversation interests them. Listens to stories with increasing attention and recall. Joins in with repeated refrains and anticipates key events and phrases in rhymes and stories. Focusing attention – still listen **or** do, but can shift own attention. Is able to follow directions (if not intently focused on own choice of activity).	Understands use of objects (e.g. *"What do we use to cut things?"*) Shows understanding of prepositions such as 'under', 'on top', 'behind' by carrying out an action or selecting correct picture. Beginning to understand 'why' and 'how' questions.	Beginning to use more complex sentences to link thoughts (e.g. using *and, because*). Can retell a simple past event in correct order (e.g. *went down slide, hurt finger*). Uses talk to connect ideas, explain what is happening and anticipate what might happen next, recall and relive past experiences. Questions why things happen and gives explanations. Asks e.g. *who, what, when, how.* Uses a range of tenses (e.g. *play, playing, will play, played*)	Beginning to accept the needs of others, with support. Can initiate conversations. Shows confidence in linking up with others for support and guidance. Talks freely about their home and community. Forms friendships with other children.
40-60+ months	Sustains attentive listening, responding to what they have heard with relevant comments, questions or actions. Maintains attention, concentrates and sits quietly when appropriate. Two-channelled attention – can listen and do for short span. Integrated attention – can listen and do in range of situations with range of people; varies according to the demands of the task.	Understands humour, e.g. nonsense rhymes, jokes. Demonstrates understanding of "how?" and "why?" questions by giving explanations. Able to follow a story without pictures or props. Understands instructions containing sequencing words; first…after…last, and more abstract concepts – long, short, tall, hard soft, rough.	Extends vocabulary, especially by grouping and naming, exploring the meaning and sounds of new words. Links statements and sticks to a main theme or intention. Uses language to imagine and recreate roles and experiences in play situations. Uses talk to organise, sequence and clarify thinking, ideas, feelings and events. Introduces a storyline or narrative into their play.	Has confidence to speak to others about their own wants, interests and opinions. Initiates conversation, attends to and takes account of what others say. Explains own knowledge and understanding, and asks appropriate questions of others. Shows awareness of the listener when speaking. Expresses needs / feelings in appropriate ways. Forms good relationships with adults and peers. Works as part of a group or class, taking turns