

**3b**

**Teaching English as an Additional Language (EAL)**

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Please read in conjunction with:

* Special Educational Needs
* Equality and Diversity Policy
* Safeguarding Policy
* Admissions Policy
* Curriculum Policy

# Overseas Students and English as an Additional Language

Students at Bloxham come from many different countries and several require varying levels of EAL support. Each academic year there are usually between 15 and 20 students in the EAL department from Third Form to Sixth Form. When they come to Bloxham most students have been learning English for about three or four years – the same length of time, or less, as most English students have been learning a Modern Language before taking GCSE.

**Overview of English as an Additional Language support at Bloxham**

Bloxham accepts students from many different parts of the world, some for a temporary stay of one term up to a year (typically from European countries such as Spain and Germany), others with the intention of completing their secondary education here, taking GCSEs and/or A Levels, and progressing on to university.

***CEFR levels***

International students at Bloxham arrive with varying EAL needs. Some may require no support at all to access the curriculum, while others may need to attend EAL classes. Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) levels can be used to give a rough guide to competence in a foreign language. The six CEFR levels are as follows:

A1 A2 (Basic users) B1 B2 (Independent users) C1 C2 (Proficient users)

Thus, A1 corresponds to beginner level, while someone at C2 level is highly proficient. The various CEFR levels are defined by lists of “can do” statements. The following, for the levels most likely to be encountered at Bloxham, are taken from the global CEFR scale given on the Council of Europe website.

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| B1 | Can understand the main points of clear standard input on familiar matters regularly encountered in work, school, leisure, etc. Can deal with most situations likely to arise whilst travelling in an area where the language is spoken.  Can produce simple connected text on topics which are familiar or of personal interest. Can describe experiences and events, dreams, hopes & ambitions and briefly give reasons and explanations for opinions and plans. |
| B2 | Can understand the main ideas of complex text on both concrete and abstract topics, including technical discussions in his/her field of specialisation. Can interact with a degree of fluency and spontaneity that makes regular interaction with native speakers quite possible without strain for either party. Can produce clear, detailed text on a wide range of subjects and explain a viewpoint on a topical issue giving the advantages and disadvantages of various options. |
| C1 | Can understand a wide range of demanding, longer texts, and recognise implicit meaning. Can express him/herself fluently and spontaneously without much obvious searching for expressions. Can use language flexibly and effectively for social, academic and professional purposes. Can produce clear, well-structured, detailed text on complex subjects, showing controlled use of organisational patterns, connectors and cohesive devices. |

Source: [Global scale - Table 1 (CEFR 3.3): Common Reference levels - Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) (coe.int)](https://www.coe.int/en/web/common-european-framework-reference-languages/table-1-cefr-3.3-common-reference-levels-global-scale)

The minimum CEFR level for acceptance into the third form at Bloxham is B1. As can be inferred from the above “can do” statements, students at B1 level are likely to find most standard curriculum classes challenging, particularly those that involve a substantial amount of reading, essay-writing and discussion, such as History, English, and Theology. Of course, there are likely to be significant variations in English language skills even between those at a B1 level – one student may have a particular strength in speaking but be weak in reading, while another may excel in reading and writing but find listening and speaking challenging, and so on. In other words, classifying a group of students as being at B1 level does not signify that they have the same EAL needs as each other. Students entering the sixth form should have achieved at least a B2 level, and ideally C1.

***EAL for students entering the school in the third to fifth forms***

In the third, fourth and fifth forms, students requiring English language support attend EAL classes instead of a second language class (French or Spanish) in the timetable. In these small EAL classes, generally comprising no more than four students, lessons focus on all four language skills – reading, writing, listening and speaking – the aim being to bring students up to a level of English language competence that enables them to cope with the standard curriculum. An appropriate, optional goal for these students to aim for is a B2 score in the Cambridge B2 First qualification (previously known as Cambridge First Certificate), which can certify attainment between B1 and C1 levels.

***EAL (and IELTS) for sixth formers***

International students accepted into the sixth form at Bloxham who intend to progress on to university in an English-speaking country and who do not have an English Language GCSE, will most likely need to take the IELTS test to demonstrate that they have a level of English adequate for university study.

IELTS stands for International English Language Testing System and is run by Cambridge English, IDP Education and the British Council. For university entrance, students need to take the academic version of the test (not the “general training” version), which comprises four separate tests in reading, writing, speaking and listening. Each part is scored in bands, ranging from 0 (did not produce anything in the test) to 9 (the band score a highly competent native speaker would expect to achieve), with the average of all four scores being calculated to give an overall score. When international students receive an offer from a UK university, they generally receive a language requirement along with their A levels offer. This language requirement can vary from university to university, and from department to department within a university, but a typical minimum IELTS offer would be 6.5 overall, with at least 6.5 in writing and no score less than 6.0 in any of the other components. (Scores in the four parts of 6.0, 6.0, 6.5, 6.5 would be rounded up to an average of 6.5 for the overall score.) For reference, an IELTS score of 6.5 corresponds roughly to a high B2 on the CEFR scale.

Sixth form students take IELTS preparation classes in free study periods in their timetable. As IELTS covers the full range of English skills – reading, writing, speaking and listening – with a focus on academic tasks, it is appropriate not only for IELTS preparation, but also for overall EAL development. Generally, students attend IELTS classes once or twice a week, but there is no limit to the amount of extra support that can be given during the week, subject only to timetable constraints. As the school charges a termly flat-rate fee for EAL support, taking extra classes does not mean paying more.

Ideally, students take the IELTS test sometime in their Lower Sixth year, so that they do not need to worry about it in their final year. Some, however, may need to continue preparing for it in the Upper Sixth. IELTS tests are held regularly throughout the year in centres all round the world and it is up to students to select a centre and book their test. Some choose to take it in their home country during a holiday, while others may prefer to go to Oxford (the closest test location to Bloxham) or London during term time.

In addition to IELTS classes, sixth form students can receive subject-specific English support, such as help with interpreting and answering exam questions on A Level papers.

**Some common problems faced by overseas students learning English**

**Asian pupils** have to learn English verb tenses as their own languages do not have them. “Modifiers” (e.g. yesterday, last year, next week, last month, ten years ago) are used with what we would call the Present Simple Tense. E.g. Last year I go to Spain for my holiday. Next week I write a letter to my parents. Two years ago my grandmother die.

**Chinese pupils** have to learn to use plurals effectively as nouns do not change to a plural form in their languages, a number word is placed before the singular noun giving the plural. Another difficulty is that there are no gender specific pronouns in Chinese languages which means that Chinese students may confuse the English pronouns.

**Spanish pupils** find that are many words in English and Spanish that look similar and some have similar meanings. This means that Spanish pupils may believe they understand a word when they do not. An amusing example is confusion between embarrassed and embarazada (pregnant). Another difficulty is that Spanish does not have two words for ‘make’ and ‘do’ so pupils may use the English verbs incorrectly.

**Russian, Bulgarian and Bosnian pupils** struggle with articles in English as do not have any in their languages. Slavic languages do not use the verb ‘to be’ either so our pupils with those as a mother tongue will often omit the verb that is used so often in English. Because of the use of suffixes in Russian, the word order is much more flexible than it is in English and pupils from this background often put adverb phrases in the middle of sentences rather than at the beginning or end.

**Understanding specialist terms** in academic subjects can pose difficulties. E.g.

Biology with words of Latin and Greek origin; Mathematical terms such as “Solve the following equation” or “Select at random” which need to be explained; Geographical words such as “sedimentary, erosion, population density”; English Literature terms such as “stanza, imagery, plot, characterisation”. Some English pupils probably experience difficulty with some of the terms mentioned above but they may have heard the word(s) before and have a vague idea of what they mean whereas to the foreign pupil the words are completely new.

**Handwriting** can be very difficult for foreign pupils to read. They may have to decipher the individual letters of writing on the whiteboard or a hand-written instruction/ information sheet before they can interpret the meaning.

**Irregular spellings and pronunciation** of English words may pose problems. E.g. cough, bough, through, ought, rough. Silent letters and unstressed syllables also affect student pronunciation when speaking or reading aloud.

**Definite and Indefinite Articles**. Learning when to use “a” and “the” before a noun is not easy for most foreign pupils. The basic rules are as follows:

The use of the **Definite Article** “the” implies that the noun:

a) has already been referred to and/or is already known.

b) is the only one of its kind or a special example.

The use of the **Indefinite Article** “ a” implies that the following noun was previously unknown and is being introduced for the first time. E.g. I had a sandwich and an apple for lunch. The sandwich wasn’t very good but the apple was tasty. English learners will often omit the article as in “I often listen to radio” or “I went to cinema last night” or put one in where it is not needed as in “I had a lunch in a very nice restaurant.” The rules are complex and take time to learn.

**Phrasal verbs** are difficult for all foreign pupils to learn. Learning which preposition is used and how each preposition can change the meaning of the verb takes time. In many instances there is more than one meaning for any given phrasal verb. E.g. get by = to pass by and get by = to survive.

**Some examples of Phrasal Verbs.**

Get by, get on, get over, get to, get through, get off, get along with, get away with, get out of, get up to, get down, get on with, get round, get across, get in.

Look at, look for, look into, look out, look out for, look up, look up to, look down, look down on, look over, look after.

**Dependent prepositions**

English speakers are very familiar with the correct prepositions that follow verbs, nouns or adjectives but as there are no fixed rules for non-English speakers, they are required to learn them as they go. This leads to some confusion when the different prepositions give a different shade of meaning. The list of dependent prepositions is very long and will take a long time to learn.

**Some examples of dependent prepositions**

‘Angry with’ suggests anger towards a person while ‘angry about’ suggests anger towards a situation. A common mistake is: “I am good in maths” instead of ‘good at’. Students also frequently say that they “listen music” rather than “listen to music”.

**Idioms** and their meaningsare also difficult to learn. English is a very idiomatic and metaphorical language and students learning the language will find some of our expressions difficult to understand.

**Some examples of idioms:**

On the spur of the moment, in the nick of time, second-hand, longwinded, all-round, dog- eared, cold-blooded, pull someone’s leg, catch red-handed, turn over a new leaf, take (someone) for a ride, put one’s foot in it, on the cards, flash in the pan, the last straw, red tape, old hand etc.

All teachers have a responsibility to ensure that their teching is adapted to suit the needs of all learners and that Quality First Teaching includes those students in need iof additional language support.

Considerations for a teachers:

In many cases, the particular challenge facing an EAL student in a standard curriculum class will be quite apparent – struggling to ask or answer a question due to insufficient vocabulary, difficulty with pronunciation, difficulty with expressing something appropriately in writing, getting through work very slowly or not at all, and so on. Sometimes, however, problems may be less apparent. Under-the-radar issues to look out for with EAL students in standard curriculum classes include:

* students saying they understand or that everything is OK when asked (to avoid embarrassment, trouble etc.)
* not asking questions or seeking help even though they need it
* sounding good, with clear pronunciation and some impressive vocabulary/phrases, giving the impression that they are capable of following lesson content when in fact they are not
* turning in written work that seems competent but that has, in fact, been generated by AI or is over-reliant on Internet sources

Below are some ideas for things teachers in standard curriculum classes can do to support EAL students. Most are just common sense and in line with what teachers naturally do already, but there may be a few less obvious ideas to bear in mind.

DELIVERY AND LANGUAGE AWARENESS

* clear repetition of key points
* checking with students that they have grasped a point, asking them directly if they have any questions and not simply waiting for them to ask
* care with handwriting on the board and checking with students that they are ready for items to be rubbed off
* supplying notes and PowerPoint slides after class so that students can go over them in their own time
* being aware of one’s use of idiomatic language (“it’s not everyone’s cup of tea” etc.), and either avoiding it or restating a point in straightforward language more likely to be understood by the EAL student
* speaking clearly, not too fast, and loudly enough
* providing lists of key terms for students to study and encourage them to write key terms on flashcards

TIME

* giving enough time for students to complete tasks, including writing down notes from the board, and checking with them before moving on
* giving students time to answer questions – they may know what they want to say, but just need time to work out how to say it
* consider making some time – even just a few minutes – regularly available to EAL students after class for them to ask questions and make comments; it might be good to explicitly invite them to take advantage of such opportunities rather than waiting for them to ask you to spare them some time

LOGISTICS

* seating EAL students at the front of the class, in optimum positions for hearing and seeing what is going on, and allowing you to keep an eye on them so as to spot any difficulties they may be having
* pairing up EAL students with a range of capable and helpful native-speaker partners; changing the partners from time to time might take pressure off the helper and also provide an opportunity for the EAL speaker to meet and interact with a number of classmates, which may lead to valuable friendships outside class

PREPARATION

* telling students in advance what to prepare for upcoming lessons, giving them time to pre-read pages from the textbook, check key vocabulary, concepts and so on

ATTITUDE

* being very patient and encouraging with EAL students so that they don’t feel uncomfortable about asking questions or asking for help
* making it clear that asking questions is a good thing for a student to do (some may come from cultures where it is not the norm to question teachers or to take an active role in classes)
* listening carefully to what EAL students have to say even if it is somewhat unclear, and not just dismissing it as not the answer you are looking for; trying to interpret their words and make some positive comment in response, so that the student feels good about having said something
* encouraging the use of problem-solving language in the class; telling students that you will be happy if they alert you to problems with phrases such as “Could you speak a little slower, please?”, “Could you say that again, please?” and so on (see below for a list of simple problem-solving phrases)

ASSESSMENT, PREP, CLASS TASKS

* consider alternative assessments and prep assignments instead of essays, such as a poster covering key points or preparation of a one-to-one presentation to the teacher (thanks to a member of the History Department for this idea)
* providing clear model answers so that students know what to aim for
* providing scaffolding for tasks, a formulaic structure into which the student can slot the relevant information; over time, with repetition, the scaffolding elements can be reduced

EQUIPMENT

* consider allowing EAL students to use “translator pens” in class, which they can scan over a section of text so as to quickly get an idea of meaning

PROBLEM-SOLVING PHRASES

Here are some ideas for phrases that are likely to be of use to students and teachers in various circumstances:

* Could you say that again, please?
* Could you say that a different way, please?
* Could you speak a little louder, please?
* Could you speak a little slower, please?
* What does …X… mean?
* I didn’t understand what you said.
* I don’t understand what …Y… means.
* I don’t understand the question.
* I understand the question, but I don’t know how to answer it in English.

If a student is seen to be struggling in your subject please liaise with both Tutor and Matthew Kent (EAL Tutor) to arrange how to Best support the student in their learning, making a record oni SAMS.

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