ENGLISH AS AN ADDITIONAL LANGUAGE (EAL) POLICY

Valuing every language. Enabling communication. Strengthening belonging.



RIVERSIDE BRIDGE SCHOOL

INSPIRE, EMPOWER, ACHIEVE

This policy forms part of the Riverside Bridge School Policy Framework and should be read alongside any related policies, procedures and guidance.

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OUR COMMITMENT

At Riverside Bridge School, every policy reflects our commitment to creating a safe, inclusive and ambitious school community in which every pupil is valued, every voice matters and every family is respected and supported.

Our policies translate our values into consistent practice. They support high expectations, clear responsibilities, effective partnership and informed decision-making, ensuring that the needs, rights, wellbeing and future outcomes of our pupils remain at the heart of our work.

We work collaboratively, act with integrity and continually reflect upon and improve our practice to achieve the best possible outcomes for every pupil.

POLICY PRINCIPLES

Our Policy Principles underpin how we work together and guide the decisions and actions we take to support every pupil and their families.



POLICY PURPOSE & FRAMEWORK

Riverside Bridge School policies set out the expectations, responsibilities and approaches that support safe, consistent and high-quality practice across the school. They translate our values, statutory responsibilities and professional expectations into clear guidance for everyday decision-making and practice.

Each policy forms part of the Riverside Bridge School Policy Framework and should be read alongside any related policies, procedures, statutory guidance and school frameworks referenced within the document.

Policies apply to the members of the school community identified within each document, including staff, governors, parents and carers, volunteers, contractors and other professionals where relevant. Everyone is expected to understand and apply the requirements appropriate to their role and to seek further guidance where clarification is required.

CURRICULUM DRIVERS



Our Drivers provide a shared golden thread across curriculum, school life, policy and leadership, helping ensure that our decisions and practice remain focused on the experiences and futures we want for every pupil.

STATEMENT OF INTENT

This policy sets out Riverside Bridge School's approach to supporting pupils who use English as an Additional Language (EAL). It explains the principles, expectations, responsibilities and arrangements that ensure pupils' linguistic and cultural identities are recognised and valued, barriers to communication and learning are identified accurately, and appropriate support enables every pupil to communicate, participate, learn and belong.

At Riverside Bridge School, we are committed to providing an inclusive learning environment in which every pupil is valued, respected and supported to communicate, learn and thrive. We recognise and celebrate the multilingual and multicultural diversity of our school community and the important contribution that pupils' languages, cultures and identities make to school life.

We recognise that using English as an Additional Language is not, in itself, a special educational need or disability. At Riverside Bridge School, however, pupils who use EAL may also have complex learning needs, autism, speech, language and communication needs, sensory processing differences, physical disabilities or profound and multiple learning difficulties. It is therefore essential that staff distinguish between needs associated with acquiring and using an additional language and those arising from a pupil's SEND, while recognising that the two may interact.

At Riverside Bridge School, EAL is understood within the wider context of each pupil's individual communication profile. For many pupils, communication extends beyond spoken language and may include signing, symbols, Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC), Objects of Reference, sensory cues, gesture, facial expression, body movement and other personalised communication systems. Supporting pupils to understand and communicate effectively is fundamental to enabling access to learning, relationships, choice, participation and increasing independence. This is embedded within the school's Total Communication approach.

The school recognises that home languages are an important part of pupils' identity, emotional wellbeing, family relationships and communication development. Pupils and families are encouraged to maintain and use their home languages, and the development of English should not be promoted at the expense of meaningful communication, family relationships or cultural identity.

Teaching and support are personalised to the individual pupil. Staff draw upon information from families, assessment, observation, communication profiles, previous settings and relevant professionals to understand how language, SEND, communication and culture interact for each pupil. Assessment does not rely solely upon spoken English proficiency and avoids attributing difficulties to EAL where they may arise from SEND, or attributing them to SEND where they may reflect the process of acquiring an additional language.

Our responsibility to pupils and families

Riverside Bridge School has a responsibility to ensure that pupils who use English as an Additional Language are fully included in every aspect of school life and are supported to communicate, participate and learn in ways that are meaningful and accessible to them.

In delivering this responsibility, we will:

- recognise and celebrate the languages, cultures and identities of all pupils and families;
- recognise multilingualism as a strength and avoid viewing the use of an additional language as a deficit;
- provide an inclusive learning environment underpinned by our Total Communication approach;
- distinguish appropriately between EAL and SEND when identifying, assessing and responding to individual needs;
- consider each pupil's communication profile holistically, recognising that communication abilities may differ significantly from spoken English proficiency alone;
- make reasonable adjustments to teaching, communication approaches and learning resources to meet individual needs;
- value and promote the continued use of home languages as part of pupils' identity, emotional wellbeing, communication and family relationships;
- work in partnership with parents, carers and relevant professionals to understand each pupil's language, culture and communication profile;
- ensure families can access important information and participate meaningfully in meetings and decision-making, including through interpretation or translation where required;
- provide staff with appropriate guidance, professional development and resources to support multilingual pupils with complex SEND effectively; and
- regularly review provision to ensure that pupils are making meaningful progress in communication, participation, learning and independence.

Through these commitments, we aim to ensure that every pupil has the opportunity to communicate, belong and participate fully in school life. Our approach recognises each pupil's strengths, values the importance of language, family and culture, and removes barriers that may limit access to meaningful communication, learning and future opportunities.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

01	EAL AT RIVERSIDE BRIDGE SCHOOL	02	DEFINITION OF ENGLISH AS AN ADDITIONAL LANGUAGE
03	IDENTIFICATION AND ASSESSMENT	04	ADMISSION AND INCLUSION
05	PROVISION	06	TEACHING AND LEARNING
07	ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES	08	MONITORING, RECORDING AND ASSESSMENT
09	LOOKED-AFTER CHILDREN	10	PARTNERSHIP WITH FAMILIES
11	RESOURCES	12	EQUALITY, MONITORING AND REVIEW
13	RELATED POLICIES AND FRAMEWORKS		

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Section 01

EAL AT RIVERSIDE BRIDGE SCHOOL

Valuing multilingualism. Removing barriers. Enabling participation.

The purpose of this policy is to establish a clear framework for identifying, assessing and supporting pupils who use English as an Additional Language within the unique context of Riverside Bridge School.

Unlike many mainstream settings, Riverside Bridge School supports pupils with a wide range of complex learning, communication and sensory needs. Consequently, the school's approach to EAL extends beyond the acquisition of spoken English and considers how pupils communicate, understand, express themselves and engage with the world using a variety of communication methods. This broader understanding ensures that communication support and EAL provision are closely integrated and personalised to each pupil's needs.

The aims of this policy are to:

- provide an inclusive and equitable approach to supporting pupils who use English as an Additional Language;
- recognise multilingualism as a strength that enriches the school community;
- ensure that pupils can access learning through communication approaches that meet their individual needs;
- promote strong partnerships with families and respect for pupils' linguistic and cultural identities;
- support staff in delivering high-quality teaching through the school's Total Communication and SCERTS-informed approaches;
- ensure that EAL provision contributes positively to pupils' communication, wellbeing and educational outcomes.

The school recognises that successful EAL provision is achieved through collaboration between pupils, families, staff and external professionals, ensuring that every pupil is supported to communicate, participate and achieve their full potential.

Section 02

DEFINITION OF ENGLISH AS AN ADDITIONAL LANGUAGE

Understanding language. Recognising diversity. Avoiding assumptions.

A pupil is recorded as using English as an Additional Language (EAL) where they have been exposed to a language other than English during their early development and continue to be exposed to that language in the home or community. EAL encompasses pupils with a wide range of proficiency in English and should not be interpreted as an indication of ability, attainment or special educational need. This may include pupils who:

- speak or understand one or more languages other than English at home;
- have recently arrived in the United Kingdom from a non-English-speaking country;
- are exposed predominantly to another language through their family or community;
- are growing up in a multilingual household.

Within Riverside Bridge School, the definition of EAL extends beyond spoken language alone. Many pupils have complex communication needs and may communicate through signing, symbols, AAC, objects of reference, gestures, sensory cues or vocalisations. Consequently, the school considers each pupil's communication profile holistically, recognising the interaction between home language, communication development, culture and individual learning needs.

The school views multilingualism as a strength. Home languages contribute to emotional wellbeing, family relationships, identity and communication development, and should be valued alongside the development of English. The acquisition of English should never be at the expense of a pupil's home language or cultural identity.

EAL is not a special educational need. Where a pupil who uses EAL also has SEND, assessment must consider language acquisition and SEND separately while recognising how they may interact. Staff should not assume that difficulties with understanding, expression, engagement or learning arise from either EAL or SEND without considering the pupil's wider communication and developmental profile.

Section 03

IDENTIFICATION AND ASSESSMENT

Building understanding. Distinguishing need. Informing support.

The identification of pupils who use English as an Additional Language begins before admission wherever possible and continues throughout a pupil's time at Riverside Bridge School.

Given the complexity of pupils' learning and communication needs, assessment is holistic and considers a wide range of information rather than relying solely on English language proficiency. Assessment should seek to distinguish between differences associated with acquiring and using an additional language and needs arising from SEND. No single assessment measure should be used in isolation to make this distinction. Information about the pupil's communication and development across languages, where available, should inform professional judgement.

Assessment may include:

- information provided through the EHCP and consultation process;
- discussions with parents and carers regarding home languages, culture and communication;
- reports from previous educational settings and external professionals;
- baseline assessments on entry;
- observations by teachers, support staff and Speech and Language Therapists (SaLT); and
- ongoing assessment through the school's pathway assessment systems.

Whilst the Department for Education's EAL proficiency codes may be recorded where appropriate, they are used only as broad descriptors and do not replace the school's personalised assessment of communication needs.

For many pupils at Riverside Bridge School, progress is more appropriately measured through:

- functional communication;
- receptive understanding;
- engagement and interaction;
- use of AAC or alternative communication systems;
- emotional regulation;
- symbolic understanding;
- the ability to communicate meaningfully across different environments.

Assessment is an ongoing process and is reviewed regularly through classroom observation, pathway assessments, Speech and Language Therapy input, pupil progress meetings and Annual Reviews.

Section 04

ADMISSIONS AND INCLUSION

Welcoming families. Understanding identity. Building belonging.

Riverside Bridge School aims to ensure that every pupil and family experiences a welcoming, inclusive and personalised transition into the school community.

During the admission and induction process, staff work closely with parents, carers and professionals to develop a detailed understanding of each pupil's communication profile, cultural background and individual needs.

This may include gathering information about:

- languages spoken within the family;
- preferred communication methods used at home;
- cultural or religious practices that may influence school life;
- familiar routines, songs, objects or sensory experiences that support emotional regulation;
- strategies that promote successful communication and engagement.

Where required, interpreters will be arranged to ensure that families can participate fully in meetings and decision-making.

Families are introduced to the school's Total Communication approach, including the use of symbols, signing, AAC, sensory supports and structured routines. Wherever appropriate, personalised transition resources may be developed to help pupils feel safe, reduce anxiety and build positive connections between home and school.

The school values each pupil's cultural and linguistic identity and seeks to incorporate these into the learning environment wherever appropriate to promote continuity, belonging and emotional wellbeing.

Section 05

PROVISION

Personalising support. Removing barriers. Enabling communication.

At Riverside Bridge School, support for pupils who use English as an Additional Language is embedded within high-quality teaching and the school's Total Communication approach. Provision is personalised and reflects each pupil's communication profile, learning pathway and individual strengths.

EAL is not treated as a separate curriculum. Language and communication development are embedded within everyday teaching, interaction and participation, with additional targeted support provided where assessment identifies that this is required.

Provision may include:

- highly differentiated teaching across all curriculum pathways;
- Total Communication approaches, including signing, symbols, AAC, objects of reference and sensory cues;
- multi-sensory teaching strategies that reduce reliance on spoken language;
- culturally inclusive resources and learning experiences;
- dual-language visuals or resources where appropriate;
- structured routines and visual supports that reduce communication demands; and
- opportunities for pupils to communicate through their preferred methods.

For many pupils, the primary aim is not simply the acquisition of spoken English, but the development of functional communication, understanding, emotional regulation and meaningful participation in learning. Consequently, EAL provision is closely integrated with the school's wider communication and SEND provision.

Section 06

TEACHING & LEARNING

Adapting teaching. Supporting communication. Maintaining ambition.

Teaching pupils who use English as an Additional Language within a complex special school requires a personalised and communication-centred approach. At Riverside Bridge School, staff recognise that successful learning depends not only on language acquisition but also on emotional regulation, sensory processing, relationships and the ability to communicate in ways that are meaningful to each individual pupil.

Teaching is therefore carefully adapted to ensure that communication is accessible, purposeful and embedded throughout the curriculum. Staff recognise that pupils may communicate through a wide range of methods and that these should be valued equally.

Effective practice includes:

- establishing predictable routines supported by visual and sensory cues;
- modelling communication through speech, signing, symbols, AAC, gesture and facial expression;
- using objects of reference, sensory experiences and practical activities to develop understanding;
- breaking learning into small, manageable steps;
- allowing sufficient processing time for pupils to understand and respond;
- reducing unnecessary language demands while maintaining high expectations;
- incorporating pupils' home languages and cultural experiences where appropriate; and
- ensuring that pupils can participate using their preferred communication methods.

Teaching is planned around each pupil's strengths, interests and communication profile, ensuring that learning remains meaningful, motivating and accessible. The overall aim is to enable every pupil to understand, communicate, participate and achieve their individual potential.

Section 07

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Sharing responsibility. Building consistency. Strengthening support.

Supporting pupils who use English as an Additional Language is a whole-school responsibility. Every member of staff contributes to creating an inclusive environment in which pupils' languages, cultures and communication methods are recognised, respected and valued.

Senior Leadership Team

The Senior Leadership Team is responsible for ensuring that this policy is implemented consistently across the school.

This includes:

- overseeing admissions and the accurate recording of EAL information;
- promoting an inclusive and culturally responsive school environment;
- ensuring staff receive appropriate training and guidance;
- monitoring the effectiveness of EAL provision;
- ensuring that communication remains central to the school's approach to supporting multilingual pupils.

Teachers

Teachers are responsible for planning and delivering high-quality, inclusive teaching that enables pupils who use EAL to access learning through appropriate communication approaches.

Teachers will:

- plan learning that reflects each pupil's communication profile;
- adapt teaching and learning resources appropriately;
- monitor and record progress;
- work collaboratively with families and professionals;

- celebrate pupils' linguistic and cultural identities within the curriculum.

Support Staff

Support staff play a vital role in modelling communication, supporting emotional regulation and reinforcing communication strategies throughout the school day.

They work alongside teachers to ensure that pupils experience consistent communication approaches across learning, routines and social interaction.

Speech and Language Therapy (SaLT)

Speech and Language Therapists provide specialist advice to support pupils whose communication needs intersect with English as an Additional Language.

Their role may include:

- assessing communication needs;
- advising on AAC, symbols and other communication systems;
- contributing to communication plans;
- supporting staff to understand how culture, language and communication interact;
- working collaboratively with families and school staff to promote consistent communication approaches.

Families

Parents and carers are recognised as experts in their child's communication, language and cultural background. The school values their knowledge and works in partnership with them to ensure that communication approaches remain consistent across home and school.

Families are encouraged to continue using their home language where this supports relationships, emotional wellbeing and communication development. The school recognises that maintaining a pupil's home language strengthens identity and family connections while complementing communication development in school.

Section 08

MONITORING, RECORDING AND ASSESSMENT

Monitoring progress. Recognising strengths. Informing provision.

The school maintains accurate records of pupils who use English as an Additional Language and monitors the effectiveness of provision as part of its wider assessment and communication processes.

Information relating to pupils' home languages, communication methods and cultural background is recorded on the school's management information system and updated where appropriate.

Monitoring includes consideration of:

- pathway assessments;
- communication profile reviews;
- Speech and Language Therapy reports;
- Annual Reviews and multi-agency meetings;
- pupil progress meetings;
- feedback from parents and carers.

The school recognises that progress for pupils who use EAL cannot be measured solely through English language acquisition.

Assessment therefore considers a range of outcomes, including:

- functional communication;
- understanding of routines and expectations;
- emotional regulation;
- engagement in learning;
- interaction with peers and adults;
- use of communication systems;
- the ability to express needs, preferences and choices effectively.

This holistic approach ensures that assessment reflects each pupil's individual strengths, communication journey and educational progress.

Section 09

LOOKED-AFTER PUPILS

Understanding experience. Coordinating support. Promoting belonging.

Riverside Bridge School recognises that pupils who are Looked After and who also use English as an Additional Language may experience additional barriers to learning, communication and emotional wellbeing.

Where relevant to the individual pupil, their experiences may include disrupted education, changes in family or care arrangements, displacement or changes in access to familiar languages and cultural relationships.

The school will work closely with the Designated Teacher for Looked After Children, the Virtual School, social workers, families and other professionals to ensure that pupils receive coordinated and personalised support.

Where appropriate, support will include:

- recognising and valuing the pupil's linguistic and cultural identity;
- maintaining home-language connections where these are in the pupil's best interests;
- providing communication approaches that promote emotional security and predictability;
- ensuring education planning reflects both communication and pastoral needs;
- working collaboratively with external agencies to promote positive educational and wellbeing outcomes.

The school recognises that every pupil's circumstances are unique and will ensure that support is planned sensitively and in accordance with individual needs.

Section 10

PARTNERSHIP WITH FAMILIES

Valuing expertise. Sharing understanding. Strengthening partnership.

Riverside Bridge School believes that strong partnerships with families are fundamental to supporting pupils who use English as an Additional Language.

Parents and carers provide invaluable knowledge about their child's communication, language, culture and experiences. The school values this expertise and works collaboratively with families to develop consistent approaches that support communication and learning across both home and school.

The school will:

- provide interpreters or translated information where appropriate;
- communicate with families in ways that are accessible and respectful;
- seek to understand each family's language, culture, traditions and communication preferences;
- encourage families to continue using and celebrating their home language;
- incorporate culturally relevant experiences into school life where appropriate;
- invite parents and carers to share words, songs, stories, objects and cultural experiences that support their child's learning and wellbeing.

By working in partnership with families, the school strengthens pupils' communication, confidence, identity and sense of belonging.

Section 11

RESOURCES

Providing access. Representing diversity. Supporting communication.

Riverside Bridge School maintains a wide range of resources to support pupils who use English as an Additional Language within a Total Communication environment.

Resources may include:

- Widgit symbols and appropriately translated or dual-language resources;
- Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) systems and devices;
- visual timetables and communication boards;
- sensory stories and culturally inclusive learning resources;
- multilingual books, artefacts and environmental print where appropriate;
- objects of reference and sensory communication materials;
- specialist communication resources recommended by Speech and Language Therapists.

The school will continue to review and develop its resources to reflect the changing needs of pupils and to promote inclusive communication across all areas of school life.

Section 12

EQUALITY, MONITORING AND REVIEW

Promoting equality. Evaluating impact. Strengthening practice.

Equality

Riverside Bridge School is committed to promoting equality, diversity and inclusion for all pupils, families and members of the school community.

The school will ensure that pupils who use English as an Additional Language are not disadvantaged in accessing education because of language or communication barriers and will meet its duties in relation to race, religion or belief, disability and other protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010. The school celebrates multilingualism and cultural diversity and recognises these as strengths that enrich the whole school community.

Monitoring and Review

The Senior Leadership Team is responsible for ensuring that this policy is implemented consistently and reflects current legislation, statutory guidance and best practice.

The effectiveness of this policy will be monitored through:

- pupil progress and pathway assessment outcomes;
- communication profile reviews;
- feedback from pupils, parents and carers;
- monitoring of inclusive practice across the curriculum;
- Speech and Language Therapy recommendations;
- regular review of communication and learning resources.

This policy will be reviewed annually, or sooner where changes in legislation, guidance or school practice make this necessary.

Section 13

RELATED POLICIES & FRAMEWORKS

Connecting practice. Strengthening consistency.

This policy should be read alongside:

- Total Communication Policy
- Curriculum Policy
- SEND Policy
- Equality Policy
- Accessibility Plan
- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- Teaching and Learning Policy
- Positive Support Policy

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Every Communication Counts

Working together to support our multilingual learners

At Riverside Bridge School we use Total Communication.
We value all forms of communication and recognise that every child has their own unique way of communicating, understanding and expressing themselves. Together, we help our pupils to communicate, connect and achieve.

AT HOME

Your child's first experiences of communication happen at home.

Home language
The language of love, comfort and identity.

Songs and stories
Sharing stories, rhymes and songs builds understanding and connection.

Familiar routines
Everyday routines help children feel safe and support learning.

Family conversations
Talking, listening and interacting together builds communication for life.

AT SCHOOL

We meet your child where they are and support them to communicate in the ways that work best for them.

Speech
We value and support spoken language.

Signing
We use signs and gestures to support understanding and expression.

Symbols
Visual symbols help our pupils to understand, make choices and communicate.

AAC
Augmentative and Alternative Communication gives pupils a voice and choice.

Objects of reference
Objects help to provide meaning and support transitions and routines.

Sensory communication
Sensory experiences help pupils to express, understand and connect.

OUR SHARED GOAL

Together, we are building the foundations for a happy, fulfilling future.

Communication
Being able to express needs, ideas and feelings.

Confidence
Feeling valued, understood and able to succeed.

Belonging
Feeling part of a caring and inclusive community.

Learning
Accessing the curriculum and enjoying new experiences.

Independence
Having choice, control and the skills to navigate the world.

We encourage families to continue using their home language.
Developing English does not replace a child's first language – it builds upon it. **Every form of communication is valued at Riverside Bridge School.**

Inspiring communication, empowering independence, achieving brighter futures.

Inspiring communication, empowering independence, achieving brighter futures.

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