

Multilingualism: English Language Learners Policy

2024-25

Date last reviewed | June 2024

Review period | Annually

Lead Reviewer | Director of Inclusion (Primary) & ELL Coordinators



***“Empowering today,
for a limitless tomorrow.”***



**Limitless
Learning**



**Limitless
Solutions**



**Limitless
Possibilities**

Introduction

GEMS acknowledges the vibrant cultural and linguistic diversity of its student body as a fundamental characteristic of its educational network in the UAE. This policy stands on the foundational principles of Quality First Teaching and Inclusive Education, aiming to address the distinct needs of each learner to foster a truly inclusive academic setting and reflects GEMS's ethos for English as an Additional Language (EAL):

"To ensure all students feel comfortable and supported, providing them with equal opportunities to learn through language and reach their full potential."

Teaching and learning is planned so that each child can aspire to the highest level of personal achievement and we believe all students, no matter their starting point and initial barriers to learning, can go on to achieve high performance.

At GEMS Wellington Academy Al Khail we believe that fostering an inclusive environment is not just the responsibility of the Inclusion department but a shared commitment of the entire school community. Our teachers, staff, and parents actively contribute to creating an inclusive atmosphere that values and respects the language and cultural diversity of our students.

Through all stages of English language provision, together, we strive to create an inclusive educational environment that celebrates diversity and empowers all learners to become confident, knowledgeable, and globally minded individuals.

Aims & Objectives



- To enable students who are ELL to have full access to the curriculum (and other educational opportunities), ensuring that they fulfil their academic potential
- To ensure that our ELL students attain curriculum levels and public examination grades appropriate to their abilities
- To create awareness among staff, students and parents about students receiving learning support, the nature of learning differences and how they can best be supported within an inclusive community, including providing students with the opportunities to study in their home language.
- To provide clarity to teachers, parents and students on Multilingualism.
- To provide information to staff on ELL, the process of ELL student identification and the ELL referral procedures
- To increase the level of communication and consistency between the ELL department, classroom teachers, form tutors and Key Stage Leaders.
- To help new teachers/students/parents adjust to ELL practices
- To ensure that we recognise and meet the needs of pupils who require ELL support

Definitions

The KHDA (Knowledge and Human Development Authority) Inspection Framework defines EAL students as 'students for whom the language of instruction is an additional language.' In the UAE, we have an increasing proportion of students whose home language is not English. These students have a range of English language proficiency and not all EAL students require ELL provision.

ELL – An English Language Learner (ELL) student at GEMS Wellington Academy Al Khail refers to an individual whose primary or dominant language is not English and who requires support to develop proficiency in English for academic purposes. ELL students typically have varying levels of English language proficiency and may face challenges in accessing the curriculum and with participating fully in educational activities conducted in English.

A student would be classified as an ELL student if they have *one or more of the following characteristics*:

- They are in the process of acquiring proficiency in the English language, whilst also developing their content knowledge and academic skills.
- They are non-native English speakers who may have varying levels of proficiency in English, ranging from beginner to advanced.
- They are a student who struggles in accessing the curriculum due to language barriers
- They are students with limited vocabulary, grammar, and language skills, which impacts their communication, comprehension, reading, writing, listening, and speaking abilities in an academic setting.

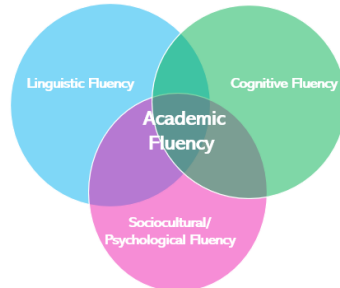
EAL – English as an Additional Language (those who speak English as an additional language). These students do not require any additional support and make progress through personalised learning and high quality first teaching.

Fundamental Principles of EAL Provision



At GEMS we believe that there are three dimensions which need to work together to achieve academic English fluency: Linguistic fluency, Cognitive fluency and Sociocultural/ Psychological fluency.

These dimensions were first identified by Kern in 2003, who argued that all three must be addressed by schools for EAL students to reach their true potential.



To help our students achieve **Linguistic fluency**, we need to help them understand

- how language functions (grammar rules, intonation, parts of words parts)
- where and when to use certain genres and forms of writing
- how to organise and structure different text types (discourse markers etc)
- academic vocabulary, including words that are used across subject areas, for example: analyse, explain.

To help our students achieve **Cognitive fluency**, we need to teach them

- critical thinking skills
- higher order thinking skills
- how to identify fact from opinion
- how to read texts critically
- how to write and speak persuasively using evidence
- to think about their own language acquisition
- how to evaluate /monitor their own learning.

To help our students achieve **Sociocultural/Psychological fluency** we need to expose students to

- “Social and cultural norms, values, beliefs, attitudes, motivations, interests, behaviours, practices, and habits” (Scarcella 2003); and
- “The particular conventions and norms that characterise the people who use it” (Scarcella, 2003);

Gee (1996, 2002) points out that students learn these conventions by “participating in specific ways of being and acting in academic contexts.” **Socio-cultural/psychological fluency is learnt through communicating in classrooms and cannot be taught explicitly.** This is why **we strive to keep EAL learners in the mainstream as much as possible.**

Identification of ELL Students

During the admission process, the following *may* indicate a student needs some level of English language support:

- EAL/ELL is indicated on the admissions form.
- The student is currently attending a school in a non-English speaking country.



- The student is currently attending a school where English is not the medium of instruction.
- The student demonstrates low levels of English proficiency or literacy based on reports.
- The data from the admissions test (CAT4) or Language Screener or the information in the admissions file indicates that the student is operating at a significantly lower level than the expected year group in Literacy.

For any of the above, the Admissions team will refer the student to the Inclusion Department / ELL Coordinator for any further assessment and recommendations.

Primary Admission

Language Screener: The admissions team will assess the student's level of English proficiency if the student has scored **less than 85 on the Cat 4**.

Comprehensive Understanding: This language screener will provide a comprehensive understanding of the student's language needs and concerns. It will help identify the level of support required for the student's English language development.

Process for Year 3 / Year 4 and above Prior to Offer			
	Less than 85	85 +	Who
Stage 1	Language screener online	No assessment	Online
Stage 2	Short conversation assessment + Short piece of writing (5 mins)		Head of EAL / SEN

For lower primary and Early Years, the procedure is as follows:

Process for Lower Primary Once they have been offered a place			
F2F / Online Meeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Test Letters & Sounds • Decoding • Talk about picture/ colours etc 	Assessment Booklet	ELL Coordinators/Director of Inclusion Primary/Heads of Phase
Stay and Play (if needed)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Test Letters & Sounds • Decoding • Talk about picture/ colours etc 	Assessment Booklet	

Level of Proficiency

At GEMS Wellington Academy Al Khail we use the **BELLS Foundation** to check the language proficiency of our students.

A- Level 3+	New to English	May use first language for learning and other purposes. May remain silent in the classroom. May be copying/repeating some words or phrases. May understand some everyday English expressions but may have minimal or no literacy in English. Needs considerable amount of EAL support.
B- Level 3	Early Acquisition	May follow day-to-day social communication in English and participate in learning activities with support. Beginning to use spoken English for social purposes. May understand simple instructions and can follow narrative/accounts with visual support. May have developed some skills in reading and writing. May have become familiar with some subject-specific vocabulary. Still needs a significant amount of EAL support to access the curriculum.
C- Level 2	Developing Competency	May participate in learning activities with increasing independence. Able to express self orally in English but structural inaccuracies are still apparent. Literacy will require ongoing support, particularly for understanding text and writing. May be able to follow abstract concepts and more complex written English. Requires ongoing EAL support to access the curriculum fully.
D- Level 1	Competent	Oral English will be developing well, enabling successful engagement in activities across the curriculum. Can read and understand a wide variety of texts. Written English may lack complexity and contain occasional evidence of errors in structure. Needs some support to access subtle nuances of meaning, to refine English usage, and to develop abstract vocabulary. Needs some/occasional EAL support to access complex curriculum material and tasks.
E-Level 0	Fluent	Can operate across the curriculum to a level of competence equivalent to that of a pupil who uses English as his/her first language. Operates without EAL support across the curriculum.

ELL Support

All teachers are teachers of English Language Learners and as such they continue to remain responsible for the teaching and learning for their students. Teachers and assistants deliver a differentiated curriculum that meets these learners' language needs.

All teachers are responsible for identifying students who are experiencing challenges with learning, and in collaboration with the Inclusion team, will ensure that those students requiring different or additional support are identified at an early stage (when they have not been identified through our admission process).

It is important that all data is correctly captured for these students and routinely updated to track progress.

Students can be referred to the Director of Inclusion or ELL Coordinator on entry or at any point during their education. In line with our SEN graduated approach, we recognise that there is a **continuum** of ELL needs. Students identified as ELL through the language screener or referral are assigned to one of three tiers of support.

Language Support Interventions

Students will be placed on a continuum following assessment (example below) and will receive a band level.



LISTENING (page 1 of 2)

	Fluent	Competent	Developing Competence	Early Acquisition	New to English
	Band E: Showing little or no disadvantage to English-speaking peers	Band D: Applying listening skills over an increasing range of contexts and functions	Band C: Developing more independence in the use of basic listening skills needed to engage with learning	Band B: Demonstrating an emerging ability to respond verbally in interactions with others	Band A: Engaging in highly-scaffolded listening activities, learning basic classroom language and linking sounds to actions and meanings
Early Development	E1. Can meet the language demands of group activities and class discussions without support for EAL	D1. Can understand an unfamiliar speaker on a familiar topic	C1. Can follow oral instructions and compare with visual or non-verbal models (e.g. Draw a circle under the line)	B1. Can understand everyday expressions aimed at the satisfaction of simple needs of a concrete type, delivered directly to him/her in clear, slow and repeated speech by a sympathetic speaker	A1. Can understand single words or short phrases in familiar contexts
	E2. Can select key information for a purpose, rejecting irrelevant and unimportant information	D2. Can understand most spoken and audio-visual texts, and can identify specific information if questions are given beforehand	C2. Is acquiring topic/subject-specific vocabulary	B2. Can respond to simply phrased factual questions (e.g. 'Which things use electricity')	A2. Can follow and identify objects, images, figures and people from oral statements or questions with contextual support (e.g. 'Which one is a rock?')
	E3. Can draw on a range of discourse markers (e.g. expressions like right; okay; anyway; as I said) to help make meaning	D3. Can participate confidently in shared texts, such as songs and poetry	C3. Can get the gist of unfamiliar English in predictable social and learning situations (e.g. language of playground games, common phrases used by the teacher 'do your best'; 'check your work')	B3. Can attend for short periods to simple stories and songs with visual scaffolds	A3. Can copy/repeat some words and/or phrases with teacher/peer modelling in curriculum activities

Assessment Accommodations

- Official exam accommodations allow for **bilingual dictionaries**, word to word only (not a dictionary with any definitions)
- **25% additional time/ separate room** (if it helps reduce anxiety)

Mainstream Provision

At GEMS, we believe that every teacher is a language teacher. We recognise and incorporate the multitude of languages that our learners bring, considering them essential to cultural identity and cognitive growth.

Responding to the individual needs of the pupil is vital, but listed below are a list of broad classroom strategies for effective differentiation and adaption for ELL students

Classroom organisation

- Pair with first language buddies to support understanding, and sit the EAL learner next to other learners who are supportive language role models (groups of three tend to work well; sit the learner with a pair who have been briefed to include and support them)
- Give the learner a role in group work e.g. timekeeper, tally recorder

Ongoing differentiation

- **Speak clearly and slowly.** If an idiomatic expression is used, expand the utterance to include a 'plain English' equivalent ('It's raining hard,' not 'It's bucketing down')
- Keep **instructions clear and simple** with repeated instructional phrases/words e.g. put down, line up, first, next, then...
- Regularly reinforce simple language expressions by providing the learners with **written or oral models of the language you want them to produce**
- To make meaning clear, use your **facial expression, tone of your voice, your body** (gestures, quick mimes)
- Always **point to the key word** or picture you are referring to
- Use collaborative activities to encourage exploratory talk and thinking between students.
- Activities that may help scaffold talk could be **sorting/matching/spotting/sequencing activities**, or use of graphic organisers
- Have **question words (on cards)** to hand to support questioning and related activities
- Keep providing **opportunities to speak** and respond to questions even if the learner is still 'shy' about talking
- Scaffold speech using **substitution tables**
- Have a mini- whiteboard or notebook to hand for quick drawings, to create on-the-spot visuals, choices or to reinforce key words
- Use sequencing activities to support the retelling of stories and recounting a sequence of events.



- Use **visual support** such as props, objects, and pictures (easily and quickly produced with software such as Widgeit)
- Use visual **word mats** (create your own with software such as Widgeit)
- Print slides with visuals from your whole class teaching screen so the learner can stick them in their book
- Provide a **bilingual dictionary** – preferably age-appropriate and pictorial depending on the learner’s literacy level in their first language
- **Have high expectations** of your EAL learners and know that EAL is not a barrier to learning; it is in fact an advantage as EAL learners have other strengths and abilities - you just need to find out what they are. Describing someone as EAL should not be their defining characteristic
- Building teacher confidence and experience in catering for ELLs in the classroom is key. As such, GEMS has developed a **CPD (Continuous Professional Development)** menu for English Language Learner provision in the classroom.

Responsibilities

The Head of EAL for GEMS and the wider Children’s Services Team is responsible for the GEMS ELL provision and strategic development of this policy. The Head of EAL supports all schools in delivering the best possible provision and outcomes for English Language Learners.

At GEMS Wellington Academy Al Khail our Director of Inclusion (Primary) and Head of English (Secondary) has responsibility for the ELL provision within the school. This involves working with the Principal, Senior Leadership Team, Heads of Year and specific subject ELL nominated members to determine the strategic implementation of this policy.

Responsibilities

- ELL students are identified using the agreed criteria
- The ELL Register is accurate and updated at least termly
- The classroom provision for students with ELL is well planned and effective
- ILPs are in place to support and monitor student progress and enable teachers to implement strategies to help students access the curriculum
- ILPs are regularly reviewed and amended to reflect progress
- The impact of provision is monitored and evaluated through learning walks
- Parents and students are kept fully informed of progress and planned provision
- The records of ELL students are accurate, updated and in line with policy
- Professional development is made available to staff to support ELL students in the mainstream
- The SEF (Self Evaluation Framework) reflects accurately the strengths and areas for development of ELL students.
- All key stages have appropriate provision for supporting ELLs within their lesson planning and delivery.
- Individual teachers have access to key information regarding ELLs and plan differentiated experiences accordingly

Monitoring Arrangements

This ELL Policy will be reviewed annually by the Director of Inclusion (Primary) and the ELL Coordinators. At every review, the policy will be approved by Mr David Irish, SVP of Children’s Services and Dr. Saima Rana, CEO Education.