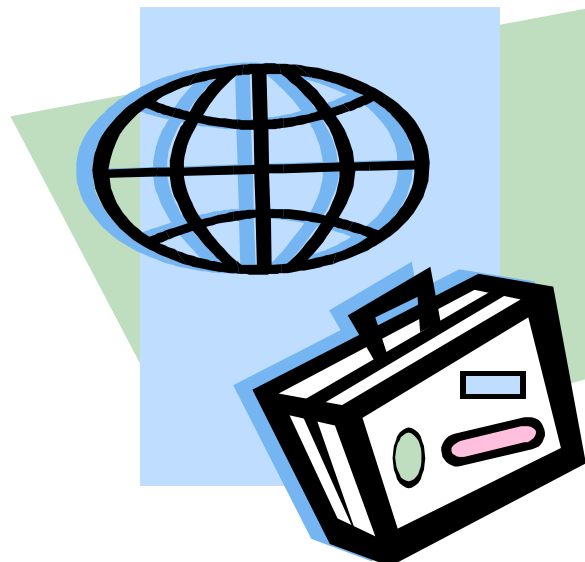


EAL AT S.J.H.S.

Information for Parents





English is the medium of communication and learning at the SJHS. The EAL department is here to support children in learning English as an additional language (EAL). When children come to the school their English language support needs are assessed and, if support is necessary, they are placed in the appropriate group.

Questions you may have:

- ✓ How is my child assessed for EAL when they join the school?

We carry out an assessment of each child to see how much English they know. At first a child may be reluctant to talk, so we observe them over a period of time to assess what they know. To measure progress we use the National Curriculum levels for speaking, listening, reading and writing for younger children and the Council of Europe Framework for language acquisition in the upper school.

- ✓ How much support will my child receive?

The number of periods a child receives depends on the level of English. First Stage learners (beginners) receive at least 10 periods of support each week and Second stage learners receive 5 periods. In the upper school, this may vary according to the subjects from which they are withdrawn.

- ✓ How long will the support last?

This depends on the progress the child makes. We carry out regular assessments during the year to find out whether a child is ready to join the mainstream curriculum. Each child's English will develop at a different rate, so we assess individual children rather than an EAL group.

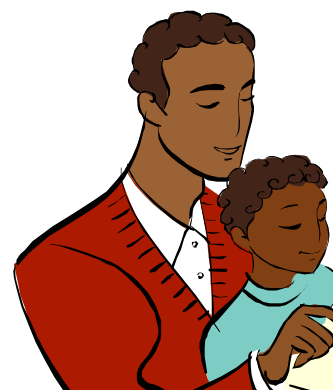
- ✓ When will I receive reports about my child's progress?

EAL reports are given to parents at the same time as other reports. Parent/teacher meetings can be arranged with EAL teachers at the same time as you meet your child's other teachers. However, you can contact the school to make an appointment to see us to talk about your child's progress at any other time. We are happy to meet with you to talk about any concerns you have – you do not have to wait for a parents' evening!



How you can help your child:

- Try to provide opportunities for your child to use English. Invite an English speaking friend to play, watch an English DVD or look at one of the English websites we recommend.
- After school clubs are a great way to learn English in an informal way
- Try to make friends with English speakers yourself, so you can learn English in a social context.
- The school DVD/Video/Audio cassette club, which is run by the Friends is a good source of films and tapes for English practice.
- Don't put pressure on your child to speak English with you. Maintaining your home language is important – research shows that good development of your home language helps you to learn a second language successfully.
- Encourage your child to go on reading in your home language if they can.
- Don't compare your child to others – everyone learns English at a different rate.
- Don't try to correct your child's English directly. Making mistakes is natural and if they are corrected, they might not want to speak. If you can, you might rephrase what they say e.g. 'I goed to school'- respond with: 'Oh yes, you went to school'.
- Ask your child to talk about the subjects they are learning in school in your home language. This develops their vocabulary.
- Lower school children will bring home reading books. Check that they understand what they are reading by asking questions – either in English or in your home language. It is useful for the teacher if you can write a comment in their reading diary.
- If you want to help your child learn the alphabet, teach them the letter sounds as well as the letter names.
- Consider visiting an English speaking country for a holiday- or a language course.
- Ask us for other ideas for how to help!





What the research tells us.

Knowing two languages gives children many advantages, but learning a new **language takes time. At first, a child may just want to listen in class and not talk. This 'silent period'** is natural during the first stages of learning a new language. Children need the time to process input without anxiety. They should, however, be encouraged to speak and write when they are more confident, as 'comprehensible output' is needed for language to be acquired.

EAL learners generally develop **conversational fluency** within a year or two. This involves use of high frequency words and simple grammatical constructions.

Discrete language skills (e.g. knowledge of the letters of the alphabet, the ability to decode written words into appropriate sounds, conventions about spelling and punctuation) can be acquired at a relatively early stage in an EAL student's language learning **but** they do not generalise to academic language proficiency.

Academic Language Proficiency is the ability to understand and produce increasingly complex oral and written language. Learning this academic English is the key to success at school. Research has repeatedly shown that EAL students usually require *at least* 5 years of exposure to academic English to catch up to native-speaker norms. Extensive reading of text is crucial for the expansion of vocabulary and the development of academic language proficiency. That is why we are always telling our pupils to read!

Maintaining home language is important. Bilingualism is educationally enriching and has a positive effect on academic performance.

Speaking and listening

Pupils learning English as an additional language:

- need to listen and tune into English being used in context
- may be silent for a time –





this does not mean they are not learning!

- need lots of opportunities to talk.

Reading and writing

- Pupils who are literate (can read and write) in their first language will make rapid progress – even if their language has a different script
- Pupils who are not literate in their first language will be learning to read and write in English as they are learning to speak.

Using a dictionary

A bilingual dictionary (especially an electronic one) can be useful when you start to learn English. However, translating every word slows you down. Once a child has passed the 'beginner' stage, an English dictionary can be used to check definitions and spellings.



Useful resources

Here are some websites with games and activities to teach children English:

<http://www.britishcouncil.org/kids.htm>

http://www.bbc.co.uk/schools/websites/4_11/

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/schools/ks2bitesize/index.shtml>

<http://a4esl.org/>

<http://www.woodlands-junior.kent.sch.uk/interactive/literacy.html#7>

<http://www.marks-english-school.com/games.html>

<http://www.world-english.org/>

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/learningenglish/>

<http://www.englishclub.com/learn-english.htm>



Here are some bookshops in Milan where you can buy English books. You can also order them from web bookstores such as www.amazon.co.uk or www.bookdepository.co.uk

You can subscribe to English comics at www.dcthomson.co.uk

American Bookstore

16 Via Manfredo Camperio
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Hoepli

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