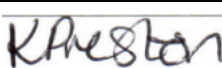




Policy/Procedure Name:	ENGLISH AS AN ADDITIONAL LANGUAGE (EAL) POLICY		
Last Update:	July 2025	Next Update Due:	July 2028

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Signature of Authorised Individual	
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Purpose

At Willow Park, we recognise that some of our pupils are growing up in homes where English is not the primary language spoken. While these pupils may not yet use spoken language themselves, their exposure to multiple languages is an important part of their identity and development. This policy outlines how we support pupils with English as an Additional Language (EAL) in a way that is meaningful, accessible, and developmentally appropriate for learners with complex needs.

Our Context

- All pupils at Willow Park have significant special educational needs, including autism, profound and multiple learning difficulties (PMLD), and/or complex communication needs.
- Some pupils are non-verbal and do not yet use spoken language in any language.
- A small number of pupils live in homes where English is not the primary language spoken by parents or carers.
- Our curriculum is pre-formal or informal, with a strong emphasis on sensory engagement, communication, and emotional regulation.

Key Principles

1. **Language is more than words:** We recognise all forms of communication — including gesture, vocalisation, AAC, and sensory expression — as valid and valuable.
2. **Multilingualism is an asset:** Exposure to more than one language is not a barrier to learning. It is part of a child's identity and should be celebrated.
3. **Language development is holistic:** We support communication through a total communication approach, not through formal language instruction.
4. **Home language matters:** We value the home language(s) of our pupils and work with families to understand and support their communication preferences.



Aims

- To ensure that pupils with EAL are fully included in all aspects of school life.
- To support the development of communication in all its forms, including AAC, gesture, and vocalisation.
- To work in partnership with families to understand each child's language environment and preferences.
- To celebrate linguistic and cultural diversity across the school.

Practice at Willow Park

Assessment and Planning

- We do not assess pupils' English proficiency using standardised EAL frameworks.
- Instead, we assess communication using tools such as SCERTS, the Engagement Model, and the Willow Park Roadmap.
- We gather information from families about the languages spoken at home and how the child responds to them.

Communication Support

- All pupils have a personalised communication plan.
- We use AAC systems (e.g. Makaton, communication boards) that reflect the child's needs and, where appropriate, include home language vocabulary.
- We model language (spoken and signed) consistently and responsively.

Family Engagement

- We work closely with families to understand their child's communication at home.
- We encourage families to continue using their home language(s) with their child, as this supports emotional connection and identity.
- We provide translated materials or visual supports where needed to support family understanding and involvement.

Celebrating Multilingualism

- We include cultural and linguistic diversity in our curriculum themes, celebrations, and displays.
- We use books, music, and sensory experiences from a range of cultures and languages.
- We celebrate all forms of communication, including non-verbal and multilingual expression.



Research-Informed Approach

This policy is informed by:

- The Bell Foundation's guidance on EAL and SEND, which emphasises the importance of **differentiated, communication-focused support** for pupils with complex needs.
- The work of Sean Pert and the RCSLT, which highlights that **bilingualism does not cause or worsen communication difficulties**, and that **home language use should be encouraged**.
- The SCERTS framework and Engagement Model, which prioritise **emotional regulation, social communication, and transactional support** over formal language acquisition.

Equality Statement

At Willow Park School, we actively seek to encourage equity and equality through our teaching and our employment practices. As such, we seek to advance the equality of opportunity between people who share any of the following characteristics:

- age
- disability
- gender reassignment
- being married or in a civil partnership
- being pregnant or on maternity leave
- race including colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin
- religion or belief
- sex
- sexual orientation

The use of stereotypes under any of the above headings will always be challenged.

Inclusion

Our school is an inclusive school. We aim to make all pupils feel included in all our activities. We try to make all our teaching fully inclusive. We recognise the entitlement of all pupils to a balanced, broadly-based curriculum. We have systems in place for early identification of barriers to their learning and participation so that they can engage in school activities with all other pupils. We acknowledge the need for high expectations for and of all children.