

GUIDANCE: when trying to distinguish between EAL and SEN consider the following:

Some pupils may not be well supported through *Quality First Teaching* in the classroom and therefore do not fulfil their potential. All teachers need training on how to make their input comprehensible to EAL pupils. As with the whole school population – there is a corresponding % of EAL pupils who have additional needs

EAL is a language barrier *not a learning difficulty* so our first thought should ALWAYS be that a pupil is probably not progressing quickly because they are learning EAL rather than any learning difficulty.

Emotional and Behavioural difficulties might arise because of:

- the experiences the students have been through
- the anxiety caused by being in new surroundings away from home
- frustration at not being able to express ability/needs/personality due to EAL
- some cultural differences (for example: rough play seen as acceptable or respectful traits such as lack of eye contact)

Generally speaking, children learning an additional language can become conversationally fluent in the new language in 1-2 years (BICS- Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills) but it may take 5-7 years or longer to catch up with monolingual peers in the development of CALP – the Cognitive Academic Language needed to succeed academically (Cummins 2002)

There may be cause for concern if the pupil exhibits ongoing difficulties below- consider the checklists on pg2/3, consider the flowchart and if you are concerned complete the Filter Questions on the HLA.

- Lack of response
- Problem with listening
- Lack of oral expression
- Progress concerns
- Slow reading progress
- Writing difficulties
- Behavioural, emotional or social difficulties

EAL OR SEN?

When a pupil shows a lack of response:	
Has hearing been checked?	
Has the student only been learning English for a short time (less than 6 months) and may be going through the “Silent Period”?	
Does the student use non-verbal communication (body language / physical actions) as a response?	
Is the teacher using language that is not appropriate for the student’s stage of development in English?	

When a pupil is struggling with listening	
Has hearing been checked?	
Is the teacher using language that is not appropriate for the student’s stage of development in English?	
Is the content of the lesson / discussion building on their prior knowledge or within their experience? Some content might not be culturally familiar to the student (eg. Pancake Day / Lent / Poppy Day)	
Does the student listen well in his/her First Language?	

When a pupil shows a lack of oral expression	
Is it too early to expect this? Has the student only had a limited exposure to English (less than 2 years)?	
Is the classroom a “safe” place? Is the pupil feeling ill at ease there?	
Are the pupil’s errors those expected by EAL learners? Are the pupil’s errors influenced by their home language structures (eg. word order / use of determiners)?	
Is the pupil able to use their HL for a range of language functions and skills appropriate to their age?	

When a student shows a problem progressing	
Are explanations and instructions easy to understand? Does the teacher take account of the pupil’s stage of development in English when explaining a task?	
Does the pupil understand the task when it is free from language or is provided with visual clues?	
Can the pupil understand tasks when explained in home language?	
Is the task built on the pupil’s prior knowledge? Has the pupil experienced the stages of learning leading up to the task?	

When a pupil shows slow reading progress	
Does the pupil lack sufficient English vocabulary to make reading meaningful?	
Has the pupil got reading practice support at home?	
Has the pupil had sufficient time to progress through and assimilate the stages of learning to read?	
Do the books used have idiomatic language, or culturally unfamiliar content that would cause difficulty to the student?	

EAL OR SEN?

When a pupil has difficulty writing	
Does the pupil lack sufficient English vocabulary to make writing meaningful?	
Is the pupil familiar with English script, do they use a completely different script in HL? Does the student's script have a different orientation (left / right)?	
Can the pupil express ideas orally or sequence events pictorially?	
Are the pupil's errors to do with word order and influenced by his / her First Language structures?	
Do the pupil's spelling mistakes show awareness of English spelling patterns?	

When a pupil shows behavioural, emotional or social difficulties	
Is the pupil confused with a new culture or grieving for the loss of their own culture (culture shock)	
Is the student a refugee /asylum seeker and has experienced recent stress or trauma because of war, family separation and / or bereavement?	
How much previous experience of formal schooling has the pupil had?	
Has the pupil's experience of schooling been significantly different (group work, interaction and collaboration with others, class size, expectations, curriculum)?	
Is lack of English skills causing frustration?	
Is the pupil anxious because of pressure to respond orally?	
Are tasks appropriate for the pupil's previous experience, cultural or religious beliefs (for example: changing for PE.)?	
Is the pupil anxious because of racist attitudes, comments or isolation?	