

# Language development and school achievement

Opportunities and challenges in the education of EAL students

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## Foreword – Anglia Ruskin University

Understanding the challenges and opportunities for pupils, their schools and families when English is an additional language is of increasing local and global importance. This carefully constructed and implemented study provides a solid evidence basis for practical recommendations that will support pupils, their families and schools in achieving the best possible educational outcomes. At a time when the proportion of students whose first language is not English is increasing, it is important for these students that approaches that maximise educational attainment are implemented as our future skilled workforce will be increasingly reliant on this cohort of students. Of particular importance is the emphasis on recognising the multiple facets that the English as an Additional Language 'flag' contains. The East of England environment in which this research was carried out reflects a very wide range of communities and environments and as such the results are likely to be applicable to other locations. Although in many ways it should be self-evident that a holistic approach to supporting EAL pupils would result in the best outcomes, the report highlights that this is not always achieved. The recommendations emphasise the absolute centrality of this holistic approach in ensuring that pupils are given the best opportunities to reach their full potential. I would like to congratulate the report's authors and thank the Bell Foundation for their support of this work.

**Iain Martin**

Vice Chancellor Anglia Ruskin University.

## Foreword – University of Cambridge

English was my third language. I grew up in Cardiff, the son of Polish immigrants who settled in Wales in 1947, and so I did not learn English until I was five years old. This was not an uncommon experience for the children of immigrant families growing up in Britain in the post-War years.

Increased mobility across international borders, and the evermore frequent displacement of families as a result of local crises, has led to a growing number of children in the UK for whom English is an Additional Language (EAL) – the figure has doubled in the past decade. This raises crucial questions about these children’s language development, about their broader academic attainment, and about their capacity to integrate. Such questions are especially acute in the East of England, a region of conspicuous disparities in wealth, opportunity and aspiration.

This study, commissioned by The Bell Foundation, and carried out by the University of Cambridge’s Faculty of Education in collaboration with Anglia Ruskin University’s Faculty of Health, Social Care and Education, is as important as it is timely. It suggests that the label of EAL may not, in itself, be an accurate indicator of a child’s proficiency in English. It suggests that factors including family income, home environment or length of time in the UK are likely to be just as important for EAL children’s educational achievement. It also emphasises that the factors associated with risk of low attainment are similar for EAL pupils as for their non-EAL peers, particularly in economically deprived communities.

Using a mix of quantitative and qualitative studies, the report underlines the need for a holistic approach to EAL children’s experience, involving parents as well as schools. It calls for evidence-based approaches to the teaching of EAL students, for greater consistency in the assessment of their progression, and for a review of testing that may put them at a disadvantage.

The first step towards better policies, in education as in all other areas, is gathering the evidence. This study makes a meaningful contribution to the development of strategies that may transform EAL children’s ability to learn, to integrate and to achieve. It is a most welcome addition to the scholarship and the public debate surrounding a key issue.

**Leszek Borysiewicz**

Vice Chancellor – University of Cambridge

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## Glossary

BICS	Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills
CALP	Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency
CLIL	Content and Language Integrated Learning
CPD	Continuing Professional Development
DfE	Department for Education
EAL	English as an Additional Language
ELG	Early Learning Goals
EMAG	Ethnic Minority Achievement Grant
ESOL	English for Speakers of Other Languages
EYFS	Early Years Foundation Stage
FSM	Free School Meals
ITE	Initial Teacher Education
KS4	Key Stage 4
L1	First Language
LA	Local Authority
MFL	Modern Foreign Languages
NALDIC	National Association for Language Development in the Curriculum
Ofsted	Office for Standards in Education
PTA	Parent-Teacher Association
SEN	Special Educational Needs
SLT	Senior Leadership Team

## Introduction

This research is published at a time of significant change in England and globally. At an international level, population movements mean that a greater number of children and families are relocating and being educated in another education system and language, including in the UK. Secondly, the number of children with English as an additional language in the UK continues to rise and over the last ten years has doubled.

At a national level, reforms to the education system in England will mean changes to initial teacher training, to school governance and leadership, and a continuation of the self-improving autonomous school-led system.

This research, commissioned by The Bell Foundation, aims to explore the link between language development, academic achievement and social integration in the context of EAL; in particular, EAL students and parents/carers who have arrived recently in the East of England.

Crude headlines, which assert either that children with English as an additional language outperform leaving other children behind, or conversely that they are a drain on scarce school resources miss the point. The picture is mixed, complex and nuanced, as research commissioned by The Bell Foundation and others has shown. Firstly, the EAL flag is a poor indicator, as it gives no indication of a child's proficiency in English. It is welcome that this will be addressed in the future by the Department for Education (DfE) and that schools in England will be required to test and collect information about proficiency levels in English. Secondly, many factors affect how well a child will achieve. These include where they live, levels of economic disadvantage, prior education, home environment, home language, proficiency in English, special educational need, and length of time in the UK. Professor Steve Strand's research identifies that at the end of reception (age 5) only 44% of EAL pupils are recorded as having achieved a good level of development compared to 54% of non-EAL pupils. However, by age 16, this gap has narrowed significantly with 58.3% of EAL pupils achieving five A\*-C GCSEs compared to 60.9% of non-EAL pupils. Yet these average attainment figures mask a huge range of outcomes for different EAL pupils. Many of the factors associated with risk of low achievement are the same for EAL pupils as their non-EAL peers. These include (roughly in order of impact): having an identified Special Educational Need (SEN); being entitled to a Free School Meal (FSM); living in an economically deprived neighbourhood; attending school outside London; and being summer born (and therefore young for their year-group).

In addition, EAL pupils are significantly more likely to underachieve compared to their non-EAL peers if the following factors apply to them:

- i. Entry to England from abroad during a Key Stage at school: On average, such EAL pupils were 12 months behind their non-EAL peers.
- ii. Changing school during a Key Stage at school: On average, EAL pupils who joined their primary school in Years 5/6 had significantly lower achievement than those who joined in Years 3/4.
- iii. Being from particular ethnic groups: EAL pupils in the ethnic groups of White Other, Black African and Pakistani have markedly lower outcomes than their non-EAL peers. Speakers of Somali, Lingala and Lithuanian have especially low outcomes at aged 16 (See Strand et al., 2015).

The following four hypothetical examples paint a picture of how complex and different the situations of and outcomes for children with EAL can be.

*Marie-Ange is the daughter of a French banker. She attends an outstanding school in London, has been well educated in France and enjoys a wide range of extra-curricular activities. She attends additional English language lessons at the weekends and has a high degree of fluency in English.*

*Lukas is the son of Lithuanian parents, both of whom are working in the UK. His parents work in agricultural labour doing shifts and are rarely able to attend school, help with homework or support his language acquisition – indeed Lukas often translates for them. His prior education in Lithuania has covered some of the material needed for GCSEs but he has limited English academic vocabulary needed for the exams. He attends a coastal school in East Anglia which is underperforming.*

*Sahra is a Somali refugee who has fled war and persecution and is recovering from trauma. She has had limited education and has limited literacy in her mother tongue. She has had no exposure to English and is struggling to understand lessons and to fit in and be accepted in her new environment. The school ethos is welcoming but she attends school in a poorly performing area of Yorks/Humberside where achievement is low for all children.*

*Juris is from Estonia, and he and his family have moved to England at the beginning of his secondary school. He attends a school in an urban area which has had many years of experience of supporting EAL learners to achieve. His parents have high aspirations for Juris and his sister and support them with their homework. He is doing well in Maths and Modern Foreign Languages but he still needs significant support to achieve the level of English proficiency required to achieve his potential in exams.*

The Bell Foundation commissioned this study as part of a five-year programme of research and interventions on children with English as an additional language. It follows on from the first report: *School approaches to the education of EAL students: Language development, social integration and achievement*. The report looks at the triangle of factors which affect students with English as an additional language, and confirms the need for a holistic and systematic approach to the support of EAL pupils. It makes a series of recommendations for policy and practice.

**Diana Sutton**

Director – The Bell Foundation



## Section 1: Focus of the study

The research project which forms the basis of this report comprises a two year longitudinal study conducted by members of the Faculty of Education, University of Cambridge, and the Faculty of Health, Social Care and Education at Anglia Ruskin University, Cambridge. The report follows on from the first report on *School approaches to the education of EAL students*, funded by The Bell Foundation (see Arnot, Schneider, Evans, Liu, Welply & Davies-Tutt, 2014) and provides further insights into the link between language development, academic achievement and social integration in the context of EAL; in particular, EAL students and parents/carers who have arrived recently in the East of England.

The research is based on a mixed-methods approach, which linked a number of quantitative and qualitative methods in order to understand the perceptions and positions of EAL students, parents of EAL students and school staff with regard to EAL opportunities and challenges. Certain aspects of the research had a longitudinal character, such as the tracking of EAL students' progression and language development over 12 months. Case study findings were further contextualised using a regional survey of schools.

Our study highlights that a multilingual and multicultural body of students offers not only challenges but also opportunities to schools, and shows that schools have developed a range of strategies in response to the challenges and opportunities. However, schools in recent years have had to do this in the context of fundamental changes in the way EAL funding has been structured in England. In 2011, the Ethnic Minority Achievement Grant (EMAG) was mainstreamed into the Direct Schools Grant with the result that services formerly provided by Local Authorities either closed down or became available on a chargeable basis for those schools that chose to use their funding to buy them.

Whilst the funding is now devolved to schools, who therefore have greater autonomy in how to spend their budgets, there is very limited accountability for the monies that exist within the system for EAL provision. Since 2013, the government has introduced an EAL factor into the local funding formulae in order to meet the needs of EAL children in the first three years of schooling in this country. For 2015-16 the minimum funding levels for each EAL student within the three year limit are £466 (primary schools) and £1,130 (secondary schools) (DfE, 2014e). Firstly, unlike pupil premium funding, there is no accountability mechanism in the system for this expenditure. Secondly, for some students, achieving a high level of academic proficiency within a language will require more than three years (see Cameron, 2003 on the under-achievement of 'advanced EAL learners' due to lack of appropriate competence in written English).

The educational context, therefore, is one in which there is a continuing risk of disparity in the quality of provision of support and training.

Several research reports published in the UK (Murphy, 2015; NALDIC, 2014; Strand et al., 2015; Tereshchenko & Archer, 2014) since the publication of our previous study have highlighted the continuing urgency of the need for a greater understanding of the implications of the increasing sociolinguistic diversification of the student population in this country. Such an understanding can no longer be regarded as sufficient without an integrated view of the variables of language development, academic achievement and social integration in the performance of EAL learners in school and of the role of school ↔ home communication. The current flow of refugees into and across Europe adds further urgency to this call for research-based evidence of effective educational policy and practice that draws on insights from the lived experiences of the newcomer children with little or no command of English on arrival, and additionally, on the experiences of those children who have lived in the UK for longer, but for whom achieving academic excellence in the English language is challenging.

The wide geographical spread of the East of England and the contrasting levels of experience and attainment levels in schools in different parts of the region, resulting from the recent expansion of families with first languages other than English, provide a powerful setting in which to research progression in the children's learning and the support provided by schools. The study at the centre of this report investigated how the educational progress of newly-arrived students with EAL is supported at secondary level, asking the following main questions:

1. What are the perceived and experienced connections between English language proficiency, academic achievement and social integration?
2. What strategies do teachers employ and what are the implications for their professional knowledge and pedagogy?
3. To what extent are parents of EAL students encouraged by schools to be involved in supporting their children's educational progress and how can this be improved?

This study builds on the conceptual framework of the triangle of mediating factors (language development, academic achievement and social integration) discussed in the earlier project. A survey was conducted in secondary schools across the Eastern region to provide information about the wider educational context. Case studies were later carried out in two secondary schools in different parts of the region. This extended research programme tracks the patterns of support, and student progression for a sample of recently-arrived EAL children with different backgrounds. Whilst the primary research was conducted in two schools over two years, the analysis also draws on evidence from the literature, the research team's extensive multi-disciplinary knowledge and the regional survey. The overall aim is to identify underlying influences on the development of their proficiency in the English language, their academic achievement, and their social integration into the school communities and to generate key recommendations to assist the development of school policy and practice.

## Section 2: EAL students in schools in the East of England: demographics, attainment and provision of support

### 2.1 Introduction

Three defining features of the East of England as an educational region in the UK are relevant to a review of the educational support provided to students with EAL:

- it is the second largest region in the country as defined by the DfE, consisting of the counties of Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire, Essex, Hertfordshire, Norfolk and Suffolk, with a total of 11 separate educational authorities including those for the urban centres of Bedford, Luton and Peterborough;
- the increase in the EAL student population is taking place in a region which has been historically predominantly monolingual and monocultural, compared with other regions in the UK such as the West Midlands and London;
- there is a sharp contrast between areas in which there are comparatively dense concentrations of EAL students and others with low numbers.

Within this regional setting, how effectively do schools address the needs of their EAL students and what do they identify as determining factors for effective provision of support? Before presenting the fine-grained analysis of evidence from our two case study schools, we provide a summary of relevant data relating to the region's provision. This section is divided into three parts: a summary of the region's school demographics; a summary of EAL student attainment data for the region; and findings from our regional school survey on EAL provision.

#### Regional population of EAL children

The term 'EAL' is imprecise, encompassing a wide range of different linguistic levels of ability, and its use is problematic if one is not careful about who precisely it is being used to denote. Current national data in the UK are based on annual statistical returns made by schools using the DfE's definition of EAL as 'a pupil whose first language is known or believed to be other than English'. As Strand et al. (2015, p.16) point out, one needs to be cautious in interpreting the official statistics generated on the basis of this definition. The qualification 'or believed to be' is an indirect recognition of the difficulty in confirming this information. 'First language' (L1) is further defined as 'the language in which the child was initially exposed during early development and continues to be exposed to this language in the home or in the community' (DfE, 2015a, p.7). As we note below, there are problems with this definition as the guidance to schools also asks them to include in this category pupils who speak English or are exposed to English as well as another language at home. At what level of proficiency in English does one stop being an EAL student? Clearly there are consequences for both schools and policy-makers. However, the figures still provide us with a broad indication of national and regional data relating to EAL population and academic performance.

Nationally, there are more than a million children aged 5-18 in UK schools for whom English is reported to be an additional language. NALDIC (2015a) points to DfE statistics showing that there are currently 1,061,010 EAL learners (5-16 year olds) in schools in England, 29,532 in Scotland, 10,357 in Northern Ireland and 31,132 in Wales. More than 360 languages are spoken by EAL students in addition to English. The population of EAL students has been progressively increasing during the last decade. Department for Education statistics (2015b) indicate that the percentage of EAL pupils in state funded primary schools was 19.4% in January 2015, showing an increase of 0.7 percentage points since January 2014. The percentage of EAL students in state funded secondary schools had also increased by 0.7 percentage points since January 2014 to 15.0% in January 2015.

The increase in the proportion of EAL students correlates with the increase in the number of pupils. The DfE (2015b) points out that the increase in pupil numbers is largely due to an increase in the number of children born to non-UK born women (compared to those born to UK-born women), rather than direct current immigration. The number of children born to non-UK born women more than doubled between 1999 and 2010. The percentage of live births in England and Wales to non-UK born mothers has been rising every year, from 14.3% in 1999 to 25.1% in 2010, the year in which most children currently beginning their primary schooling were born (Office for National Statistics, 2010, 2011).

In the East of England there has been a similar trend in the profile of the population of school children. School census data for January 2015 show that in the region there were 54,724 pupils in state funded primary schools who speak a language other than English as their first language, 37,713 in state funded secondary schools and 1,038 in special schools (DfE, 2015a)<sup>1</sup>. However, though the EAL population has increased in the last decade, the percentage of children with English as an additional language in schools in the East of England is still lower than the percentage for England as a whole. 13.9 % of state funded primary school pupils in the East of England have English as an additional language compared with 19.4% in England, 10.2% in state funded secondary schools in the East of England compared with 15% in England and 10.6% in special schools in the East of England compared with 13.9% in England (DfE, 2015a). However, as Table 1 shows, there is a sharp contrast between the Luton and Peterborough local authorities with the highest percentage of children with English as an additional language and those of Essex, Norfolk and Suffolk with the lowest proportions.

<sup>1</sup> The DfE recognises that the statistics are based on census returns from schools in which first language other than English spoken by pupils is not an indication of whether or not they are also proficient in English.

Table 1: Percentage of primary and secondary pupils with English as an additional language in schools in the East of England by local authority. (Drawn from DfE, 2015a): SFR16/2015)

	Primary	Secondary
<b>East of England</b>	<b>13.9</b>	<b>10.2</b>
Bedford	29.0	19.9
Central Bedfordshire	5.9	3.2
Cambridgeshire	12.7	9.0
Essex	6.6	4.9
Hertfordshire	15.0	11.1
Luton	52.4	48.0
Norfolk	9.2	5.9
Peterborough	38.4	29.3
Southend-on-Sea	13.3	12.7
Suffolk	8.0	5.6
Thurrock	16.5	10.3

### The most common home languages spoken by EAL students nationally and in the East of England region

From January 2007, schools were asked to record every student's native language into a coding system. School census data for 2008 and 2012 indicate that the top four most common home languages spoken by EAL students in England had remained unchanged and they were Panjabi, Urdu, Bengali and Polish. However, the number of students whose first languages were Lithuanian and Polish had significantly increased. The number of Lithuanian speakers had more than doubled, from 4,350 (0.1%) in 2008 to 11,275 (0.2%) in 2012. Polish speakers had doubled, from 26,840 (0.4%) in 2008 to 53,915 (0.8%) in 2012 (DfE school census data, reported by NALDIC, 2015b).

## 2.2 Attainment of EAL students compared to all students

As Strand et al. (2015) have reported in their cross-sectional analysis of the National Pupil Database, the gap between attainment of children with EAL and children with English as a first language decreases with age. However, as they warn and as we note below, caution needs to be applied in interpreting the official figures, since schools are not required to report the results of pupils in the first two years after their arrival in the UK. The statistics also do not distinguish between EAL students and bilingual students for whom English is also a first language.

### Attainment of EAL students at Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS)

49% of EAL pupils achieved a 'good level of development' (defined by the DfE as attainment at the expected level in the early learning goals (ELGs) in personal, social and emotional development; physical development; and communication and language and in mathematics and literacy) in the EYFS in 2014 compared to 63% of pupils whose first language is English. The gap between EAL and English first language pupils had been narrowing since 2007, but had remained unchanged at 11 percentage points since 2013 (DfE, 2014a).

A comparison of those who managed to achieve the expected standard in all ELGs in the EYFS showed that 61% of English first language pupils in England and in the East of England, 49% of EAL pupils in England and 47% of EAL pupils in the East of England, managed to achieve the expected standard in all ELGs (DfE, 2014b). In other words, EAL children scored generally less well than English first language speakers but the gap was particularly wide in Bedford (26 percentage points), Peterborough (24%) and Cambridgeshire (18%).

### Attainment of EAL students at Key Stage 1

In 2014, a lower number of EAL pupils achieved the expected level (Level 2) in reading, writing, mathematics and science at Key Stage 1 (KS1) compared with non-EAL pupils. The differences were four percentage points in reading, four percentage points in writing, three percentage points in mathematics and six percentage points in science. These gaps have narrowed over time. In reading, a seven percentage point gap in 2008 had narrowed to four percentage points in 2014. Whilst in science, a ten percentage point gap in 2008 narrowed to six percentage points in 2014 (DfE, 2014d). However, the biggest attainment gap at KS1 was in speaking and listening in each year between 2011 and 2014.

In the East of England local authorities, the widest gaps between English first language and English as an additional language pupils were primarily in the scores for writing (Peterborough, 13 percentage point gap, Norfolk and Suffolk both showed a 10% gap), for science (Peterborough, 15% and Norfolk, 11%), and for reading (Suffolk, 12%).

### Attainment of EAL students at Key Stage 2

In 2014, 86% of EAL pupils in England achieved the expected Level 4 or above in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Key Stage 2 (KS2), compared with 89% of English only pupils. The percentage point difference has narrowed from seven percentage points in 2007 to three percentage points in 2014.

However, the gap between EAL (83%) and non-EAL (89%) pupils in the East of England in 2014 was wider than the national average. This gap was widest in Luton (9%), Norfolk (9%) and Peterborough (8%), and narrowest in Cambridgeshire (1%) and Hertfordshire (2%) (DfE, 2014c).

### Attainment of EAL students at Key Stage 4

When comparing the percentage of students achieving 5 or more GCSEs at grade A\* to C, or equivalent, including English and mathematics GCSEs or iGCSEs, EAL students (58.3%) performed less well than English first language students (60.9%) in 2013 (DfE, 2014d). However, the figures for 5 or more GCSEs at grade A\* to C (when comparing both with or without the inclusion of English and mathematics) have been much closer, and in 2013 the score for pupils with a first language other than English (83.3%) was higher than for pupils with English as first language (82.9%).

#### **At this level, the gap between EAL and English first language students is wider in the East of England than in the national figures.**

61.0% of English first language students achieved 5 or more GCSEs at grade A\* to C, or equivalent, including English and maths, compared with 54.4% of students with EAL. There is some variability in the results for the different authorities within the region. The widest gaps between EAL and English first language students were in Peterborough (15.1%), Norfolk (13.2%) and Bedford (12.3%), which are authorities with both some of the highest and some of the lowest percentages of EAL students in the region. Conversely, the authorities with the best comparative attainment figures in this category for 2014 are Thurrock, Essex and Luton, where the percentage of EAL students achieving these grades was a little higher than that of English first language students (17.5, 4.7, and 3.1 percentage points respectively).<sup>2</sup>

Researchers have recently been looking for explanations of the differences in levels of attainment between EAL learners on the basis of different language backgrounds. Tereshchenko and Archer (2014), for instance, report that in the cohort of Eastern European students with EAL in London and the East of England, Slovak and Czech speakers tend to show the lowest attainment levels, while Russian and Bulgarian speakers show higher attainment levels. Similarly, Strand et al.'s analysis of the national data indicates that '[at] KS4, Spanish, Russian and Italian speakers performed better than English speakers, while Slovak, Lithuanian, Romanian and Latvian speakers did significantly less well than White Other English speakers' (2015, p.11). However, the researchers also point out that the first language variable needs to be seen in the context of the influence of socio-economic background and of ethnicity.

**The poor performance of EAL learners in parts of the East of England relative to those in other parts of the country raises concerns, but as yet the causes remain largely unexplained.** However, the low levels of attainment in the region have attracted the attention of Ofsted which in 2014, for instance, carried out an authority-wide inspection of EAL support provision in schools in Peterborough. The report comments that in some schools in the authority 'the quality of teaching and the progress of pupils who are beginning to learn English requires urgent improvement' (2014, p.6) and acknowledges the work of the EAL strategy involving schools across the authority and the professional development training run by an external provider. It would seem, therefore, that while examples of good practice and effective action are taking place in the region, the underlying causes of under-performance and inconsistencies of provision continue to represent a challenge. In order to obtain the schools' perspectives of the issues surrounding the experience of EAL provision in the East of England, our study conducted an on-line regional survey in the Spring term of 2014.

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<sup>2</sup> However, it should be noted that schools are allowed to apply to have pupils discounted from the regional figures if they have recently arrived from overseas and their first language is not English. The data therefore may not give us an accurate insight into how well schools are managing to support more recent arrivals in reaching requisite standards in their academic learning.

## 2.3 Summary of main findings of the regional school survey

### Profile of the respondent schools and their EAL students

The online survey was completed by 37 EAL-related staff (e.g. EAL co-ordinators, EAL teachers), six SEN-related staff, and two members of the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) (one headteacher and one assistant headteacher), and one unspecified. Of the 46 schools, 33 were state-maintained (of which 27 were academies), ten were independent schools, and three were voluntary-aided.

There was a wide range in the number of EAL students in the responding schools: 20 schools had between one and 49 EAL students on roll; eight schools had between 50 and 99 EAL students on roll; ten schools had between 100 and 199 EAL students on roll; **four schools had 200+ EAL students on roll**. Of the 13 schools that reported having more than 100 EAL students on roll, 12 were state-funded schools and one was independent. The most common home languages spoken by the EAL students were reported to be Polish (identified by 23 schools), Chinese (12 schools), Bengali (nine schools) and Lithuanian (nine schools).

Increases in the proportion of the EAL student population varied within the sample, but the most common increase during 2012 – 2014 was between less than 1% and up to 10%, mentioned by 18 respondents (see Table 2). In two of the 41 schools who responded to this question none of their EAL students had arrived during this period, and for one school all of the EAL students on roll had arrived during this period.

Table 2: Percentage of EAL pupils joining the school from abroad during 2012 – 2014

% of EAL students joining school from 2012-14	Number of schools with a total of				% of schools in sample
	1-49 EAL students	50-99 EAL students	100-199 EAL students	200+ EAL students	
0%	2	-	-	-	4.9%
0.13-10%	8	2	5	2	43.9%
11-30%	4	1	2	1	19.5%
31-50%	3	2	2	-	17.1%
51-70%	-	1	-	1	4.9%
71-80%	2	1	-	-	7.3%
100%	1	-	-	-	2.4%

Relatively low figures were reported for their EAL students' eligibility for the Pupil Premium. 12 schools reported that 11 – 30% of EAL students were eligible, six schools reported 1 – 10% were eligible, one school that 31 – 40 % were eligible, and one school that 41 – 50 % were eligible.

### Assessment of EAL students in the schools

While 25 respondent schools re-assessed all EAL students transferring from primary school, 93% of schools assessed students who were new arrivals to the school. **Most schools assessed EAL students' competence in English language (40 schools) and mathematics (37). A small number of schools reported assessing other areas: cognitive ability (six), science (five) and home language (one).** 34 schools (76% of respondents) assessed EAL students using English only, 11 (24%) used both English and the student's home language. None used the home language exclusively and most schools (74%) rarely or never received information from the EAL students' prior school abroad.

**When asked about the effectiveness of these assessments, 35% of respondents thought their current EAL initial assessment procedures were 'very effective' and 59% 'quite effective'.** Two respondents thought their procedures were 'quite ineffective' and one thought their procedures were 'very ineffective'.

Box 1: Respondents' suggestions of ways in which initial assessment could be improved (the number in brackets refers to the number of comments made)

- More time for assessment (7)**
- A wider range of test tasks and language skills (3)**
- Need for an initial national, formal test (2)**
- Need suitable tests (2)**
- Personalised support (2)**
- More funding (2)**
- Involvement of EAL specialist staff (2)**
- The use of external assessors (2)**
- Expand the academic focus of assessment (1)**
- More staff speaking the home languages (1)**
- Periodic re-testing (1)**

In 34 of the schools which responded to the survey, the assessment is carried out by the school's EAL co-ordinator; in ten schools by the SEN staff; in three schools by the headteacher or SLT; and in two schools by the English or class teacher. Results of the initial assessment are received by EAL staff (25), heads of department (25), all subject teachers (26), the Year or Pastoral head (19), all TAs (14), the Head or SLT (10 schools), all staff (7), parents (3), the SEN co-ordinator (2), the admissions officer (1).

When describing the focus of the initial assessment of EAL students, 44 respondents said it was important to assess English competence; 38 respondents considered it important to assess subject knowledge as well. **Despite the fact that only one school reported that they assessed the home language, 38 respondents considered it to be 'very' or 'quite important' to assess the home language proficiency of newly-arrived EAL students.**

Box 2: Rationale for initial assessment of language and subject knowledge

<b>Reasons given for the importance of assessment of home language proficiency</b>	<b>Reasons given for the importance of assessment of subject knowledge</b>
Strength of L1 influences acquisition of English (e.g. transference of language skills) As an indicator of competence in literacy To reveal learning difficulties As an indicator of subject knowledge and academic potential To assess comprehension skills To enter the students in exams (GCSE) for their home language To inform teaching To access the curriculum For setting purposes To assess comprehension To determine level of support needed Because English is medium of instruction	To identify support needed with subject To determine ability in subject For setting purposes To identify gaps in knowledge Three respondents thought this was not important

In general, there was a widespread eagerness for new resources and support for initial assessment of EAL students, as exemplified in the following selection of comments from the survey respondents about how their initial assessment procedures could be improved:

- Desperate to find a useful test we can do on the children to assess their level before or on arrival. We keep looking and have not found anything that suits.
- We would be pleased to know of what assessments could be used with students and how best to use them.
- A formal uniform assessment which gives me very specific information on strengths and weaknesses of student.
- Having more time to assess over a number of weeks as the pupils become familiar with their new working environment and culture.
- Students are only assessed in mathematics and writing in English. The procedures could be improved by including reading, listening and spoken language.
- By having a more formal, test-type, assessment that does not rely on knowledge of English to assess ability in other subject areas.
- I feel, in our setting, the whole process could be improved if 'Admin' listened more carefully to the feedback and recommendations put forward in an effort to make the transition for the student much smoother.

### **Provision of support for EAL students in school**

In order to see what was happening in schools with regard to processes and procedures for supporting EAL students, the survey sought information on the following: the induction programme, staff training, and perceived effectiveness of the provision.

**With reference to induction processes, 24 schools said their newly-arrived EAL students followed a specific induction programme. However, 21 schools, a worryingly high number, said their newly-arrived EAL students did not follow one.** In sharp contrast, five schools reported having an induction programme that lasted longer than a term; four had one that lasted up to half a term; and ten for between one and three weeks.

There seemed to be a wide disparity in the frequency of EAL-related in-service training in the sample schools. 22 schools (just over half of all respondents to this question) reported no in-school EAL-specific training for the school's senior management (SLT) in the previous two years, 15 (just over a third) said there had been no whole school training for classroom teachers or department-specific training on EAL, and nine (20%) respondents said there had been no training for EAL support staff. Most commonly, there had been between one and five EAL-specific training sessions for each category: SLT, classroom teachers, department specific, and EAL support staff. Seven (15.5%) respondents reported more than five different sessions of EAL support staff over the previous two years.

45 respondents thought their school's support for EAL students was 'very' or 'quite effective'. The evidence they gave to support this belief varied and included one or more of the factors listed in Box 3 below. The constraints on effective provision were explained in terms of staffing and resources.

The survey revealed that respondent schools mainly relied on their own resources and initiatives to support their EAL students, rather than using local or commercial support services. The majority of schools (37) reported employing a dedicated EAL co-ordinator and providing dedicated EAL lessons for their students (22 schools). Other, less frequently reported school resources were: bilingual assistants (20 schools), interpreters (13 schools), and extra-curricular language clubs (11 schools). On the other hand, very few schools in the sample reported using external EAL-related services. **31 schools (67% of the sample) did not use Local Authority EAL-related services, including the ten independent schools. Only four schools (9%) used EAL support services provided by other external providers.** This raises questions about the extent to which provision of support for EAL is available or being accessed by all schools that need it.



Box 3: Effective support and constraints on support in school

Evidence of effective support	Constraints on effective provision
<p>There was small group or individual support tailored to individual needs.</p> <p>There was regular assessment with Individual Plans available on a centralised system.</p> <p>There was some withdrawal from some subject lessons for English language and curriculum support.</p> <p>Support formed part of the focus on differentiation.</p> <p>There was good academic achievement, including GCSEs in the home language.</p> <p>There was an autonomous EAL unit supporting full immersion into mainstream.</p> <p>There was a large bank of materials in a range of languages.</p> <p>The EAL students mostly progressed at a faster pace than non-EAL students.</p> <p>EAL support was praised in Ofsted reports.</p> <p>Staff knew who to turn to for advice.</p> <p>School policy stated that the whole school had a responsibility for supporting EAL students.</p>	<p>There was a need to increase staffing in order to offer in-class support.</p> <p>There was a lack of resources.</p> <p>There was a lack of staff proficient in the home languages.</p> <p>They had to prioritise because of large numbers of EAL students.</p> <p>There was variability among staff and departments in providing appropriate support.</p>

**2.4 School policy approaches: language use, social integration and parental engagement**

An overview of school policy approaches can provide a picture of the degree of consensus between schools in their assessment of the importance of different facets of support for EAL within a school, and in their understanding of the best ways to provide relevant support in these areas. It would seem, from the evidence generated here, that substantial differences in approach exist within and between schools.

**On language use in school**

In *Closing the Gap for Immigrant Students*, the OECD concluded that it was essential to have national and school-level language policies in order to ensure that ‘school practice is guided by an explicit coherent language policy that is informed by research and adapted to the different levels of the education system’ (2010, p.8). This view was also a recommendation we made in our first report (Arnot et al., 2014, p.104). Our regional survey sought to investigate the degree to which school-level language policies were being developed.

When asked about whether there was a written language policy in their school (in the sense of the school’s views on multilingualism in the classroom and other social spaces), respondents gave a mixed response. 24 (52%) respondents said they had a school-wide written language policy. 20 (43%) said they did not have one. This finding may reflect prevailing scepticism about the value of written policies by some EAL co-ordinators and senior staff. The absence of a written policy may not necessarily mean the absence of a consensus on issues. However, **the fact that 86% of respondents said they did not have a language policy for each subject department suggests that disparities and inconsistencies of approach exist on this issue within the schools.**

There was a broad consensus among the respondents about the value of the EAL students’ home language. 41 respondents (89%) agreed with the statement that performance in academic subjects is supported by home languages. **44 (96%) agreed with the statement that literacy in home languages supports literacy in English, reflecting evidence reported in the literature (see, for instance, Jang et al., 2013).** 36 (78%) did not think that EAL students’ use of their home language was a barrier to their progress in English. This belief represented the views of the respondents, who were mostly EAL co-ordinators; it may not, of course, represent those of the majority of the teachers in the school.

**On social integration**

Overall there was a mixed picture of the schools’ views about the level of social integration of EAL students and about effective strategies for strengthening this. This lack of clarity on policy is perhaps underlined by the fact that, as 71% of respondents revealed, most schools had no written policy or guidelines on this issue. Over a third of respondents described the level of social integration (defined in the survey as ‘forming positive and inclusive social relationships within the school and being attached to the school and its values’) at their school as ‘patchy, depending on the personalities’, while a similar percentage described it as ‘reasonable, given different cultures and languages’.



The survey also asked schools to comment on how they encouraged the integration of EAL students in their schools. The findings resonate with those in our first report: most respondents said they thought the strategies were effective, although this begs the question about what constitutes effective social integration. The main members of staff responsible for ensuring social integration of EAL students in school were seen to be the pastoral heads and EAL co-ordinators: head of year/house/ pastoral team/ head of boarding school (15); EAL staff (13); teachers/ form tutors (12); all staff (5); senior management (3); and teaching assistants (1).

**The most common strategies for social integration that were in place in the schools were classroom organization and use of seating plans (41) and buddying systems for newly-arrived EAL students (41).** These low-key strategies that affected EAL students' daily lives were considered to be effective by the majority of respondents, rather than more high-profile strategies. 38 considered classroom organisation 'effective' or 'very effective' and 37 considered the buddying systems 'effective' or very effective'. The most frequently reported school activities that fostered social integration involving EAL students were: helping other EAL students fit in (39 respondents), joining school sports teams (34), and joining after school clubs (31). Conversely, 22 respondents reported that EAL students seldom agreed to be class representatives and 20 said they seldom joined school drama productions. There seemed, therefore, to be an awareness of EAL students' reluctance to engage in more language-dependent communal activities in school. At the same time, however, this awareness seemed to be contradicted by the commonly held view that not speaking English is a barrier that can be overcome in relation to social integration in the school. Only nine respondents felt that it restricted EAL students from engaging in school activities.

When asked about the composition of friendship groups in their school, 29 respondents (67%) said they 'often' or 'very often' observed friendship groups involving both EAL and non-EAL students. A worrying 33% of respondents said they did not observe this very often or did not observe it at all. 21 respondents (half of those who replied to the question) described the attitude of non-EAL students to EAL students who were not fluent in English as sympathetic and helpful. 17% defined the attitude as 'they see them as no different from other students'.

A key issue identified in the literature is that of bullying in schools. For instance, Tereshchenko and Archer (2014) report that Eastern European students expressed some concern about hostility towards them as individuals, and that there was stereotyping of their cultures (e.g. Latvians). Our survey attempted to tap into how schools perceived the issue.

**The responses seem to indicate that bullying culture was more prevalent among non-EAL students than towards or by EAL students. 42 schools (45%) had to address it 'very often', or 'sometimes' in the last 3 years.**

23 respondents said EAL students never bullied non-EAL students. 15 said non-EAL students never bullied EAL students. However, among those schools which did identify problems, the sorts of issues that arose included the following: name-calling/ 'go home' comments (9), low-level unkindness and misunderstanding (2), language-related issues (2), racism (2), exclusion (2), and issues based on personality (2).

### **On parental engagement**

In terms of policy approach, schools need help with engaging with the parents/carers of EAL students. This is especially relevant if they are not fluent in English. Schools judge what is effective engagement by a number of different means depending, it seems, on the sort of activities they use to encourage parental involvement.

Our survey revealed the following three most common activities **with which parents of EAL students had 'very high' or 'high involvement' with the school: parents' evenings (23), 'meeting the class teacher' (21), helping with homework (15).** There was a 'low' or 'very low' level of involvement in activities such as school governance, parent-teacher association activities, helping in the classroom, translation, international days or community-based activities. Involvement in whole school activities or contributions which might affect EAL policy or representation of multilingualism and multiculturalism in the school would seem to be very scarce.

The respondents' explanations of the reasons affecting parental involvement fell under two broad categories: practical factors, such as the level of the parents' competence in English (7) or work-related constraints (3), and sociocultural factors such as the family background (2) educational background (2), or nationality. Seven respondents said there was no perceptible difference between EAL and non-EAL parental involvement in the school: four said there was a high level of involvement and three said it was a low level.

The three most common strategies the schools used to encourage parental involvement were:

- Induction meeting with new EAL parents (93% of those whose school did this viewed the strategy as effective)
- Translated parent mail and other communications (94% viewed this as effective)
- Parents' evenings in main home languages (100% viewed as effective)

## 2.5 Summary

DfE school attainment data show that EAL students in the East of England performed less well in 2014, compared with their non-EAL peers, than their counterparts in other regions in the country at Key Stages 1, 2 and 4. The widest gap between EAL and non-EAL students in the region is in assessment of writing.

The current overall picture of the context of provision for EAL in schools in the region is one of a struggle to adjust to the developing multilingual profile of its student population. Schools and practitioners are learning, often without a clear sense of direction, to adapt to the evolving educational environment and to meet the diverse needs of EAL children arriving with a diversity of linguistic, cultural and educational backgrounds and at different points in the academic year. Meanwhile, newly-arrived EAL students who are currently populating classrooms in increasing numbers across the region are having to learn to adapt to their new educational environment and to make the most of social and educational opportunities with variable degrees of appropriate support.

The regional survey showed that there was a diversity of assessment practice in the respondent schools and therefore a need for a coherent regional policy on admissions practice.

Very few schools in the sample assessed new entrants' competence in areas other than English language. There are likely to be consequences for appropriate setting in subjects like maths and science and for the development of appropriate support strategies in the early stages following admission.

The sharp contrast between the majority of respondents' expressed belief in the importance of assessing in the home language and the fact that only one school reported doing so points to the need for region-wide provision of bilingual assistant support for this purpose.

The very small number of schools in the survey who said that they fed the results of assessment on admission back to the parents would seem to be symptomatic of an underestimation of the value of liaising with the parents over the appropriate support measures for the children in the transitional phase following admission.

Most worryingly of all, almost half the schools in the sample reported having no specific induction programme for newly-arrived EAL students.

## Section 3: The linguistic, academic and social dimensions of progression in learning: the EAL students' perceptions and performance

### 3.1 Introduction

At the heart of our analysis of the educational progress of newly-arrived EAL students is the assumption that their academic attainment is deeply affected by, and affects, the language issues they face and their integration into the school. Given the particular circumstances which define the challenge of learning in the new school context for EAL students, it is important to view educational progress in this inter-related way. Investigation of progress in our sample, therefore, takes a three-pronged approach focusing on development in English language competence, accounts of socialisation in the new school community, and progression in academic performance. With this in mind, we undertook an analysis of the pupils' performance and also their perceptions during the initial phase of schooling in the two case study schools in 2014 and a year later in 2015.

### 3.2 Findings from KS4 student surveys conducted at the two case study schools

In order to gain an overall impression of the wider student perspective of EAL-related issues in the two participant schools, a questionnaire was administered during the Spring term of 2015 to all Year 10 and some Year 11 EAL and non-EAL students at the schools. The survey aimed to gather information relating to the students' schooling and language experiences as well as their perceptions regarding academic study and social integration.

#### Profile of respondents

407 EAL and non-EAL Key Stage 4 (KS4) students from both schools completed the questionnaire, 217 males and 188 females (two neglected to indicate their gender). In Kirkwood Academy the survey was administered to all Year 10 and Year 11 students at the school and in Parkland School, because of the relative size of the school population, the questionnaire was administered to all Year 10 students in the school. Overall the age profile of the respondents was as follows: 174 were 14 years old, 202 were 15, 31 were 16. 346 respondents were mid-way through Year 10 at the time of completion of the questionnaire, and 61 were in Year 11. 41(11.9%) of the Year 10 respondents at both schools said they had joined the school in the last three years, in other words they had joined the schools after the start of the secondary school phase of their education. Of those, ten had joined in the previous six months, and 12 in the previous six to 12 months.

Just under a quarter of the Year 10 and Year 11 student respondents had lived outside the UK - in a total of 28 countries. Those most frequently listed were Lithuania (19), Poland (10), Portugal (10) and Pakistan (9). 67 respondents had attended primary schools outside the UK and 34 a secondary school. **The diversity of the educational background experienced by EAL children in schools thus represents a challenge in terms of ensuring a smooth transition between the different national educational contexts.**

As might be expected, most respondents (68%) defined themselves as an 'English native speaker'. However, 21.1% (86 students) said they had a language other than English as a first language, and 6.6% (27 students) said they had both English and another language as their native languages. There was a very wide range of languages which the respondents reported they were able to speak, covering a variety of European, Asian and African languages. The most frequently mentioned languages were Punjabi (50), Spanish (41), Urdu (39), Lithuanian (21) and Polish (10).

Despite this linguistic diversity, it seems that EAL students are seldom encouraged to use their home language. The overwhelming majority of EAL respondents (79.5%) said that their teachers either rarely or never encouraged them to use their L1 in lessons. On the other hand, most (62.7%) reported that their parents or carers supported their use of their L1 in school.

First language competence seemed to play a role in the composition of the EAL respondents' close friendship groupings. 30.2% of EAL student respondents said they normally spoke in their L1 with their close friends in school, and 52.3% said they normally did out of school. The vast majority were speakers of European languages, perhaps indicating that the L1 was the medium of peer communication, particularly in more recent migrant communities. For the sample as a whole, 57.9% said their closest friends mainly came from the UK, 35% said they came from a mix of countries including the UK, and 7.1% said they were mainly from other countries. There was a difference between responses from the two schools in relation to these responses, with Parkland School indicating greater mixed friendship groups.

Table 3: Differences in composition of friendship groups in the two schools

	Kirkwood Academy	Parkland School
Closest friends mainly from UK	76.1%	46.8%
Friends from a mix of countries	17.9%	45.5%
Mainly friends from other countries	6%	7.7%

**EAL student curriculum choices and confidence in their subject learning**

One of the goals in surveying EAL students in both schools was to find out about the subjects that the students were learning at KS4 and how confident they felt about their own performance. The information was analysed in relation to three groups of respondents: those who defined themselves as native speakers of English; those whose first language was other than English; and those who said they had English and another language as their first language. In the interests of concision, we shall refer to the latter group as 'bilinguals', and the second group as EAL students. The imbalance of numbers between the groups and in particular the relatively low number in the 'bilingual' category does not permit us to make any generalisations in terms of the wider population. However, a cross-group comparison of the percentages is useful in shedding some insight into patterns of perceptions within the overall sample at the two schools.

The responses indicated that there was low take-up (less than 20%) across all three groups in the following main subjects: drama, languages, music. While this finding might, to some extent, reflect the circumstances of provision in the two schools at the time of our study, it is surprising that, with all three subjects offering forms of input and learning other than exclusively through the medium of English, more EAL and bilingual students are not encouraged to engage with them. It is worth noting, for instance, that Strand et al. (2015) found that, nationally, EAL students outperformed English First Language students in the main taught foreign languages (French, German and Spanish) at GCSE.

In terms of perceptions of the level of their performance in the different subjects (elicited through responses to the question 'How well are you doing in...?'), **70.3 % of the bilingual group said they were doing 'very well' or 'well' in English language compared with 63.6 % of EAL students and 62.7 % of English native speakers.** The bilingual group also expressed greater confidence in their study of RE: with 62.9% saying they were doing either 'very well' or 'well' compared with 44.2% of EAL students and 43.6% of English native speakers.

On the other hand, there was very little difference in expressions of confidence with regard to performance in science (just under 30% saying they were doing 'very well' or 'well') and in maths, the EAL group expressed the highest level of confidence (53.6%) compared to 48.7% of English native speakers and 37% of bilinguals. The number of EAL and bilingual students studying history was low, but amongst those who were studying the subject their level of confidence was lower than English native speakers: 14.8% of bilinguals and 22.1% of EAL students compared to 37.9% of English native speakers said they were doing 'very well' or 'well'.

**School support for EAL**

Although the regional survey suggested that there are a raft of activities available to support EAL students, in our student survey only a little under half of the EAL respondents (37) reported having had support from an EAL teacher in the school. Of these, 25 students said they received it often or very often and 25 students said they had had help from an interpreter.

When asked what best helped the development of their competence in more formal or academic features of English on which their academic achievement would to some extent depend, **EAL respondents mostly considered 'normal English lessons' and teachers as sources of such support rather than extra support. This would indicate that the students conceived of their learning as primarily a mainstream classroom experience.** There was little difference between the three groups in this response.

Table 4: What helps them most to do well in English tests/exams

	English as first/native language		A language other than English as first/native language		English and another language as first/native languages	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Normal English lessons in school	229	83.9	65	75.6	21	77.8
Extra English lessons in school	59	21.6	33	38.4	13	48.1
Extra lessons outside school	28	10.3	9	10.5	5	18.5
Teachers	171	62.6	54	62.8	17	63.0
Teaching assistants	48	17.6	24	27.9	6	22.2
Homework	52	19.0	24	27.9	11	40.7
Discussions with parents/carers	35	12.8	9	10.5	3	11.1

In order to identify preferences in EAL students' modes of learning and engagement in learning activities, they were asked which features of their learning they found easiest in lessons. As Table 5 indicates, only a few students across the three different groups of language speakers selected writing down ideas, memorisation and reading from textbooks as the easiest aspect of their classroom learning. Working with classmates seemed to be the preference of the largest proportion of students in each group.

Table 5: What do you find easiest in lessons?

	English as first/native language		A language other than English as first/native language		English and another language as first/native languages	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Working on my own	147	53.1	41	47.7	14	51.9
Working with my classmates	187	67.5	51	59.3	27	100
Working with another adult in the class/teaching assistant	77	27.8	30	34.9	12	44.4
Understanding teachers' explanations	103	37.2	40	46.5	13	48.1
Writing down my ideas	104	37.5	26	30.2	10	37.0
Remembering information	69	24.9	22	25.6	9	33.3
Reading from textbooks	67	24.2	18	20.9	10	37.0

### 3.3 Student perspectives on their social and academic progress

This section provides a summary of the main findings of our analysis of the student data relating to the 22 selected participant EAL students at the two schools in order to gain insights about progression in their academic and social experience during the first two years at their new school. The purpose of the analysis is to provide a general overview of the students' development in these areas, rather than to compare experiences between the two schools. We are conscious of the need to avoid monolithic labels such as 'the EAL student' and therefore qualitative analysis of student introspections allows us to respect individual differences and to factor them in to our broader interpretations and conclusions.

#### Language, peers and teachers seen as key mediators in the students' social integration and academic progress

The majority of the students interviewed at both case study schools commented that when they first arrived they felt overawed by the experience of being at a school where everyone spoke English. The following terms were used to describe how they felt at the time: 'scary', 'scared', 'really nervous', 'really hard', 'very bad', 'strange', 'not really comfortable', 'a little bit sad', 'difficult', 'terrible', 'confusing'. Andrius, who could already speak English fluently and with an American accent, which he said was acquired from watching cartoons, described the experience as being 'culture shocked':

I was really culture shocked when I first came into this country. I knew how to speak and write in English but still there is this thing, like that push-up against me, when I came in, there was a wall in front of me. (Andrius, Lithuanian boy, Parkland School)

However, for most, the anxiety they felt about being in the new classroom environment was primarily due to their inability to communicate in English. On the one hand, their lack of English created problems for them in terms of learning in the classroom, due either to their inability to understand the teacher and their peers or to an inability to express themselves in English. While some students at the round 1 interview, which took place several months after their admission to the school, reported that this feeling of anxiety had since diminished, for others like Bronius (a Lithuanian boy, Parkland School) the problem was still lingering:

Interviewer: What is it like to be in a school where everyone speaks English? How do you feel when everyone around you is talking English and you're very new to English?

Bronius: It's very scary. Can't understand. And I can't say some words.

Interviewer: And in the classroom what helps you to understand what's going on?

Bronius: Who's sitting next to me.

Interviewer: Does that depend if it's an English person sitting next to you or another Lithuanian student?

Bronius: Always sit Pakistan.

On the other hand, the EAL newcomers' lack of English also risked having a negative effect on how they were perceived by their English-speaking peers. Agnieszka, for instance, was conscious that her lack of proficiency in English was taken as a sign of a lack of intelligence:

It was really hard at the beginning. I mean when I came here for first few months, it was really like bad experience for me. I didn't speak English, like not at all, but I was really shy to speak and people they treat me like special child. I don't know how to explain it, and they thought I'm stupid because I don't speak like in proper English. And it was really bad for me, but now it's better. Like yeah, they know that I'm not stupid and they started to talk to me and now is real better. [Agnieszka, Polish girl, Parkland School]

Acquiring an adequate level of competence in English, therefore, was seen as a pressing issue to be addressed, at the cost of neglecting other academic subjects, as Agnieszka, referring back to her approach in the previous year at the school, revealed:

I wanted to improve my English ... so I didn't really care about my subjects... till I make my English good enough to understand something. But now it's a bit harder because I need to learn something and I have to like do two years in one go.

However, peers also played a crucial role in helping the newly-arrived EAL student to settle in. For instance, Dimitrij, a Latvian student who could also speak Russian, appreciated being paired with a classmate who could speak Russian and this helped with his induction into classroom learning in the new linguistic environment:

Dimitrij: Yes I found it helpful, because they can explain me information.

Interviewer: Can you give me some examples?

Dimitrij: When I come in school, in my first English lesson learned me, helped me in my Russian who is from Latvia speak Latvian, and he explained me questions.

Interviewer: Just general questions about how the school works?

Dimitrij: Yes, or my uniform. In Year 11 I have friend from my country and city and he speak Russian and he explain me all about school and lessons.

While in many cases the students commented that they were capable of making friends independently of teacher mediation, for others teacher help through organising seating arrangements or through introduction to appropriate potential classmates was seen as instrumental. Indeed these strategies were almost the only ones recognised by the students as ways in which the school helped them to make friends. Many students admitted that making friends was 'difficult' and this would have been doubly so for newly-arrived students who had limited or no competence in the English language. For some of these students the school's help in pairing them with appropriate 'buddies' provided an effective introduction into the peer social community. For a few (notably three Lithuanian boys who were part of the same friendship group at Kirkwood Academy), there appeared to remain a sense of alienation from the community.

When asked if they felt they belonged in their new school and community, 18 students of the 22 interviewed said they did, expressing enthusiasm about their new social environment or 'home'. For instance, when asked in the round 2 interview what was the 'best thing' that had happened to him in the intervening year, Bronius commented on how his competence in English now allowed him to feel he was 'from' England:

I think when I go somewhere, like, now all the time I'm going with friends, like, everything. Now I'm going with English. And when you need to speak with someone, I can speak, like, properly, because – like, last year I'd just go with, like, friends, Lithuanians who were good speaking English and everything, and I was asking them to speak to someone, not me, like, everything. I feel now like I'm ... because I speak now, like, not so bad. So when I go somewhere, I feel like I'm from here, you know.

English was singled out by six students as the 'best thing' in response to this question, making friends was also cited by six students, academic achievement by three students, help from teachers by two students, and activities (such as involvement in drama or music events) by two students.

It would seem that the focus of interaction with classmates in the second year shifted a little compared with the first year. **While in the round 1 interviews, L1 peers were primarily seen as playing a key role in mediating the learning through translating the teachers' instructions and explanations, in the second round the focus turned more toward help with subject matter.** The most commonly mentioned subjects in which help was sought were history, science, and maths. Help was also said to be sought 'depending on the subject' (Krzysztof, Polish boy, Parkland School), or 'in most subjects' (Daina, Lithuanian girl, Parkland School). Agnieszka (Polish girl, Parkland School), for instance, commented that this was true in all subjects and that this was now a two-way process:

Interviewer: What about in your classes, do you help friends much or do your friends help you?

Agnieszka: I think both ways. If they need help they asking me and I'm helping them. And if I need help I'm asking them and they help me. Yeah, that's how it works.

Interviewer: That's great. And is that in all of your subjects?

Agnieszka: In every single one.

While in their first year at school English language was largely the focus of the help provided by classmates, in the second year English was also the medium with which help with other subject matter topics was communicated. The EAL students reported working in groups in lessons and many expressed a preference for this. Some students continued to express a preference for discussion in the L1 with peers about the work, and most reported that teachers on the whole allowed this. A scan of some of the teachers' comments in the students' exercise books confirmed this, particularly in Parkland School. However, some students at Kirkwood Academy, such as Tomas (Lithuanian boy), commented that some teachers proscribed the use of the L1 in the classroom:

Interviewer: And do the teachers – are they happy for you to do that [discuss learning problem in Lithuanian with classmate]?

Tomas: Not some of them. Some of them are alright. Some of them are not.

Interviewer: What sort of things would they say if they –

Tomas: Like, "Speak English." So they could understand what we're talking about.

Interviewer: Yeah, so they would ask you to speak English.

Tomas: Yeah.

Interviewer: And do you explain that you're helping each other?

Tomas: Yeah.

Interviewer: And they still ask you to speak in English?

Tomas: To speak English.

Interviewer: Are there any lessons where that happens particularly?

Tomas: No.

Interviewer: But some of your other teachers are happy for you to help each other?

Tomas: Yeah.

### **Continuity and positive assessment are key features in the students' accounts of their success in learning**

When asked at the round 2 interview what they felt was their greatest achievement in the school so far, some students pointed to activities which built on interests that they had already developed in their country of origin. For instance, Agnieszka in Parkland School said that her progress in writing in English was particularly gratifying since she was always keen on writing stories in Polish before coming to England:

Yeah in my language I used to write not really essays but stories and everything because I really like writing. And I couldn't do it in English on the same level as I used to in Polish. I tried very hard to somehow make it better or improve myself. And now it's better but it's not still as good as in my language. Because English is still my second language, right. But like it's way more better. No, way better.

Similarly, Jana (Polish girl, Kirkwood Academy) and Andrius (Lithuanian boy, Parkland School) both identified their work in music as their proudest achievement and both revealed that they had already developed this interest and studied the subject before coming to England. Interestingly, their accounts shared a common feature in the different ways in which they talked about this in the round 1 and round 2 interviews. While in the first interview the reference to music was made purely on the basis of their interest and success in the subject, in the second interview, one year later, both added the fact that their achievement had been recognised by their teacher and it was clear that this was a determining factor in their sense of achievement. Jana was proud of her performance in 'music

assessments: 'I really enjoyed them. I'm rehearsing a lot and then I'm doing them. I'm really happy about them'. Andrius, similarly, was proud that his music teacher had allowed him to choose his preferred genre of music for his GCSE coursework submission and that her feedback was positive:

And I spent almost every Wednesday and Friday after school trying to work as hard as I can to create what I wanted to originally and for my own genre of music which would be mellow in this case, which I did, and I created a six minute long piece which she thought would be too long because she thought it would be too repetitive, but in the end she said, "Oh my God, this is..." To quote her: "When I saw this I thought this was going to be too long but this is actually good," she said, because it was very progressive and she thought this would actually pass. And I'm surprised that I passed. This might be like a B to a C maybe.

In the round 2 interviews twelve students defined their proudest moments in the school in terms of performance in tests or some form of teacher or public recognition whereas in the round 1 interviews only one student, a high-attainer, did so. This would suggest that in the first year or so of an EAL student's arrival in a school in the UK their primary concerns are with language and integration and that from the second year on, regardless of age or ability, assessment and teacher endorsement play a greater role in defining their sense of achievement.

### 3.4 Students' accounts of their progress in the English language

In line with the integrated conceptual framework adopted in this study, the EAL students' views of their progress in English were examined from three perspectives: English as the medium of social interaction; alternation between English and the first language as competing forms of language of thought; and perceived progress in learning English inside and outside the classroom. We have reported on aspects of the first perspective in section 3.3; the other two perspectives are reported in the following sub-sections.

#### Reports of a gradual shift in the language of thought

Newly-arrived EAL students are invariably in the position of drawing on more than one language, and sometimes several, as they process the curricular and pedagogical information presented through the medium of English in subject lessons. Regardless of whether or not there is formal sanctioning of the use of the home language in lessons, the inner linguistic resources of the individual student consist of one or more languages that they can speak other than English and choices can be made both consciously and unconsciously about which one to use to support their learning. Though the relative contrast in the strength of proficiency in English compared with the L1 changes the longer the student is resident in England (and this change will alter the amount of processing in English or other languages), it is clear that in the first few months after arrival at the school, the choice of which language to use is a real and acute issue. In the round 1 interviews almost all the students in both schools said that they thought in their home language at least some of the time in lessons and when completing homework. While some students said they did this in all subjects, others said it depended on the subject, such as mathematics and science. Some students recognised that choosing the language of thought is not always a conscious decision. Petras referred to the process as 'automatic':

Sometimes it comes automatically and not only Lithuanian. It can be in Russian. It can also be in Polish. It just automatically comes to my mind. (Petras, Lithuanian boy, Kirkwood Academy)

Andrius, in Parkland School, also referred to the 'strange' experience of mentally switching between English and Lithuanian: 'My mind kind of switches between my language and English when I think'. Most students, however, conceptualised the mental alternation between their home language and English in more controlled or learning-oriented terms. They explained it in terms of a sequential stage of processing based on the principle of translation into and out of the home language. Typically, the trigger for the mental use of the home language was lack of comprehension in the initial English text (whether written or spoken by the teacher), as indicated by Jana (Polish girl, Kirkwood Academy):

- Interviewer: What about, for example, when you are in lessons, do you find you think first in Polish or do you think in English?
- Jana: It is a little bit ... I am thinking in both languages, first I am thinking in Polish and trying to translate it and then I am doing the work ...
- Interviewer: Doing the work in English?
- Jana: Yeah.
- Interviewer: So sometimes if you are in a lesson and the teacher is saying something in English you will ...
- Jana: I am translating quickly, but it's like that when they are speaking to me I am just ... I can't understand it, I do need to translate.

Similarly, when commenting on which language they thought in when doing their homework, normally consisting of a written task, 19 students interviewed said they thought in their home language at least some of the time. For some, context seemed to play a role:



they commented that they were more likely to think in the L1 at home as that was what was spoken there, and to think in English in school. For others, however, the conscious decision relied on whether the task was perceived as easy or difficult. For instance, Tomas (Lithuanian boy, Kirkwood Academy) said that 'sometimes I think in English because it's easy' while Linas (Lithuanian boy, Parkland School) said that 'sometimes if it's hard homework I think first Lithuanian; if it's not I think English and then do it'.

There was evidence of a shift in patterns of choice of language of thought reported in the first and second round interviews. Most of those who had said in the first round of interviews that they did not think in English in school or at home now claimed to do so to varying degrees. Translation was less commonly seen as a key device in negotiating communication with teachers and peers. Many, like Anikke (Lithuanian girl, Parkland School), said they were now processing communication directly, without the mediation of the home language: 'Last year, first in Lithuanian and then I translate it, but now directly in English'. Similarly, Dmitrij (Russian speaking Latvian boy, Kirkwood Academy), who in the round 1 interview had stated that he thought almost entirely in Russian in school and at home, and who conveyed a strong sense of identity with his Latvian background, indicated that he now sometimes thought in English rather than Russian: 'now I improved my English even in my thinking. I can sometimes think in English but not in my own language'. As the two languages appeared to be shifting in their relative prominence in his linguistic repertoire, Dmitrij sometimes saw the intervention of the home language as a translating tool as an unwelcome intrusion: 'sometimes I can think in English some words but still in my mind I translate from Russian to English and sometimes it's a mistake – make mistakes'.

It is, of course, important to note that these findings are not evidence of whether or not the students actually alternated mentally between English and the home language in the way they describe; these are merely their representations of what they did. However, student conceptualisations are important as they give us an indication of how they understand their learning experience and what they prioritise in terms of learning strategy, which in turn can inform policy and teacher classroom practice.

### **Perceptions of progress in English and in academic achievement in the second year**

Unsurprisingly, all the case study student participants believed they had made progress in their competence in English in the second round of interviews. Most reported that they were more confident in communicating in the language, and in particular with regard to speaking and oral comprehension.

**When asked to talk about areas in which they still had problems with the English language, the most common area mentioned was that of listening comprehension. This was sometimes related to phonology such as accent of speakers or speed of delivery.** The latter was particularly the case with interactions with peers. Two students referred to problems in making themselves understood and stated that peers were not patient enough in making the effort to understand them. Three students referred to writing as a problematic area but, in each case, this was specified as a spelling issue. There was no recognition of writing issues such as grammatical construction or expression of thought despite the fact that on the evidence of their written tasks, as shown in the language analysis section below, these were in most cases markedly deficient.

The students' largely optimistic accounts of their progress in English was matched by similarly positive views on their general academic progress which was particularly evident in the round 1 interviews: 'I'm doing well' (Farooq, Pakistani boy, Parkland School), 'good' (Naveed, Pakistani boy, Parkland School), 'very well' (Kasia, Polish girl, Kirkwood Academy) and 'I think it's very good' (Jonas, Lithuanian boy, Kirkwood Academy). However, the higher attaining students tended to be more cautious about their progress: 'I think it's like, in the middle, it's not the best great, but it's not the worst ... I think I need to do it better' (Ona, Lithuanian girl, Parkland School), 'I think it's alright ... I think I can, like, learn better' (Agnieszka, Polish girl, Parkland School).

### 3.5 The pace of academic progress

Measuring progression in EAL students' academic attainment is even more difficult than in the case of English native speaker students due to the additional EAL-related variables, such as competence in English and date of admission to the UK school. **In some cases, one can speculate that the discrepancy in a sequence of grades reflects a teacher's re-assessment of a newly-arrived EAL student rather than an actual change in the student's level of attainment. Summative assessment data, therefore, needs to be accompanied by qualitative evidence from teachers who have knowledge of the individual's circumstances and potential.**

#### The EAL co-ordinators' and subject teachers' views of the students' progress

Both EAL co-ordinators at the schools showed exceptional knowledge about the individual EAL students in their schools and exceptional commitment to supporting them. They were able to provide detailed and nuanced accounts of the extent of social integration and academic progress of the students in their school. For instance, the co-ordinator at Kirkwood Academy, a non-native speaker of English herself, had enrolled to take the GCSE maths exam with her Year 11 EAL students in order to give them moral support:

I'm trying my best. Perhaps I know because I'm not English as well and I'm trying to be one of them this year. Even this year to encourage especially Karolis, Kasia, Dmitrij and Laima. I took GCSE in maths just for them, just for them. [...] It was good fun actually.

For her part, the EAL co-ordinator at Parkland School had directed a school musical and involved Ona, a successful and able student:

She was doing so well she actually got herself involved in the school musical, attended all the rehearsals and I directed and produced it. 'Hairspray' we did, which was a lot of fun, really good fun. A lot of dancing, a lot of singing and she was one of the major chorus members and she was fantastic. It did a lot for her confidence because she's quite quiet and reserved but she's an excellent student and she's very highly able, really gifted.

As these two examples indicate, the co-ordinators' analysis of the participant students' progress in the schools varied between an emphasis on evidence of social integration, and comments about support for this, on the one hand, and focus on academic improvement, on the other.

The following are brief summary profiles or 'vignettes' of four students in our sample based on teachers' comments and other evidence. They provide examples of the kind of data the study has been able to draw on to depict the students' educational progression over this period and they illustrate the relationship between performance-based evidence, students' self-assessment and teachers' and EAL co-ordinators' views to contribute to this picture.

**Daina** spoke Russian and Polish at home and was fluent and literate in Lithuanian. School reports from Lithuania were very positive and indicated she was a high achiever. She was assessed as stage 1/2 in English on admission at Parkland School in September 2013 in Year 7. The EAL co-ordinator believed that, with appropriately structured work and careful seating plans, she would make rapid progress. In the 2014 interview, her English teacher described her as 'a very fast learner' who used *Google Translate* when needed but who 'advanced very quickly when she worked at the same pace as the first language speakers'. Her written work showed that she made a lot of corrections and changes that were responses to verbal feedback from the teachers. Her teacher commented that Daina had made good progress with structures but was still challenged by vocabulary. She sometimes wrote in Polish first and then converted it into a final English draft. In our tests she wrote a similar number of words for each (159 words in round 1 and 161 in round 2). The main indicators of improvement were a reduction in the number of spelling mistakes (12 in round 1 and four in round 2), and an increase in the range of correct use of the past tense (none in round 1 and five in round 2). Analysis of the language at the interviews also indicated improvement in most of the features targeted including correct use of the past tense (three instances in round 1 and 23 instances in round 2). The EAL co-ordinator described her in the 2015 interview as follows:

very quiet, very applied, studious and doing very well [...] Not shy at all of asking for help. She mixes [...] a lot with Lithuanian children, more than I would say any other group but she can converse with Polish children as well because she's multilingual. Academically she's absolutely fine.

**Marijus** was admitted to Parkland School in September 2013 from Lithuania and joined the Year 10 group, with an initial assessment of S3 in English. The initial notes from the EAL co-ordinator are that he was a bright student, keen on football and basketball, and would make good progress if included from the start with appropriate supportive strategies in all areas. In the first year there was some adjustment in the teachers' assessment of his academic potential. The science teacher commented that Marijus struggled in the GCSE science group in which he was initially placed and was moved to a coursework class:

Now some of that was down to the behaviour in the classroom that he couldn't understand, and some of that was due to the fact that he doesn't like taking the exams and he can't access exams. So we just moved him to the coursework module and the EAL team has just provided us with a Lithuanian translator to help us with that, so he's getting there.

His English teacher used closed activities targeting formal features of writing such as verb tenses, phrasing, and switching between formal and informal registers in writing. In the writing tasks for our study, Marijus was one of the most profuse writers. Particular features of improvement between 2014 and 2015 were correct use of the present tense (seven in 2014 and 19 in 2015) and in correct use of the past tenses (one in 2014 and 10 in 2015). The greater range of correct uses of these tenses was also evident in his speaking at the two interviews, but the most striking feature of his spoken English was his frequent use of reported speech (54 instances in 2014 and 23 instances in 2015). In his interviews with us, Marijus revealed that he had a few behavioural problems in class which he sometimes interpreted in terms of cultural difference. The EAL co-ordinator confirmed that there had been some issues with his behaviour and attitude in some lessons and that he had not worked diligently in his first year at the school: 'he didn't do any work, so he just didn't work for about a year and then suddenly he got a fright because he was told he was so far behind and he had to go to all of these extra classes and detentions to catch up on coursework'. For his GCSE results, Marijus obtained a C in maths, a D in English language and Art & Design, an E in English literature, a G in geography, P1 in science and L2 pass in BTEC sport.

**Laima** was assessed for admission to Kirkwood Academy in June 2013 and joined the Year 10 cohort in September 2013. She spoke mainly Lithuanian at home with her family though she said her sister spoke English well and helped her with it. She was assessed at pre-level 1 National Curriculum for listening and speaking in English and at a slightly higher level (stage 2 level 1) in reading and writing. In the 2014 teacher interviews, her history teacher commented that she was 'very quiet' and that she did not mix at all with the other students in class: 'I felt sorry for her so I made sure I gave her a lot more one-to-one'. One strategy the history teacher used to support Laima was to highlight key words in yellow on her handouts. At interview Laima told us that she found history particularly difficult because it involved a different type of English: 'Because language is so difficult for me, not like English, it's not like normal you can speak; it's so difficult for me'. The maths teacher, on the other hand, reported that Laima was moved up sets in maths as a result of her determination to do well and as the language barrier had lowered:

she started in set four, we moved her to set three, she's now in set two in maths and it is probably a little bit difficult for her at the moment but she wants to do well and I think she will just keep plugging away at her maths, but I don't think it really is her language anymore. She maybe isn't as good as she would like to be but she wants to work at it.

In our writing tasks, Laima showed distinct progress between 2014 and 2015. The most striking areas of improvement were in a more than double increase in word length (171 and 446), range of correct uses of verb forms in present, past and future tenses, and in the number of complex sentences produced (seven and 24). Analysis of the language she produced at the interviews showed little change between 2014 and 2015 in the items targeted, other than an increase in instances of expressions of feeling (three and seven). The present tense continued to be the dominant tense used in her speech, although while she made quite a few errors of conjugation in the first interview (e.g. 'I'm not speak very well', 'she learn me'), her use of tenses was much more accurate in the second interview. For her final GCSE grades, Laima gained a C in maths, a D in history and English literature, an E in English language, an F in history, ICT merit, and a Pass in BTEC PE.

**Petras** joined Kirkwood Academy in March 2013 from Lithuania and was assessed as Pre-NC level 1 in speaking, listening and writing in English and NC level 1 in reading. He spoke Russian and Lithuanian with his parents and was also competent in Polish. At home he spoke mainly Russian and at school mainly Lithuanian with friends as well as English. His favourite lesson was art. In 2014 when he was in Year 9, his history teacher described him as 'quite lazy' and susceptible to being distracted by peers at his table. His science teacher described him as 'quite an able student'. He had moved Petras up a set 'which was fairly positive' and was looking to move him up another set:

The class he moved into was a large class in terms of numbers; in Year 9 our classes are quite big. And when I could go round and talk to him individually it was evident that he actually knew way more than was coming out in the context of a class of 32, 33 or even in a table with sort of 8 or 9 students on it. And it's that sort of individual attention which I think is better.

In July 2015 the EAL co-ordinator commented that she was disappointed with his progress. In her view he was 'very intelligent' and because she had not given him the same attention as in the previous academic year, his work rate and performance had dipped. The implication was that some teachers were not pushing students like Petras sufficiently to achieve to their potential. In our writing task, Petras performed comparatively weakly in round 1; and in round 2 there was little significant evidence of improvement beyond a wider range of correct forms of the present tense. In speaking there was more evidence of improvement in language competence over the year: in range of usage of verb tenses, including past and future tenses; in expressions of feeling and likes and dislikes; and in expressions of conjecture, although even in the first interview he did use some quite complex sentence structures (e.g. 'other people helped me if I needed help and if there were none of my friends next to me').

### Progression in assessment grades recorded by subject teachers

Centrally recorded marks in the schools' databases give some indication of the extent of progression in each subject for an individual by viewing the sequence of marks from first to last recorded grade in a given academic year. Both schools recorded assessment and effort grades and targets for all students in the different subjects they were studying, though different frameworks of assessment were used and the number of marks and grades recorded per student varied between the schools. As can be seen from Table 6, in both schools the largest group within the sample indicated no grade improvement during 2014-2015, and the second largest group indicated improvement by one grade over this period. Maths and Art & Design stand out as the subjects which recorded the greatest grade improvement: twelve students improved by one grade or more in the former, and six in the latter.

Table 6: Difference between first and last grades recorded in 2014-2015 for each subject

	Parkland School				Kirkwood Academy				Total			
	-1	0	+1	+2	-1	0	+1	+2	-1	0	+1	+2
English language	1	7	4	–	2	2	4	2	3	9	8	2
English literature	6	3	1	–	–	5	2	–	6	8	3	–
Maths	1	3	7	1	1	4	4	–	2	7	11	1
Science	1	8	1	1	–	4	4	2	1	12	5	3
RE	3	4	2	1	–	4	3	–	3	8	5	–
History	1	–	–	–	2	1	2	–	3	1	2	–
Geography	–	1	–	–	–	–	1	–	–	1	1	–
Humanities	–	–	–	–	–	3	1	–	–	3	1	–
Sociology	–	1	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	1	–	–
Art & Design	–	–	5	1	–	3	–	–	–	3	5	1
Product Design	–	–	1	–	2	4	4	–	2	4	5	–
ICT	–	–	–	–	–	6	–	–	–	6	–	–
Music	2	1	–	–	–	–	–	–	2	1	–	–
Drama	–	1	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	1	–	–
Spanish	–	1	–	–	–	2	–	–	–	3	–	–
Urdu	–	–	1	1	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	1
Total	15	30	22	5	7	38	25	4	22	68	47	8

### Comparing final GCSE grades with predicted grades.

In our cohort of 22 participant students, there were ten students who sat their GCSE exams in the summer of 2015 (we are excluding, for the purposes of this analysis, exams taken in BTEC subjects): seven students at Parkland School and three students at Kirkwood Academy. In total, 65 GCSE exams were taken between these ten students and if we compare the final grade attained with the schools' predicted GCSE grades for the students in these subjects we can see that in a little under half of the number, 31, the final grades

matched the predicted grade recorded by the school. In the remainder, 20 actual grades were higher than the predicted grades, and in 14 cases they were lower than the school predicted grades. While predictions of performance in an exam are sometimes undermined by unforeseeable circumstances in individual cases, it is nevertheless worth noting the relatively high number of exam results which were under-predicted by 'pessimistic' estimated grades made by the schools: 20, or just under a third of the total.

Table 7: Comparison of final GCSE grades awarded and the schools' predictions

	Final grade same as predicted grade	Final grade higher than predicted grade	Final grade lower than predicted grade
Parkland School	28	15	11
Kirkwood Academy	3	5	3
Total	31	20	14

This contrasts with the findings reported by Gill and Benton (2015) and Gill and Chang (2014) for the OCR exam board which show that, for all GCSEs in 2013 and 2014, the number of 'optimistic' predicted grades (i.e. which proved to be higher than the final grade awarded) exceeded those which were 'pessimistic' by just under a third. The researchers point out that this was particularly true for predictions made with grades below C. **While teachers thus seem to have a tendency to be overly optimistic about the GCSE grades of their students in general, is it also possible that, at the lower end of the scale, they have a tendency to be 'pessimistic' about the grade potential of their EAL students?** A large-scale comparison of EAL final and predicted GCSE grades is needed to verify the indications of our case study.

### 3.6 Participant students' performance in writing English

As described in the Methodology section in Appendix A of this report, all case study students completed an open-ended writing task, supported by a few prompts in English to direct the focus of the output, at the two rounds of interviews. The purpose of this task was to measure progress in formal and communicative features of language as expressed in writing. The focus of the analysis is on change in three areas: in general features such as word count and use of L1 words, in the use and accuracy of formal features of language such as spelling errors and verb tense usage, and in communicative (or functional) use of language to express thought and emotion. The main findings of this evidence are given below.

#### Limited signs of overall improvement in writing

One of the main areas of improvement in performance in the written task between round 1 (2014) and round 2 (2015) was in changes in word count (or text length) in the texts produced by the students. There was a significant overall increase in word count in round 2 ( $p=.01$ ). For instance, in round 1 Anikke (Lithuanian girl, Parkland School) wrote 130 words and in the second she wrote 221 words. All students, regardless of level of academic ability, wrote more in the second round than they did in the first round. This can be interpreted as a sign of improved confidence in written expression in English over the intervening period, although there continued to be a wide disparity in the extent of improvement between individual students.

A second area of improvement related to an increase in correct uses of the formal and communicative features targeted in the writing task (see Appendix A, Table 24 for a list of the features analysed). There was also an increase in the ratio of correct to incorrect (or attempted) use of these features overall, though this was only significant in the use of present tense ( $p=.002$ ) and expression of conjecture ( $p=.002$ ). The main verb tenses used were the present and, to a lesser extent, the past tenses; there was little evidence of competence in using other tenses.

Table 8: Extracts of performance in writing tasks in rounds 1 and 2

Pseudonym	2014	2015
Anikke, Parkland School	My first shool in Lithuanian and this school very different, because in this shool very much people from Đvairus countries and in Lithuanian school peope go tik lietuviai.	When I start going to school I found Lithuanian friends and they helped me in lessons when I don't understand something.
Fatima, Parkland School	I am going in Six form in Future and i want to do Art and Science in A level because this is my favourt subject	I would like to live in Pakistan in the future because i want to be a nurse and want to help people in Pakistan because there are lots of poor people in there.
Ana, Kirkwood Academy	I'm know in this school and when I arrived in this school I feeled different because I can't speek english but know I have freends and good teachers who helpe my to lear English.	When I arrived here I was happy and sad, I got to see lots of different things, I got to lern a new language, I got to have new friends, but I left my best friends and my famaly behaind.
Tomas, Kirkwood Academy	In first days i feel nervois because it's was my fist day in different school.	When I came to England I felt exited but after few months I felt bored because I didn't go to school I couldn't can find friends I just was in home.
Petras, Kirkwood Academy	When I will left school I will go to Colige and after Colige I will go to University for business Prefession.	My ideal town would be with nice history about it and a lot of nice people, I wan't my town to be next to a sea and it will have always nice weathe

### Improvement in written English and L1 use at home

**There was no evidence that using the L1 as the main medium of communication at home was a barrier to improvement in the development of writing in English.**

The only significant difference in the language scores between the group of students who spoke only the L1 at home and some English in school and those who spoke both English and their L1 at home and at school was in the production of spelling mistakes in rounds 1 and 2, with the latter group performing better in both rounds ( $p=.040$ ). However, the imbalance of group size (16 and six, respectively) may have affected this finding. It is nonetheless worth noting that some of the highest scoring writers reported that they spoke exclusively in the L1 at home due, in general, to their parents' lack of English. They also said they were avid readers of English fiction and this may well have played a more significant role in the development of their competence in writing. For instance, Andrius revealed that he enjoyed crime, horror and suspense books. Similarly, Ona commented that she read a lot in English: 'I think that reading helps me a lot because every time I read in English I learn more words and I can use it in like talking with other people and it expands my language, my English language'.

### Improvement in written English and composition of friendship groups

**EAL learners who had mixed friendship groups in school consisting of peers who shared their home language and those who were English speakers performed best in the writing tasks.**

The students who reported being part of mixed friendship groups displayed the highest proportion of correct uses of formal and communicative features of English in their writing. There was a significant difference between the performance of the three groups in the first round task (all or mostly L1 speakers; mix of L1 and English speakers; all or mostly English speakers) in relation to use of the present tense ( $p=.045$ ) and expression of likes and dislikes ( $p=.017$ ). The group of students who reported having mostly L1 speakers as friends in school performed the least well in the written tasks. The group of students who said they had mostly English speakers as friends made significantly more spelling errors in the tasks than those in the other two groups ( $p=.008$ ). However, a year later, in the second round task the difference between the three groups in terms of writing performance was reduced.

## Correlation between performance in the study written test scores and initial assessment on admission

### There was some correlation between scores for the students' written performance and the schools' initial assessment of the students on admission

On admission, together with all other EAL arrivals at the participant schools, and following an array of assessment procedures described earlier in the report, 12 students in our sample were assessed as being at level 0 to 1 in English, using modified versions of the QCA EAL Common Scale of descriptors; five were assessed as being at level 1+ to 2; and five were assessed as being at level 2+. We used these groupings to investigate evidence of different patterns of language progression between the students who began at the school with different levels of competence in English and found that the schools' assessments were generally good predictors of success in the writing task, particularly in the first round.

For over two thirds of the variables targeted in the analysis of the writing task, the students' performance increases as the level of initial assessment group increases, although the difference between the groups is only significant in a few cases: students at level 2+ were more likely to write longer texts ( $p=.016$  in round 1 and  $p=.017$ , in round 2), to use more complex sentences ( $p=.011$  in round 1 and  $p=.017$  in round 2), and to write more accurately. While for the first writing task the mean scores for over two thirds of the variables increased according to the assessment group, in the second writing task this was only so in the case of seven variables, suggesting that over time the initial assessment level had less effect, especially with communication features. However, with respect to formal features of writing, the students at level 2+ still produced significantly more complex sentences ( $p=.011$ ) and used tenses more accurately. The gap, therefore, seems to have reduced with regard to communicative features of writing but not to formal features over this period. It may be that improvement in communicative features in written expression benefited from increasing informal oral interactions with peers and teachers in English.

#### Example of difference in Past Tense use between round 1 and round 2 written task completion by Fatima (Pakistani girl, School A)

Range of correct uses of Past tenses:

Round 1: I arrived; I finished (total range of past tense instances: 2)

Round 2: we had; we couldn't; shop which was near; atmosphere was; it was; I didn't know; I was; I came; I lived; I went; they were also (total: 11)

## 3.7 Participant students' performance in speaking English

Analysis of progress in speaking was carried out, as indicated in the methodology section of this report, through analysis of aspects of the language and discourse interactions in the student interviews in rounds 1 and 2. Using the semi-structured interviews as the basis of analysis allowed us to gain insights into the development of the students' oral competence in English in a semi-formal setting. Unlike, 'experimentally elicited' learner language (Ellis & Barkhuizen, 2005, p.23) through the use, for instance, of specifically designed language tasks, analysis of interviews provides evidence of the development of 'naturally occurring' language produced in a real-life situation where the focus is on the content of communication but where also there is a degree of control of direction of the use of language through appropriately selected questions. The focus of the analysis, as stated earlier, is on three areas: change in the use and accuracy of formal features of language, communicative (or functional) use of language to express thought and emotion, and interactional features of performance at the interview including degree of reliance on an interpreter.

#### Example of difference in communicative features of language use in round 1 and round 2 speaking: Use of direct (reported) and indirect speech.

Anikke (Lithuanian girl, Parkland School)

Round 1 interview: No use of direct or indirect speech

Round 2 interview:

Direct speech: They say: "how you can't understand what I said?"

Indirect speech: Teachers says to do a task; I ask the teacher what does it mean; they say where you need to sit; The teacher says she has problems in her family.



## Areas of improvement in spoken English

**For the sample as a whole, there was evidence of significant improvement in the students' comprehension at interview, their willingness to speak, and in certain areas of language production.**

A comparative analysis of the interview recordings in rounds 1 and 2 shows enhanced confidence and willingness to speak as indicated by the overall increase of length of turn which was measured by comparing the three longest turns (i.e. responses to a question) produced by each student in rounds 1 and 2. Improved comprehension of spoken English was indicated by a significant decrease in the frequency of interviewer recast (i.e. re-phrasing of a question due to the student's lack of understanding). Although scores on use of recast constituted the only measure in which change from round 1 to round 2 was statistically significant, most of the measures of difficulties with comprehension decreased between the two rounds. Interpreter interventions, in particular, were greatly reduced in round 2. However, with some weaker students there were lingering issues of comprehension despite the lapse of time since their arrival at the school. For instance, Krzysztof (Polish boy with SEN, Parkland School) still needed the interpreter to translate the interviewer's questions on 36 occasions in the round 2 interview.

As Table 9 below shows, there were three main areas of communicative features of speech in which the sample as a whole showed significant improvement between the two rounds: use of conjecture, expressions of likes and dislikes, and expressions of feeling. The improvement in speech performance was evident in the significant increases in successful attempts at formulating these expressions as well as in unsuccessful attempts. In other words, the students showed greater willingness to express themselves using these features and they showed more success in using them.

Similarly, with the formal features of speech which we analysed, there were two main areas showing significant improvement for the sample as a whole: verb tenses, and use of connectives. While the analysis shows a statistically significant improvement for the use of the present, past and future tenses, we should note that the mean scores for correct present tense usage in Years 1 and 2 were much higher (32.14 and 65.86, respectively) than for other tenses. The second highest scores for verb tenses used were for correct instances of variants of the past tense (mean scores of 8.86 and 26.14, for rounds 1 and 2 respectively). In other words, many students in the sample continued to rely exclusively on the present tense to express themselves in round 2. Finally, the accuracy of usage of the features of speech was defined by measuring the proportion of correct uses of a feature out of the total uses attempted. As the table below indicates, there was a significantly greater proportion of correct uses of the present, past and future tenses, and of conjecture and expressions of feeling in round 2 compared to round 1.

More broadly speaking, there was a significant decrease in the range of difficulties encountered in English language production ( $Z = -2.299, p = .021$ ), as measured by instances of interpreter scaffolding of responses in English, indecipherable responses, pronunciation-based miscomprehension by the interviewer, and interviewer requests for clarification. Similarly, there was also a significant decrease over time in the number of comprehension difficulties encountered by pupils ( $Z = -2.236, p = .025$ ), as indicated by interaction with the interpreter or a need for clarification by the interviewer.

Table 9: Features of student language performance at interview showing significant improvement between round 1 and round 2.

	Mean Round 1	Mean Round 2	Z	p
Total longest turns	145.00	216.59	-2.435	.015*
Interviewer recast	4.50	0.41	-3.403	.001*
Formal features:				
Present tense (correct)	32.14	65.86	-4.109	.000*
Past tense (correct)	8.86	26.14	-4.011	.000*
Future tense (attempted) <sup>3</sup>	0.14	0.95	-2.672	.008*
Future tense (correct)	0.59	3.73	-3.703	.000*
Connectives	6.55	11.23	-3.968	.000*
% Present tense correct	68.90	81.50	-3.068	.002*
% Past tense correct	57.68	72.65	-2.321	.020*
% Future tense correct	30.30	68.43	-2.838	.005*
Communicative features:				
Conjecture (attempted)	0.36	1.59	-3.330	.001*
Conjecture (correct)	1.05	6.27	-3.644	.000*
Comparison (attempted)	0.45	2.18	-3.487	.000*
Comparison (correct)	2.00	6.41	-3.412	.001*
Feeling (correct)	1.55	6.00	-4.006	.000*
Like/dislike (attempted)	0.05	0.68	-2.889	.004*
Like/dislike (correct)	1.64	4.91	-3.159	.002*
% Conjecture correct	30.30	63.97	-2.867	.004*
% Feeling correct	58.79	84.79	-2.587	.010*

### Improvement in spoken English and home language use

There was no significant effect of home and school use of L1 on spoken English performance.

In round 1 (2014) there was no statistically significant difference between the groups but Group 2 (consisting of students with both L1 and English friends at home and school) performed comparatively better. They used a higher proportion of correct formal and communicative features, and encountered fewer language production difficulties than Group 1 (students who only used L1 at home and some English at school). In Year 2 the gap between the two groups narrowed.

### Improvement in spoken English and composition of friendship groups

Having mixed language friendship groups (L1 and English-speaking) had a more positive effect on EAL students' spoken competence in English than monolingual-based groups did, particularly in the first few months following admission.

In Year 1, as with writing outcomes, the best performing group was Group 2 (students who reported having a mix of L1 and English speaking friends); they exhibited the lowest scores for range of difficulties in language production and comprehension and the highest scores for range of formal language features. Group 1 performed least well, with statistically significant differences in scores for interactional features ( $p=.030$ ), correct use of likes and dislikes ( $p=.002$ ) and range of correct past tense use ( $p=.027$ ). In Year 2, the groups' performance was more similar. Group 3 (students who reported having mostly English speakers as friends) were the most accurate in their use of formal and communicative features, scoring the highest percentages in correct usage.

<sup>3</sup> While technically the English language does not have a future tense, due to absence of inflection of verb morphology to represent futurity, we use the label in this report for ease of reference.

### Correlation between performance in the study written test scores and initial assessment on admission

#### There was some correlation between scores for the students' English speaking performance and the schools' initial assessment of the students on admission

Analysis of the extent of correlation between the schools' initial assessment of the EAL students and the results of our two staged analysis of the participants' language performance serves two purposes. Firstly, it provides some confirmation or otherwise of the accuracy of both sets of data; secondly, it provides us with some insight into the relative rate of improvement in different aspects of language use by learners who were assessed at different levels of competence in English on arrival at the school.

In general, the initial language assessment of the EAL participant students at both schools matched our analysis of their progression in English over the two years. In the case of about half of the variables targeted in the analysis, performance improves as the initial group level increases, but this is only significant in a few cases: interviewer recast ( $p=.018$ ), correct past tense ( $p=.010$ ) and longest turns ( $p=.027$ ). The higher the initial assessment level, the longer the turns and the more formal and communicative features produced.

In round 2, students in the level 1 – 2 group had the fewest language production difficulties and the level 2+ group had the fewest comprehension difficulties, although the difference was not significant. As with the first interview, in the case of about half of the variables the performance improves as the initial level increases. The difference between the groups is significant for correct uses of the following formal features: present tense ( $p=.029$ ), past tense ( $p=.001$ ), future tense ( $p=.013$ ), connectives ( $p=.023$ ); and the following communicative features: conjecture ( $p=.027$ ) and comparisons ( $p=.005$ ). For these features the difference between groups seems more marked than in round 1, which suggests that the high attainers were stretching away from those in the lower group. The highest level group is still more likely to use a significantly greater range of formal ( $p=.006$ ) and communicative features ( $p=.018$ ).

Finally, comparing change between rounds 1 and 2 in the students' use of all the language items targeted in the study can provide us with some evidence of the differences in the rate of progress of students initially assessed at the three broad levels of competence in English. It is important to bear in mind the caveat that where the initial mean score is low the percentage change recorded is likely to be higher than in those cases where mean scores for both rounds are high. In other words, there is a 'ceiling effect' whereby the scope for improvement of students who begin at a higher level of competence will be more limited than that of students who have a low starting-point. Nonetheless, the scores in our sample indicate that Group 2 (assessed at level 1+ to 2) recorded the highest percentage difference in more items than the other two groups.

### 3.8 Summary

The social, linguistic and academic dimensions of EAL students' progression in school are both interlinked and follow parallel paths. It is clear from the evidence presented in this section that students used their L1 and their social interactions with peers to support their acquisition of English and their subject learning in the first year following arrival at the school in England. These interactions and the gradual socialisation into the new community complemented the pedagogical and pastoral support provided by the schools.

In terms of progressive improvement in English over the first two years, there was a more marked improvement in the students' spoken English than in the development of their competence in writing. Speaking seems to draw on a range of sources of input including peer interaction in English. The development of EAL students' writing, widely seen as an area of under-performance (Murphy, Kyriacou & Menon, 2015), is more dependent on formal academic and pedagogical input and on assessment feedback and this requires greater and more concentrated effort in order for most EAL students to reach requisite standards of competence within the reduced timescale of their schooling.

Progression in academic attainment is more difficult to gauge given the influence of external variables such as an individual's prior learning and timing of their transition to the UK educational system. **For students arriving late in the school cycle, it is not clear how the immersion approach alone can ensure that they are able to perform to their best ability in GCSE and other exams.** The pattern of grades achieved by our participant students shows, as indicated in studies of the DfE statistical data (Strand et al., 2015; Tereshchenko & Archer, 2015), that EAL students can make more headway in less verbally-focused subjects such as maths<sup>4</sup> or Art and Design than in humanities subjects. However, it is important to avoid thinking of certain subjects as unsuitable for EAL students if we are to avoid presenting them with a restricted curriculum. Furthermore, summative assessment marks of EAL newcomers must be viewed alongside qualitative evidence from teachers who have knowledge of the individual's background and potential.

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4 However, as noted by one of the teachers below, the maths curriculum in England has been changing and becoming more linguistically dependent.

## Section 4: Flexible and differentiated: teachers' professional knowledge base for EAL pedagogy

### 4.1 Introduction

This section focuses on teachers' views on the EAL support in the two participant schools and aims to provide insights into teachers' professional knowledge base and the question of what is appropriate for EAL pedagogy. The discussion will draw on the 'EAL Triangle' (see Appendix A of this report; Arnot et al., 2014; Liu & Evans, in press) and on the findings of the study in relation to what works and what needs to be known in practice by teachers across the curriculum in order to promote EAL learners' language development, social integration and educational achievement. It should be noted that although the interviews are based on the perceptions of individual teachers from two schools, the overall message was relatively consistent across contexts in calling for a needs-sensitive, context-dependent and individual-based EAL pedagogy. The whole section is divided into three main sub-sections, each focusing on teachers' views and examining these in the context of research about what works. These perceptions and beliefs reflect the teachers' thinking and assumptions about best practice and, as will be shown in section 4.4, broadly reflect a 'common principle, diverse strategies' approach to EAL pedagogy described in the literature. The sub-sections relate to 'the system' (4.2), 'the learner' (4.3), and 'the practice' (4.4) in the teachers' respective schools.

### 4.2 Maintaining quality provision in challenging times

Parkland School and Kirkwood Academy differed in many ways but staff in both reported similar **challenges, the most prominent of which was the fact that centrally provided services such as bilingual translation and regional teacher training from the local authority were dwindling, while the replacement support, mainly provided through external bought-in service, was felt to be lacking local relevance.** The headteachers and the EAL co-ordinators we interviewed admitted that their schools faced enormous challenges with an increasing EAL population and limited capacity and resources. The co-ordinator in Parkland School described the experience of her school as follows:

Before the shrinking of the Local Authority, there was regular training and meetings and there was a network of EAL co-ordinators and people working in [...] that area of education, specialising in it and we were all self-supporting. There isn't a team of people at all that the Local Authority can provide for parents' evenings or for readmission meetings or for admissions, so in the past we had access but now we have to, you know, find people ourselves which is quite difficult. (EAL co-ordinator, Parkland School)

The removal of funds previously ringfenced for EAL at a local authority level was therefore perceived by school staff as a retrograde step, even if additional funding was now devolved to schools.<sup>5</sup> Despite this lack of central support, there was great reluctance in both schools to compromise the quality of EAL work which, according to the EAL co-ordinator at Parkland School, was based on a personalised approach and was essentially 'adaptable and responsive to change'.

In our interviews, the headteachers stressed the importance of EAL work and their willingness to give strong support to the EAL team. In Parkland School, for example, the EAL unit was relocated to a much bigger room next to the library in the centre of the school and the EAL co-ordinator reported directly to the deputy head rather than to the manager of learning support. In Kirkwood Academy, the position of EAL co-ordinator had been created two years earlier to enable the work to be done in a more effective way. Neither of the EAL teams had a budget for themselves, but they knew that if they needed anything, 'they [the headteachers] would find the money for it'. The strong and supportive leadership seemed to also have a very positive impact on the morale of the EAL staff who were appreciative that their work was highly valued by their line managers.

It is clear that in both schools the negative impact of losing ring-fenced central support was cushioned through positive leadership, strong communities, and teacher dedication. This, however, raises an important question pertaining to the possibilities of maintaining high quality EAL support in schools which are located in disadvantaged areas and where experienced EAL co-ordinators and strong leadership are lacking. A comprehensive solution to the problem is beyond the remit of the research, but the message calling for more EAL resources and for school leadership accountability in relation to the funding is clearly evidenced throughout our data.

### 4.3 Multiple constructions of the 'EAL learner'

#### Lack of English is the main challenge for EAL learners

As stated in our introduction, the term EAL has been questioned in the literature, as it is deemed to be too all-encompassing. Some EAL students may be third generation migrants and highly proficient in English, while others, particularly new arrivals, are usually associated with having a low language ability which prevents them from accessing the curriculum. The relationship between EAL students' progression in academic subjects and their English proficiency also shows much complexity (Demie, 2013; Demie & Strand, 2006, Strand & Demie, 2005). In our interviews, many teachers admitted that the language barrier remained the biggest hindrance for EAL students, particularly for new arrivals from overseas, who usually had very limited English or no English at all. This concurs with the findings in the Strand et al. (2015) report which indicates that the negative impact of language proficiency on academic

<sup>5</sup> For a summary of current funding systems affecting EAL support in schools in England see the NALDIC website and for an account of the effects of the mainstreaming of funding on provision of support see their survey report (NASUWT, 2012).

achievement is particularly evidenced in the early rather than later stages of development and might vary among different ethnic groups. Teachers' views on this also aligned with comments in the pupil interviews, where participants spoke about the alienating effect of their lack of English and the anxiety that this generated. For students coming from the primary feeder schools, however, the challenge was less severe as they had mastered at the very least some basic language skills.

**The teachers interviewed perceived the language problem to be more prominent in literacy than in oracy, with many teachers observing that the majority of EAL students managed to develop functional oral proficiency within a year, but continued to struggle with reading and writing academic English texts even at Key Stage 4** (see Strand et al., 2015). The interview extract below with the EAL co-ordinator at Parkland School provided some evidence of perceived distinction between Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS) and Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP) (Cummins, 1981, 2000), which points to the need for continuous support for advanced bilingual students:

The hardest thing always is to learn more formal English. They are going to [...] pick up conversational fluency, I don't know, 12, 15 weeks, you know, some fluency, to two years and may well have a beautiful English accent by the end of that time and have lost any trace of an accent from elsewhere. But academic English in [...] subject specific academic English, and understanding the difference between writing for different audiences, can take a lot longer. So really formal written English is the most difficult skill for all EAL, that's for all kids generally, but for EAL kids, whether they are, whether they come to school at the age of five and learn English then or whether they come to Parkland at the age of 14 and start learning English then, that is always the hardest thing to do and that's the thing that as EAL support staff and as mainstream teachers generally, that's what needs to be pushed and accommodated. (EAL co-ordinator, Parkland School)

An additional issue is that learning for EAL students entails dealing with language and content simultaneously (see Cenoz & Ruiz de Zarobe, 2015; Dalton-Puffer & Smit, 2013, for reviews of research on CLIL). Teachers suggested in the interviews that they thought it was essential for them to grasp some basic language skills first before moving on to learning the curricular content. Typically, arts and humanities subjects such as English and history are very dependent on students' levels of English, because the content of these subjects involves nuanced 'cultural connotations'. This concurred with our findings in the pupil interviews where some of them commented that they found history difficult, especially because of the subject-specific and culture-related vocabulary. A history teacher, for example, commented on the 'nuances' of English and its impact on the learning of history as a subject:

I remember vividly six or seven years ago I had two twin girls put into my GCSE class and it was just beyond them. Their written and verbal English was incredibly weak, they had no idea of the content; it was very, very difficult, and I always wanted them to do extra English lessons to get them up to a standard where they could understand a piece of text. And I think that it's a nuance sometimes. Even these words, nuances sometimes of the English language, especially in history, to understand what the meaning is, the tone of a piece of writing in history is so vast, you have to really read it and understand it. **And I've got kids that speak English that struggle with it**, and I think it's the content and the skill set does throw a lot of EAL students off. Some do. It literally depends on their grasp of the language. (History teacher, Kirkwood Academy)

In more 'context embedded subjects' (Cummins, 2000) such as science and mathematics, there has also been an increased emphasis in the curriculum on the use of functional linguistic skills.<sup>6</sup> A maths teacher discussed in detail the language demand in learning mathematics and the impact of the change of curriculum on learning the subject:

Well anything that improves their language skills will support the maths because the maths curriculum has been changing and it's becoming more and more functional, so they do now need a much better understanding of the English language and also they need an understanding of how to apply their maths and be able to explain it. So if their English is very, very weak they are seriously disadvantaged now whereas 20 years ago it wasn't so obvious. So yes, anything that improves their vocabulary and understanding is essential now in maths. (Maths teacher, Kirkwood Academy)

In short, teachers and EAL co-ordinators considered level of English as being the key to accessing the curriculum, with the development of literacy more often lagging behind oracy, yet central to accessing curricular content. This view echoes the finding reported in the previous chapter showing limited signs of overall improvement in the writing produced by our sample of participant students.

### **A learner is a learner**

Although the teachers we interviewed agreed that weakness in English remained the biggest hindrance for EAL students, they were reluctant to single them out for special attention in class. **Many teachers had serious concerns about labelling students in general and thought that it is 'not healthy' to single out certain students**; they said that they don't 'pigeon-hole them' or treat them differently (see also Arnot et al., 2014). Such a view is also compatible with an approach that recognises that EAL and non-EAL pupils will sometimes have similar language learning needs; for example, in acquiring the relevant skill set for writing academic English (e.g. Rose & Martin, 2012).

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<sup>6</sup> Strand et al. (2015, p. 28) found that EAL students were slightly more likely than first language English students to achieve an A\*-C pass in mathematics and in MFL.

Overall, the principle of differentiated 'education for all' was carefully observed. For those EAL students who had mastered some English, 'immersion' and 'deep water swimming' right from the start were deemed the most effective approach for them (see also Leung, 2007). Many teachers confirmed that they did not treat these students differently except that they felt the need to 'keep an eye on them' and constantly 'check on their understanding' in order to monitor their progress. This gentle approach was mentioned in an interview with the English teacher at Kirkwood Academy:

I've tended to have been quite lucky, because I teach a higher set at GCSE, a lot of the students I've had who are EAL haven't struggled, so they've either come in and been learning English for quite a while, or they've picked it up very, very quickly. So with the training we've had it's been more me remembering to check that they're understanding the language and the context. Because although they can pick up a lot of it, there is still the odd thing that they don't understand, but that's the same as the English students, checking that their understanding of words that perhaps I would expect them to understand, they don't; so it's being much more aware, and asking and checking. (English teacher, Kirkwood Academy)

For those students who were 'really struggling' and who 'got lost' in the class, however, many teachers stressed that it was important to provide appropriate support based on individuals' needs (Arnot et al., 2014). They emphasised, however, that additional support should be provided in a 'discreet' and 'implicit' way, as they had learned from past experience that EAL students do not generally want to be singled out from their peers in lessons:

No, I think it's... Well, what happens in the classroom, I think, is paramount. You obviously need awareness, but it needs to be done discreetly. You can't just label people. It would be very wrong to label someone with just that. At the end of the day, we're teaching students, we're giving them access to some learning, so it's there for everybody. It's not, oh, you're EAL, therefore I'm going to treat you very differently. You do in your planning and your differentiation, but you don't do it in an obvious way, because that would alienate [...] I think that would alienate them socially. (MFL teacher, Parkland School)

#### EAL students bring diversity to the school and enrich the environment

Some teachers mentioned that **EAL support is essentially a matter of maintaining a balance between helping EAL students access the curriculum and protecting their linguistic and heritage identity (see Liu & Evans, in press)**. Rather than seeing EAL students as 'problems', many teachers actually saw them as 'assets' in the classroom as they provided some 'new' and 'different' experiences for all, both students and teachers (Arnot et al., 2014; Tereshchenko & Archer, 2015; Hamilton, 2013). Some related this to the changing demographics in the region and considered EAL students as an indispensable part of the school and the community:

I think all students offer opportunities and advantage and I think that anybody has something to give to enrich the environment and the school environment. So I think that they fit in perfectly into our school environment and to be honest, I don't think they enrich more than anybody else, but they definitely offer a lot more and we'd be lacking without them. (Science teacher, Parkland School)

At the personal level, the history teacher at Parkland School also talked about how much he enjoyed working in a school with a large number of EAL students. For him, it was a rewarding and life-enriching experience:

I think you adjust accordingly, but [...] I think you can gain a lot from a student who's come from a different background. It's why I've not left this school in ten years. I absolutely love working with different cultures. And I'm white and I'm British and I'm also nearly 40 so I fit all the sort of stereotypes for this, that and the other, and it enriches my life, and I think being able to use and draw upon those experiences in the classroom is essential. So I think if you don't do that you're missing a trick as a teacher. (History teacher, Parkland School)

#### 4.4 Common principle, diverse strategies

The research literature in the field has repeatedly shown that EAL support in England is varied, patchy and very diverse (Conteh, 2012). There is also an indication in the professional literature that one size does not fit all in EAL and teachers need to provide support based on individual needs and situations (Bourne, 2001; Safford, 2003). These findings concur with what we observed in this study. Despite limited and decreasing resources, many teachers expressed a strong belief in a child-centred approach to EAL which, in their views, should serve as the cornerstone of the school support system. According to them, **'every child matters' but 'every child is different', so a child-centred approach embedded with sufficient flexibility and differentiation is important**. The valuing of diversity in this context includes a pedagogical awareness of the impact of home language and cultural background on the academic and social learning experiences of individual children at the school.

In the following, we will first present the core principle of teacher professionalism. This is followed by detailed discussion of a wide range of classroom strategies (see also Arnot et al., 2014).

##### The core principle of making professional judgement based on professional expertise

In both schools, there was no formal written policy for EAL pedagogy specifying what needed to be done across the board, nor did the teachers seem to want one. Many teachers felt strongly that EAL support was not 'black and white', preferring the system to have sufficient flexibility to allow the work to be done in a sensitive and appropriate way. The history teacher at Parkland School commented on how EAL worked in his school:

I think having a written policy, it's good to have systems, it's good to have procedures but I think having something that's in black and white limits professionalism and I think as long as the training and the capabilities are there and people know that there's a route to go and get advice, I think that's a much better way than having a policy. [...] I think it's right to have a system at the top but I think when departments put in black and white, "This is what you must do for an EAL child," I think that's when they've lost the battle and I think that's where EAL teaching becomes an issue. **For myself, being able to look at the child in a classroom, assessing their needs and putting a programme in place that meets that and supporting people who need it I think is a much better approach** because how can you have one policy which is dealing with children from Nigeria, Afghanistan, Asia, the Philippines, America, Germany, Portugal, Italy? Someone show me a policy that can cover that, and I'll tell you it won't be a small policy. (History teacher, Parkland School)

An interesting question arises here as to whether teachers at Parkland School in particular, having had many years of experience of teaching EAL students, were able to adjust their teaching skilfully to the needs of the learners they encountered, and whether teachers who were less familiar with such students might need more explicit guidance. Nevertheless, **according to these teachers, underpinning an appropriate EAL pedagogy was the belief that teachers need to be given the autonomy to make judgements based on their professional expertise.** The English teacher interviewed at Parkland School explained this pedagogical approach in terms of trying out a range of teaching strategies to meet specific needs of different individuals until progress in learning is observed:

No. Other than personalised learning. That's our ethos and that's what we work to so if there is a kid in our room who needs support they get it and there doesn't need to be a written policy for personalised learning. That's already there but EAL specifically we just throw every strategy we can at the class until things start to work and kids start to make progress. We work together as a team, we're a strong department so we care about making sure that every kid is making progress. (English teacher, Parkland School)

### Diverse strategies based on individual needs, situations and contexts

**There was acknowledgement in the interviews that it is important to stick to the common principles of 'mainstreaming', 'inclusiveness' and 'fairness' (see Leung, 2001, 2007). But many teachers agreed that whatever strategies were used should be based on individual needs, be context-specific and fit-for-purpose.** The strategies presented below were deemed by teachers to be working well in the classroom. They, however, were used in a differentiated way. **This 'differentiated diversity' in pedagogy, we argue, suits well the English school contexts that are often characterised by extreme complexity and superdiversity** (Vertovec, 2007).

#### *Flexible, personalised and continuous 'assessment for learning'*

As for pedagogy, neither school had a written policy on the assessment procedures to be followed for newly-arrived EAL students; the approach in use was flexible, personalised and continuous, which aimed to ensure that the EAL students were not disadvantaged and were able to develop their potential to full. The EAL co-ordinator talked about what she would do with new arrivals to ensure that they made progress:

It depends on their ability in English. But [...] if they have got knowledge of English they will go in mainstream, but I will still keep watching their achievement. And, for example, if they will be level 1, level 2, I will send them in the class but I will go and support them in the class. If they come with no English at all then [...] I will keep them with me one week, two weeks, and then they will start gradually. And again I will send them in the class and I will have intervention with them. (EAL co-ordinator, Kirkwood Academy)

The EAL assessment work was co-ordinated and led by the EAL teams, who also served as the hubs of communication responsible for collecting and distributing information. The EAL co-ordinators in both schools were very highly regarded by their colleagues and there was a lot of appreciation for the effort that they put into their work. For example, in Parkland School one teacher commented 'if you need anything, just go to [the EAL co-ordinator]'. Similarly, the EAL co-ordinator at Kirkwood Academy provided subject teachers with a brief pen portrait after an initial interview with the student, summarising the individual's level of English and learning ability.

Getting to know the students when they first arrive is an important part of the EAL assessment cycle. In both schools, information about the EAL children was received by the school before their arrival, but the type of information varied from student to student. For those who went straight from the feeder primary schools or were transferred from other local schools, students' profiles were passed on to the admission team by the local authority. In this situation, detailed information about the students, including their family background, socio-economic status as well as their academic performance, was available. However, if the students came directly from overseas or arrived from another city half way through the year, the information passed on was very limited, and sometimes, as one teacher put it, consisted of 'just a few sentences about their name, nationality, and sometimes language':

So it does massively depend on who the child is to be honest and how old they are and where they've come from. We would generally get what their level is in English, different subjects, favourite subjects, bit of background if we have it, languages spoken, that sort of thing. (English teacher, Parkland School)



Many teachers said that the initial information obtained at admission was fragmentary and unreliable and that they preferred to find out what the children were like when they arrived through in-house assessments and only used the information provided by the Local Authority as 'an indicator' or 'a signpost' to 'flag up' the issues that required special attention.

The initial assessment was usually conducted by the admission and EAL teams at the two schools. An interview was normally arranged for the children and their parents in the first week of their arrival and if necessary a bilingual interpreter was also provided to facilitate the process. The main purpose of the interview was to find out as much as possible about the children and to triangulate with the information passed on to the school. Some specialist assessments, particularly in mathematics, were also conducted, but in a way that only assessed 'the basic maths and the basic skills' of the children:

The most important thing for us initially is to know their competence within maths, not so much their sort of linguistic and their sort of grasp of English because we want to make sure that they go into the right set based on their maths ability rather than their level of English because we feel that their level of English will develop in time, but we need to make sure that [...] they're going to be challenged with regard to their maths. (Maths teacher, Parkland School)

The EAL co-ordinator at Kirkwood Academy also emphasised the importance of assessing EAL children's ability in maths:

The initial assessment will be only English and maths. And despite the fact if they know English or not, if they're good at maths, because we had cases, I will tailor their maths according to their ability. And the maths department is very, very supportive and I work very well with maths here. And because especially eastern European students, they are very good at maths and algebra where they don't need to know a lot of English[.] (EAL co-ordinator, Kirkwood Academy)

Results of the initial assessments were shared with colleagues and mainly used to inform decisions on setting. For science subjects, the teachers we interviewed reported that they would put the students in middle or higher sets where possible in the first three weeks and provided them with the experience of 'good language models'. Adjustments were made later on based on individual students' performance in the classroom. Many EAL students usually coped quite well with science and maths and were likely to remain in the same set after three weeks. For humanities and language-based subjects such as history and English, however, many teachers agreed that EAL students would need more time to develop their basic literacy skills in English before they could meet the language demand of these subjects and therefore were often moved to lower sets. The initial assessment was followed up by continuous classroom-based assessment by the subject teachers. Various types of information and evidence were recorded and collected throughout the year by the subject teachers which were then fed back to the EAL team.

When asked whether they would comment on EAL students' language errors in assessed work, some teachers said that they were well aware that 'every teacher is a language teacher' but insisted that they mainly focused on subject-specific language. A maths teacher at Kirkwood Academy said that language correction sometimes focused on the vocabulary of maths and at others on written English more generally:

If they use mathematical words incorrectly then you would comment on that. The problem would be if it's a functional question they might write an answer because then they have to write a sentence explaining their answers in the exam where you think it completely didn't make any sense because their English is limited, you would have to comment on that and explain to them how it should have been phrased to help them attain the marks they need to pass the GCSE (Maths teacher, Kirkwood Academy)

#### *Differentiated use of translation and bilingual resources in the classroom*

Translation was one of the most commonly used strategies by the teachers in both schools and took various forms (see also Arnot, et al., 2014). *Google Translate*, despite the teachers' reservations noted below, remained the most frequently used translating tool in the classroom and was deemed particularly helpful for struggling students. Although there were criticisms of the accuracy of the translation provided by the software, many teachers agreed that it could serve as a stepping-stone for EAL students to access the basic content of the subject, or to understand key instructions such as 'describe' and 'evaluate'.

Bilingual dictionaries were also seen as very useful in supporting EAL students, although they were less popular than *Google Translate*. Many students, according to the teachers we interviewed, were 'a little lazy' about using dictionaries. Despite this, they were still made available as supplementary resources in both schools and were recommended to certain students who were keen to explore beyond the superficial and sometimes vague meaning provided by *Google Translate*.

The English teacher at Parkland School referred to a Polish new arrival in her class who had brought with her a translation of *Romeo and Juliet* which served as a useful initial 'back-up':

She has a translated version of *Romeo and Juliet* so it's not only in the original Shakespeare but in the modern English. [...]. Has a copy in her home language because she studied it at school back home. So she brings that in occasionally. She's not using it very much anymore but to start with it was there as just a back-up really. (English teacher, Parkland School)



In practical and heavily content-based subjects, particularly science, bilingual materials in a range of languages were sometimes used to help EAL students understand the technical terms and vocabulary. For example, the science department at Kirkwood Academy provided laminated sheets of technical terms translated into a range of languages. It is important, however, for such translations to be checked by speakers of the languages involved in order to avoid providing students with inaccurate translations of the terms.

#### *Using visual, kinaesthetic and multimodal aids to reduce the language demand*

Teachers also reported using visual and kinaesthetic aids to help EAL students' progress. As language remained the biggest hindrance for EAL students, multimodal methods such as 'pictorial science dictionaries', 'TV programmes', 'pictures and cartoons', where understanding of the content was less dependent on text and talk, were also drawn upon to support students' learning.

In science subjects, the benefit of using visual and kinaesthetic aids was seen to be clear by the teachers. Opportunities were provided in practical sessions where students could 'feel', 'play' and 'shape' different objects and experience learning by doing such as 'mixing chemicals'. Similarly, a maths teacher talked about his experience of getting students to use cubes to make 3D shapes:

trying to be a bit more hands-on practical with the EAL students [...] Say, for example, when we're [...] doing plans and elevations using cubes, we get the students to make the 3D shapes with the cubes and then they can manipulate them physically in their hands [...] So that works for, you know, EAL students, [...] because it takes the sort of language barrier out of the way. (Maths teacher, Parkland School)

#### *Context-sensitive task simplification*

As well as providing differentiation by task, teachers modified and simplified their English input, drawing on training they had had about their use of their own language. The history teacher at Kirkwood Academy, for example, described how, following training from an external specialist provider, he now thought carefully about his use of language and the effect this had had on his appraisal of the effectiveness of his communication:

For those that have got non-specific issues I will do a lot more one-to-one and check understanding and we had some training [...] so I'd become very aware of how I speak, like very aware. I speak very quickly so when I'm talking to EAL students I don't slow it down massively but I will ... I think very carefully what I'm going to say and make my voice a lot clearer intentionally and cut down on colloquialisms and those kinds of details to make it very clear what I want them to do or to check on their understanding. And that I think has had a massive impact. Or it's made me think a lot about my teaching anyway, but definitely with those students I think it ... "did I say that too fast? I'll just go over that again and make sure I'm not using language I don't need to use", and that's been a massive, massive help. (History teacher, Kirkwood Academy)

Some of the techniques used in grading language appropriately when presenting tasks were quite similar to those used for teaching students with SEN or when teaching classes of mixed ability. Underlying these strategies was the core principle of genuine inclusion whereby additional support was provided but without labelling individual students.

#### *Use of home language for social and academic purposes*

While there is a lack of clarity about when the use of the home language in the education of EAL students is helpful and when it is not (Bourne, 2001; Leung, 2007), in both schools there was some consensus among staff we interviewed regarding the role that English and the home language should play academically and socially. All agreed that, socially, it was important to 'celebrate' EAL students' home languages and maintain their 'heritage linguistic identity' (Schmid, 2011). They allowed the EAL students to use their home language for the purpose of socialising and they would not intervene unless the students used their home language to deliberately exclude their peers.

In general, there was a strong feeling that English is very important for EAL learners' academic achievement, so where possible opportunities needed to be created and provided for them to pick up the language as quickly as possible. **The majority of the teachers, however, also indicated that it was essential to allow students to use their home language on some occasions, particularly when they were really struggling to access the curriculum.** The science teacher at Parkland School, for instance, commented on how home language might work in learning science:

Sometimes it's extremely important because sometimes it works better if they write what they're thinking in their own language and then they can read it again and try and process it into English. Because sometimes that doesn't naturally come and we do have EAL students that can think it, hear it in English, think it in their own language and put it down in English, and they seem to be able to make that transition. But other students, it's better for them to put it in their own language first and then write it from then in English, which means they don't get through quite as much work but what they have completed is far more valuable because they've actually learnt something. (Science teacher, Parkland School)

In interviews, pupils reflected on the 'strange' experience of mentally switching between languages and the need to process information first in the home language, so it would seem that this strategy of gradual moving towards full use of English is likely to be helpful. This is also confirmed by the EAL co-ordinator at the Parkland School:

It [home language] plays a really, really fundamental role. In the beginning we encourage students to use mother tongue when they're note-taking, even if they've got a measure of, even if they've got enough English to get by on, that if they're thinking high level, you know, concepts ... that they actually are better working in mother tongue and making notes. So, you know, we encourage the practice and whether or not everyone does it, I don't think they all do, but I know some teachers do, where you can write mother tongue notes on the left-hand side of the exercise book and English key words and so on on the right-hand side and they can carry on doing that for as long as they feel comfortable. ... we'd always say to somebody in maths: 'Don't ever start trying to count in English in your head, always count in whichever language or thought process that you learnt maths in first'. (EAL co-ordinator, Parkland School)

**In language-related subjects, such as English and MFL, the teachers were keen to support the children to develop biliteracy in English and home language. There was indication in the interviews that a grasp of the home language would be useful for the development of English skills and vice versa.** For example, an English teacher referred to how she encouraged children to develop bilingual fluency:

**We try to encourage students to read in their home language as well as in English to try and keep them bilingual,** increase the vocabulary in both languages. But having just had year 8 parents evening and tried that and brought that up with parents, parents are a little bit surprised that we were encouraging home language reading as well, and that's really important actually. (English teacher, Parkland School)

As the students progressed, many teachers would expect them to use English, as they did not want them to 'slip into a comfort zone' of using their own language. The extract below summarises many teachers' general attitude towards the use of the home language in the classroom, allowing the students, where necessary, to first secure their understanding through the home language and then helped to express their answers appropriately in written English:

Like I say, to gain that understanding, so once the students have gained the understanding then we would need to try and bring it back to [...] the written English language because [...] that's what they're going to be coming up against more in the future. (Maths teacher, Parkland School)

The teachers interviewed had developed their practice around home language use based on some well-conceived pedagogical principles, though this was not always obvious to the students, as seen in the previous section; pupils noted differences in practice whereby some teachers allowed home language use and others did not and were not clear why this was so. The implication here is that teachers need, on the one hand, to decide if and when they will encourage home language use and, on the other, to help EAL learners understand the role of the home language and the basis on which teachers are making decisions about its use. Such decisions need to be reflected in a whole school language policy, based on sound principles that can contribute to a coherent and consistent framework of practice.

#### *Making cultural and contextual reference to create resonance and rapport*

The teachers in both schools valued the opportunity to work in a multicultural environment and were keen to create opportunities to celebrate different heritages and cultures (see Conteh, 2012). For example, in Parkland School, cultural days were organised where students were invited to introduce their culture and country; senior students from the same country were invited to talk to the younger ones. These cultural activities were mainly organised at the social level, which aimed to create a sense of community in light of the school ethos 'Being Different, Belonging Together'. In Kirkwood Academy, an activity that reportedly worked well was that Year 7 students interviewed some Year 10s about what life was like in the country they came from originally, which allowed students who would not usually talk to each other to come together.

In subject teaching, however, many teachers admitted that, while they were interested in incorporating a cultural element in their teaching, opportunities to make reference to culture varied from subject to subject and from class to class. For humanities subjects, making cultural and contextual reference was more pertinent: for example, modules on 'rice fields' in Vietnam, 'Nelson Mandela' in Africa, 'colonial history' in India and Pakistan. Science teachers also reported making an effort to refer to cultures where relevant: for example, by drawing students' attention to well known 'Russian scientists'; and in maths teachers included work on the 'Babylonian' and 'Egyptian' tradition of mathematics. It was also clear that the purpose of making cultural and contextual reference in teaching was not merely to make the content more accessible to the students but, more importantly, to create a classroom that felt more open and potentially responsive to other cultures. The history teacher at Parkland School, for instance, commented that it was 'important to try and look at ways to incorporate different cultures' in lessons and for teachers to take account of the fact that where one comes from shapes how one interprets history.

### *Providing extra tuition and language support based on needs*

When students were seen to be struggling, extra tuition and language boosters would be put in place to support them. This could be small group tutoring or EAL classes with a focus on language. For example, in Kirkwood Academy there were one-to-one tutorials offered by the EAL co-ordinator, and small language classes taught by English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) staff from a local college were provided after school twice a week (though this was discontinued during the period of our study). Where resources were available, subject specific extra tuition, with a particular focus on content, was also arranged and conducted by teaching assistants. In Parkland School, for example, extra tuition for science was organised for certain students and the decision to provide this additional support was jointly made by the science department and the EAL team. Overall, keeping pupils in the mainstream was seen as the most effective approach, but complemented by targeted language and subject support when needed and as early as possible. The EAL co-ordinator at Kirkwood Academy was a firm believer in the value of an immersion approach backed up by EAL specialist support inside and outside the classroom:

I'm not agreeing with some literature that says you have to keep them out from class for one month, two months, no, even if their English is very basic. From my personal experience, ... you keep them one week the most, then gradually introduce to the school system. Even taking year 10 and 11, if they don't know English, if you are keeping them as long as you think, oh this is right and teaching them grammar. But when they are going in class, they are getting lost because they don't know what is this coursework, they're missing a lot and I think the quicker the better. But at the same time they should have some intervention one to one and basic grammar but gradually what they're learning in the class such as formulas or coursework, and say look you are going to learn in the class this coursework, let's read a bit, I'll explain. You have to combine the language. (EAL co-ordinator, Kirkwood Academy)

### **The subject teachers in both schools valued greatly the role the EAL team played in supporting the students in their school.**

Bilingual teachers usually sat in the class to help the very new arrivals with limited English. The effect of in-class bilingual support, according to many subject teachers, was both pedagogical and psychological. One of the maths teachers at Kirkwood Academy, for instance, commented that having the EAL co-ordinator in lessons was particularly useful for confirming whether an EAL student's reticence in a lesson was due to lack of comprehension of English or of the maths, or whether it was just due to lack of interest and therefore appropriate remedial action was possible more quickly.

### *'Buddying' and peer support for learning and social integration*

EAL students received support not only from their teachers but also from their peers and there was a lot of appreciation in the interviews for the peer support culture in both schools (see also Arnot et al., 2014). For younger new arrivals new to English in particular, a pupil from the same year group was designated as their 'buddy' who would translate for them and help them to settle in. These 'buddies' usually came from the same country and spoke the same home language as the EAL students who, according to the teachers, tended to 'gravitate towards what's comfortable' when they first arrived. However, the EAL co-ordinator in Kirkwood Academy talked about more recently making a move to pair newly-arrived EAL pupils with an English-speaking buddy, which she thought would be helpful for both language development and social integration. When the students made more progress and felt 'more acclimatised' to the environment, they were then encouraged to mix with other students with different backgrounds. Some EAL students chose to stay with the same buddy, however, while others joined new friendship groups. The teachers reported paying close attention to individual students' learning and integration, and making adjustments to the pairings and groupings based on their observation. As a general principle, they tended to let their students choose what was comfortable for them. Only when they felt that students' learning was being affected by what they called 'negative groups' did they intervene and put them in new groupings:

If there is a student who's brand new who's feeling shy and whose [...] English is limited, I would usually sit that student next to somebody who speaks his or her language, just to help them. But later on it plays no role, it's just as a buddy system; it makes them feel more comfortable. Unless of course it doesn't work, then I split them and I sit them next to somebody who's, who's a helper, because certain students are very much helpers and they will sit there with a dictionary and help them, whereas others don't want to have anything to do with it. It just depends on the kid. (MFL teacher, Kirkwood Academy)

### *Task-based group work for effective content and language integration*

Group work and collaborative learning was seen by many teachers as one of the most effective EAL strategies for achieving the dual purpose of learning content and language simultaneously. Through 'pair and share', students were provided with an opportunity to learn new concepts in science, for example, through questioning and communication, and to acquire English at the same time through collective problem-solving. Even for those recent arrivals who had very limited English, the amount of input through listening to their peers helped them develop their language skills, as they could gradually work out the meaning of words and sentences through matching what they saw with what they heard. The maths teacher at Parkland School explained the benefits of group work for EAL students as well as non-EAL students:

If one student doesn't and another student does then they've got to communicate on the table to make sure that whoever gets asked on their table is then able to, you know, give a shot at explaining and giving the answer. So that will encourage the communication and the interaction on their tables.... so by the pure fact that one student has to explain to another

student how to do it, it then embeds their knowledge as well and if at first they try to explain it and the EAL student doesn't necessarily understand, then they will try to find another way to explain it so it is developing their understanding and their skills themselves, so definitely gives them opportunity. (Maths teacher, Parkland School)

The history teacher at Parkland School further summarised this kind of collaborative learning as 'dialogic pedagogy' which sees task-based communication as a mediating tool to develop reasoning skills and build confidence for EAL students:

So we found actually dialogic, as we've now got that as our key basis of all learning in our subject that students share the ideas amongst themselves ... So by using dialogic as that sort of key area of discussing and almost experimentation we found that that's really helped with our students with EAL needs ... So, as I said, literacy, dialogic, sharing, I think that really gives those EAL students a lot more confidence, because it's okay to get it wrong. (History teacher, Parkland School)

## 4.5 Summary

At all levels, staff in the case study schools reported that they enjoyed the diversity that EAL students brought to class. At a whole school level EAL learners' heritages and cultures were celebrated in various ways, e.g. culture days and tutor group activities, and teachers reported attempting to introduce culture into subject lessons where possible. This valuing of diversity seemed to influence the broad pedagogical approach they adopted to cater for the learning needs of EAL students in mainstream lessons.

Teachers in both contexts were keen to describe how they treated each child as an individual and attempted to tailor work to his or her particular needs, rather than labelling students under the banner of 'EAL'. Teachers reported that when they employed differentiated strategies to mediate classwork they tried to be discreet about it and were aware of potential sensitivities. Such strategies included: translation (software, dictionaries, translated books, translated materials such as prompt cards, bilingual staff); visuals (e.g. cartoons, TV programmes); task simplification; teacher instruction simplification; and buddying with other students, e.g. who shared the same home language.

Despite dwindling local authority provision for EAL-related services such as bilingual translation and Continuous Professional Development in the context of the devolution of funding directly to schools, the school leadership teams, EAL co-ordinators and subject teachers interviewed in the case study schools viewed high quality induction and on-going support for EAL students as a priority, and one to which they were willing to devote energy and as much resource as possible.

**Lack of proficiency in English was perceived as the biggest potential obstacle to effective integration into the school system and to progression in academic subjects, in particular for newly-arrived EAL students. Literacy was perceived to be a bigger barrier than oracy, especially in humanities subjects, though beyond these as well given the functional linguistic skills required by all subjects.**

In neither case study school was there a common policy that dictated pedagogical approaches that all teachers were required to employ in working with EAL students, nor did the teachers want this, feeling that it would limit their capacity to make their own professional decisions about what best suited the individual learners in their classes. They welcomed, however, the information that they were provided about learners' profiles and results from early diagnostic tests with newly-arrived students or from primary schools for those already inducted into the system.

EAL co-ordinators and their teams, were viewed as lynchpins of the system, and were highly respected in both case study schools as sources of knowledge and practical support. The effectiveness of the EAL provision in both schools was directly attributable to the leadership and expertise provided by the co-ordinators.

In summary, according to the teachers we interviewed, the best way to support EAL students was to muster all possible resources when a need arose. This, however, runs the risk of a hit-or-miss approach that will not meet the learning needs of the students. Thus, for example, with the lack of written policies, the way EAL support was organised might seem patchy or unsystematic. However, underpinning the diverse practices was a strong and consistent belief in the principle of teacher professionalism. Both schools were staffed by dedicated professionals who were keen to provide the best support that they possibly could for the migrant children. In their view, a personalised, individual and humanistic approach to EAL bore important pedagogical values and at the same time fulfilled many moral responsibilities.

Finally, it should be noted that the above summary draws on the perceptions of the teachers and senior leadership we interviewed at the two case study schools. Both schools were selected because of their commitment to EAL provision: Parkland School had longstanding expertise in this field; and Kirkwood Academy was looking to develop its practice. Crucially, both schools have invested in an EAL co-ordinator and, in the case of Parkland School, in further EAL support staff and resources. In schools where this experience, commitment and resources are lacking, the balance between practice-based knowledge and research-based guidance in informing the teachers' professional knowledge and pedagogy will need to be more weighted towards the latter.

## Section 5: Parental knowledge, school ↔ home communication and parental engagement in children's learning

### 5.1 Introduction

It is widely recognised that the involvement of parents/carers in school and their engagement in their child's learning play a vital role in supporting their children's achievement in school; in particular, in the context of EAL (see Goodall & Vorhaus, 2010; Hamilton, 2013; Walker, 2014). Gorard and See (2013) argue that there is generally a strong association between parental involvement and pupils' subsequent attainment; however, it is not clear why this association exists and which interventions targeting parental involvement make a difference regarding students' attainment. This section will not evaluate the effectiveness of interventions but offers an insight into the levels of knowledge parents/ carers of EAL students have about the English school system, the barriers and opportunities regarding school ↔ home communication and the levels of engagement parents of EAL students show in their children's learning.<sup>7</sup> On the basis of these findings recommendations are made with regard to school ↔ home communication whose impact on EAL students' attainment could be evaluated in a future project. Our study highlights that parents/ carers of EAL students are keen to know about their child's schooling and want to be involved. However, parents can only play a role in their child's learning if they can actively participate in their children's schooling on a day-to-day basis. This participation is, in turn, affected by whether the parents feel that their contributions are perceived by schools to be of value (rather than a hindrance) and whether they have a sufficient sense of empowerment and understanding in terms of being able to support their child's progress in education (Delgado-Gaitan, 1991). These issues are common to all parents, but parents of EAL students, especially those who have low levels of English and/or who have arrived in the UK recently, are likely to face the added obstacle of having to understand the information schools provide for parents (in English) and of getting to know the school system (see Walker, 2014). School ↔ home communication is about finding successful ways of involving parents in understanding and supporting their children's learning, their progress and their educational choices (at present and in the future). This research confirms that there is a high level of interest by parents of EAL students in their children's learning and schools should take advantage of this opportunity and offer support for effective parental engagement which can help EAL students' progression (see Hamilton, 2013 and Walker, 2014). However, the cuts in funding to local authorities and the mainstreaming of resources into the schools direct grant have put considerable strain on schools to resource such strategies. Overall, the parental side of EAL has been focused on less in the UK and projects such as the EAL Nexus website (<https://eal.britishcouncil.org>) or the Renaisi Bilingual Adviser (RBA) Service (<http://www.renaisi.com>) have recently introduced some wider support for parents, school staff and EAL students.

In this section, we consider how our two case study schools tackle school ↔ home and communications for EAL students and to what extent this facilitated knowledge and engagement in children's learning. The parental view has been gathered through in-depth interviews with 10 parents of newly-arrived EAL students (with low levels of English) and through 64 questionnaires completed by parents of EAL students in the two schools. Samples were small and self-selected and the findings cannot be generalised to the wider population. This section also includes the views of staff and EAL students on parental knowledge, understanding and engagement, as reflected in the regional survey, interviews with staff and the interview and survey responses of EAL students (see also methodology section). We look specifically at the following areas:

- parental knowledge, understanding and perceptions of the English school system
- schools' communication and support strategies for parents of EAL students
- translations and translators
- parental engagement in their children's learning
- barriers to parental engagement
- perceptions of parental support regarding pupils' progress

### 5.2 Knowledge and understanding of the English school system

Parents' knowledge and understanding of the school system is vital for effective engagement (at home and at school), which can help with the child's progression (Goodall & Vorhaus, 2010; Walker, 2014). Despite the fact that parents were very interested to know about their child's schooling, a large group of parents lacked knowledge in relevant areas, such as topics for examinations and topics within subjects. The findings of our parental survey highlight that low levels of English and/or recent arrival impact on understanding and knowledge. Not only recently arrived parents, but also parents (often with low levels of English) who had been in the UK longer (over 5 years), showed shortcomings in knowledge and need continuing and targeted support.

#### Parents' views of knowledge and understanding of the English school system

According to the survey responses of parents of EAL students, a large percentage of parents in each school reported that they had a 'limited' or 'very limited' understanding of the general school system including vocational training, GCSE choices, groupings into sets of ability, school tests, school reports and the A-Level system (see Table 10). Parents' understanding was reported to be lower at Kirkwood Academy than Parkland School; reflecting that a higher proportion of respondents at Kirkwood Academy had lower levels of English (50 % of parents at Kirkwood Academy said that their English understanding was 'not good' or 'not good at all', compared to only 16 % at Parkland School) and had arrived in the UK more recently (54 % of the Kirkwood Academy sample arrived within the

<sup>7</sup> Unless stated otherwise the term 'parents' includes carers and refers to parents of EAL students.

last five years, compared to 32 % at Parkland School). Looking at the data more closely, low levels of understanding of the school system corresponded especially with low levels of English within the Kirkwood sample. Although many parents who had arrived recently in the UK struggled to understand the English school system in both schools, those who had been in the UK for longer (more than 5 years) also showed at times low or no understanding at all. All parents in both schools emphasised their interest in their child’s learning and their desire to know more about the school system. Although both schools provide a range of support strategies to parents of EAL students, the data suggest that more focused strategies for parents with low levels of English and recently-arrived parents are recommended, so that they can catch up and engage more effectively with their children’s learning (see section 5.3). There are also pockets of low understanding and knowledge amongst parents who have resided for more than 5 years in the UK and schools need to make sure that they are included in the development of targeted strategies such as ‘confidence-building’. Although the survey findings below are based on relatively small samples (Parkland School: 37 and Kirkwood Academy: 24) they support the findings of our interviews with parents of EAL students.<sup>8</sup>

Table 10: Parental reporting on ‘limited’ or ‘very limited’ understanding of the English school system

Limited and very limited understanding of ...	Parkland School	Kirkwood Academy
School tests	32 %	58 %
School reports	27 %	54 %
Grouping into sets of ability	35 %	46 %
GCSE choices	35 %	42 %
Vocational training	49 %	46 %
A-Level system	32 %	42 %

Parents in both schools felt they had better knowledge about specific areas of their child’s schooling, such as the subjects studied by their child and when exams took place. However, **a large number of parents in both schools reported having little or no knowledge of topics within subjects and exam topics (see Table 11). This knowledge is crucial for effective engagement by parents with their child’s learning and impacts potentially on their child’s progress.** Overall, the table below indicates that parents at Parkland School are more knowledgeable than those at Kirkwood Academy, which reflects especially the lower levels of English in the Kirkwood sample. However, the lack of knowledge regarding exam topics and topics within subjects appears to be a more general issue across both schools. This finding is also reflected in the interviews with EAL students at the two schools, in which the majority of students emphasise that parents, including their own, would benefit from more information about the exam and curriculum systems.

Table 11: Parental reporting on the lack of knowledge of specific areas

Little or no knowledge of...	Parkland School	Kirkwood Academy
School subjects	16 %	33 %
Topics within subjects	38 %	58 %
Exam topics	41 %	54 %
Tasks set for homework	24 %	54 %
When exams are	24 %	33 %

One in four parents at Parkland School and around one in three parents at Kirkwood Academy only knew ‘a little’ about their child’s academic progress or language development and one in three parents in both schools had ‘little’ or ‘no knowledge’ of their child’s social integration at school (see Table 12).

Table 12: Parental reporting on their knowledge about academic progress, language learning and social integration

Little or no knowledge of...	Parkland School	Kirkwood Academy
Child’s academic progress	22 %	37 %
Child’s language learning	25 %	33 %
Child’s social integration	33 %	29 %

<sup>8</sup> Although the overall sample of the parental survey was 64, three returns of the electronic version could not be matched with a specific school.



Those parents of EAL students in the two case study schools whom we interviewed also emphasised their lack of knowledge about the English education system:

**I think I don't know much. As education is not my specialty, my profession is completely different. And knowledge as well. Very general, I know how long a primary school lasts, when children start attending the school. When they finish. How long secondary school lasts. What does college or university mean here. But nothing in a greater detail. Nothing.** (Parent/Carer from Lithuania, Parkland School)

**Unfortunately, I must confess I don't understand English marking system. And I am always lost when we speak about the assessment and concrete marks. I still don't understand what good or bad mark means.** (Parent/Carer from Lithuania, Kirkwood Academy)

**However, in each of the two schools, all the parents who completed the survey said that their knowledge of how their child was doing at school was 'very important' or 'important' (see Table 13); reflecting that all parents of EAL students had a high level of interest.**

Table 13: Parental reporting on the importance of knowing how their child is doing at school

Importance of knowing how child is doing at school	Parkland School	Kirkwood Academy
Very important	95 %	78 %
Important	5 %	22 %

Overall, the discrepancy between the parental interest in their child's learning and the lack of knowledge parents have about their child's schooling suggests that schools need to develop further communication and information strategies for parents of EAL students.

Interestingly, the majority of EAL students reported in the survey that their parents had good or very good knowledge of the school system. This discrepancy between pupils' and parents' views of their level of knowledge highlights the fact that schools cannot rely on students' explanations of the school system to their parents (as outlined further in section 5.3). **A clear communication and information system needs to be arranged for parents of EAL students, which is not exclusively mediated via EAL pupils acting as translators and transmitters of information about the school.**

### Staff and EAL students' views of parental knowledge and understanding of the English school system

In our study, **teachers in both schools hold different views regarding parental understanding of the English school system, ranging from those who think there is no difference between parents of EAL and non-EAL students to teachers who highlight the lack of understanding among the group of parents who have very low English proficiency.** For example, these four teachers make very different assumptions:

I think it varies like any parents really. Some don't understand our levels at all, and that's understandable because lots of English parents don't understand. (Maths teacher, Kirkwood Academy)

Yeah. [They understand] pretty well. I think depending on where they're coming from, pretty well. Very keen to understand [...] So the information is there. I think the information for that also goes home, but again, in English. So issues there, so. (English teacher, Parkland School)

I think it depends on where they are with their own education and what their education was in their own country. (Science teacher, Parkland School)

**Again, you've got the three groups of parents, those with good English, those with some English, those with no English, and I think those with no English don't really understand and don't feel connected to the school. I think the other two groups do feel connected and do have a basic understanding of what is going on. But I think those that don't have English struggle to understand what's going on here.** (History teacher, Kirkwood Academy)

Looking at our findings above, which highlight parental lack of knowledge in areas which are significant for effective parental engagement, it is critical that teachers do not assume that parents of EAL students know about and understand the English school system. Making an assumption about the degree of parental understanding can greatly affect the level of support given to such parents and potentially influence the EAL child's chances of progressing academically and socially.

### 5.3 Communication and support

Both case study schools offer a wide range of strategies to communicate with and to support parents of EAL students and make a considerable effort to maintain this support in a climate of limited EAL funding.

Both schools employed EAL co-ordinators who played a central role and were seen as essential information and communication hubs by parents, pupils and staff. The EAL co-ordinator at Kirkwood Academy also spoke several European languages. Both schools offered induction meetings, which were seen as very helpful by the parents, placed emphasis on a range of innovative support strategies and were considering new ways of informing, communicating with and engaging parents.

We run a lot of holiday sessions which are specifically aimed at EAL parents and children so, for example, we do arts and craft sessions...One of things that we haven't done yet, we have a very successful homework club that runs after school so that the students can come and use IT, get some support, but having more parents to come and join that [...] just coffee mornings. So we've done a few things where we've said, 'You're very welcome to pop in on the way,' on the school run as well is a good time to catch people. (SLT, Parkland School)

Really, personal contact is the biggest one. They know that they can phone [the EAL co-ordinator] [...] That's an extra investment in having, sort of, round the clock almost, people's contact and lots of EAL parents are grateful for the support that [the EAL co-ordinator] might give to begin with but then they move on to just having that corridor of support into the head of house as any other family would, and they find that very helpful. (SLT, Kirkwood Academy)

I've put forward a suggestion that I'd like to do informal preparation for parents' evening so that you encourage parents to come in [...] and someone who can chat to them about their child's progress and unpick this sort of, you know, this horrible muddle of symbols that there is on a page [...] I think a lot of English, you know, English only speakers, parents who had a bad experience at school probably appreciate a service like that. (EAL co-ordinator, Parkland School)

In the context of the regional survey, the schools represented the majority of regional schools by employing EAL co-ordinators and offering an induction meeting for newly-arrived students and parents. However, other areas such as parental networks, a parent buddying system and parents' evenings in main home languages (e.g. on GCSE choices) were not offered, although schools in the region which used these strategies found them effective or very effective (see section 2). Schools such as Parkland, which has over 50 languages spoken, might find it particularly difficult to arrange parent (information) evenings in main home languages, although the use of technical devices for translations might make such a goal more feasible. Both schools invited EAL students to open and parents' evenings to help with translations:

And when we do our open evenings, our Year 6 to 7 open evenings, we have students, you know, who introduce themselves, normally about 10 or 12 students who introduce themselves in their home language and so, you know, if you want to do the tour of the school with me, I'll tell you what it's like from my point of view... and it's just getting that confidence, you know, with them. I think there's always more we can do. I think one the big challenges for secondary schools is parental engagement. (SLT, Parkland School)

Both schools use phone calls, email, letters and face-to-face meetings for communicating with parents. **In general, the parents of EAL students interviewed found phone calls the most problematic tool of communication. They pointed to a number of reasons why email was a better way of communicating:**

**I don't like phone calls, as I don't understand much. So in this case I try not to call the school by myself as well as not to receive phone call from them - I rather avoid this mean of communication. I try to avoid a language barrier. If I need to ask something - I prefer writing an e-mail. We get together with a son and we draft an e-mail. I can express myself better and receive help from him as well. He knows English better and suggests me any amendments or corrections.** (Parent/ Carer from Lithuania Parkland School)

Maybe e-mails would be a good solution as meeting a teacher is quite difficult thing to do. For example, I have to a day out of work, ask my employer for this. You know it's not easy. They know that one has a child and only for this reason asks for a free day. (Parent/ Carer from Lithuania, Kirkwood Academy)

Letters were also identified as a good communication tool (68% of parents at Parkland School; and 92% at Kirkwood Academy, probably reflecting that the EAL co-ordinator translates most of the letters as outlined further below). Face-to-face communication with school staff (and a translator) was also welcomed by parents although, in particular, the difficulties of organising a translator were seen as a major barrier for parents and school staff.

Information on the website was only chosen as preferred communication tools by one in four parents in both schools – possibly reflecting that the websites are in English. Parkland School's website has a link to *Google Translate*, but parents have to cut and paste sections of the website into the link to receive their translations. Several schools in the region offer a service whereby parents can identify different languages directly on the school's website, so that all the information which is available on the website (including



attached letters) is immediately translated via *Google Translate*. Although *Google Translate* does not offer optimal translation of all languages, it offers an inexpensive way to improve communication with some parents of EAL students.

**Teachers had contrasting ideas to those of parents about what communication tools were best. Some were sensitive to the problems faced by parents who were not fluent in English, others less so. Some assumed that help was at hand for parents at home, while others worried about being too patronising by using simplistic language.** Here are some examples:

Phone calls often if there's enough English at home is great for behaviour and attitude. Parents evening is a bit better for showing them examples of work. Reports home obviously are there but there's a lot of English on that and we tend to write them in quite a formal style and I don't know if maybe we're using too academic language, but then you don't want to patronise parents by using too simplified English, so it's kind of where's the line? (English teacher, Parkland School)

We quite like to use emails and emails are quite good [...] There's always somebody in the community that can read the email for them, or they will copy and paste it into *Google Translate* themselves to try to get some idea of what's happening. (Science teacher, Parkland School)

The parental survey revealed the sort of support that might help parents of EAL children. Parents at Kirkwood Academy selected a range of support strategies in the survey: a translation tool on the website (46 %), a parents' evening with an interpreter (38 %), access to an interpreter for meetings (33 %), podcasts about GCSE information in language of origin (25 %), a parents' evening in their home language (25 %), a network of parents from same country of origin (21 %) and the use of a translation tool when meeting staff (17 %). Parkland School parents were especially keen on having an interpreter (32 %), parents' evening with interpreter (27 %), a translated website (24 %) and English classes (19 %; the school offered an ESOL class and it seems that some parents were not aware of this).

Interviews with EAL co-ordinators show that they tried various strategies and sometimes they had to cancel strategies as the uptake was not there. Kirkwood Academy, for example, trialled an ESOL class for parents, but did not continue the class due to low uptake. Cline and Crafter (2014) highlight that strategies need a while to be established and it is recommended to reintroduce strategies as parents' contexts and needs change. Translations were clearly identified by parents as providing major support. **It should be emphasised that parents showed awareness in the interviews regarding the costs involved for schools when providing translators and interpreters; especially if several languages were spoken in the school.** The use of more technological devices available for translations might offer a more consistent and cost-effective approach and will be outlined further in our recommendations. The following section will, first of all, highlight some further aspects regarding translations and translators.

### Translations and translators

The key issue to emerge from the data on school - home communication that would support EAL children's academic progress is that of translation. The consistent and wider use of translations is a vital strategy to facilitate, improve and encourage communication between the school and parents of EAL students, who have lower levels of English. Both case-study schools are trying to deal with translations and translators in a situation where central services, such as bilingual translation services are no longer offered by the Local Authorities (LAs).

**Parents emphasised in their interviews the difficulties they had in organising interpreters for school events, such as individual consultations with teachers and general parent information meetings.** As a consequence, they sometimes did not come into school, although they would have liked to. More spontaneous meetings with school staff and translators were more or less impossible for them to arrange; even if there was an important issue to be addressed, such as the bullying, outlined below.

**You have to plan everything well. Also, find the right person. Sometimes friends are available to help. However there are situations when you would like to go to school but there is no opportunity to find a translator quickly...**I remember there was a situation at school where other girls were bullying. Unfortunately there was little I could do or help as there was no translator and I couldn't meet or arrange an appointment with the headmaster at that point. This was the reason I had to leave the situation as it was. It's a pity. (Parent/Carer from Lithuania, Kirkwood Academy)

While many teachers agreed that more support with translations was necessary for communicating with parents of EAL students, they offered a variety of views. The practicalities and logistics of getting a translator in at short notice was recognised as considerable, especially given the number of languages spoken at Parkland School.

It only sometimes is hard for us if we want to contact parents quickly but we have to wait for an interpreter to be in, or you can't find a willing sixth former that can speak the same language to interpret for you. And obviously you have to be really careful about that because that's the kind of information you're handing over. That's the only obstacle I feel that there is that really in a school like ours where we speak, I think it's 88 different languages [the school had over 50 languages] in our school, we could do with some permanent interpreters within the school for the main languages that are spoken so that you can get hold of someone straight away to do that for you. (Science teacher, Parkland School)

**I mean there's a move, we're aware that translation is becoming more important for our cohort so that's something that I know that the school are working on for next year is that if there are certain sections of the community we're not able to get in, we need to translate stuff and send it home.** (English teacher, Parkland School)

Some teachers emphasised that family members and children could act as go-betweens and translators. However, our interviews revealed that parents did not necessarily agree with having their own children acting as translators because of potential bias and some staff also showed concern [see report by Cline & Crafter, 2014, which highlights the advantages and disadvantages of using children as translators and interpreters].

With letters that go out... again from a department point of view we don't sort of use the *Google Translate* or anything, information goes home and the students can relay information. (Maths teacher, Parkland School)

Teachers at Kirkwood Academy, which was relatively new to having a large number of EAL students, appeared to have a range of views and strategies regarding communication and translations; ranging from no translations to a considerable effort to translate messages to parents:

No different communication than with the English parents. Most of the communication would go through your Head of Department or Head of House, rather than necessarily through the teacher, and obviously at parents' evenings you get to see who comes in. (English teacher, Kirkwood Academy)

**There is, to the best of my knowledge, no attempt if you were about to say 'in terms of translation for parents', I don't think there is. I could be wrong about that but I've never seen one if there is.** (Laughs) (Science teacher, Kirkwood Academy)

Sometimes you say, "I want to send a praise postcard home, but we want the parents to know what it says, will they be able to understand it?" Then she [EAL co-ordinator] has written some in Russian for us, we've even posted some because they don't necessarily all live with parents over here, some are living with older brothers and sisters so we'll send the postcard in Russian and a translation in English as well so they get both, so I think that's quite nice. (Maths teacher, Kirkwood Academy)

The EAL co-ordinator was central to organising translations at Kirkwood Academy and used *Google Translate* manually for all letters, which was possible as the school had fewer languages spoken and there was a smaller EAL population compared to Parkland School.

At the moment we are translating the letters in all the languages. The translation is not accurate because we are translating by computer *Google* and it's not accurate. But at least they have got an understanding of what this letter is about. (EAL co-ordinator, Kirkwood Academy)

**Overall, the use of translators and translations varied across departments and teachers in both schools and there was no consistent policy regarding the use and organisation of translations and translators.** Both schools relied to a large extent on parents to arrange translators and engaged the parents' own children, or other EAL students to help with translations, which was potentially problematic. **Parents reported severe difficulties in arranging translators for school meetings and to translate school information. As a consequence, parents lacked knowledge and did not come into school, even if they thought it was necessary.** Translation alone is not sufficient to support parental involvement and a bilingual advisor service would offer a more holistic approach:

We try to get schools to see our advisers as 'interpreters plus' – they are in school consistently, able to be called upon spontaneously, but also are there to build trusting personalised relationships with parents and pupils over time. This resolves a whole host of barriers to do with confidence, telephone access, family support work, cross-cultural misunderstandings and clarifying expectations around education – i.e. seeing language support as holistic and ongoing rather than reactive and peripatetic' (Emma Brech, Renaisi Bilingual Advice Service, November 2015).

## 5.4 Parental engagement

Parental engagement refers to the involvement of parents in a whole range of activities and sites: learning at home, including discussions about school, aspirations and careers; school-home and home-school communication; in-school activities, such as parents' evenings and meetings with class teachers; involvement in decision-making (e.g. role of school governor); and collaboration with the community [see Goodall & Vorhaus, 2010, p.14]. **Following this wider conceptualisation of engagement, the parents' and pupils' interviews and surveys in our study indicate a high level of parental interest and involvement in their children's education and progress. However, staff in both case-study schools often defined engagement, first of all in terms of attending parents' evenings, while a smaller number (including the EAL co-ordinators) applied a wider conceptualisation. A more limited notion of engagement by some staff may lead to wrong assumptions about parental interest in their children's learning.** As Goodhall and Vorhaus (2010, p.5) point out:

Schools which successfully engage parents make use of a broad understanding of parental engagement, and their parental engagement strategies accord with the interpretations and values of the parents they are aimed at. Parental engagement with children's learning is effectively supported when parents receive clear, specific and targeted information from schools.

A limited notion of engagement might also be the reason that a third of schools in the regional survey stated that parents showed

a lack of involvement and had different educational expectations of schooling. On the other hand, and somehow contradicting the above finding, half of the schools responding to the regional survey indicated that parents of EAL pupils showed 'high' or 'very high' involvement in parents' evenings and meetings with class teachers.

Only two schools in the regional survey (one state, one private) stated that parents of EAL pupils were involved in representative roles in the schools, such as being a parent governor or a member of a parent teacher association (PTA). This low representation of parents in schools' decision-making (see Goodall & Vorhaus, 2010 above) was also reflected in the two case-study schools. **Better representation of parents of EAL students at school might be a cost-effective way of enhancing the school-home and home-school communication for parents of EAL students**, although recently announced plans to reform school governance may make this even more difficult to achieve. Schools with a certain number of EAL students might consider having a more formalised representation of parents of EAL students such as parent networks.

The parental survey looked at different types of parental engagement at school. 78% of parents/carers of EAL students at Parkland School stated that they attended parents' evenings, compared to 46% at Kirkwood Academy. A smaller percentage attended GCSE information evenings (35% at Parkland School and 21% at Kirkwood Academy), which might reflect the fact that these evenings were held in English and EAL students could not act as translators, as was the case in parents' evenings. A higher number of parents attended individual consultations at Kirkwood Academy (42%), compared to Parkland School (35%), reflecting to a certain extent a 'compensation' for the lower attendance of parents' evenings and highlighting that parents' evenings should not be seen as the major indicator for engagement.

The parental survey further showed that the majority of parents helped their children with assessment and homework tasks, although the support varied between the two schools (see Tables 14 and 15); reflecting the lower levels of English in the Kirkwood sample and the fact that parents at Kirkwood had lower levels of knowledge regarding exam topics and homework tasks (see 5.2). Further barriers which might hinder parental support will be outlined in section 5.5.

Table 14: Parental help with assessment

Parental help with assessment	Parkland School	Kirkwood Academy
Very often	11 %	8 %
Often	30 %	17 %
Sometimes	35 %	29 %
Seldom	11 %	17 %
Never	14 %	25 %

Table 15: Parental help with homework

Parental help with homework	Parkland School	Kirkwood Academy
Very often	16 %	8 %
Often	24 %	13 %
Sometimes	43 %	42 %
Seldom	8 %	21 %
Never	8 %	17 %

The interviews with parents and EAL students reflected an intense engagement at home, ranging from general discussions about school and careers to specific support with homework tasks which involved intense and time-consuming translation strategies.

*Parents*

Yes, yes, for example we discuss about English language. Sometimes even about literature. We read the same books. I did this as a child. But only in Lithuanian. *Romeo and Juliet* for instance. Thus we talk about a world class literature. He tells me a lot what he has read, what interpretations he or his teacher has. (Parent/Carer from Lithuania, Parkland School)

Yes, of course. We know everything. Every change that happens in school...We have parental evenings here. We can talk with every teacher separately. We do not communicate in English but Jonas tells or translates everything. (Parent/ Carer from Latvia, Parkland School)

*Students*

**Yes, when I have homework like I'm translating this to Polish. They telling me what they know and then I translate this to English again.** (Agnieszka, Student from Poland, Parkland School)

I saying what is writing in Lithuanian, she help me, but in Lithuanian. She can't speak English. (Bronius, Student from Lithuania, Parkland School)

Yeah, I ask them on some questions, mostly maths. They just help me understand some of the equations that would help me understand, because it's the same thing in English, just the words are different but the actual numbers and everything is the same thing. (Andrius, Student from Lithuania, Parkland School)

The senior leadership team in both schools reflected a mixed perception regarding the engagement of parents of EAL students. While staff at the case-study schools were often unified in seeing the attendance of parents' evenings as a yardstick for engagement, their impressions on the actual level of attendance varied to a large extent; from viewing parents from non-EAL students as being more involved than those from EAL pupils, to a less clear-cut distinction between parents of EAL and non-EAL students, emphasising determining factors such as English language, own educational experience and confidence:

**Some are enormously committed. That tends to be people who come from, who are quite educated and aren't afraid of school. Even if they don't speak much English, they will come into parents' evenings and their child will go round with them and interpret.** (EAL co-ordinator, Parkland School)

Non-EAL parents are more involved than EAL parents. [...] I don't have hard data to tell you but it is much worse. It's much worse than non-EAL. There's a much smaller involvement. EAL families are highly unlikely to come to parents' evenings here, we get very few even though we have phoned and tried to make appointments and so on. (SLT, Kirkwood Academy)

Again, it depends on the parents, depends on the families. But not as involved as I would like them to be. And I understand because mainly all the EAL students, when their parents get here to work, they work hard. They work 12 hours, or they don't work 12 hours but they travel 12 hours and they find it very difficult. Some of them will take time off but very rarely... But a problem is they won't dare to ask the employer. (EAL co-ordinator, Kirkwood Academy)

Pupils' perspectives on their parents' engagement at school had a different hue. EAL students generally reported a higher engagement from their parents than staff had assumed in their interviews. Overall, there was no reported difference with regard to attending parents' evenings with 92 % of EAL and non-EAL students stating that their parents came to parents' evenings. The attendance of parents at individual appointments was also similar for EAL and non-EAL students (around 35 % for both groups, reflecting findings from the parental survey). Interestingly, more EAL students (57 %) were reporting that their parents were visiting school (very often, often or sometimes) than non-EAL students (43 %). 22 % of EAL and 24 % of non-EAL students reported that their parents helped them 'often' or 'very often' with their homework tasks. These data are limited due to being perceptual (as our parental and staff data). **However, the student survey was based on the largest and, possibly, most representative sample and it is interesting that it clearly shows no difference with regard to parental engagement of EAL and non-EAL parents at school and at home.**

## 5.5 Barriers to parental involvement in their children's learning

**Although our research shows that parents cared very much about their children's education, there were some substantial barriers which, if addressed more directly by schools, could make engagement more effective with regard to students' progression.** More targeted strategies for parents are therefore recommended to bridge the overall achievement gap between EAL and non-EAL students and to help newly-arrived EAL students to catch up more quickly. This is especially important for secondary school students working towards their GCSE exams.

A range of barriers to effective school ↔ home communication and parental engagement were identified in the previous sections:

- low levels of English
- recent arrival in the UK
- lack of parental knowledge about crucial areas, such as topics within subjects and exam topics and a wider understanding of future educational options
- inconsistent assumptions by teaching staff regarding parental understanding and knowledge
- discrepancy between parents' and teachers' views regarding most effective communication tools
- difficulties for parents in arranging translators for school visits
- inconsistent use of translators and translations across teachers, departments and the wider school
- engagement of EAL students as translators and transmitters of information from school
- lack of parental confidence
- discrepancy between parents' (and EAL students') and teachers' views regarding parental involvement
- lack of school data regarding parental views on their knowledge, engagement, barriers and recommendations

This section discusses further barriers which were identified in the regional survey, in the parental interviews, the parental survey and in the interviews with staff, including:

- employment
- childcare
- lack of knowledge regarding subject content
- understanding the homework system
- knowledge about assessment preparation
- discrepancy between parents' and teachers' perceptions of barriers to parental involvement

The above barriers will be discussed in more detail. The majority of the schools in the regional survey indicated that teachers thought that language and employment were the main barriers to parental engagement. These barriers were confirmed by our parental survey in the context of engagement at school; although childcare seemed to be also an issue at Parkland (see Table 16).

Table 16: Barriers to engagement of parents of EAL students at school (respondents could select more than one option)

Barrier	Parkland School	Kirkwood Academy
Employment	43 %	88 %
Difficulties communicating in English	19 %	46 %
Childcare	22 %	4 %
Distance from school	11 %	0 %

Parental interviews confirmed that their work schedules were a major barrier to their engagement, in particular at school. Although parents of non-EAL students also have work-related barriers, parents of EAL students (and here especially those who are labelled migrant workers) have working conditions which are often specific to agency work in the agricultural and care sectors (see Schneider & Holman, 2011) characterised by: work schedules which change from one day to the next (parents often do not know their schedule until the morning of their working day), shift work (day and night) and long travel to work (in agricultural work the field is often up to two hours away from their home). This barrier is especially reflected at Kirkwood Academy, which is situated in an agricultural area. Due to work commitments parents therefore highlighted the problem of having to arrange a meeting with staff in advance (especially when they had to arrange a translator as well) and that it was difficult to access a spontaneous chat after school.

A variety of barriers existed regarding parental help with children's homework and assessment tasks (see Table 17): The vast majority of parents at Kirkwood Academy mentioned English language followed by lack of knowledge about assessment preparation, subject content and understanding the homework system. Parents at Parkland School identified English language and to a lesser degree subject content, understanding of the homework system and lack of knowledge about assessment preparation.

Table 17: Barriers for parents of EAL students to helping with children's homework and assessment tasks (respondents could select more than one option)

Barriers	Parkland School	Kirkwood Academy
Subject content	19 %	21 %
English language	35 %	79 %
Accessing the homework task	8 %	0 %
Understanding the homework system	19 %	17 %
Lack of knowledge about assessment preparation	14 %	25 %
Lack of resources (e.g. computer, books)	5 %	0 %

In interviews, teachers and SLT in the two schools referred correctly, in particular, to work and language barriers restricting greater parental involvement (at school). However, staff did not emphasise barriers regarding knowledge and understanding of the school system and more specifically the homework system and assessment preparation, which is crucial for effective parental involvement at home.

Yes the main obstacle is work, is jobs, yes. ... And she [parent] said, 'But I cannot come because every night I am waiting for message to tell me tomorrow what time I am working and how long I am working.' And I have this quite a few times and even they don't know when they're working. They [employer] are on the phone, 'Today you are working from this time and this place tomorrow. And she promised me she will come on Tuesday. (EAL co-ordinator, Kirkwood Academy)

To be fair, I think some of the obstacles are the fact that parents are often working long hours, some of them are doing shift work, some of them are working quite a long way away, and that's where it's difficult to find an appropriate time to get them to come and spend time, but she [the EAL co-ordinator] is very good at that, she's good at knowing the individual situation. (SLT, Parkland School)

I think the biggest obstacle is if they don't speak any English and there is nobody available at that point in time to translate for them. It's not that I think that they don't care, I think it's just that there is no point if you're going to sit there and the room's going to be nonsense. It's just – it's polite I guess, but it doesn't get you anywhere, does it? And it doesn't help, so yeah, I think that's the biggest obstacle. (Science teacher, Parkland School)

When parents did not turn up to official information sessions, some teachers interpreted this as a lack of motivation on their part; although the same teacher also mentioned a range of different factors that might influence the level of attendance, some known and others speculative:

Sometimes, which is an issue, and again it's not just isolated to EAL, the parents don't turn up and don't come to those formal sessions so it's not confined to just EAL, that happens with lots of other parents as well, so even though there is formal situation in place sometimes it doesn't happen because of the lack, you know, of motivation of parents to come in [...] Well mainly down to, mainly down to language really and that involvement and possibly the parents' own sort of experience within the school system, sort of thing, and because it's quite new to them so that might be a barrier to themselves and not wanting to put themselves in that situation. But it is mainly going to be down to their own language barriers and obstacles there. (Maths teacher, Parkland School)

A barrier which was highlighted especially at Parkland School was confidence, and the EAL co-ordinator was in the process of planning to engage with parents more closely before the parents' evening, encouraging confidence, more informality and closer attention to their experiences of schooling:

Language, whether there is a language issue, whether there's a confidence issue. Or whether they feel that we listen to them? (SLT, Parkland School)

I've put forward a suggestion that I'd like to do informal preparation for parents' evening so that you encourage parents to come in, you know, and kind of coach them into what they can ask at parents' evening, what they're entitled to ask at parents' evening, so it would be a kind of a learning experience for them too. But that's going to take a little bit of time to set up, and again you've got to make sure that you've got the support for them. I think a lot of English, you know, English only speakers, parents who had a bad experience at school probably appreciate a service like that. (EAL co-ordinator, Parkland School)

Overall, teachers identified work and language as the main barriers and added the issue of 'confidence' and parents' own experience of schooling and education, which were not mentioned by parents themselves. However, teachers were less likely to mention barriers relating to knowledge and understanding and parental difficulties in finding translators. **It is, therefore, recommended to highlight more clearly barriers for parents to staff, so that more targeted support strategies can be developed at departmental and school level to counter these barriers.**

## 5.6 Perceptions of parental support regarding pupils' progress

This section brings the themes of parental knowledge, engagement in children's learning and a child's academic progression together. **Parents, staff and EAL students themselves highlighted the importance of parental knowledge and parental engagement in their children's learning on a child's academic progression. Parents further emphasised that language learning and social integration at school was vital for their child's progression.**

Parents interviewed highlighted the importance of knowing about the school system and their child's progress, so that they can engage with their child's learning.

**Yes, of course, it is very important to know [the school system]. Then you can push or motivate a child more. Well, how to say it better. Control him more** (Parent/Carer from Lithuania, Parkland School)

It is important to get this information [about child's progression] directly from a teacher as you will never get all the truth from a child [...] The school would like to see her at the university and she definitely qualifies for this. I have my fingers crossed that she will be successful. Everyone in my family has really high ambitions when it comes to education. (Parent/Carer from Poland, Kirkwood Academy)

Staff also highlighted the link between school ↔ home communication, parental engagement and a child's academic progress:

**Oh it's vital. For any child it's the triangle, isn't it? It's the child, the school, the parents. When you've got all three working together it's fantastic.** If part of the triangle isn't working for whatever reason, it's really hard. (SLT, Parkland School)

Yes. If they [parents] are involved, yes. Yes in everything; attitude towards learning, attitude towards behaviour. It's just all the same. (EAL co-ordinator, Kirkwood Academy)

Yes, I do, and I think anecdotally we run a Key Stage 3 reading group which is for mums and dads, and the idea being that they read books together at home and they come and we talk about them and maybe watch the film of the book or whatever, and it's interesting how many EAL parents have been involved in that. And it's clearly had an impact in terms of how students are doing and the school becomes accessible, and it was lovely because we often found that mums and dads would bring little brothers and sisters...So, yes, I think it really does have a big impact; so we just need to do more of it. (SLT, Parkland School)

Parents were also clear about the link between social integration and language development, as reflected in the tables below:

Table 18: Parental view on link between progression, social integration and their child's academic progression

Link between child's social integration and progression	Parkland School	Kirkwood Academy
Very important	65 %	75 %
Important	35 %	21 %
Not so important	0 %	4 %

Table 19: Parental view on link between language development and their child's academic progression

Link between child's language development and progression	Parkland School	Kirkwood Academy
Very important	78 %	83 %
Important	22 %	17 %

## 5.7 Summary

Both schools, and here especially the EAL co-ordinators, made a significant effort to provide support strategies for parents of EAL students in a climate of limited funding. However, our research shows that a considerable number of parents of EAL students have little or no knowledge and understanding of areas such as GCSE choices, groupings into sets of ability, school tests, school reports, the A-Level system, vocational training, subjects within school topics and exam topics. These are all crucial areas for effective engagement of parents, which can support children's academic progression in the short and long term (see also Walker, 2014). Both schools lacked data on parental knowledge and understanding; consequently, staff reflected a range of assumptions, which could potentially hinder the development of targeted communication and information strategies for parents of EAL students and here, in particular, parents with low levels of English.

The two schools employed EAL co-ordinators who were absolutely central to the support of parents, students and teaching staff. Induction meetings for newly-arrived parents of EAL students were also provided and one school in particular emphasised a variety of out-of-school programmes. Both schools relied strongly on EAL students as translators (at school and for information sent home). Although the engagement of EAL students as translators can cover communication problems (which were considerably exacerbated by the closure of central bilingual translating services provided by the LAs) both parents and some staff perceived it as being problematic (see also Cline & Crafter, 2014).

The evidence from parents and from their children, is that parents care considerably about their children's education. They try to help with homework, despite the language challenges, they attempt to attend parents' evenings and individual consultations and translate if they can, or find translators to do so. Teachers often have a limited conception of engagement and see attendance at parents' evenings as a key indicator, ignoring the true extent of parental engagement, which occurs in particular at home (see Goodhall & Vorhaus, 2010 for a wider notion of parental engagement).

Parents face a range of barriers and their engagement could be made more effective with regard to EAL students' progression. The high levels of parental interest in their children's learning offers an opportunity regarding EAL students' progression and schools should take advantage of this opportunity by enhancing their communication and information strategies. The range of barriers to engagement identified in the research include: a lack of knowledge and understanding of a wide variety of areas relating to schooling and learning; work patterns specific to agency work in the agriculture and care sectors; English language; organising translators for school meetings; levels of parental confidence to engage with the school. Some of these issues might also relate to parents of non-EAL students. However, parents of EAL students face language and knowledge barriers, which need to be targeted with specific support strategies. There were also barriers in the school structure relating to the lack of consistency regarding the use of translations across the school and departments and lack of information structures for staff relating to the specific barriers experienced by parents of EAL students. These barriers need to be overcome as parents, staff and pupils emphasise the link between parental understanding of the school system, school ↔ home communication, parental engagement and pupils' progress.



## Section 6: Summary and recommendations

### Summary

This report follows on from the first report on *School approaches to the education of EAL students*, funded by The Bell Foundation (see Arnot et al., 2014) and provides further insights into the link between language development, academic achievement and social integration in the context of EAL and, in particular, EAL students and parents/carers who have arrived recently in the East of England. The research highlights that a multilingual and multicultural body of students offers challenges, but also opportunities, to schools and shows that they have developed a range of strategies to overcome such challenges and take advantage of the opportunities. Since 2011, much of the EAL funding that was previously held by the LA and used to provide central services such as regional teacher training and bilingual translation has been devolved directly to schools. While this might arguably be seen as an opportunity, schools in this study reported that replacement services were either lacking or of poor quality, and that this had required them to work all the harder to try and plug gaps in provision themselves.

Our findings show that progression in English language proficiency for the EAL learner has a complex relationship with the social integration and academic achievement of students. Teachers play a central role in developing strategies, which address language development, educational achievement and social integration in the classroom and in the school. Finally, the school-home and home-school communication is central for an effective engagement of parents and carers, which supports the child's progress.

The research is based on a mixed-methods approach, which linked a number of quantitative and qualitative methods in order to understand the perceptions and positions of EAL students, parents of EAL students and school staff, with regard to EAL opportunities and challenges. Certain aspects were investigated on a longitudinal basis, such as the tracking of EAL students' progression and language development over 12 months. Case study findings were referenced to a wider context using a regional survey of schools. The following summarises the findings and develops recommendations in the context of our main research questions.

### 6.1 What are the perceived and experienced connections between English language proficiency, academic achievement and social integration?

This question was addressed by investigating the patterns of progression in these three areas of EAL development. This was based on evidence from our analysis of the EAL students' academic and linguistic performance, as well as from their perceptions as formulated in the interviews and KS4 student survey conducted in the case study schools. Below are the main findings relating to the three domains:

#### English language development

- There was evidence at interview of significant improvement in the following areas of the EAL participant students' proficiency in English at interview: comprehension of interviewer questioning; willingness to speak (as measured by length of replies); and in certain areas of language production such as in the range and accuracy of verb tenses, and in expression of conjecture, comparisons, likes and dislikes and expressions of feeling. There was also a significant reduction in the need for interpreter intervention.
- There was no significant effect of home and school use of the L1 on the spoken English performance of our sample of EAL students. On the other hand, having mixed language friendship groups (L1 and English-speaking) had a more positive effect on the EAL students' spoken competence than monolingual-based groups did, particularly in the first few months following admission to the school. EAL students in mixed friendship groups registered fewer problems in a range of items relating to language production and comprehension and registered the highest scores for correct use of a range of formal language features.
- EAL students stated that they were more confident in speaking than in other aspects of English language use and that they encountered problems with listening comprehension more than with other aspects. Native speaker accents and speed of delivery in English reportedly posed problems for some EAL students. There was little acknowledgement by the students of the difficulties they were evidently encountering in grammatical construction or written expression of thought, indicating that they conceptualised their progress in English more in terms of informal interpersonal language development than more formal linguistic competence.
- Increased confidence in English writing was indicated by increased word count in the writing tasks between the two rounds of testing by most participants in the sample [see also Carlisle, 1989, for use of text length as a measure of performance in a cross-sectional study of EAL writing; and Evans & Fisher, 2005 and Llanes, Tragant & Serrano, 2012 for longitudinal MFL studies]. There was an increase in correct usage of present tense. While some participants used L1 words in the written task in the first round, no L1 words were used a year later in the second round of testing. There was an overall increase in correct uses of formal features and communicative functions in writing and an increase in the ratio of correct uses to incorrect attempted uses in all features, but this was only significant for correct use of present tense and expression of conjecture. Otherwise, there was little general evidence of improvement in writing skills. Weaker students made very little progress in writing in the intervening year.



- There was no evidence that using the L1 as the main medium of communication at home was a barrier to improvement in writing or speaking English, other than in accuracy of spelling.
- EAL students in mixed friendship groups performed best in the writing tasks and, conversely, EAL students who reported having mostly L1 speakers as friends in school performed least well in the writing tasks.
- There was some correlation between initial assessment on admission and scores for writing and speaking in the study, indicating a degree of accuracy in initial language assessment procedures at the two schools.
- There was evidence of a shift of focus in the students' prioritisation of English language acquisition, academic achievement, and social integration following the initial phase of their new school experience. In the first year following admission, the EAL students' primary concern was with acquiring English language proficiency and social integration into the school and community. From the second year on, there was evidence that assessment and teacher endorsement of their academic achievement was more important to them.
- EAL students indicated that in the first few months following admission they mainly continued to think in their home language in lessons and elsewhere. Some students said they did this in all lessons and when completing homework while others said that it depended on the subject, such as maths and science, or on how difficult the task was, or in some cases on location (L1 at home and English at school). The home language seemed to serve as a vital mediating tool in learning at this stage. After a year the students reported a shift in the language of thought and said that they had begun to think spontaneously in English rather than in the home language. They also reported less reliance on mental translation of the English input from teachers and others into the home language.

### Academic achievement

- Analysis of the school achievement data for the participants reveals little evidence of progress in attainment within a given year. For most subjects, there was no change in the grade awarded to most of the EAL students studying the subject over the year. The exception was for grades awarded in maths and art & design, for which the majority of the students in the sample improved by one grade or more. These subjects involve 'context-embedded' tasks (Cummins, 2000) which may partly explain the relative success displayed by the EAL students' grades.
- A comparison of the schools' predicted grades with the actual GCSE grades obtained by the EAL participant students in 2015 shows that 31 grades were the same as predicted, 20 were higher than predicted, and 14 were lower than predicted. In just under a third, therefore, the teachers under-predicted the EAL students' exam performance.
- Very few EAL students studied drama, MFL, or music at KS4 in the two case study schools and many were entered for BTEC rather than GCSEs in the subjects they studied, particularly science and ICT. The more practical and vocationally-oriented subjects and more coursework-based BTEC exams were considered more manageable for EAL students with low levels of English competence. While decisions will be justifiable in some cases, schools should not be applying this as a default exam entry strategy for all their EAL students.
- The KS4 student survey revealed that the subject in which EAL students felt that they had made best progress was maths: 53.6% of EAL respondents said they were doing very well in maths compared to 48.7% of English native speaker respondents. On the other hand, 70.3% of 'bilingual students' (self-defined as having English and another language as first languages) said they were doing well or very well in English language, compared to 63.6% of EAL respondents and 62.7% of English native speakers. The findings relating to perceived progress in maths are interesting because they suggest that, comparative to their English proficient peers, EAL students have more confidence in their ability in maths, perhaps because it is currently a less language-dependent subject of study. The high percentage of 'bilingual students' who believed they were doing well in English is evidence of the value-added benefit of bilingual competence in terms of confidence in further language development and acquisition.
- EAL students with little knowledge of English on arrival reported focussing in the first year primarily on developing their competence in the language rather than on the subjects they were studying. In the second year, the students reported a shift to focussing on their academic studies rather than on English language development per se.
- The students perceived their English language learning as mainly 'a mainstream classroom experience', largely reliant on continuous and naturalistic exposure to the language in all lessons rather than consisting of systematic and explicit study.
- Reference to continuity of achievement and positive assessment feedback were key features in the students' accounts of their success in learning at the new school. Achievement was defined in terms of building on knowledge and skills already developed in their country of origin.

## Social integration

- EAL students reported high levels of anxiety on first arrival at the school due primarily to their inability to communicate effectively with English-speaking peers. Lack of English also had a negative effect on how newcomer EAL students were perceived by other students.
- There was some, though not extensive, evidence that, on initial arrival at the school, EAL students' lack of competence in English was interpreted as a reflection of the level of their intelligence: 'People thought I was stupid because I couldn't speak English'.
- Peers, and in particular speakers of the same first language, played a key role in helping newly-arrived EAL students to settle in the school. This was either arranged through the school's buddying system or emerged from naturally developing friendships.
- By the second year of the study the EAL participants almost all reported a strong sense of belonging in their respective schools and local communities. Students credited this enhanced feeling of being 'at home' in their new community to their improved communicative competence in English.
- First language competence played a role in the composition of the EAL students' close friendship circles. 30.2% of EAL respondents to the KS4 survey said they normally spoke in the L1 with their close friends in school and 52.3% did so out of school. The two case study schools differed in the proportion of reported friends from a mix of countries, with Parkland School students reporting a much higher proportion of mixed background friendship circles.

## 6.2 What strategies do teachers employ and what are the implications for their professional knowledge and pedagogy?

### System-related

- The EAL co-ordinators, and their teams, were viewed by staff and students at the two case study schools, as lynchpins of the system, and were well respected in both case study schools as sources of knowledge, expertise and practical support.
- School leadership teams, EAL co-ordinators and subject teachers viewed high quality induction and on-going support for EAL students as a priority, and were willing to devote significant energy and as much resource as was available to this.
- Teachers and school leaders valued the diversity that the EAL student population brings to a school and to classrooms. At a whole school level EAL learners' heritages and cultures were celebrated in various ways, such as culture days and tutor group activities, and teachers reported attempting to introduce culture into subject lessons where possible.
- School staff reported dwindling central LA support for such services as bilingual translation and a need for high quality in-house Continuing Professional Development (CPD) to replace external expertise in their school.
- School leaders demonstrated support for EAL co-ordinators and their teams through practical measures, such as providing suitable rooms and direct line management to gain a better understanding of their work.

### Strategy-related

- Staff in both schools agreed on the need to avoid labelling of groups, preferring to view every learner, including EAL students, as having particular needs. The principle of differentiated 'education for all' was commonly held by the teachers interviewed.
- Teachers reported that they monitored the progress of EAL students particularly closely and adapted practice as necessary. This included the use of target-setting to support progression in English language acquisition as well as subject learning.
- There were no explicitly formulated departmental policies, whether written or otherwise, regarding pedagogical approaches for working with EAL learners and teachers felt these were unnecessary and unworkable due to the wide range of individual needs.
- Teachers believed that they were best placed to make their own decisions as to how to deal with the learning needs of each EAL student, having received information on their prior learning, any particular needs, and, for newly-arrived EAL students, the results of diagnostic tests.
- There was a recognition of the need for discretion in any adjustments that were made for EAL students.

- Teachers reported using a number of differentiated strategies to ensure optimal participation and learning in lessons: for example, modified materials, translation resources (software, dictionaries, translated books, translated materials, prompt cards, bilingual staff), task simplification, teacher instruction simplification, and buddying with other students who shared the same home language or with English speaking peers.
- Visuals (picture dictionaries, cartoons, TV programmes) and kinaesthetic activities and aids (such as manipulating objects and making models) were felt to be especially helpful. However, teachers also saw visuals as an additional scaffolding resource rather than as a substitute for language processing. The history teacher at Parkland School, for instance, reported that the school was following advice of giving EAL students 'a lot more reading, a lot more opportunities to challenge the issue that they have [with English literacy]'.
- Teachers noted that modified oral input was important, whether simplified language, slower speech, or repetition, and noted that training had benefitted them greatly with understanding how to do this effectively.
- Integration-related strategies reported by the teachers included the use of multicultural buddying activities in order to create a rapport between groups of students who would otherwise not mix (such as interviews of newly-arrived Year 10 EAL students by Year 7 students about life in the former students' country of origin).
- Grouping was commonly viewed as a useful strategy serving the dual aim of learning content and language simultaneously. EAL students with low levels of proficiency benefited from listening to input from their peers and also from opportunities to learn through collective problem-solving.

### Language-related

- Teachers and EAL co-ordinators viewed a lack of English proficiency to be the biggest barrier to successful social and academic inclusion (see Strand et al., 2015).
- While it was felt better to keep students in mainstream classes, extra support (whether one-on-one or in small groups) was offered where there was a perceived need. Some subject departments also provided additional subject-specific support classes.
- Teachers were aware of the particular demands on EAL students of having to deal with both curricular content and language.
- Developing good levels of literacy was felt to be a more difficult to achieve than oracy (Cummins, 1981, 2000). Teachers commented that the majority of EAL students developed functional oral proficiency within a year but continued to struggle to use appropriate academic English, even at Key Stage 4. The EAL co-ordinators identified this dimension of proficiency as an area of need to be addressed.
- The 'cultural connotations' of some subjects, such as English and history, were felt to be potentially challenging for some EAL students.
- In subjects such as maths and science, recent changes to the curriculum that have laid more emphasis on functional linguistic skills were felt by teachers to disadvantage EAL students where in the past any lack of academic English would not have been a disadvantage.
- There was no consistent approach to the use of the home language. While in language-related subjects, such as English and foreign languages, the teachers were keen to develop bi-literacy and multilingual competence, other subject teachers in these schools seemed to have a different approach, allowing for some use early on (e.g. bilingual dictionaries, writing or sharing orally ideas in the home language) but this was seen as a bridge that would lead to English only as quickly as was practicable (see Liu & Evans, in press). The home language was sometimes seen as useful in allowing students to write down their ideas and thoughts in response to a particular task before translating them into English. Students were often aware of the differences in practices between teachers but had no understanding of the rationale.
- Teachers supported the use of the home language for socialising as long as it was not used to exclude other students.

### Assessment-related

- Both schools relied on adaptations of the QCA's (2000) *A Language in Common: Assessing English as an additional language* as a scale for initial and subsequent monitoring of the students' progress in English. The EAL co-ordinators at both schools acknowledged the limitations of this scale. At Parkland School all newly-arrived EAL students were also asked to complete Cognitive Ability Tests.

- Many teachers felt that the information on EAL students' prior attainment obtained at admission was fragmentary and unreliable. There was a preference for in-house assessments and they only used the information provided by the Local Authority as 'an indicator' of issues that required special attention.
- Both schools employed strategies for academic inclusion. Students with knowledge of English were placed in mainstream classes on arrival. If they had no English then there was a phased induction.
- With respect to setting, both schools were keen to emphasise that performance in substantive subjects, and not level of English, determined the set that EAL students were assigned to.
- In cases where the level of academic attainment was yet to be established, newly-arrived EAL students were placed in middle or top sets for a time to ascertain in which subject groups they should be placed longer term. At Parkland School a criterion for choosing classes to place newly-arrived EAL students was that of availability of good language role models in the class. Another key criterion for placement was an individual's potential, rather than their current performance.
- EAL co-ordinators at both schools followed up on monitoring the students' progression subsequent to initial assessment through consulting the centrally stored records of classroom assessments in each subject. There was no systematic monitoring of English through intermittent testing against the assessment scales after the initial assessment.

### **6.3 To what extent are parents of EAL students encouraged by schools to be involved in supporting their children's educational progress and how can this be improved?**

Our research indicates that while there has been considerable effort by schools, teachers, parents and EAL students to bridge the communication and information gap between families with different language and/or countries-of-origin profiles, there is still much more to be done. Schools with a large number of language backgrounds among their EAL students and families and schools with less experience of working with EAL students face challenges, but also opportunities in the context of an increasingly international student body. Overall, the reduction in services (such as bilingual translation) provided by the local authority make it increasingly difficult for schools to offer effective support strategies for parents of EAL students with lower levels of English. The study highlighted the following findings in the context of parental knowledge, school ↔ home communication and parental engagement:

- Interviews with parents of EAL students confirmed existing findings that parents cared considerably about their children's education (Hamilton, 2013; Tereshchenko & Archer, 2014). However, if parental engagement is mainly understood by school staff as the attendance of parents' evenings, it is unlikely to represent the actual level of involvement and interest of parents in their children's learning (see Goodhall & Vorhaus, 2010).
- Parents of EAL students, especially those who have low levels of English and/or are new to the English school system, face a range of specific barriers including: lack of an understanding of the workings of the English school system and, therefore, difficulties in supporting children in their homework and assessment tasks, difficulties communicating in English, difficulties in organising translators for school meetings and low levels of confidence to engage with the school. While newly-arrived parents often benefit from an induction meeting with the school, parents who have been in the UK for longer (over five years) will not have been invited to such a meeting and our findings showed that they also struggle to understand the system, in particular if they have low levels of English. Strategies such as confidence-building in engaging with the school need to therefore be applied to all parents of EAL students.
- The research found that parents (particularly those newly-arrived in the last two years and/or who have low levels of English) have a significant lack of knowledge and understanding of important areas such as GCSE choices, groupings into sets of ability, school tests, school reports, the A-Level system, vocational training, subjects within school topics and exam topics. These are all crucial areas for effective parental support for their children's academic progression in the short and long term (see also Walker, 2014).
- School communication structures present further barriers such as inconsistency regarding the use of translations and translators, the lack of shared data on parental education and knowledge, and different levels of parental involvement in school processes. Teaching staff reflected a range of assumptions about the aspirations of parents of EAL children which could potentially hinder the development of targeted communication and information strategies.
- Overall, the strong interest by parents of EAL children in the latter's schooling offers a considerable opportunity for schools to find resources in support of EAL learners' progression. For this support to be effective, schools need to empower parents more effectively via engagement in school decision-making, through appropriate targeted communication and information.

## 6.4 A holistic approach to EAL support

Overall, the above findings confirm the need for a holistic systematic approach to the support of EAL learners. Language development and social integration (including the engagement of parents), is crucial for the academic progression of EAL students. The findings of the linguistic analysis of EAL learners' progression in section 3 offers objective data on the link between language development, social integration and progression, while sections 4 and 5 present perceptual data on the above link. The above findings confirm that effective school provision for EAL students and their parents/carers depends on information, co-ordination, support and communication, as reflected in our first report (see Arnot et al., 2014). The conceptual framework is represented in Figure 1 presented at the start of Appendix A.

### Critical discussion of the study's findings in light of the conceptual framework

#### *An integrated conceptual framework*

EAL students' educational achievement, host language development, social integration and sense of identity are integrally related as research has shown (Cummins, 2011; Esser, 2006). Negative stereotypes can hold back migrant children's success in academic attainment in school and EAL status itself is sometimes perceived as a barrier to success (Tereshchenko & Archer, 2014). The attitudes conveyed by schools generally, and by teachers individually, towards EAL students' cultures and languages therefore play a key role in establishing the right conditions in which EAL students' learning can flourish. Our study suggests that even in schools where such support and positive multicultural messages are promoted, the inevitable anxieties and their identity-related consequences arise as a result of the experience of immersion in a new linguistic and educational environment. While with time and increased socialisation into the new culture the sociocultural constraints on educational achievement are reduced or eliminated, the challenge for schools is to be alert to the pressures on and perceptions (real or imagined) of EAL students during the transitional phase of schooling in the host country and to adopt appropriate compensatory strategies.

#### *A holistic approach to EAL support*

One major contribution of this project is the development of a context-sensitive model for a holistic approach to EAL support. The findings from our study support the assumptions inherent in our model, insofar as they demonstrate that EAL students' language development, social integration and educational achievement result from a dynamic interplay of information, co-ordination, communication and support. To optimise the positive effect of this model, a strong professional knowledge base, which can be shared and developed within the school and within the educational community more widely, is needed. Our research findings clearly show that aspects of such a professional knowledge base relating to EAL provision is evident in different ways in both schools. Our regional survey suggests that for many schools this is lacking.

While in some senses the model is applicable to all learners, there are specific reasons why it is particularly pertinent for EAL new arrivals, those with low English competence and those from low-income backgrounds. The unique circumstances of these learners mean that without the appropriate support they are likely to struggle to adapt to their schools and to succeed. The key to successful negotiation of their background and new identities and to their success in studying the new curriculum with which they are confronted in the UK is acquisition of English. Our findings indicate that the EAL students in our study naturally prioritised the goal of developing their competence in English before focusing substantively on their academic learning. The teachers also admitted that the language barrier remained the biggest hindrance for EAL students, particularly in relating to writing and the development of academic English, which can take up to seven years (see Demie, 2013). This underlines the importance of establishing a long-term, realistic and consistent policy which supports EAL learners beyond the initial stages and throughout this process. This is where the EAL co-ordinators in our study played such a vital role, in gathering and communicating the information on EAL students to teachers, co-ordinating an approach to their learning, and supervising and supporting classroom teachers and assistants to ensure the students' academic and linguistic progress and social integration.

#### *A child-centred approach*

The work in the two schools in our study, schools which we take to embody good practice, was premised on the fundamental principle of differentiated 'education for all'. At the heart of this principle is the philosophy of child-centredness which holds that holistic support systems need to be based around individual children's needs within different contexts. These contexts are defined, broadly speaking, by learning and social factors. Ultimately each EAL child is an individual no less than a non-EAL child is: 'we are all learners of English', stated a deputy head at one of our schools, stressing that it is important to acknowledge that EAL students share similar learning needs with their English speaking counterparts. The challenge of all schools with EAL students, however, is to balance the individualised support provided by teachers and others with a critical awareness of the additional specific needs of an EAL student. For example, in order to make informed decisions in the classroom, teachers need to be aware of the learning (and ideally social or cultural) histories and, where possible, the prior performance levels of the EAL students they teach. Teachers' awareness and understandings of the EAL students' needs and challenges can be heightened through dialogue with individual students but also through more collective activities. At one of the case study schools, for instance, a video was made by some EAL students in which they talked about 'what it's like to be a bilingual learner' and included sections in which they spoke in their home language in order to

draw attention to the 'scary' feeling of immersion in a new linguistic environment. Systems of reporting and monitoring developed and informed by the principles embedded here need therefore to be as all-encompassing as possible and involve all stakeholders.

In our case study schools the adoption of a child-centred approach, where teachers drew on information provided by EAL co-ordinators and then used their professional judgements as to how best to teach individual learners in their classrooms, reflected this core principle. A range of strategies were implemented in the classroom, such as differentiated instructional input and provision of learning materials, additional language support, buddying and grouping for both social and academic outcomes, and monitoring learning through continuous assessment for learning. These strategies were used in a measured manner, which were needs-sensitive, context-dependent, and individually-based.

Classroom strategies were either language-focused, such as giving key words at the start of a lesson and allowing the students to write the translation in their L1 beside each one, or through the use of 'speech starters' to support talk in class and 'sentence starters' for writing. Strategies were also based on task-design, such as doing plans and elevations in maths lessons using cubes which can be manipulated physically in order to support their cognitive understanding of the problem. Finally, strategies were in place in relation to target-setting. Level ladders were used for monitoring progress, particularly with EAL students who were identified as having learning difficulties. At Parkland School, in particular, EAL students were given very specific targets in their English exercise books relating to features such as phrasing and register switching between formal and informal written English.

### *Parental engagement*

Parents, too, play a vital role in the holistic approach of school provision for the support of EAL students, and effective school ⇔ home communication is crucial. All participants in the research; parents of EAL pupils, EAL pupils themselves, EAL co-ordinators, teachers and the Senior Leadership Team (SLT), highlighted the importance of parental involvement in the school to help the educational achievement, social integration and language development of EAL pupils (see also Goodhall & Vorhaus, 2010; Walker, 2014). EAL co-ordinators play a key role in school ⇔ home communication and EAL staff in both schools showed outstanding commitment to facilitate effective school ⇔ home communication. However, it is also clear that this is one area within the holistic approach which remains a challenge and is in particular need of resources and further strategic thinking by different stakeholders.

Importantly, the research confirmed that parents of migrant children are very interested in their children's education, reflecting opportunities for schools to include them in the holistic approach towards school provision for the support of EAL students (see Tomlinson, 2000). However, school staff often use a very limited definition of parental engagement, conceptualising it in terms of attending parents' evenings (see Epstein & Dauber, 1991; Goodall & Vorhaus, 2010 for a wider conceptualisation of parental engagement). Consequently, staff often make wrong assumptions about parental interest and, at times, interpret lack of achievement by pupils as lack of parental interest.

On the other hand, our research highlighted that parents of EAL students, and here especially parents who arrived recently in the UK and/or have low levels of English, lack vital information about the school system and their child's learning (see Hamilton, 2013; Pascal & Bertram, 2007; Walker, 2014). However, parents of EAL students who have been in the UK for longer (over five years) also showed lack of knowledge and understanding of the school system and need to be targeted with specific strategies (e.g. confidence-building) as they might have missed out on induction meetings which newly-arrived parents are invited to.

School information about families of EAL students is crucial for a holistic approach. However, EAL co-ordinators or assistants have generally more knowledge and awareness than other staff regarding effective school ⇔ home communication; they are also more aware of the 'funds of knowledge', forms of social capital and resources available in EAL students' homes (see González, Moll & Amanti, 2013; Devine, 2009; Naidoo, 2013). Most of the teaching and senior management staff are less knowledgeable and rely on assumptions rather than information, as a systematic collection of parental views and barriers to engagement is rarely available. Furthermore, the research identified an inconsistency between teachers, subject departments and central school administration with regard to communication, information and translation strategies. Therefore, a clear, consistent and transparent co-ordination across the school is necessary to maximise school ⇔ home communication within a holistic approach of school provision for the support of EAL students. It is vital that schools find ways to involve parents of EAL students in school decision making and policy development (see, for example, Coady, Cruz-Davis & Flores, 2009). However, parents of EAL students are hardly ever represented in the decision-making structures of schools (e.g. parent-governors, parents-teachers association and working groups of parents of EAL students). If such representation was facilitated, information about effective school ⇔ home communication could be more easily gathered and disseminated amongst all staff.

Overall, school ⇔ home communication needs to focus much more clearly on the empowerment of parents, of which knowledge of the school system is a central factor. Empowerment also means that the school and staff reflect an 'outreach mentality' (Hamilton, 2013) and an 'empathetic climate' (Emma Brech, Renaisi Bilingual Advice Service, November 2015) and are aware of the following issues: parents' lack of knowledge of the English school system, consistent and effective co-ordination of communication with parents, the identification and acknowledgement of parents' specific needs, the avoidance of over-relying on pupils to mediate and translate information between school and home, and the avoidance of labelling and underestimating the engagement and interest of parents of EAL pupils (e.g. on the basis of country of origin) in their child's learning.



## Recommendations

### 6.5 Recommendations for classroom and pedagogy

EAL students' progression in English can be enhanced by the following strategies and measures:

- **EAL students' progression in English should be seen as a process that is integral to their progression in learning all the subjects they are studying in school:** This should be monitored and supported systematically within the different subjects. This support should be ongoing and its duration should reflect the length of time it can take for students to develop proficiency in academic English, which may be longer than the three years currently allocated in the funding formula.
- **Developing and implementing appropriate interventions which support EAL students to develop their writing skills:** The focus of such support should be on explicit instruction on how to compose the different text types that the students will need to write as part of their coursework and assessment requirements in their curricular subjects. This could involve study of relevant model texts displaying a range of formal and communicative features typical of their register and genre, ample opportunities for students to notice and practise using such features in their own writing, systematic feedback on their progress and on the difficulties they have with their formal linguistic production, and peer editing and assessment of writing tasks. In particular, effort needs to be invested in supporting lower attaining learners.
- **Peer learning and support opportunities should be maximised:** Opportunities which involve task-based communication and problem solving, particularly in pairs and groups with English-speaking buddies, should be provided for EAL students in order to enable them to have exposure to rich linguistic input and to benefit from collaboration with peers in completing learning tasks.
- **Teachers should employ a wide range of differentiated strategies** in order to provide support for the students' processing of the language, such as: task simplification; translation or modification of materials or oral input using e.g. bilingual staff, software, dictionaries, translated books/materials, prompt cards; teacher instruction simplification; buddying with other students, e.g. who share the same home language.
- **Teachers should employ strategies to compensate for the delayed focus on subject learning:** To counterbalance the students' tendency to focus on language rather than on subject content learning in the first six months or so following admission, teachers should develop appropriate strategies to compensate for the delayed focus on subject learning through, for instance, catch-up sessions in specific subjects where appropriate. Such strategies could, for example, consist of tuition in the L1 or the use of scaffolded English to support learning in particular subjects.
- **Extensive reading should be promoted:** Given the evidence of the importance of independent reading in English in our study, it is recommended that schools survey their EAL students to find out if they are reading English in their leisure time and to look into ways of promoting reading with individuals both in English and in the home language. Given the importance of transference of literacy skills between home language and English as an additional language (Jang et al., 2010), students who are literate in their L1 should also be encouraged to continue to read for pleasure in their home language.
- **Implementing a child centred approach:** A child-centred approach should be the core principle of EAL provision in schools, whereby EAL students are given additional support when needed, for as long as it is needed. Given the diverse range of linguistic, academic and social integration needs and profiles of EAL students within a school, individualised support, informed by a rounded knowledge of each student's profile, needs to be provided rather than a one-size-fits-all template of EAL provision (Bourne, 2001; Safford, 2003). In order for teachers to be able to work effectively within this pedagogical framework, the professional knowledge base of teachers regarding EAL pedagogy should take account of the following areas:
  - **Provision of targeted individual support:** While keeping students in mainstream classes should remain the principal approach to EAL students' schooling (Leung 2001, 2007), targeted individual support, in both language and subject matter, should be provided at the early stages of learning where necessary and school leaders should support this practically.
  - **Cultural and cross-linguistic awareness:** Teachers should be sensitive to features of different languages and cultures of learning to which learners may have been exposed, as this will help them make better pedagogical decisions. Similarities and differences between the home language and English can play a part in both helping and impeding acquisition of English. Similarly, awareness of the extent to which a newly-arrived EAL student has had experience of group work or other classroom interactional practices can help smooth the transitional process within mainstream lessons.
  - **Awareness of the need for whole-school consistent language practices:** As indicated in our first report (Arnot et al., 2014), a fully implemented language policy helps reduce inconsistencies in teachers' attitudes and practices regarding the use of the EAL students' home language in the classroom and beyond, and promotes a cohesive and systemic whole-school approach. Individual teachers may have different explanations of whether or not given practices are appropriate in their particular contexts

and subjects, but these justifications must be part of an overall coherent school rationale that acknowledges the value of bilingualism, and attempts to minimise the need for EAL students to adjust to potentially conflicting messages and pedagogical practices.

- **Developing academic English:** CPD activities in school should include a focus on how to monitor progression in academic English within different subjects, and also more globally through the use of EAL-appropriate scales and competency descriptors.

## 6.6 Recommendations for school leadership

### *Developing and supporting the work of EAL co-ordinators*

- **The status of the role of the EAL co-ordinator:** The development of a national qualification for EAL co-ordinators is needed and should be introduced for new EAL co-ordinators. The current disparity between the Masters level qualifications required of new SEN co-ordinators (National College for Teaching and Leadership) and the absence of any qualifications required of EAL co-ordinators in the UK needs to be addressed by the Department for Education.
- **Raising the status of EAL support with the school:** The current situation in which schools have no suitably qualified or experienced EAL co-ordinator in place despite significant numbers of EAL students at the school needs to be addressed. Increasingly this support is provided by a teaching assistant without particular expertise in EAL. Given that this work is central to the successful academic performance and social inclusion of EAL learners, and that schools need to provide adequate support for their EAL students, senior leadership should appoint a suitable senior member of staff to assume this role. This support should include:
- **A co-ordinated approach:** Designated EAL funding along with practical support needs to be used by schools to allow the EAL co-ordinators, or others fulfilling this role, to develop their expertise so that they can effectively assess, review, plan with individual and groups of teachers, and to connect up all EAL-related activity across the school.
- **Sharing expertise:** Opportunities for the EAL co-ordinator and his/her team to work with school departments, and especially English and languages departments, to share expertise should be encouraged by school leadership teams.
- **Developing guidelines:** Departments should be encouraged to develop appropriate guidelines based on agreed principles supporting EAL teaching and learning. Some strategies will be common across departments (e.g. use of home language; scaffolding students' use of English) and some subject-specific (dealing with the metalanguage of particular subjects).
- **Whole school awareness:** School leadership teams should encourage a whole school ethos that values linguistic and cultural diversity as an asset to the school. Such symbolic valuing of language diversity should be backed up by policies and strategies to help teachers and students have a better understanding of how multilingualism can be a beneficial resource for academic and social purposes.

### *Formalising appropriate monitoring and assessment systems*

- **Flexible initial assessment:** Initial assessment systems should have sufficient flexibility to accommodate the varying needs of the students. The key focus in using this assessment should be to promote the EAL students' potential development within the UK curricular framework. However, stronger intergovernmental mechanisms and protocols should be developed for ensuring transmission of relevant academic profiles to the host school in the UK, particularly in the case of arrivals from other EU countries.
- **Assessment procedures/diagnostic tools** should also be developed for ascertaining English literacy and oracy baseline levels for newly-arrived pupils.
- **Assessment of progress:** School leaders should put in place procedures for the assessment of EAL students' progress in academic and curriculum-related English on an on-going basis and this should be relatively fine-grained so that individual areas of difficulty can be identified and addressed.
- **Monitoring the pace of progress in subject areas:** The pace of progress in most subject areas, beyond mathematics, needs to be carefully monitored and accelerated in order for students to meet their full potential within a shorter timespan than is available for most native speakers. Appropriate resources and strategies need to be developed by EAL experts in consultation with subject teachers working in different curriculum areas.
- **Whole-school EAL support and monitoring systems:** A whole school EAL support and monitoring system should be devised which covers a longitudinal period from students' first arrival till advanced stages.



*Opportunities for CPD and teacher development*

- **Internal CPD:** Schools should run regular internal CPD sessions on EAL support, drawing on the existing expertise of members of staff.
- **Access to external CPD and networking:** Schools should provide opportunities for teachers to attend regular training and networking events to update general and subject specific aspects of EAL knowledge and practice, and in order to share expertise and engage in collaborative projects with professionals from other schools to develop their knowledge and skills in this field.
- **Access to information and resources:** Potentially facilitated by EAL co-ordinators, schools should ensure that staff are aware of the resources available to them (e.g. key websites such as NALDIC) and how to access information relevant to the learners.
- **EAL induction and training for newly qualified teachers:** EAL induction should be made compulsory as part of the school orientation for newly qualified teachers. School-specific EAL guidelines for new staff should be developed in consultation with EAL staff, subject teachers and experts in the field. Similarly, all initial training programmes should include training in embedded EAL support, drawing on local practitioner expertise and up-to-date relevant research in the field.

*Encouraging parental involvement*

School ⇔ home communication is a complex area and a range of issues should be addressed by school management and teaching staff to make it more effective:

- **Developing an 'outreach mentality':** Schools should take advantage of the opportunities offered by the high levels of interest from parents of EAL students in their child's schooling and offer school strategies which reflect an 'outreach mentality' (Hamilton, 2013) and an 'empathetic climate' (Emma Brech, Renaisi Bilingual Advice Service, November 2015) which sees speaking English as an additional language as an opportunity rather than a barrier.
- **Seeing parents as an asset:** Our research has highlighted that school – home communication should not mainly rely on EAL students to transmit and/or translate information for their parents (see also report by Cline & Crafter 2014). Secondly it highlights that parents of EAL students have high levels of interest in their children's learning and need to be viewed as a resource rather than a hindrance to the school system. Given this, the presence of such families in a local community offers numerous opportunities for the English education system to engage with the assets which the families hold (see Devine, 2009; Tomlinson, 2000). Regional, local and school-based resources should be harnessed, be they through Multi Academy Trusts, local authorities, maintained schools, community networks or informal parental networks to assist in the bilingual support of school ⇔ home communication. This could for example include sharing translations of routine school information, avoiding duplication and sharing strategies for effective parental engagement.

*Raising staff awareness of parental engagement issues*

- **Raising awareness of staff regarding a wider conceptualisation of parental engagement** (Epstein & Dauber, 1991; Goodall & Vorhaus, 2010): Engagement cannot be merely measured via attendance at parents' evenings as it ignores the diverse and complex involvement of parents in their children's learning at home and the assets and 'funds of knowledge' available at home (see González et al., 2013). Different migration, geographical and/or language backgrounds can produce proactive and stimulating interaction between parents and students at home which can, in turn, be seen as an advantage, rather than a hindrance to a child's educational achievement.
- **Having targeted strategies for parents with limited English:** Staff need to be aware that parents of EAL students, and especially those who have a low level of English, will need targeted school ⇔ home communication strategies. Schools also need to be aware and find ways of circumventing the exceptional employment conditions. Parents of EAL students (and here especially those who are labelled migrant workers) have working conditions which are specific to agency work in the agricultural and care sectors (see Schneider & Holman, 2011), which poses a particular barrier to parental involvement at school.
- **Developing communications that help parents to understand the school system by:**  
Firstly, ensuring that all parents understand the school system and know the specifics such as exams and homework tasks, GCSE choices, groupings into sets of ability, school tests, school reports, the A-Level system, vocational training, subjects within school topics and exam topics. Language barriers for parents of EAL children and recent arrival in the UK should not prevent parents' involvement in and support for the child's educational choices, academic progress and achievement (see Pascal & Bertram, 2007; Walker, 2014).

Secondly, highlighting and clearly communicating the aims of parents' and information evenings (e.g. GCSE) to parents to support their involvement and confidence. Additional information evenings can be provided in (main) community languages (with the help of bilingual advisers, volunteer experienced parents and/or interpreters).

Thirdly, providing clear guidance in an induction meeting about expectations and opportunities of parental involvement and how to access homework and exams tasks. The research project produced a template (see Appendix B), which can be used to encourage newly-arrived families to get involved by presenting their country of origin/previous country of residence.

Fourthly, school communication strategies with parents need to reflect a reasonable level of consensus, co-ordination, continuity and quality across departments and among staff. Phone calls are problematic as a communication tool and whenever possible email and face-to-face communication (with translators or translation tools) should be used.

- **Having a representative voice:** Parents of EAL students are significantly under-represented in school structures (e.g. as governors, in parent-teacher associations etc.). Recently announced plans to reform school governance may make this even more difficult to achieve. The representation and involvement of parents of EAL students should be actively encouraged and supported. The formation of parent networks is cost-effective and helps parents of EAL students to understand the school system and to integrate. It also offers opportunities to contribute their own language, values, skills and recommendations (see Ramalingam & Griffith, 2015 on community and parent-led strategies).

#### *School ⇔ home communication and translations*

- **Using technology to facilitate home/school communication:** Technological advances and increasing use of computers/tablets for student learning at school and at home can support the communication with parents of EAL students in order to overcome language-related barriers (if internet is accessible in the local area). Parents should be informed about IT training and access to computers at the school/ in the community, so that tools such as skype meetings, podcasts and online translation sites can be used for school ⇔ home communication.
- **Developing a clear and consistent policy regarding translations** across the school with the help of parents of EAL students (central administration, departments and classrooms). Relying on EAL students for translations is potentially problematic and other means (outlined below) should be considered whenever possible (see report by Cline & Crafter, 2014).
- **Providing translations of all general information, which is available on the school website:** Some schools are already using a device, which indicates different languages at the bottom of the school website, which can then be clicked on, so that the entire context of the website (including attached letters etc.) are translated automatically into the required language. Other strategies such as simplifying the language for parental letters and developing glossaries of relevant words for parents in different languages can further support the communication process. Organisations such as Renaisi (<http://www.renaisi.com>) also offer effective bilingual parent support services (in combination with ongoing cross-cultural advocacy and community support work).
- **Local, regional and school-based resources should be made available** for the bilingual support of school ⇔ home communication. Our research has highlighted that school ⇔ home communication should not mainly rely on EAL students who transmit and/or translate information for their parents (see also Cline & Crafter, 2014).

## 6.7 Recommendations for policy makers

A number of implications for policy arise from the findings of this study.

It is firstly important to be cautious in making any assumptions that the issue of EAL attainment has been solved, as this has largely been due to historic long-term targeted investment in this area, which included the existence of specialist local authority teams many of which have now disappeared, resulting in a loss of expertise. This was evidenced in the schools surveyed for this report and has been widely reported elsewhere. As schools are now operating in a self-improving school-led system, and if the roles of local authorities diminish as envisaged in the Government's recently published White Paper, (DfE, March 2016) it will be important to incentivise the systematic sharing of best practice for EAL learners. As classrooms become more diverse, solutions are needed which ensure accountability, sustainability and sharing evidence and good practice about what works for this group of learners.

Secondly, it is important for policy-makers to move towards a narrative that recognises the reality of the current available data and evidence. For some EAL learners, along with some white working class children and other ethnic groups such as the Roma, there are significant under attainment issues which persist for certain children, particularly outside London, which need to be addressed through mechanisms including the systematic use of evidence, funding, improved accountability and best practice sharing. There is a welcome emphasis on the sharing of evidence in the White Paper *Educational excellence everywhere* (DfE, March 2016). It is recommended that:

- **Evidence-based approaches inform pedagogy:** More opportunities for focused, research-informed thinking about effective EAL-related strategies and practice should be organised at school level, within subject teaching communities and within teaching school alliances, and other school improvement bodies.

In the context of rising numbers of EAL pupils, and a changed funding system, it is important to improve accountability within the current system.

- **Develop an accountability mechanism for EAL funding:** Accountability for and transparency of expenditure of existing EAL funding is currently absent. Under the current funding system there is no direct accountability mechanism regarding schools' use of EAL funding. This contrasts starkly with the requirement on schools to annually account for their use of Pupil Premium funding and to evaluate its impact. Schools should be held accountable for how their EAL funding contributes to improving pupil attainment in the same way as they must demonstrate how Pupil Premium spending impacts on disadvantaged pupils. This could be done in the same way as for the Pupil Premium monies and if done could improve transparency, and best practice sharing. This could additionally be addressed through school governance and through strengthening the current Ofsted framework.
- **Incentivise the sharing of best practice:** With the loss of many of the Ethnic Minority Achievement (EMA) teams in Local Authorities, there is a pressing need to capture and promote existing good practice and expertise on raising the attainment of EAL learners and new arrivals. It is important to build incentives into the current system for schools to improve their EAL provision (including pupil attainment, teacher training and parental engagement strategies) and offer this expertise to other schools.
- **Build better assessment of English language proficiency:** It is welcome that the DfE from September 2016 will require schools to implement and test for proficiency in English for EAL learners. Greater coherence and consistency is needed in the assessment of EAL students' acquisition of and progression in English. Schools will need clear guidelines on the form and frequency of assessing EAL students' performance in English. More nuanced, research-based and practice-informed frameworks and scales should be adopted by schools, serving the prime purpose of formative development of the students' competence in English. The guiding principles for such an approach and validated scales are being developed by the Bell Foundation (see Evans et al., 2015).
- **Spelling, punctuation and grammar (SPaG) tests:** SPaG criteria that have recently been incorporated into public examinations should be reviewed for their impact on and potential disadvantage to EAL learners. Research should ascertain whether EAL students are on the whole disadvantaged by this measure and, if so, how this can be addressed.
- **Developing an emphasis on academic English:** It is also important to maintain support for 'more advanced EAL pupils' who, although fluent in everyday English, need support for developing 'academic' English. Noting the Government's position below, there is a body of evidence that suggests that, although a basic level of fluency may be obtained in three years, academic proficiency takes up to seven years. EAL learners, and particularly those joining at secondary level, need to be able to function at a high level of academic English because schools often assume fluency when in fact a pupil may not possess the skills to write academic English.

*We want all schools to address English language need quickly. We do not want the funding system to reward schools for delay in this regard. This is why we permit local authorities to provide additional EAL funding for a period of three years only. (DfE, Consultation on fairer school funding for 2015 to 2016, Government response)*

Developing academic proficiency in written and spoken English, (particularly that which is subject specific and exam based) is important for other disadvantaged pupils broader than EAL learners.

- **Improve provision in Initial Teacher Education (ITE) and Continuing Professional Development (CPD) :** Meeting the needs of pupils with EAL could be addressed by including in the DfE's new ITE core framework a greater and more systematic emphasis on the needs of pupils with EAL during the training year. For example, a greater component on teaching to the diverse classroom and also an improved focus on language in the initial teacher training curriculum could then be supplemented by on-going continuing professional development.

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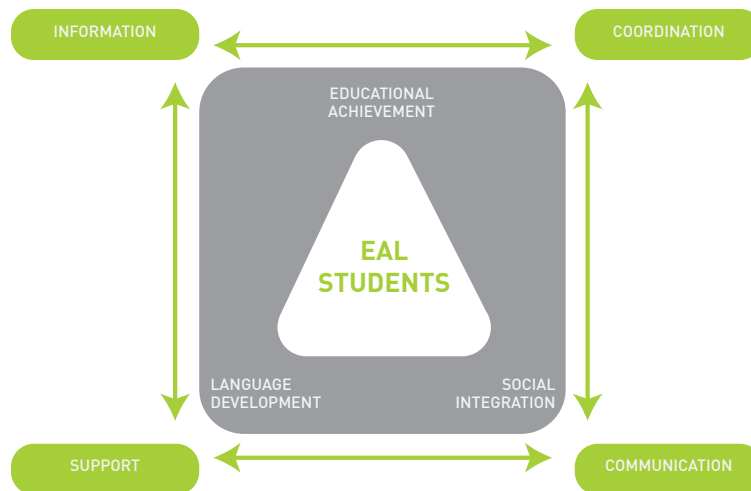
## Appendix A: Research design

### A.1 Conceptual framework

We concluded in our first report (Arnot et al., 2014) that a holistic approach is needed for the school provision of support for EAL pupils (see Figure 1). This involves four different aspects:

- Information (e.g. on family backgrounds, prior educational history and records, appropriate testing and progress monitoring and comparison between EAL and non-EAL levels of achievement taking into account relevant variables);
- Co-ordination within the school of all categories of staff, support and assistant staff (in terms of EAL policy, planning, organisation and allocation of resources and budget, appropriate pedagogic strategies and rules about the relationship between, for example, L1 and English language development, integrated approaches to EAL elements in teacher training and professional development programmes);
- Support for the EAL child and family (in all areas: social integration, achievement, monitoring, prevention of bullying, valuing of other cultures and languages, taking social disadvantage and other relevant variables into account); and,
- Communication (in school between management and teachers, between school and parents, teacher and pupils, specialist and general teachers and between pupils themselves).

Figure 1: Conceptual framework for the school provision of support for EAL pupils



### A.2 Regional survey

The aim of the online regional survey was to obtain an overview of EAL experiences and provision in secondary schools across the East of England. The survey consisted of 50 questions (both multiple choice and open-ended) organised into five key sections, aimed at addressing our three research questions:

- General questions about the profile of the schools, the number of EAL students and languages spoken;
- Assessment procedures for EAL students on arrival and their effectiveness;
- Support for EAL students in school such as induction programmes and staff training;
- Language use in school, including written language policies and attitudes towards the use of the L1;
- Social integration strategies and the involvement of EAL students and their parents/carers in school activities.



The survey was piloted and an explanatory email was sent to the headteacher of each school before the survey link was distributed via email to all secondary schools in the East of England<sup>9</sup> (n=438) in the spring term of 2014. In order to encourage schools to respond, reminders were then sent to all non-respondents as the submission deadline approached and a subsequent reminder was sent to all respondents who had begun but not completed their responses. Emails and reminders were also addressed personally to the appropriate member of staff (for example, EAL co-ordinator), where this information was available from the school website. However, even following several reminders the response rate remained very low. 46 schools completed all, or a substantial part of the survey, which represents around 11% of secondary schools in the region. Of the 46 respondents, 33 were from state-maintained schools, ten were from independent schools and three were from voluntary aided schools. Although the small number of respondents is clearly not sufficient to provide a generalisable overview of EAL provision in the region, responses were helpful in contextualising the findings from the two case study schools.

### A.3 Case studies

#### Profile of schools<sup>10</sup>:

The two secondary schools which formed the basis of this study were selected due to their demographic diversity and differing experience with EAL students in order to ensure that we had access to a range of experiences and practices in the provision of EAL support. One of the schools was a large urban school with a long-standing and well-established community of EAL students, while the other was a smaller school in a semi-rural area where the arrival of EAL students has been much more recent. The two schools belonged to different Local Authorities. Both schools, however, already had a wide range of support mechanisms in place for their EAL students and were keen to build on this provision. Both schools, therefore, were chosen partly on the basis of their interest and commitment to EAL provision. They differed, however, in the extent of experience they had in this area at the time of the study. Only two schools were chosen in order to allow for an in-depth and comprehensive insight into the EAL students' progression, both in English and more generally, and to explore the factors which influenced this progression.

#### *Parkland School*

Parkland is a large 11-18 comprehensive school with more than 1500 students located in a multicultural urban environment with a high level of social deprivation. The school serves an ethnically diverse catchment area which is home to a large and well-established Pakistani-heritage community and which also includes more recent arrivals from predominantly Eastern European countries. White British and Pakistani students form the largest ethnic groups in the school. Our KS4 student survey indicated that 56.5% of students at the school regularly spoke a language other than English at home with their family.

The proportion of students who receive free school meals and who are identified as having special educational needs is above both the national and Local Authority average. EAL students represent over half of the school community and approximately 60 different languages are spoken. As a result, the school has substantial experience in EAL provision. The school received a 'Good' overall rating in a recent OFSTED report and it was noted that students, including those who speak English as an additional language, make good progress as they move through the school.

Parkland is a school which takes pride in its multicultural student population, evidenced in part by the many multilingual signs and displays around the school. The EAL students are supported by a team of four full-time and three part-time teaching assistants specifically assigned to learning support, including several bilingual assistants, led by a very experienced Ethnic Minority Support Leader<sup>11</sup>.

Table 20: School characteristics for Parkland School

	<b>Parkland</b>	<b>LA average</b>	<b>National average<sup>12</sup></b>
EAL students	Over 55%	27.7%	14.3%
Free School Meals	Over 17%	16.7%	15.7%
SEN and school action plus	Over 10%	8.4%	7.4%
GCSE results - A*-C grade including English and maths (2014)	Over 45%	50.0%	56.6%

9 This included all secondary level state-maintained schools, academies, voluntary-aided, free schools and independent schools across Cambridgeshire, Peterborough, Norfolk, Suffolk, Essex, Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire.

10 Data in tables retrieved from <http://www.education.gov.uk> on 1st September 2015.

11 The role of Ethnic Minority Support Leader encompasses what would be referred to as the EAL co-ordinator in other schools.

12 National average for state funded secondary schools in England.



*Kirkwood Academy*

Kirkwood is a relatively small 11-16 academy with fewer than 700 students located in a semi-rural area. The school attracts students from the local farming community and from some of the nearby villages. The majority of students are of White British heritage; however, in recent years the area has experienced a growing population of families from other European countries, particularly from Eastern Europe. In contrast with the Parkland School student profile, our KS4 student survey indicated that only 17.2% of students regularly spoke a language other than English at home.

Currently approximately 12% of all students at the school are EAL, which is above the average for the local authority, but more or less in line with the national average for state-funded secondary schools across England. Similar to Parkland, Kirkwood has a higher than average proportion of students who receive free school meals and who are identified as having special educational needs. In their 2014 OFSTED report the school was identified as requiring improvement in some areas; however, the inspectors noted the progress made by EAL students, and particularly those from an Eastern European heritage.

Kirkwood has a dedicated English-Romanian EAL co-ordinator who also speaks several European languages and, although she has been working in the school for a number of years, the EAL co-ordinator role in itself was established relatively recently in order to provide support for recently-arrived migrant students and their families.

Table 21: School characteristics for Kirkwood Academy

	Kirkwood	LA average	National average
EAL students	Over 12%	5.6%	14.3%
Free School Meals	Over 20%	13.5%	15.7%
SEN and school action plus	Under 10%	7.6%	7.4%
GCSE results - A*-C grade including English and maths (2014)	Over 30%	52.7%	56.6%

**A.4 School data**

The data collection process in the two schools was organised in collaboration with members of the senior management team (SMT) and the EAL co-ordinators. Data collection took place over two years, as outlined in Table 22 below, which provides an overview of the data collected from each school in each year of the study. Informed consent was obtained from all of the participants and parental consent was also obtained for the participant students via letters sent home which had been translated into their home language. All interviews with school staff and students were conducted during school hours and were audio recorded. The members of the research team conducting the interviews had been DBS checked in order to comply with school regulations.

Table 22: Overview of data collection in schools

	Round 1 (2014)		Round 2 (2015)	
	Parkland	Kirkwood	Parkland	Kirkwood
Interviews with SMT	3	1	-	-
Interviews with EAL co-ordinators	1	1	1	1
Interviews with classroom teachers	5	5 <sup>13</sup>	-	-
Interviews with EAL students	12	10	12	10
Writing tasks completed by EAL students	12	10	12	10
Surveys completed by KS4 students	-	-	255	152
School assessment data	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Interviews with parents/carers of EAL students	-	-	6	4
Surveys completed by parents/carers of EAL students	-	-	37	24

<sup>13</sup> A group of three maths teachers at Kirkwood all wished to participate in the interview, therefore while the other interviews with teachers all took place on an individual basis, the maths teachers were interviewed as a group. The five interviews with classroom teachers at Kirkwood therefore include seven teachers in total.

## Interviews

### *Senior management and EAL co-ordinators*

The research team conducted semi-structured individual interviews with the headteachers and EAL co-ordinators at both schools and also with the deputy headteacher and assistant headteacher at Parkland School. Interviews were conducted in the spring of 2014 and each lasted approximately one hour.

The interviews addressed six key areas of interest:

- General questions about the role of the interviewee in relation to EAL provision in the school;
- School policies relating to EAL including available support both within the school and from external providers;
- Initial assessment of both language and academic ability on arrival and information provided from feeder schools and/or from other countries;
- Students' language development, teaching strategies and any current challenges facing EAL students and their teachers;
- Facilitation of and obstacles to the social integration of EAL students in school;
- Involvement of parents/carers and strategies in place for communication with parents/carers.

A follow-up interview was also conducted in the spring of 2015 with the EAL co-ordinators in each school, which focused on changes in their role and school policy in the intervening year. Where applicable, interviewees were also asked to comment on the progress of the 22 participant students.

### *Classroom teachers of maths, English, science, history and MFL*

Semi-structured individual interviews were conducted with the Head of Department, or a representative, from English, maths, science, history/humanities and Modern Foreign Languages in each school (ten interviews in total). Interviews were conducted in the summer term of 2014 and lasted approximately 30 minutes each. The aim of the interviews was to obtain the perspective of classroom teachers on EAL students and their classroom practice across a range of core curriculum subjects.

Initially, it was hoped that it would be possible to interview the teachers of the participant students; however, due to the range of year groups and abilities represented, this would have involved interviewing a large number of teachers in each school which was not feasible within the time constraints of the study. As a result, a representative from each department was interviewed and where possible, they were asked to comment on the progress of the participant students.

The interviews addressed six key areas of interest:

- General profile of the teacher and information provided to them about EAL students in their classes;
- Teaching strategies used to support EAL students and their effectiveness;
- Language use in school and the role of the L1 in the classroom;
- Departmental policies on the assessment and monitoring of EAL students and the general progression of EAL students in each subject area;
- Teachers' perspectives on the social integration of EAL students including use of seating plans and observation of friendship groups;
- Communication with parents/carers of EAL students.

### *EAL students*

Interviews were also conducted with 22 newly-arrived EAL students, 12 from Parkland School and 10 from Kirkwood Academy. The aim of the interviews was not only to gain students' perspectives on their school experience, but also to assess their ability to interact in English and how this changed over time.

The 22 students were selected in consultation with the EAL co-ordinators and in accordance with the following criteria: the students were 'newly-arrived' students who had come to the UK within the 2013-14 academic year, or as soon as possible before this; they represented a range of performance levels in English and in their general academic attainment; they represented a mix of gender and year groups across KS3 and KS4; and they were from a range of first language backgrounds, though over half were Lithuanian speakers. Table 23 provides an overview of the profile of each of the 22 students. Names have been changed to preserve anonymity.

Interviews were firstly piloted with a small group of EAL students at another secondary school in the region. The first round of student interviews was conducted in the spring of 2014 and the second round one year later, in the spring of 2015. Each interview lasted approximately 20-30 minutes and where necessary, an interpreter was available to translate. The decision on whether or not an interpreter was needed was made in conjunction with the EAL co-ordinator and where it was felt that the student would not be comfortable communicating in English.

Table 23: Profile of the 22 EAL students

Pseudonym	School	L1	School start date	Year group (2013-14)	Initial EAL assessment <sup>14</sup>
Daina	Parkland	Lithuanian	Oct 2013	7	1+ to 2
Farooq	Parkland	Urdu/Italian	Oct 2013	7	1+ to 2
Anikke	Parkland	Lithuanian	Oct 2013	9	1+ to 2
Krzysztof	Parkland	Polish	Mar 2012	9	0 to 1
Naveed	Parkland	Urdu	Oct 2013	9	0 to 1
Agnieszka	Parkland	Polish	Sept 2013	10	2+
Andrius	Parkland	Lithuanian	Sept 2013	10	2+
Bronius	Parkland	Lithuanian	Sept 2013	10	1+ to 2
Fatima	Parkland	Urdu	Sept 2013	10	0 to 1
Linas	Parkland	Lithuanian	Oct 2013	10	2+
Marijus	Parkland	Lithuanian	Sept 2013	10	2+
Ona	Parkland	Lithuanian	Sept 2013	10	2+
Ana	Kirkwood	Portuguese	Nov 2013	8	0 to 1
Jonas	Kirkwood	Lithuanian	Sept 2013	8	0 to 1
Kasia	Kirkwood	Polish	Nov 2013	8	0 to 1
Dmitrij	Kirkwood	Latvian	Jun 2013	10	0 to 1
Giedre	Kirkwood	Lithuanian	Oct 2012	9	0 to 1
Jana	Kirkwood	Polish	Sept 2013	9	1+ to 2
Karolis	Kirkwood	Lithuanian	Nov 2013	10	0 to 1
Laima	Kirkwood	Lithuanian	Jun 2013	10	0 to 1
Petras	Kirkwood	Lithuanian	Mar 2013	9	0 to 1
Tomas	Kirkwood	Lithuanian	Dec 2012	9	0 to 1

The first round of interviews focused on the following key areas:

- General background of the student, such as their experience of arriving in the UK and their previous school experience in their home country;
- Language use both at home and at school and how their language development is supported in the classroom;
- Students' perceptions of their attainment in school and how this is supported;
- Social integration and friendship groups.

The aim of the second round of interviews was to assess whether there had been any changes in the above during the intervening year, specifically in relation to students' general experiences of school/learning, whether they had integrated more into friendship groups, whether they had flourished in lessons and felt a sense of achievement or were still struggling with some aspects of learning, and whether they needed help and support and if so what form this took.

<sup>14</sup> Students were grouped according to the initial assessment scores given to them on arrival at the school as either Level 0 to 1, Level 1+ to 2, or Level 2+. Levels were determined using an adapted version of the QCA assessment scales.

## Writing tasks

Writing tasks were also administered to the participant students either immediately before or after the interviews. The purpose of the tasks was to elicit a written sample of students' English to be analysed alongside their spoken language produced during the interview. The tasks were completed both in 2014 and 2015 in order to provide evidence of the progression of students' ability to communicate effectively and accurately in writing. The tasks were administered under test conditions supervised by one of the researchers, and students were instructed to write as much as they could in 30 minutes.

The topic of the first writing task was related to students' school experience, and asked them to describe their current school and their previous school, to give opinions about the school and the subjects they study and their plans for the future. The topic of the second task was related to the students' town. They were similarly asked to describe their current town, to compare it to their hometown and to give opinions.

The prompts for each task were designed to elicit a range of both formal and communicative features, such as different verb tenses, and the expression of opinions and feelings.

## School assessment data

Assessment data concerning the 22 participant students was also collected from the school for both the 2013-14 and 2014-15 academic years. This included their initial EAL assessment level and the written reports completed by the EAL co-ordinator on their arrival, school reports and assessment grades given by teachers across all subjects studied, and final GCSE grades for the ten students in the sample who took their exams in summer 2015. Such data provided the research team with a more objective view of the students' assessment and progress over the two-year period of the study.

## Student surveys

In the spring of 2015 a total of 407 surveys were completed by Key Stage 4 students in each school. The aim of this survey was to provide a broader overview of attitudes both of and towards EAL students in the two schools, in order to further contextualise the findings from the participant students. Non-EAL students were also asked to complete the survey in order to enable comparisons to be made between the two groups. The survey was firstly piloted with a small group of EAL students. The paper-based surveys were then given to all EAL and non-EAL Year 10 and Year 11 students (age 14-16) at Kirkwood and to all Year 10 students (age 14-15) at Parkland<sup>15</sup>. The surveys were completed by the students at an appropriate time in school, such as a tutor period, and copies of instructions were provided for the teachers involved. Translations of the student survey were also provided in Lithuanian, Polish and Turkish for those who needed them, as identified by the EAL co-ordinators. Students were not asked to write their name in order to preserve anonymity.

The survey consisted of 29 questions and addressed the following areas:

- General information about the student, such as length of time at their current school and, if applicable, any other countries they had lived in;
- Details of any other languages spoken/learned, how they were learned and where they are spoken;
- Involvement of parents/carers in students' school life, for example, how often they help with homework or come into school;
- Students' perceptions of their achievement in school subjects and plans for the future;
- Country of origin of close friends and language(s) spoken;
- Questions specific to EAL students concerning support in school and their perception of their ability in English.

## A.5 Parent/carer data

Data were also collected via interviews and surveys from the parents/carers of EAL students.

## Interviews

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with ten parents of EAL students over the course of the 2014/15 academic year. The aim of the interviews was to gain information about the perspective of parents and their involvement with the school, and to combine this with the perspectives from both the school and the students themselves in order to build a more comprehensive picture of the progression of EAL students. A selection of parents were identified and approached by the EAL co-ordinators at each school and were given information letters about the research which had been translated into their home language. Ten parents agreed to participate in the interviews: five from Lithuania, two from Poland, two from Latvia and one from Portugal, of whom five were the parents of the participant students. All of the interviews were conducted with the mothers, and in one case the father also participated. Eight of the

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15 Due to the timing of GCSE examinations it was not possible for the Year 11 students at Parkland to complete the survey.

ten interviews were conducted in the parents' home language and the remaining two were conducted in English. Interviews took place either in the school or in their home, if that was more convenient. All interviews were audio recorded and lasted between 30 minutes and one hour.

The interviews addressed the following key areas:

- General background of the family, such as country of origin, educational background of the parents and language(s) spoken in the home;
- Their understanding of the UK school system and examination system;
- Their relationship with and communication with the school and the teachers;
- Their engagement with the school.

### **Parent/carer surveys**

In the summer term of 2015 surveys were administered to all of the parents/carers of EAL students at both schools. The aim of this survey was to provide a broader overview of the EAL experience from the perspective of the parents/carers, and to help to contextualise the data from the ten interviews. Paper-based versions of the survey were created in English, Polish and Lithuanian and were distributed to parents/carers via the students, who were asked to return them to the EAL co-ordinator once completed. Online versions of the survey in each language were also created and links were emailed directly to the parents/carers via the school's email system. Parents/carers could therefore choose whether to complete the paper-based version or the electronic version. In total, 64 parents/carers completed all or a substantial part of the survey, 37 from Parkland and 24 from Kirkwood and 3 which could not be matched with a specific school.

Of the completed surveys, the largest group of responses from both Parkland and Kirkwood were from Lithuanian parents (10 and 12 respectively). From Parkland eight of the respondents were from Pakistan, three were from Poland and the remaining were from Slovakia, India, Afghanistan, Canada, France, Hong Kong, Latvia, Portugal and Zimbabwe. From Kirkwood five of the respondents were from Poland, four were from Turkey and the remaining were from Portugal, Moldova and China. As such, the background of respondents from Kirkwood was predominantly Eastern European, while those from Parkland represent a much more diverse range of countries. It is also important to note that 29% of respondents from Kirkwood arrived in the last two years, compared to only 11% at Parkland, reflecting the higher proportion of new arrivals in the former. The surveys addressed similar topics to the parent/carer interviews, and focused mainly on the parents'/carers' background, their understanding of the school system in England, and their communication and involvement with the school.

## **A.6 Data analysis**

### **Surveys**

Descriptive and inferential tests were used with SPSS to analyse the responses to the student and regional surveys.

### **Content/thematic analysis of interviews**

All of the interviews were transcribed verbatim and any use of a language other than English (in the interviews with students and parents/carers) were firstly transcribed in the L1 and then translated into English. General themes were then identified for each of the interviews based on the interview schedules and the responses given and the transcripts were then coded using NVivo software.

### **Language analysis of student interviews and writing tasks**

In addition to conducting a thematic analysis of the content of the student interviews, both the interviews and writing tasks were also analysed in terms of the quality of language used (see below) and the students' ability to communicate in English. Of particular interest were changes in students' use of language between the first round of data collection and the second round a year later.

#### *Coding framework for writing tasks*

The writing tasks given to EAL students (described above) were first coded individually by two of the researchers according to the coding framework. Each task was then moderated and a final total for each item was agreed on. For the formal and communicative language features the range of uses were scored rather than the total frequencies, therefore each correct or attempted use of a particular verb or expression was only counted once. For example, if a student wrote 'I have a sister' this would be coded as the correct use of the present tense of the verb 'to have'. If they later wrote 'I have a friend' this would not be scored again as it represents correct use of the same verb. On the other hand, variations such as 'he has', 'my sister has', 'we can have', 'I don't have' etc. were each scored once if they were used.

Table 24: Language coding framework for writing tasks

Category	Code	Notes
General features	Word count	Number of words written in English
	Spelling mistakes	Number of words spelt incorrectly
	Use of L1	Total number of words written in L1
Formal language features	Present tense*	Both correct uses and attempted uses
	Past tense*	Both correct uses and attempted uses
	Future tense*	Both correct uses and attempted uses
	Connectives	Range of different connectives used
	Complex sentences	Including 2 or more different verbs
Communicative language features	Expressions of feeling*	Both correct uses and attempted uses
	Expressions of like/dislike*	Both correct uses and attempted uses
	Comparisons*	Both correct uses and attempted uses
	Conjecture*	Both correct uses and attempted uses
* The percentage of correct uses of each feature was also calculated		

*Coding framework for interviews with EAL students*

The procedure for coding EAL student responses to the interviews was similar. The transcripts were coded using the following categories which were similar to those used to analyse the written task responses. These codes, however, also included interactional features based on the students' ability to communicate with the interviewer in English, as shown in Table 25.

Table 25: Language coding framework for interviews with EAL students

Category	Code	Notes
Interactional features	Speaks in L1 with interpreter, then in English	
	Interpreter replies on behalf of student	
	Interpreter scaffolds in English	
	Interpreter translates question	
	Interviewer asks student for clarification	
	Interviewer recasts	
	Interviewer recasts, student still does not understand	
	Interviewer repeats question	
	Clarification of question requested by student	
	Repetition of question requested by student	
	Non-sequitur response	
	Indecipherable response	
	Pronunciation-based miscomprehension	
General features	Longest turn (total)	Word count of three longest speech turns
Formal language features	Present tense*	Both correct uses and attempted uses
	Past tense*	Both correct uses and attempted uses
	Future tense*	Both correct uses and attempted uses
	Connectives	Range of different connectives used
Communicative language features	Expressions of feeling*	Both correct uses and attempted uses
	Expressions of like/dislike*	Both correct uses and attempted uses
	Comparisons*	Both correct uses and attempted uses
	Conjecture*	Both correct uses and attempted uses
	Direct speech	
	Indirect speech	
* The percentage of correct uses of each feature was also calculated		

Statistical tests used in the analysis of language

Once coding was completed, the data were entered into SPSS and a series of non-parametric tests were conducted to further analyse the data. Non-parametric tests were considered to be more appropriate than their parametric counterparts due to the small sample size. The language data for both the writing tasks and the interviews were analysed as follows:

- By whole group (over time) - Wilcoxon signed ranks tests were conducted to examine the differences between the ratings in round one and round two for each individual code and for each category (formal, communicative etc).
- By L1 use at home/school - Students were grouped according to whether they used only L1 at home and some English in school (Group 1), or whether they used both English and L1 both at home and in school (Group 2). Independent samples Mann Whitney U tests were conducted to examine the differences for each item and category according to L1 use.

Table 26: Student grouping by L1 use

	Round 1 (n)	Round 2 (n)
Group 1	16	17
Group 2	6	5

- By friendship group - Students were grouped according to whether their friendship group consisted of L1/mostly L1 speakers (Group 1), a mix of L1 and L2 speakers (Group 2), or English/mostly English speakers (Group 3). Independent samples Kruskal-Wallis tests were conducted to compare the distribution of scores for each item and category across friendship groups.



Table 27: Student grouping by friendship group

	Round 1 (n)	Round 2 (n)
Group 1	12	4
Group 2	6	14
Group 3	4	4

- *By initial assessment level* - Students were grouped according to the initial assessment scores given to them on arrival at the school, as either Level 0 to 1 (n=12), Level 1+ to 2 (n=5), or Level 2+ (n=5). Independent samples Kruskal-Wallis tests were conducted to compare the distribution of scores across groups.

## A.7 Use of data in this report

Table 28: Use of data in this report

Section	Data source(s)
EAL students in schools in the East of England: demographics, attainment and provision of support	Regional survey Surveys completed by Key Stage 4 students
The social, linguistic and academic dimensions of progression in learning: the EAL students' perceptions and performance	Interviews with EAL students Writing tasks completed by EAL students Surveys completed by Key Stage 4 students
Flexible and differentiated: teachers' professional knowledge base for EAL pedagogy	Interviews with SMT Interviews with EAL co-ordinators Interviews with classroom teachers
Parental knowledge, school-home communication and parental engagement in children's learning	Interviews with parents/carers Surveys completed by parents/carers (all other data sources are used to contextualise the findings of these data sources).

## Appendix B: Poster resource

### Poster about you and your home country (or a country you lived in before coming to the UK)

The staff and pupils of your new school are keen to know more about your country and it would be great if you (maybe with your parents) could develop a poster about your home country or the country you lived in before you came to the UK. The diagram below shows different areas which you might want to include in your poster. Please add any other areas which you would like to present. It would be great if you could also include some pictures/ photos. Thank you for giving us this information about your country!

