

Working with EAL Learners Who Arrive at Secondary School in Year 9 or Later

October 2025



About The Bell Foundation

The Bell Foundation is a charity which aims to overcome disadvantage through language education by working with partners on innovation, research, training, and practical interventions. Through generating and applying evidence, the Foundation aims to improve practice, policy and systems for children, young people, adults, and communities who use English as an Additional Language in the UK.

Contributors

The Bell Foundation would like to thank the many people who helped to shape this guidance by responding to surveys, taking part in focus groups, sharing reflections and experiences during interviews, and organising school visits. Among many others who preferred to contribute anonymously, the participating organisations included:

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Berwick Academy
City Academy Bristol
Colchester Academy
Coventry Ethnic Minority Achievement Service
Fortis Academy, Birmingham
Harris Federation, London
Jacari, Bristol
Northumberland Inclusive Education Services
Princes Risborough School, Buckinghamshire
Refugee Education UK
Stoke-on-Trent College
Stoke Park School, Coventry
Swansea Council
Warwickshire Ethnic Minority and Traveller Achievement Service
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Foreword by Diana Sutton, Director of The Bell Foundation

The Bell Foundation recently published research commissioned from and written by Refugee Education UK (REUK) (bit.ly/late-arrivals). The findings were both disappointing and surprising, given the UK's international commitments to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, as well as legislation and guidance that has as its objective ensuring that all children receive a school place in a timely manner.

What we found was that some refugee or asylum-seeking children were denied access to education, or were kept waiting an unacceptably long time for a school place. When these children and young people finally secured a school place, often the right support to develop their proficiency in English – needed to ensure access to the curriculum – was just not available. Many of these learners will have faced trauma and displacement, will not speak English at the level required to pass exams, and may well be in temporary accommodation with limited access to support. The research found some schools being unwilling to accept late arrivals, a lack of available places in schools in some areas, and huge complexities around placing in-year arrivals at Key Stage 4, with GCSE courses already underway. Young people who arrive after the start of Year 11 in particular are often left without access to education until they are able to attend college at the age of 16.

Access to EAL support – or rather the lack of it – follows many years of cuts to what was once ringfenced provision that supported ethnic minority achievement. When the EMAG (Ethnic Minority Achievement Grant) funding was mainstreamed into schools' budgets, many local authority teams supporting the integration of learners using English as an Additional Language (EAL) disappeared almost overnight – and good or great practice is now isolated to a few areas.

We now face a patchwork of practice, with secondary schools struggling to know how to ensure that these young people can access the curriculum and achieve. This then drives a reluctance to offer a school place. We also found that schools often did not have anywhere to access good practice guidance. However, on the positive side, there is some great practice out there too. We found examples of schools and colleges that have successfully integrated late-arriving young people, with a flexible, young-person-centred approach.

In response to demand, we have written this guidance to showcase examples of effective current practice and what works across a range of settings, including schools and the charity sector. In it are some practical ideas for school staff – whether you are a pastoral lead, a teaching assistant, a senior leader, an EAL lead, or a subject teacher, we hope you find information in this guidance that is relevant for you, and we welcome your feedback and comments.

Contents

About this guidance.....	5
Introduction.....	8
Senior leaders.....	16
EAL leads.....	26
Subject teachers.....	38
Staff with pastoral responsibilities.....	48
Including:	
Form tutors	
Pastoral leads/heads of year	
Careers leads	
Support staff.....	61
Opportunities for support and collaboration with the charity sector: An overview.....	70
Conclusions.....	74
References & further reading.....	75

Who is this guidance for?

If your school receives learners using English as an Additional Language (EAL) into Year 9 and above, we hope you will find this guidance useful. The guidance covers a number of roles, with specific sections relevant to:

- [Senior leaders](#);
- [EAL leads](#);
- [Subject teachers](#);
- [Pastoral staff \(including form tutors\)](#);
- [Support staff \(including TAs\)](#).

We recognise that schools, like learners, are all different and that different sections of the guidance are likely to resonate with various readers. This guidance may also be interesting to charity sector groups working with newly arrived learners – either alongside schools, or while a school place is being identified. We have focussed on England, but much of the content will be relevant throughout the UK.

How was this guidance developed?

This guidance draws on information gathered from survey responses, online interviews, focus groups, and school visits carried out between January and May 2025.

A survey, including sets of questions tailored to different school-based roles, was shared among practitioners in January 2025. We received a good response from across England, covering a range of roles and varying degrees of expertise. A number of these respondents were also invited to take part in focus groups, along with some of the Foundation's licensed partners.

Interviewees were primarily identified through The Bell Foundation's network of scaling partners or webinar participants and included independent consultants, advisors working for local authorities, EAL leads, senior leaders, pastoral staff, subject teachers, and support staff working in schools and multi-academy trusts. We also spoke with groups of students and former students, including some through our lived experience partnerships. And finally, we met with staff from a number of charities working with late-arriving learners in a range of contexts.

A number of organisations that supported and contributed to this guidance are listed in the acknowledgements, while others preferred to take part anonymously. The reflections of all participants are woven into the guidance, ensuring that any recommendations are grounded in the realities facing schools that welcome and work with learners arriving in Year 9 and beyond.

How to use this guidance

The best place to start reading this guidance is the [introduction](#), where you will find an overview of the current situation in England and a suggested process for putting support in place in your setting.

We suggest that after reading the introduction, you go directly to the section that is most relevant to your role and responsibilities. Then, you may find it useful to read the sections for any other roles with whom you regularly liaise or have any shared or similar responsibilities.

The [final section](#) includes guidance on working with charities. This will be relevant for anyone whose school is involved with a charity offering support to late-arriving EAL learners, and those who are interested in finding out more about this area.



Introduction

Introduction

“No person shall be denied the right to an education.”

(European Convention on Human Rights, Article 2 of Protocol 1)

Education is a right for all children, as enshrined in Article 28 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). Regarding secondary education, the article states that signatories should:

“Encourage the development of different forms of secondary education, including general and vocational education, make them available and accessible and take appropriate measures such as the introduction of free education and offering financial assistance in case of need.”

(United Nations, 1989)

However, when it comes to accessing education, some learners in England have a very different experience.

In 2024, around 11,000 learners who use English as an Additional Language (EAL) arrived in the country – and entered the education system – during the final two years of secondary school (Educational Policy Institute [EPI], 2025). This was up by 6,000 learners compared to 2019 figures (bit.ly/EPI-annual-report-2025-eal).

Newly arrived teenagers routinely face barriers to accessing mainstream secondary education – and to successfully navigating it when they do. The EPI’s annual report highlights an attainment gap of 14 months between late-arriving EAL learners aged 16 and their first-language English-speaking peers.¹

This guidance examines the complicated and challenging landscape experienced by EAL learners who arrive in our system at upper-secondary age. It presents examples of innovation and best practice from within schools and the charity sector, and offers practical ideas for school staff. Throughout the guidance, we have drawn on recent research from Refugee Education UK (REUK) (bit.ly/late-arrivals), other guidance published by The Bell Foundation, and, most importantly, first-hand accounts from teachers and the voices of learners themselves.

Throughout this guidance, we describe learners who enter the UK education system in Year 9 or above as “newly arrived” or “recently arrived”, referring to their arrival in the country, or “late arrivals”, meaning late to the English school system. But like all learners who use EAL, late arrivals are not a homogenous group. For example:

¹ The EPI report notes that the attainment gap is adjusted to account for “changes in the ethnic make-up of the group”.

- They may be asylum seekers or refugees, including unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (UASC) who have arrived without their families; or they may be young people whose families have relocated to England for work or study, or to care for a sick relative living here.
- They may be completely new to the country and never have been to an English school before; or they may have already started at a school elsewhere in England, and be moving to a new area due to refugee dispersal or other reasons.
- Some will have received a full, academic education in their home country and be at, or above, age-appropriate levels of attainment in all subject areas; others may never have been to school at all.
- Among those who have received schooling in their country of origin, some will find the English school system relatively familiar; for others, the difference in terms of pedagogy and curriculum will be much greater.

This heterogeneity must be kept in mind throughout the planning and delivery of EAL provision for late arrivals. Avoiding generalisations and tailoring support to each individual's needs will increase effectiveness and give the young person in question the best possible chance of thriving at your school and beyond.



There are significant issues, but we all share one conviction without a shadow of a doubt: the need is very high – and we are talking about a lost generation here.

Ethnic Minority and Traveller Achievement Service Advisor



Barriers to admission

The School Admissions Code (Department for Education, 2021) ([bit.ly/school-admissions-code](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/544212/school-admissions-code-2017.pdf)) makes it clear that admissions authorities must not “disadvantage unfairly, either directly or indirectly, a child from a particular social or racial group” (p. 10, s. 1.8). Despite this, REUK found that newly arrived asylum-seeking learners are facing increasingly impassable barriers to obtaining a school place, including:

- Schools' unwillingness to accept late arrivals;
- A lack of available school places in some areas;
- Insecure accommodation and forced relocation, often over long distances and at short notice;
- The complexities of placing in-year arrivals at Key Stage 4, with GCSE courses already underway.

Newly arrived learners are often out of school, waiting for a place, for prolonged periods of time. Those who arrive after the start of Year 11 in particular are often left in “no man’s land”, without access to education until they are able to attend college at the age of 16.

A lack of government policy and guidance over the last decade means that secondary schools vary widely in their expertise in and commitment to welcoming newly arrived EAL learners into Year 9 and Key Stage 4. REUK’s research found that schools are sometimes unwilling to accept these students, citing concerns about their ability to offer suitable support – often due to time and financial constraints – as reasons for rejecting them.

While accepting these often-traumatised learners is not without challenges for schools, the current situation is clearly unacceptable. It puts already vulnerable young people at risk of re-traumatisation; wastes precious time and talent; and ultimately jeopardises their chance to thrive in their education, integrate into their new community, and flourish in their ambitions.



We have witnessed... a massive retrograde step in the capacity of schools to deal effectively with multilingual learners, and that is against a huge rise in numbers....

Advisory teacher



Challenges at school

When newly arrived EAL learners are finally allocated a place and join the school system, they face further challenges inherent to this particular stage of education.

The curriculum at Key Stage 4 is rigid, overloaded with content, and almost exclusively focused on GCSE exams. It is also fast paced, with limited time for pupils to develop a deep understanding of their subjects, and it builds on work completed in Key Stage 3, in which the newly arrived pupil did not participate.

Some optional subject groups may be full, and places in higher-ability sets may also be unavailable to newcomers. And, of course, lessons are delivered exclusively in English, for exams that will be taken in English. In this context, then, the learner’s level of English-language proficiency is both pivotal to their success and, often, a source of significant challenge and inequality (Strand and Lindorf, 2025, p.38; bit.ly/strand-2025-report).

OCR’s 2024 review of the curriculum and assessment in England (bit.ly/OCR-review-of-11-16-curriculum-and-assessment) highlights the over-reliance on examinations as the sole method of assessment at the end of Key Stage 4, describing it as “excessive”, consuming “valuable learning time”, and leading to a “concentrated period of pressure”. This approach particularly disadvantages newly arrived learners who use EAL, as they

face assessment on a curriculum they may not have studied, in a language that is not their first and in which they may not yet be fully fluent (OCR, 2024, p.5).

Socialising can also be fraught, as friendship groups are well established by this stage and may seem impenetrable. Teachers are less able to engineer friendships between teenagers than they might be with young children. If the new arrival is new to English, or at the early stages of language acquisition, this adds a further obstacle to successful social interactions, with little time available for improvement.

Research recognises that some groups in particular are more vulnerable. According to a 2021 report published by the Education Policy Institute (EPI) (bit.ly/epi-asylum), unaccompanied asylum-seeking young people face the biggest challenges. These learners were shown to have higher rates of exclusions, greater levels of absenteeism, and lower attainment rates – lagging an average of 37 months behind their peers.



And ... schools are saying what in the world do you expect us to do with this child ... with the government expectations around curriculum delivery and exam taking? What are we supposed to do?

MAT consultant



... it was so difficult beginning because English it wasn't first language for me; I knew some English just a little bit ...

Learner



To inform this guidance we interviewed and surveyed a wide range of educators and learners who shared their experiences and reflections. We found that the nature and levels of support offered to late arrivals varies according to context, with factors such as staffing, training, funding, and pupil numbers all playing a part.

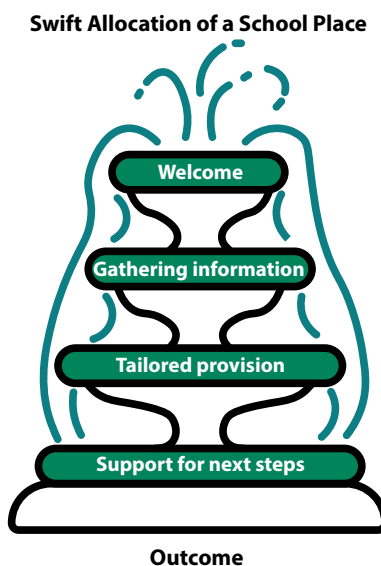
Challenges and frustrations described by our interviewees included what they see as a decline of expertise in the area of EAL pedagogy; the need for – and current lack of – language-proficiency data at local authority (LA) or multi-academy trust (MAT) level; and the prioritisation of special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) over EAL provision in schools.

But we also heard about celebrations and successes – and, above all, shining through, we witnessed a dedication among educators to deliver the very best to these students and, on the part of learners themselves, truly humbling levels of determination and resilience.

Drawing on all these insights alongside leading educational research, this guidance suggests practical ways to provide the best possible welcome and support for these learners. They may have arrived late, but they have brought with them a wealth of experience, skills, and aptitudes – and the potential to thrive in the English school system and beyond.

A whole-school approach

To be most successful, support for every young person who arrives late into the English education system should build on their prior education and the knowledge and experiences they bring with them. A whole school, top-down approach is required. It can be useful to think of a tiered fountain:



1. Welcome

It is crucial to get this right, to prevent feelings of alienation and despondency that might arise if new arrivals feel unwelcome.

Displaced people do not arrive conveniently at the start of an academic year, so multiple enrolment windows will help ensure they are not without a school place for too long.

EAL learners and their families must be left in no doubt that they have both an unquestioned right to be in the school, and a valuable contribution to make. They also need to find a sense of direction, or at least an awareness of possibilities post-school, so that neither learner nor educator feels that they are just “treading water” while waiting for a college place. This means that clear information about pathways and possibilities beyond Year 11 needs to be shared with the family in a language that is accessible to them.



2. Gathering information

This will enable the most accurately tailored provision and, in turn, the best outcomes for the learner.

It is important that the school develops knowledge of its various linguistic communities – their religions and cultural practices as well as their languages. This will put a frame around individual learners and help you understand more about their backgrounds and likely influences.

At the student level, a holistic assessment should gather both linguistic and educational information, including a learner’s previous education, level of proficiency in English, home language(s) and levels of proficiency, talents, interests, and career aspirations, as well as any health concerns and dietary requirements. Much of this will be undertaken by the person in school with responsibility for EAL, under the direction of the senior leaders. However, with the right systems in place, all relevant staff will be able to contribute, and this information will build, snowball-like, as the learner settles into the school.



3. Tailored provision

Using the information gathered, EAL provision can be carefully crafted to meet the learner’s individual needs and achieve the best outcomes for them. These learners are a heterogeneous group, and bespoke solutions must be found for each individual, within the constraints of school resources. This might entail one or a combination of options from a menu featuring, for example:

- Initial induction programmes to cover the basics;
- Small-group, time-limited interventions to address specific English-language or reading needs;
- The use of EAL-friendly strategies within mainstream lessons;
- A reduced number of GCSEs, complemented by extra support sessions;
- Home-language GCSEs;
- A 14–16 course offered at a college.

Social inclusion options, offered in parallel to academic ones, might include:

- Buddies/peer mentors;
- Intentional seating plans in class and carefully planned grouping for collaborative activities;
- Introduction to extracurricular clubs and activities based on the learner’s personal interests.

All of these options will be expanded on in the sections below.



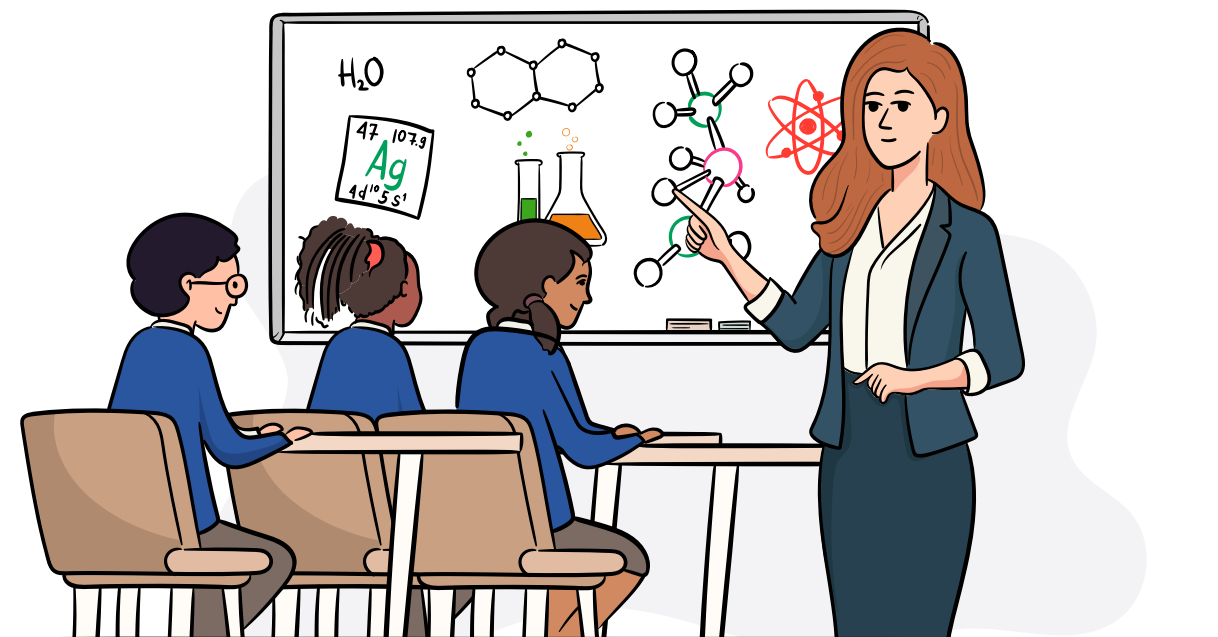
4. Support for next steps

Secondary school, in England at least, is likely to be a relatively short interlude in this learner's educational life – but it can be vital in laying a firm foundation on which to build a future. Many young people aged 13+ have some idea of what they would like to do in adulthood. While some will only have a vague direction, such as “I want to work in healthcare”, others may be extremely precise: “I want to be a consultant microbiologist at Guy's Hospital”.

Some young people might feel secure about achieving their goals but others, particularly those who have experienced traumatic departures, journeys, and arrivals in the UK, may be feeling despondent and overwhelmed by the challenges. Listening to young people's aspirations and offering practical, step-by-step guidance as to what their unique pathway to these goals might look like can be life changing for them.

It is also important to make explicit the links between students' current learning experiences at secondary school and their future plans, so that learners (particularly those who arrive part way through Years 10 or 11) are aware of the relevance of secondary school as the first rung on their new ladder.

A whole-school approach means that all staff have a part to play in welcoming the new arrival, including them, and enabling them to thrive. The rest of this guidance will examine each of these four stages, role by role.



Guidance for senior leaders

Senior leaders

This section offers guidance for school leaders on approaches to welcoming older learners who use English as an Additional Language (EAL) into school. For senior leaders, the aim is to provide impactful strategic leadership and an enabling environment for school staff to implement the most effective strategies.

The Department for Education’s Expert Advisory Group for Inclusion states as its fifth principle that leaders should regard inclusion as a core priority and principle, rather than as a separate system (Inclusion in Practice, 2025; bit.ly/inclusion-in-practice).

This principle was echoed in the words of our interviewees, who consistently highlighted the importance of an integrated, whole-school approach to welcoming late arrivals, and the significance of strong leadership, commitment to inclusion, and high expectations from senior leaders.

Our interviewees agree that the starting point for excellent, whole-school provision – where feasible – is a dedicated team of staff that includes a senior leader, a head of EAL, EAL teachers, and support assistants (depending on numbers), with some input from home–school support staff.

Senior leaders will need to give thought to the roles and responsibilities of staff working with late-arriving learners, and ensure they have the resources they need – including sufficient time.

In many ways, the EAL lead is not comparable to any other “lead” teacher typically found in a secondary school, and as such may require a bespoke set of roles and responsibilities to allow them to work effectively. They should be given the opportunity to work closely with both pastoral and academic teams, liaise with speakers of key community languages, and ensure the needs of late arrivals are explicitly considered in policies and procedures – distinguished from the more general approaches to welcoming and working with EAL learners.

The EAL lead is often the linchpin to the provision for late arrivals. However, the EAL leads we spoke to described a number of challenges that they face in their roles, including:

- Lack of or low status within the school;
- Lack of designated time to focus on EAL;
- Being a lone voice;
- Lack of suitable training/experience; and
- Inability to influence policy and process at whole-school level.

As a senior leader, taking steps to address these challenges will signal your clear commitment to EAL provision, and provide an enabling environment for your staff to deliver this effectively.



1. Welcome

The role of senior leaders in welcoming late arrivals is fundamental – the approach taken by the leadership sets the tone and defines the environment within which the whole school will operate. It is therefore important for leaders to avoid deficit-model thinking, which sees only the challenges, and instead focus on the positives and what these young people can contribute to the school.

An inclusive learning environment that views multilingualism as an asset will help late arrivals who use EAL to feel welcome, and will establish the school as a forward-thinking, globally aware community in which all learners can thrive. Creating this environment starts with senior leaders. The policies, procedures, structures, and, above all, expectations you put in place will, alongside the expertise of your staff, enable a smooth and positive experience for late-arriving EAL learners. From induction onwards, these students will be given the maximum chances – to integrate, to succeed, and to flourish – in your school and beyond.



Belonging over academic data. Students should be exposed to full range of subjects to foster a love for UK school and education. Take students' aspirations into account and expose them to subjects that help them achieve that.

Survey response



We're... moving EAL students into whole-school tutor groups to foster belonging from the start.

Assistant headteacher



So, what can you do?

- Consider offering a rolling admissions programme (whereby learners can start on any school day), or at least frequent admissions windows (whereby learners can start school at regular fixed times during school terms, for example the first three Mondays of each half term), so that learners can take up their school place promptly and do not have to wait until the start of a new school term or year. REUK's research shows that late arrivals from asylum-seeking families are often left waiting

considerable amounts of time for a school place – sometimes up to a year. This not only hinders their chances of academic success, but also puts them at risk of exploitation and mental health deterioration.

- Put processes in place to accommodate late arrivals mid-term and mid-year, such as rolling induction programmes, preparation for alternative exams, or catch-up sessions in key subjects.
- Ensure that the school’s website can be read in different languages, and that it includes multi-language text-to-speech tools, with natural-sounding voices.
- Ask existing parents from different community groups to act as ambassadors, welcoming newly arrived families and talking to them about the school.
- Empower your EAL lead to set up a buddies/peer-mentor scheme, such as Hampshire’s Young Interpreters programme (bit.ly/young-interpreters-guide). Afford this scheme high status within the school, and reward students who volunteer to take part as buddies.
- Ensure that the needs of late-arriving EAL learners are embedded in your school’s policies – such as those covering admissions, teaching and learning, and language and inclusion – and that these are regularly updated. Make sure that staff are aware of these aspects of school policies, and that they receive suitable training to follow them confidently (see bell-foundation.org.uk/guidance/school-policies).
- Make sure a senior leader personally greets new arrivals and their families. It is a nice touch to learn a greeting in the family’s preferred language if you can. Not only does it send a welcoming message to the learner and family, but it also models your commitment to inclusion to the school staff.
- Make sure an admissions meeting is the norm, and includes the learner, their parents/carers, and the school EAL lead. Offer and provide an interpreter if appropriate; if this is not possible, consider using AI tools. It can be effective to make sure the EAL lead is free at a certain time each week and to schedule these meetings so they can attend. It is important to make sure the family understands how the English education system works. The Bell Foundation has produced translated guidance about the education system in England, Wales, and Scotland, which you might find useful (bell-foundation.org.uk/English-education-system).
- Ensure that families are shown around the school and are given an outline of what provision their child can expect. Use a translation app – or, better still, an in-person interpreter – if the family is new to English.
- Arrange for uniform and equipment to be provided free of charge, if needed. Maintaining an up-to-date awareness of the funding landscape, including any national or local government schemes and charitable grants, can be helpful, and you may be able to access something to help offset the cost of providing specific equipment, and/or for particular pupil groups.
- Make sure that the EAL policy is visible on the school website, and available in multiple languages.
- Consider becoming a School of Sanctuary (see bit.ly/schools-of-sanctuary).



We have an admissions policy that's specifically for our EAL students. We had one beforehand for our non-EAL students, but then we wanted to make sure that we had something that was specifically EAL and for late arrivals that would follow the other process quite well, but with an extra layer added to make sure that they were receiving the best support and could settle into school in the most successful way. Because that's a big thing, and it is even more traumatic if you've had to leave a lot of stuff behind.

EAL co-ordinator



2. Gathering information

Having set up the structures and processes for admissions and welcoming new EAL learners, it is important to show leadership in the information-gathering stage by making your expectations clear.

So, what can you do?

- Aim to develop a diverse school community. Encourage applications for staff and governor roles from individuals from different linguistic and cultural communities, and those with lived experience of migration. Their collective knowledge, experiences, social networks, and cultural brokering will be invaluable resources to help you build a picture and understanding of your constituent communities. This knowledge and understanding will in turn provide context and framing around each new arrival. Where possible, make sure that governors with lived experience are involved in relevant policy development.
- Find out about any relevant multi-agency and/or partnership networks that coordinate and share information across your local or combined authority. These networks can provide detailed and crucial data, pull resources together, reduce duplication, and work closely during transitions; learn about what is available in your local area to decide whether your school might benefit from joining.
- Find out about any charity provision or other relevant initiatives that learners and their families can access (e.g. while waiting for a school place, or after school/over the summer break) and explore how the school can work with them to best meet their needs. For example, if the young person's parents/carers are new to English, the school could refer them to English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) classes in a local college or community setting.
- Make information gathering part of the admissions process, including talking to parents/carers about their child's educational history and aspirations and talking to the learner themselves. Be equipped and prepared to interact in the family's home or preferred language(s).

- Start gathering whole-school data on proficiency in English – if your school already does this, then make sure the data-capture process includes learners who arrive late. Use this data to monitor the relationship between a pupil’s point of entry to the school, and their English-language proficiency levels, educational attainment, behavioural outcomes (such as exclusions), and so on.
- Make sure that the information-gathering process includes contacting a learner’s previous schools, wherever possible, to build a picture of their prior educational attainment and any known learning needs.
- Use a robust, curriculum-based assessment of proficiency in English, such as that offered by The Bell Foundation (bell-foundation.org.uk/eal-assessment-framework). Research shows that proficiency in English has the strongest relationship with educational attainment for learners who use EAL, far surpassing other variables like gender, ethnicity, and free school meals entitlement (bit.ly/Strand-jan-2025).
- Allow enough time and resources for assessments to be carried out – not only in English-language proficiency, but in the learner’s home language(s) wherever possible, and also in mathematics. Numerical assessments can be very revealing, especially if they can be given without the need to understand English.
- Require subject staff to adapt assessments for recently arrived EAL students, aiming to reflect subject knowledge without too much emphasis on English-language proficiency. (For more ideas around assessment, see bit.ly/curriculum-and-assessment-practices.)
- Maintain oversight of the pupil profiles drawn up by the EAL lead. Set up a process to ensure profiles are circulated among all relevant staff, and make it clear that staff are expected to be aware of them.
- Include EAL-friendly strategies in your checklist for learning walks and lesson observations (see bell-foundation.org.uk/guidance/self-evaluation).



3. Tailored provision

EAL learners are a superdiverse group, and the best provision will be closely tailored to the individual. The EAL lead, in conjunction with the learner themselves and their family, should be able to select the most appropriate interventions from a provision “menu” of different options. As a school leader, you are responsible for setting up and resourcing this menu.



The main passion for me is enabling children to have access to a broad and balanced curriculum – and that is why the induction class doesn’t just do six hours of English a day. They’ve got to have access a range of subjects.

Associate assistant headteacher and EAL co-ordinator



So, what can you do?

- Understand the funding landscape and make sure you are accessing your school's full entitlement to help offset the cost of EAL provision. Within the National Funding Formula, Additional Needs Funding is allocated for factors including deprivation, mobility, and EAL. The EAL factor applies to pupils recorded as having entered England during the last three years, and whose first language is not English. To ensure that your school receives the correct amount of Additional Needs Funding, including the EAL factor, it is vital to make sure the school census is completed accurately each October and reflects learners' EAL status. Bear in mind that the government definition of EAL is a learner who "... is exposed to a language at home which is known or believed to be other than English". Funding is not linked to a learner's level of proficiency in English.
- Consider looking beyond your delegated budget for other sources of EAL-related funding. Schools with high pupil mobility – for example because of refugee dispersal programmes – will find that learners who arrive and then leave in between census dates will not be included in the school's headcount for funding purposes. In this situation you can explore other funding that may be available for certain groups, for example via resettlement programmes (contact your local authority for the most up to date advice), or pupil premium funding for learners without recourse to public funds (see also p.19 onwards of the EPI/Bell Foundation policy briefing: bell-foundation.org.uk/EPI-Technical-Briefing-of-Refugee-and-Asylum-Seeking-Children_FV-1.pdf).
- Plan carefully how you can best use the EAL factor and any other relevant funding to meet the needs of this group of learners. For example, if your school does not already have an EAL lead, you could think about appointing one, or investing in training an existing member of staff for the role. Useful training is available from organisations such as The Bell Foundation, and also via more formal qualifications such as a postgraduate diploma (e.g., the University of Oxford's Postgraduate Diploma in English as an Additional Language; bit.ly/pgdip-eal). Even if you do not have specific plans for your EAL funding, earmarking it with a separate budget line for EAL expenditure will signal your commitment to excellent provision and ensure staff have the resources to work effectively as needs arise.
- You could also consider arranging external tutoring for EAL learners.



An external tutor was hired, using the allocated funds to cover their lessons over the year 2024/25. The student has since received 2 hours daily of individual tutoring (80% of the time focussing on maths, 20% on English), as well as the regular EAL intervention at school (3 hours weekly, one-to-one).

Case study



- If your school welcomes asylum-seeking and refugee learners, bear in mind that these young people and their families may be processing trauma from the experiences that led them to flee their homeland and, in some cases, from having taken a long and difficult journey to safety. Consider accessing staff training from organisations such as Trauma Informed Schools UK (this training is relevant to all learners suffering trauma, not specifically refugees; bit.ly/trauma-informed-school), or from REUK, which provides refugee-orientated training (bit.ly/reuk-training). UNHCR also offers a useful, free handbook aimed at teachers working with traumatised refugee children (bit.ly/stress-and-trauma).
- Consider whether the Designated Safeguarding Lead also needs training around supporting unaccompanied asylum-seeking children, for example in handling disclosures around personal safety.
- Arrange training for subject teachers to ensure they develop the skills to adapt their teaching appropriately. Seek specialist advice from your local authority or an independent consultant about what is available to access. The Bell Foundation has a network of regional licensed practitioners offering training and support (bell-foundation.org.uk/regional-training/).
- If your school uses teaching assistants (TAs) or higher-level teaching assistants (HLTAs) as EAL teachers/leads, consider whether they are sufficiently empowered to suggest and affect change. If not, consider increasing their mandate or deepening their empowerment, for example by establishing a link to a senior leader.
- Audit your school's current processes and provision for late arrivals who use EAL, and speak with the EAL lead, external agencies (e.g. charities, volunteers, tutors, etc.), and community representatives about how it could be improved. The Bell Foundation offers a set of whole-school self-evaluation materials that you might find useful for this (bell-foundation.org.uk/guidance/self-evaluation).
- Keep the learner's aspirations at the forefront while planning their provision. This will ensure it is meaningful for them and that their time at your school will help them achieve their goals.
- Ensure that the school is set up to run appropriate alternative qualifications such as:
 - Trinity ESOL (bit.ly/trinity-esol);
 - Cambridge IGCSE English as a Second Language (bit.ly/cambridge-igcse-esl);
 - Pearson's GCSEs in home, heritage and community languages (bit.ly/Pearson-qualifications-languages);
 - AQA Unit Award Scheme (bit.ly/AQA-unit-award-scheme).
- If a number of learners using EAL will be arriving in Key Stage 4, consider timetabling one or two option slots to offer classes focused on acquiring and improving curriculum-related English, run by specialist EAL staff, concentrating on the words and structures learners need for the remaining GCSEs on their timetable. These slots could also be used to work towards alternative qualifications.

- Make sure it is a matter of school policy to enter late arrivals who use EAL into core-subject GCSEs – even if their grades will be low. GCSE qualifications are the main educational currency, and while exams can be retaken at Key Stage 5 to improve grades if necessary, it is not normally possible for learners to take GCSE English “from scratch” at college. This will need to be communicated carefully to the learner and their family, as well as to staff.
- Consider creating entry-level groups for Key Stage 4 in humanities subjects.
- Reassure staff that you are aware of the impact on their wellbeing and workload. With late arrivals in their class, teachers may feel anxious that they only have a few months to do what everybody else has done in three years. Instead of overwhelming staff, the focus should be on preparing students for future success at the next key stage. This takes some pressure off teachers, while learners get valuable exam experience and the chance to improve their grades through resits at college.
- Give heritage language GCSEs parity with other modern foreign languages, including equal display space and resource materials. Consider bringing in tutors for popular heritage language options.



4. Support for next steps

Learners who arrive in Year 9 and above are far from being blank slates. They have aspirations, hopes, and dreams – and they should be encouraged to see these as attainable. One day they will look back on their time at your school as the starting point of their life and career in England.

As a school leader, you can maximise positive memories by ensuring that key staff, including those responsible for careers guidance, work closely with local post-16 providers, and with the learners and their families or carers, to map out the most appropriate pathway in each case.



Any child who enters into a school has to have somebody who’s looking at a long-term plan for that child ... how they are going to become the people they have the potential to be.

MAT-wide EAL consultant



So, what can you do?

- Build a positive professional relationship with local post-16 providers. Make sure that the EAL lead knows what is on offer locally, and encourage them to establish dialogue with college staff.

- Arrange for staff to accompany learners to open days at local colleges. These events can provide invaluable information and inspiration, but can also be extremely overwhelming for recent arrivals, especially if their English is still at the earlier stages of acquisition.
- Arrange for former pupils to return and talk about their college courses and other post-school experiences. If possible, invite former students from different linguistic communities and those who were themselves late arrivals to secondary school.
- Host post-16 information evenings for parents/carers, and arrange for translated materials and interpreters if necessary.
- Make sure that staff responsible for careers advice are familiar with The Bell Foundation's Post-16 Education Guidance for Recently Arrived Learners (bell-foundation.org.uk/post-16-guidance), which is available in 10 languages as well as English.
- Make sure that careers guidance provision is appropriate for late-arriving learners. All learners should have sessions with a careers advisor, regardless of their English-language proficiency, using interpreters if necessary. This aligns with Gatsby Benchmark 3: "Addressing the needs of each student" (bit.ly/gatsby-benchmark). Your school's activities can be recorded and mapped against the benchmarks on Compass (bit.ly/Compass-Schools).
- If your school has a sixth form, consider what you might be able to provide that would suit your recently arrived learners post-16. For example, one school we spoke to offers a BTEC qualification in its sixth form, alongside maths and English GCSE options. This aims to keep late arrivals in school post-16 and helps them achieve a useful qualification.
- If your school has provision at Key Stage 5, consider offering a bridging year for learners to take or retake GCSEs and improve their proficiency in English before progressing to sixth form or college.



In the sixth form we have enrolled late arrivals onto our post-16 GCSE programme, where they sit their GCSE English and maths qualifications. This gives students a year to develop their language proficiency as well as gaining UK qualifications. This means that they can then go on to student A-levels and then degree courses.

Survey response



Guidance for EAL leads

EAL leads

This section is for those tasked with leading English as an Additional Language (EAL) provision in their school. This may be an EAL lead role in its own right, with no mainstream teaching or other responsibilities, or it might encompass a broader range of roles. For example, the EAL leads we spoke to included:

- Members of the senior leadership team;
- Heads of an academic department, such as modern foreign languages or English;
- Mainstream teachers with EAL as an additional responsibility;
- Support staff (e.g. HLTAs), often reporting to the SEND co-ordinator or inclusion lead.

The EAL lead is often the linchpin to the provision for late arrivals. They are the key contact for learners and their families, for whom they will become a familiar and reliable face. The EAL lead is likely to have the clearest oversight of a learner's experience in school, so their role in the student's journey will have strategic as well as more practical elements. They also often act as a link to other staff – from the admissions team to senior leaders, pastoral staff, and subject teachers.

The EAL lead's role – though it might feel overwhelming at times – will certainly be a rewarding one.

✓ Putting it into practice: What works and what doesn't?

Our interviewees identified multiple practices that enable the most effective EAL provision, including:

- Appointing an EAL lead who is also a senior leader, with the ability to influence school-level policies and processes;
- Having a dedicated EAL team that is separate from the SEND team;
- Ensuring that EAL staff have time to liaise with subject teachers;
- Having EAL specialist staff who speak the languages of learners.



1. Welcome

Setting policies and processes that are appropriate and realistic will ensure that EAL learners are welcomed properly and that all staff feel well-informed and confident of their role. Most importantly, a robust policy ensures that the learners have the smoothest start to their time in your school.



The EAL co-ordinator, alongside the year office, provided the family with a school uniform and a PE kit. She also supported the family in applying for [free school meals] and a free school bus pass and liaised with charity shops to organise some clothes for M, who had travelled to the UK with nothing.

Case study



So, what can you do?

A. Supporting learners and their families from day one

- Meet with the learner and their family/carers at the admissions interview, during the tour around the school, and at any induction events.
- If possible, reach out to the family before the admissions interview to greet them and find out whether they need any translation or interpretation support.
- Arrange for an interpreter to attend if the family have requested it. If this is not possible, explore tech-based translation options.
- Ensure parents/carers know how they can contact you (e.g., via school reception or your direct work email), and how soon they can expect a response to queries or messages. Also make sure that the learner knows how to find you within school.
- Arrange for learners to have a tour of the school, preferably accompanied by their buddies or peer mentors (see below).
- Establish a safe space, such as an EAL room, the library, or your tutor base if applicable. Let learners know that this is a place they can go if they are feeling overwhelmed or just need some quiet time.
- Provide new learners with an electronic translator or a bilingual dictionary that they can carry with them to all their classes, and make sure they know how to use it.
- Be aware that if the learner has been admitted quickly and comes from a refugee/asylum-seeking family, they may not yet have access to funds for equipment and uniform. They may need to borrow or be given stationery and PE kit.

B. Buddies/peer mentors

Newly arrived learners find support from their peers invaluable. A peer mentor can help new arrivals interpret the school's systems and the fabric of a school day through the eyes of a fellow learner; give them someone to hang out with at break time and a way into clubs and teams; and take the fear out of routines in canteens and changing rooms. And of course, they can also be learning partners in class.



A Year 10 new arrival who was not literate in their home language of Arabic, was buddied with two peers who shared this language. After a while, they started voluntarily tutoring the new arrival in written Arabic during their self-study time.

Case study



As EAL lead, finding, training, and managing buddies/peer mentors is likely to be part of your remit. Buddies should be volunteers who are keen to help newcomers – but they must also be good role models, as new arrivals will often seek to fit in by copying what they see.

If you can, recruit buddies who speak a range of community languages. English-only-speaking buddies who volunteer and are kind and empathetic can also be highly effective in the role and make it more of an inclusive, whole-school approach to welcoming newcomers from abroad. Where buddies do not share a first language with a newcomer, provide them with advice on how to communicate effectively using clear, plain English as well as visuals and technology.



2. Gathering information

Late arrivals are never “blank slates” – they will come with a wealth of knowledge and experience. As EAL lead, you should oversee the gathering of relevant information to help build the most appropriate tailored provision for a new learner. You can also use this information to create a pupil profile. Make sure this is accessible to all relevant staff, so they are aware of the learner’s strengths and interests and can build on them.



... late arrivals are not defined exclusively by the language they speak. They're defined by their subject interests, their hobbies... their previous education.

EAL consultant



It was very important for us that we were able to collect this data so that we could ... first of all, identify the children, make sure that they have the right support in lessons, make sure that we could track their progress, that we could offer the right intervention. So we collect all of that information, which goes into the system. So when I do a search, it is really easily accessible.

Strategic lead for EAL and senior leader



So, what can you do?

A. Background information

- Find out what previous education the new learner has received, including which subjects they have studied and in what languages. Pass any relevant information on to subject teachers. Where possible, factor this information in when you set the learner’s timetable.

- Find out about the new learner's longer-term ambitions, so you can focus on orientating them towards achieving their goals.
- If a student previously accessed an external orientation programme (e.g., through a charity) while waiting for a school place, try to liaise with the provider to gain more information about the learner's time with them. Similarly, local authorities will have met and may have worked with some learners, such as those arriving through resettlement programmes. Accessing information that has already been gathered will reduce the need for learners and their families to have to repeat themselves to different authorities.
- Establish an agreed system for collating and sharing relevant information. The Bell Foundation offers guidance about what information to collect and how, and a pupil profile template (bell-foundation.org.uk/learner-profile).



Language proficiency is a journey, and the school supports every phase of that journey.

Associate assistant head and EAL co-ordinator



B. Assessment

Assessment is an important part of information gathering. To gather a rounded picture of the learner, it is useful to assess:

- **Proficiency in English:**
 - Assessing the learner's proficiency in English will enable you to advise class teachers on appropriate forms of support they may need in class.
 - You will gain insights into learners' academic attainment and be able to judge the extent to which language barriers might affect their achievement at school – then focus on removing as much of the barrier as possible in each curriculum area.
 - Proficiency in English assessment should be ongoing, with targets and strategies adapted as the learner progresses.
 - Use a curriculum-focussed assessment such as The Bell Foundation's EAL Assessment Framework (bell-foundation.org.uk/eal-assessment-framework).
- **Numeracy:**
 - Assessing learners' numeracy will give you an idea of their current knowledge and previous experience of education.
 - Use a test with minimal English in the instructions, or use translation tools, to ensure numeracy skills are not obscured due to a language barrier.



You know, if they can do algebra, you're not going to waste time putting them in a nurture group.

EAL consultant



- **Home-language proficiency:**

- If learners have previously attended school in another country (or countries), the chances are that they were not taught in English. An assessment of how well they use their home, strongest, or preferred language for academic purposes will tell you much about what you can expect from the learner as their English develops, and what kind of support you need to put in place.
- If a learner can write coherently and cohesively, with appropriate organisation and punctuation, in their home, strongest, or preferred language, then these skills are directly transferrable to English. The closer the language is to English, the more this applies – but even in more linguistically distant languages, learners who have acquired the concept of academic writing and a suitable vocabulary will find it stands them in good stead. For these students, the focus will be on learning English words and structures, and the conventions of academic writing in UK schools. For other students, you will need to ensure that these more foundational skills are integrated into their support and provision, and are emphasised alongside English-language and general literacy.
- If you have a staff member who can conduct this assessment in the learner's preferred language, this is ideal. If not, you may wish to consider reaching out to staff at local community language schools, for example, and ask them to give you feedback on a piece of writing completed by the learner.



3. Tailored provision

As EAL lead, you are likely to have the best overview of the learner and their needs. You will therefore play a crucial role in deciding the most appropriate provision for them, within the constraints of your school's context and resources.



In Year 11, it is very difficult to catch up with everything, to learn enough [English] language to then be able to access all the lessons. So what they did is they changed two of the options and they made one called an EAL option and the second one was a supported study option.

EAL and refugee consultant





I oversee the entry point of an EAL learner, the assessment, the provision and follow their, you know, their journey, progress, pastoral care, all the way through up until they leave at the end of year 11.

EAL lead



So, what can you do?

A. Course of study/qualifications

Tailoring and flexibility are key to building an appropriate timetable for late-arriving EAL learners, and as EAL lead you should have a key role in recommending their course of study. Depending on the learner's individual profile, to ensure provision is tailored to their needs, there are a number of options you could consider, including:

- A full GCSE timetable;
- A reduced GCSE timetable and some extra tuition in curriculum-focussed English and/or catch ups in particular subject areas;
- A minimal GCSE timetable (e.g., maths and English) plus an alternative exam or part-time 14–16 college course;
- A GCSE/A-level in their home language.

Discuss with senior leaders all options around qualifications. Bear in mind that, in England, GCSEs are the main currency of secondary education and therefore learners should sit these if possible. If the grade they achieve first time around is low, it can always be improved upon in an exam resit at a sixth form or FE college. Studying the GCSE course will also provide the learner with valuable English-language and classroom experience.



It is all about making decisions with the child and the effort is always to try and go for the most successful outcomes possible and then scale it back if needed. So rather than meeting a child with no English and saying they can't be entered for anything, start from the top and pull backwards if needed.

Associate assistant head & EAL co-ordinator



Alternative exams that can be taken alongside a minimal GCSE timetable include Trinity College London's English for Speakers of Other Languages (bit.ly/trinity-esol); the Cambridge Step up to English (bit.ly/step-up-to-english) qualification; Functional Skills certificates; or AQA Unit Awards (bit.ly/AQA-unit-award-scheme).

✓ Putting it into practice: What works and what doesn't?

One EAL advisor we spoke to described a successful provision where, in addition to the core subjects and two option choices, learners could also choose a supported study option, which worked on study skills and building literacy, and an “EAL option”, which taught iGCSE English as a second language.



There are opportunities for pupils to sit exams in home languages. We do bring in a tutor to support with this, so we don't just chuck them in. Just because it says Urdu on your SIMS report, we don't just assume you can speak and write Urdu and put you in the exam.

Deputy headteacher



For learners who are literate in their home, strongest, or preferred language, GCSEs or, for some, A-levels, can be a quick-win qualification. As well as the advantages of obtaining a good grade, maintaining and further developing a learner's home or preferred language results in greater cognitive flexibility and stronger overall academic performance. And for some learners, maintaining their home language is important for their ability to communicate with extended family and to successfully re-enter education in their home country, should they return.

GCSEs are available in a range of languages from boards such as Pearson ([bit.ly/pearson-quals](https://www.pearson.com/qualifications)) and AQA (www.aqa.org.uk/subjects). You will need to:

- Find an examiner for the speaking components – try reaching out to local community and supplementary schools.
- Coach newly arrived learners on the format of the exams and how to interpret the instructions.

In addition, Cambridge International offers International General Certificates of Secondary Education (iGCSEs) in a range of languages, for both first- and second-language speakers ([bit.ly/Cambridge-IGCSE-subjects](https://www.cambridgeinternational.org/igcse)). These are recognised by universities as equal to GCSEs. It might be appropriate for some students to take, for example, iGCSEs in Arabic as a first language and English as a second language.



The induction programme ... covers all subjects...it is a heavily scaffolded curriculum taught ...in much safer, smaller groups with EAL knowledgeable staff.

EAL co-ordinator



B. Induction programmes

For students who have come from countries where schooling is very different, an induction is likely to be helpful. It could be as short as one morning, a set of sessions over a fortnight, or considerably longer depending on the needs of the learner.

Induction sessions can be used to:

- Familiarise the learner with the geography and layout of the building, the way the school works, and typical daily routines, as well as what they will learn, the qualifications on offer, and so on. It also provides some respite from the busyness of school, as this can often be overwhelming to new arrivals.
- Introduce the types of language that learners will encounter and need to use in their various subject classes.
- Provide opportunities to practise spoken English in a safe space, including social English, as well as academic oracy such as question asking and presentation skills.
- Introduce study skills such as researching, note taking, and essay structuring.
- Familiarise learners with behaviours expected in lessons and around the school. Be particularly alert for any potential differences in expectations – for example, some learners may be unfamiliar with collaborative activities, particularly if schooling in their home country emphasised teacher-led instruction. Strong modelling of the purpose and expectations around group work may help ensure they engage fully.
- Provide age-appropriate phonics and handwriting support for learners who arrive without the ability to read and write.

Induction and subsequent intervention programmes should aim to support EAL learners with the acquisition of English-language skills, but should avoid decontextualised, grammar-focussed lessons. Although these can be found in many English as a Foreign Language (EFL) textbooks, they are less helpful as they do not embed or contextualise language learning within the curriculum.

Also bear in mind that, while induction programmes can be a lifeline to late arrivals – especially those from very different educational systems or who have had a disrupted education – these learners also need to be mixing with their peers, hearing English spoken naturally in the classroom, forming friendship groups, and accessing lessons from subject specialists.

To find out more about working with intervention groups, see The Bell Foundation's guidance at bell-foundation.org.uk/interventions-guidance.

X Putting it into practice: What works and what doesn't?

Our interviewees discussed a number of practices that they have generally found to be less successful. These include:

- Grouping late arrivals in EFL-style groups based on grammar tests or assessments using the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages, rather than on what they can do in curriculum lessons. This ignores the unique position of all EAL learners, of needing to develop English-language proficiency alongside and through the school curriculum.
- Placing new arrivals who speak limited English into low-ability groups based on their English-language proficiency rather than their level of cognitive ability. Consider on a case-by-case basis whether the presence of additional adults in such settings compensates for the lack of academic challenge and good language role models, and how easily learners will be able to progress to groups where the level of content matches their ability.
- Removing students from the curriculum full time for extended periods. This limits learners' exposure to good language role models and academic content from subject specialists, as well as their opportunities to build friendship groups.

Interviewees acknowledged that both students and teachers sometimes favour this approach, because it feels the most comfortable. But while the environment it provides is certainly safe and nurturing, these learners are not being sufficiently challenged or prepared for GCSEs, which could limit their future opportunities.

C. Continuing professional development (CPD) and advice

As EAL lead, a major aspect of your role is to provide suitable advice and training to staff, equipping them with EAL-friendly strategies and adaptations so they can include the learner effectively in their lessons.

Access to CPD

Almost half of the respondents to our online survey said that they had not received any training or professional development related to effectively supporting late-arriving EAL learners. For those who had received training, this included short courses or sessions from The Bell Foundation and from local Ethnic Minority and Traveller Achievement Service specialists, as well as in-house training.

There are various ways that you can deliver this in your school. For example:

- Speak to your senior leaders about organising whole-school or department-wide training, either delivered in-house or bought in from local consultants, that focuses explicitly on how to support late-arriving EAL learners. The Bell Foundation has a network of regional licensed practitioners offering training and support (see bell-foundation.org.uk/regional-training/).

- You could also run workshops or surgeries, where staff come to you with upcoming modules of work in their subject and you provide tailored advice about how to include the new arrival and ensure their progress and attainment. The Education Endowment Foundation mentions the value of peer support in its guidance on effective professional development (bit.ly/effective-professional-development) – and this approach is particularly effective as it addresses real, specific needs rather than presenting a more generalised overview.
- Include a session dedicated to the needs of late arrivals and refugees within your school’s programmes for early-career or new-to-the-school teachers, particularly those who have not worked with these groups before.
- Share relevant guidance and resources with teaching staff and discuss how they can be used to support late-arriving learners. For example:
 - The Bell Foundation’s Five principles to guide EAL pedagogy (bell-foundation.org.uk/effective-teaching-of-eal-learners);
 - The Bell Foundation’s Classroom guidance and strategies to support EAL learners (bell-foundation.org.uk/classroom-guidance-strategies);
 - The Bell Foundation’s curriculum-related resources, designed to support language development as well as subject knowledge (bell-foundation.org.uk/learning-resources/).



4. Support for next steps

As EAL lead, it may fall to you to ensure all late-arriving EAL learners are supported to continue their education post 16. The best place to start is a conversation with each learner about their aspirations and ambitions. Recent arrivals to England will not necessarily be familiar with the education and qualification system here and will need support on how best to navigate it.

So, what can you do?

You may find the following resources useful:

- The Bell Foundation’s Post-16 education guidance for recently arrived learners (bell-foundation.org.uk/post-16-guidance). This guidance, translated into 10 languages, is designed for learners at Key Stage 4 and their families. It explains the range of qualifications on offer and what various vocational and/or academic pathways might look like.
- Refugee Education UK’s webpage, Access to college for asylum seekers and refugees (reuk.org/fefaq), provides bespoke advice on further education, including funding, for different groups of young people. It includes information for those who have applied for asylum, those with UASC leave, and those with refugee status.

- The Careers and Enterprise Company (bit.ly/careers-enterprise) hosts a range of materials, though not specifically aimed at EAL learners.

✓ Putting it into practice: What works and what doesn't?

Examples of practices that our interviewees generally find to be effective include:

- Creating and maintaining an up-to-date database of all local colleges and sixth forms and the qualifications they offer;
- Providing late arrivals with mock interviews and help completing application forms;
- Making it possible for all students to meet with a careers advisor, regardless of their language proficiency, with specialist EAL staff in attendance when appropriate;
- Supporting late arrivals to access an ESOL course in Year 11 to help with their transition to college;
- Having conversations with college staff and writing student references that take into account the learner's language development and potential they have demonstrated;
- Organising coffee mornings for parents/carers of learners in Key Stage 4 to inform them about the different college pathways, with college representatives in attendance;
- Inviting former pupils who are currently studying at college/sixth form – and who also arrived late at secondary school – back to speak to learners in Years 10 and 11.



We do a lot of work with Year 11s. There's lots of conversations. You know, we do all manner... of mock interviews etcetera to try and get to the process to be more professional. There's a lot of conversations with colleges.

Admissions lead



Guidance for subject teachers

Subject teachers

This section is for teachers of all subjects, who welcome late arrivals using English as an Additional Language (EAL) into their classes.

Although a whole-school approach requires close collaboration among staff in various roles, subject specialists are the single most essential group addressed in this guidance. It is from you that late-arriving learners will gain new subject knowledge and deepen learning they already have, feeding their interests, aptitude, and talent, and rising to new challenges. It is in your classes that late-arriving learners will prepare for qualifications, which, in turn, will help them progress on their chosen career paths.

Each subject has its own distinct characteristics. Some have more practical or physical elements – such as PE, drama, science, and art – while others are more desk-based, abstract, or theoretical, such as maths and many humanities subjects. However, many of the strategies for welcoming late arrivals presented in this guidance are applicable across subjects and curriculum areas.

Develop your expertise

EAL pedagogy is not often covered in initial and early-career teacher training, and research shows that many teachers lack confidence in this area (DfE, 2023, p.119). At Key Stage 4, it can feel particularly challenging to welcome a new learner into a GCSE class.

If you do not feel confident about effectively including newly arrived learners in your classes, especially those who are new to English and/or whose prior formal education has been disrupted or lacking, then speak with your line manager – and know that you are fully within your rights to seek advice and request suitable training.



1. Welcome

It is important that newly arrived learners using EAL understand that they are welcome and wanted in your classes, and that they will learn content and develop skills that are useful and relevant to their lives.

Many new arrivals are likely to be nervous and daunted by the prospect of studying, say, chemistry in another language. They may be afraid of looking foolish in front of their peers, or of being reprimanded by teachers. Some will have come from schools and educational systems that are very different from those in England, and will not be sure what to expect.

It is therefore crucial to make sure they feel welcome, and that their first impressions and ongoing experiences are positive.



Belonging first. Relationship building is the key. Having subjects understand that academic outcomes are not the initial priority. Getting students to love school and love their classes is paramount.

Survey response



I was, like, stressing because I'll meet all different people, different student and ... I thought like it will be hard for me, like don't speak English. But I change my ideas when I meet the people and the teachers. Because they explain easy if I didn't understand...

Learner



So, what can you do?

- Greet the new learner in their first language, if you have time to research it. This is a great icebreaker and shows the learner that you were expecting them and have prepared accordingly. If not, ensure you greet them warmly, with a smile, and using their name. Ask for clarification on how to pronounce their name, preferably in advance, and teach them how to say yours.
- Prepare in advance to make sure there is already a chair for them, an exercise book, textbooks, and so on.
- Set an expectation for learners to use bilingual dictionaries or electronic translators. In order to be useful for exam access arrangements, it needs to be established as the learner's normal way of working. If the learner has not already been provided with this equipment, speak to the EAL lead or the staff member responsible for overseeing their admission.
- Be aware that if the learner has been admitted quickly and comes from a refugee/ asylum-seeking family, they may not yet have access to funds for equipment and uniform and may need to borrow or be given stationery and PE kit. Liaise with the EAL lead or relevant staff to arrange this where necessary.
- Think carefully about groupings. Seat the new arrival with friendly and empathetic peers who are good models of both English and behaviour, as newcomers will often seek to fit in by copying what they see and hear. If you have another speaker of the learner's home language in the class, then sitting them together is ideal.
- Respect that the learner may choose to be silent for a while, particularly if they are new to English. At the same time, make it clear that they are expected to participate in other ways – for example, involve them in non-threatening classroom routines, such as giving out books.

- After a lesson or two, start to involve the new learner by asking easy-to-answer questions (which require a yes/no answer or a/b choice). This will get them into the habit of participating, which you can then build on as their confidence increases. Keeping them involved also signals to other students that the new learner is a full member of the class.
- Have a can-do attitude and high expectations. This means expecting the new arrival to participate in class – and making sure they are able to – even when they are new to English and the topic is complex. Behaviour expectations should also be high.



2. Gathering information

Much of the initial information about the learner is likely to have been collected and shared already. However, as subject teacher, you still have a role to play in adding to their pupil profile and building up a comprehensive picture. The significant time you spend with learners stands you in good stead to gather more nuanced information through your observations and interactions in the classroom.



... working with refugees and asylum seekers needs a lot of teacher knowledge about history and culture and language ... and how to work in those diverse communities. It is not just about teaching English.

EAL consultant



So, what can you do?

- Access the new learner's assessment information and pupil profile to familiarise yourself with their level of English-language proficiency, their previous education, and the home language(s) and cultural heritage that they bring to your class. This will provide a starting point. You will be able to add valuable further insights to the pupil profile from your observations as the learner settles in.
- Gauge the learner's prior knowledge of your curriculum subject. If they have studied it previously through another language, then much of that curriculum knowledge is transferrable to English (although the content of subjects such as history and literature will vary across countries and cultures). If both the subject and the English language are new to the learner, their progress will be slower and their support needs more intense.
- If you suspect a learner may have SEND in addition to using EAL, refer them to the SENDCO and the EAL lead. The Bell Foundation's EAL and SEND: Guidance for Integrated Provision in Schools includes a staff observation sheet (p.82) and information on recognising the effects of trauma (p.100), which may be particularly useful when working with some late arrivals (bell-foundation.org.uk/eal-send-guidance).



3. Tailored provision

As subject teacher, you are responsible for managing your own classroom. This includes ensuring that your lessons are accessible to all learners and maximising their chances of exam success.

To effectively support late arrivals who use EAL, it is important that you:

- Collaborate with other key staff;
- Adapt your teaching methods as appropriate;
- Consider opportunities for promoting social inclusion within your classes.

These steps will help make your lessons a positive experience, and your classroom an environment that fosters both academic progress and a sense of belonging.



Group planning among teachers allows for shared differentiation strategies.

Assistant headteacher



So, what can you do?

A. Liaising with other key staff

Liaise with the SENDCO and exams officers about access arrangements for exams, to be sure that learners who are entered for them have the best chance of achieving. For example, in 2025, learners who entered the UK within the three years prior to taking certain exams, including GCSEs, are entitled to use a bilingual dictionary and 25% extra time. Access arrangements like this change each year, so make sure the person responsible checks annually with the JCQ (Joint Council for Qualifications) (bit.ly/access-arrangements-exams).

Schools we spoke to highlighted the importance and usefulness of joint planning – between subject teachers and the EAL lead; subject teachers and intervention teachers; and among subject teachers themselves.

If the learner is attending induction sessions or intervention classes to help them accelerate their English-language development, it is important that you liaise with the staff delivering these. The aim of the interventions is to close the gap, as quickly as possible, between the learner's current level of English and the level they need to access the curriculum and any exams they will be entered for. Working collaboratively to help structure their lessons will ensure the interventions are effectively targeted.

For example:

- A science teacher noticed that some EAL learners were confusing their prepositions of place (next to, in, on top of, under, etc.) and that this was impacting their ability to write up experiments coherently. She therefore asked the interventions teacher to teach and rehearse this in a small group, using borrowed science equipment.
- Another student seemed unclear about command words in exam questions (analyse, describe, explain, evaluate, etc.), despite some class time being dedicated to this. After a brief meeting with the subject teacher, the intervention teacher was able to go through this again, more slowly, using examples and translations as well as model answers provided by the subject teacher.
- A maths teacher noticed that an EAL learner was often impeded by the language around the GCSE maths questions, which left them unsure as to the calculations required, even though their numeracy skills were age appropriate. The teacher shared their concern with the staff member responsible for delivering interventions, who dedicated time to breaking down the language of common exam-style questions, enabling the learner to understand what they were being asked to calculate. Ongoing dialogue between the two staff members meant the intervention work corresponded with content covered each week in maths lessons and revision sessions.



... you need to be in a class where you think, OK, I'm learning that and I understand it.

Learner



B. Adaptive teaching strategies

All newly arrived learners for whom English is an additional language will need some level of lesson and task adaptation. The exact extent of their requirements will depend on their previous education, and particularly on their level of English-language proficiency:

- A learner at band E who has had full, age-appropriate education in their home country might only need you to speak more slowly and clearly for a while, until they get used to your voice, and to see models of what is required of them before attempting tasks.
- A learner at band A (new to English) or B (early acquisition) will require much more in the way of visual support and scaffolded tasks, as well as translations (see bell-foundation.org.uk/scaffolding).

Below we offer some ideas for adaptive teaching that are simple to implement and require minimal preparation.

i. Speaking and listening

- Collaborative activities in carefully considered groups will help the new arrival to practise spoken English in a safe setting at the same time as learning curriculum content. Be mindful, however, that talking and working in groups within a class may not be familiar to the learner if they have experienced a more traditional, instructor-led pedagogy in their previous education system – so they may take time and require support to become used to it. You may also find that classmates who are feeling the pressure of exams might be less willing to accommodate and support learners in the earlier stages of developing English. Regularly rotating partners and groups will help.
- Seek out opportunities for the new arrival to demonstrate their prior knowledge on a topic. This will help develop their confidence and reduce any deficit framing by classmates.
- Give clear and concise instructions, modelling what you require (or asking other learners to do so) wherever possible (bell-foundation.org.uk/comprehensible-english).
- Allow the new arrival time to think and process before responding, perhaps by warning them in advance of asking a question. For example, “Sadia, I’m going to ask Ali and then Ruby to answer one and two, and then I’m going to ask you the answer to number three.”

ii. Reading and viewing

- Enable home-language subtitles on class videos where possible/appropriate.
- Provide dual-language word lists to help clarify key vocabulary for specific modules and lessons. Wherever possible, make these available in advance so the student can study them before the lesson. Word lists can be generated using free online AI tools.
- Where a learner has not yet developed reading and writing skills in English (for example, due to being a user of a different script, or having missed out on basic education), consider referring them for age-appropriate phonics/literacy interventions. In class, allow them to focus on developing speaking and listening skills, giving them heavily scaffolded tasks for writing and using read-aloud technology (such as Microsoft’s Immersive Reader or ChatGPT’s Read Aloud feature) for class texts. These can also be translated.

iii. Writing

- Provide extensive scaffolding, such as writing frames, sentence stems, and substitution tables, for writing tasks (see bell-foundation.org.uk/scaffolding).
- Provide examples of model answers to exam questions and analyse them as a class, drawing attention to language features as well as subject content.
- Encourage the use of graphic organisers, such as spider diagrams, for organising thought and planning writing (see bell-foundation.org.uk/graphic-organisers). Model this on the board first for the benefit of all students. Make it clear that the learner does not have to use English for this task – their home language is equally valid.



What works really well? Working with his friends who regularly help out in explaining things to him in Arabic. Massive use of dual coding strategies, and tailored lessons using a translator with spoken Arabic.

Case study



Like in maths when you don't know the numbers. I just count in my language.

Year 11 learner



C. Promoting the learner's home language as a tool for learning

The learner's home or preferred language is the most effective learning resource they have when they first arrive. It is the language in which they think and process information, through which they have studied and in which they have a stored vocabulary.

It is important not to give learners the impression that they have to somehow suppress their own language. Rather, encouraging them to make full use of it – and to draw links between it and English – will help their English-language proficiency to develop.

In class, where possible and appropriate, encourage EAL learners to:

- Use translations of class material;
- Use their preferred language for note taking or discussions with same-language peers;
- Access textbooks or websites that explain curriculum content in their preferred language (see bell-foundation.org.uk/translanguaging).

For more ideas on adaptive teaching, see The Bell Foundation's Classroom guidance and support strategies, which accompanies and complements the assessment framework (bell-foundation.org.uk/classroom-guidance-strategies).

Remember that where a learner is entitled to access arrangements for exams, the particular adjustments need to be established as the learner's normal way of working during lessons. A learner who is not already confident and efficient in using a bilingual dictionary, for example, will find it a hindrance rather than a help in the exam. There are some useful suggestions about exam access arrangements on The Bell Foundation website (bell-foundation.org.uk/exam-arrangements-for-eal-learners/).

D. Social inclusion

A recurring theme among EAL learners when they first arrive is fear of not fitting in and making friends. Here are some things you can do to promote opportunities for social inclusion:

- In class, seat the learner near friendly, helpful peers and encourage collaborative work.
- If your subject involves practical tasks, such as putting away equipment in science, consider asking the EAL learner to help with this as part of a small friendly group.
- If it comes to your attention that a learner likes a particular sport or activity, signpost them to any relevant extracurricular clubs. If possible, ask an established member of that club to take them along.
- If your lesson directly precedes a break or lunch time, check that the new arrival has someone to spend it with and knows where they should be going afterwards.



4. Support for next steps

As late arrivals' time in school is relatively short, it is important to help them look forwards to the next stage of their education. As a subject teacher, your role here is to communicate to the learner how your subject and lessons are relevant to their chosen career or life path.



I, as the class teacher, always have a discussion with my students. I mean, I would enter all of mine for physics, but I would definitely have had a discussion as to whether it is higher or foundation tier that we're entering for.

Subject teacher



Learners in upper-secondary school are usually fully capable of being involved in discussions and decisions around their own learning. Making time to listen to their ideas about what would help them and checking in with them about how they are feeling in your lessons will yield useful insights, as well as developing their metacognitive strategies.

So, what can you do?

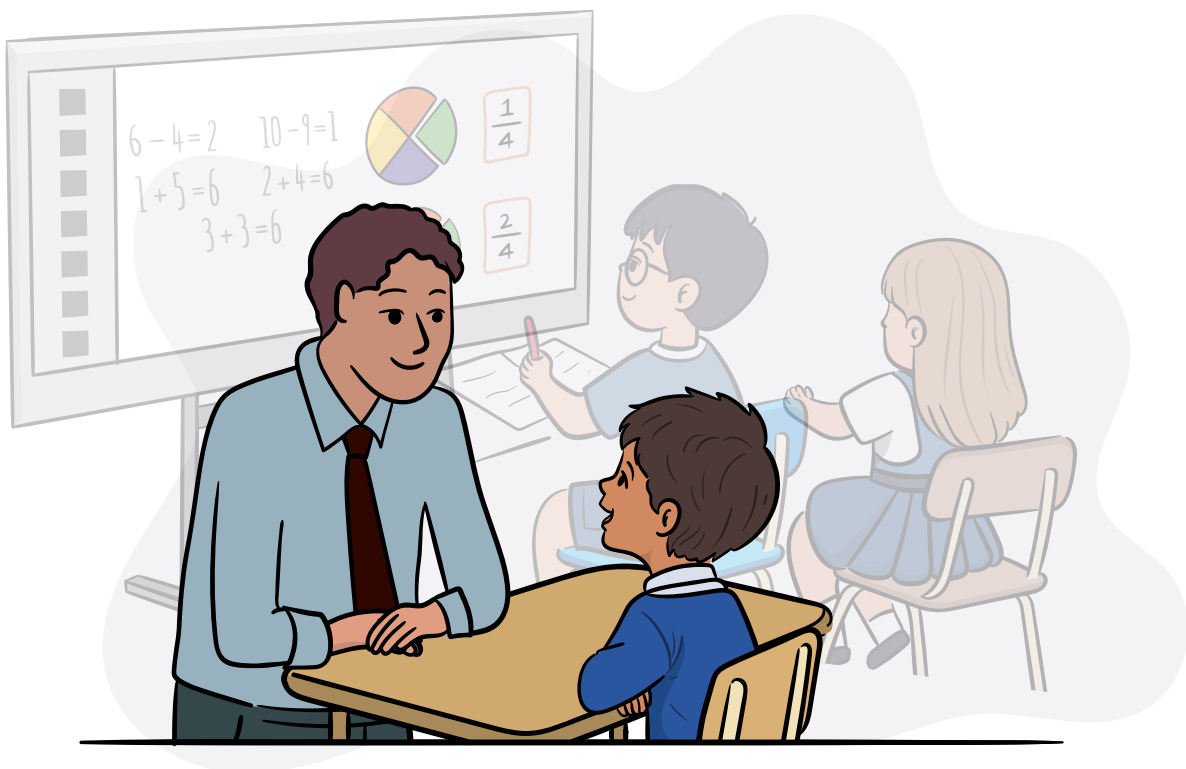
- Have honest conversations with learners about what they can hope to achieve in their GCSEs on their first attempt. Stress that their results will be affected by their late starting point in UK schools and their still developing English-language proficiency, and that they can, if they wish, build on them via retakes or further study.

- Also be honest that this will require hard work, over and above that already faced by their peers who are proficient in English and have received all of their education in the English system.
- Be clear about how studying your subject will serve the learner in the future, whether by equipping them with essential numeracy/literacy/research skills; making up one of the “magic number” of GCSEs at a certain grade required for college entry; or as an absolute necessity for their preferred career path.
- If you are required to write a college reference for the learner in your subject, be sure to mention their potential and your estimation of what they might achieve in the future with determination, study, and improved proficiency in English.



One ... refugee joined ... with no prior schooling. He completed ESOL and now studies engineering. Another student ... became a hairdresser. Many go into Functional Skills or ESOL before progressing to vocational studies.

HLTA



Guidance for staff with pastoral responsibilities, including form tutors

Staff with pastoral responsibilities, including form tutors



[Pastoral support] is really important for EAL learners because over the years I've learned that despite background despite reasons for being here, migration status, etcetera, every EAL learner is suffering from bereavement and it's a bereavement of the life they know. And so that needs addressing because, you know, psychologically you are not able to maximise learning if you are unhappy. And so, you have to address that before you can see the academic progress happening as well.

Associate assistant head & EAL co-ordinator



This section is for staff with some degree of pastoral responsibility, which is likely to include a broad range of roles. Staff who might find the content in this section helpful include:

- Form tutors;
- Heads of year;
- Support staff (e.g., TAs, HLTAs, learning support assistants);
- Designated Safeguarding Leads (DSLs);
- Careers advisors;
- School counsellors.

What these roles have in common is an emphasis on supporting the personal, social, and emotional wellbeing of learners, as part of the school's wider safeguarding and inclusion work.

Late arrivals who use English as an Additional Language (EAL) will have diverse pastoral needs. Some may adapt quickly to their new environment and make friends. Others will struggle more in one or both areas. Some learners may be suffering from trauma, culture shock, or anxiety about, for example, their family, housing issues, and the future in general, whereas others will feel more secure.

Unaccompanied asylum seekers, who typically arrive late into secondary school, face particular challenges. Behaviours linked to trauma, such as withdrawal, hypervigilance, and frustration, can sometimes be misinterpreted as non-compliance. You can find further information about the signs of trauma in The Bell Foundation's EAL and SEND: Guidance for Integrated Provision in Schools (bell-foundation.org.uk/eal-send-guidance; p.100 onwards).

“Unaccompanied asylum-seeking children experience higher rates of fixed period school exclusions (7.1%) than non-migrant children (5.2%), as well as slightly higher school absence rates of 6.8% compared to 6.6% for non-migrant children.”

(Education Policy Institute, 2021)



1. Welcome

The learner and their family need to see the school as a supportive place where they can feel safe and thrive.

Different schools will follow different processes and have different staff roles and responsibilities around welcoming new EAL learners – depending largely on whether there is a designated EAL lead. But regardless of who is responsible for organising the welcome process, it is crucial that they work closely with other staff to create a co-ordinated, whole-school approach.



Getting the admissions process right for late arrivals is the number one thing that needs to be put in place.

EAL consultant



So, what can you do?

A. All pastoral staff

i. Admissions

Pastoral staff who are responsible for admitting late-arriving EAL learners should consider the following:

- Before the admissions interview, liaise with the form tutor, EAL lead, or person in charge of assigning buddies. Arrange for the new learner to meet one or more of their buddies at the admissions interview, perhaps for a tour of the school. This will ensure that a friendly and familiar face will meet and greet them on their first full day of school.
- When holding admissions interviews with families, be sensitive to the possibility that they have experienced stressful or traumatic interviews as part of their asylum or immigration process. Create a safe, calm, and welcoming environment and use a human interpreter if at all possible.
- Make sure the learner and their family understand that it is a legal requirement to attend school in England, as school leaving ages may be different in their country of origin.

- Share information about term dates and holidays, and expectations around attendance. Let families know how they can go about requesting authorised time off for religious festivals.
- Ask the learner how they are feeling about starting school and try to address any concerns they have. Reassure them that, although they have arrived in the system later than is typical, there is still plenty that they can learn, and school will help them progress towards their career goals.
- Double check that any dietary, prayer room, and changing requirements can be met, and share the arrangements with the learner and family. For example, at the school of one member of staff we spoke to, a visiting imam leads prayers at lunchtime several times a week.
- Bear in mind that some learners will have had disrupted education and/or been educated in countries with very different pedagogical and behaviour-management approaches. For example, in some countries, lessons are entirely instructor-led, and it is not usual for students to work in groups discussing their own opinions. Similarly, in some educational cultures it is not acceptable for learners to challenge the opinions of others, however politely. Some learners will be used to schools that have 5–10-minute breaks between all lessons, while some will not be familiar with practical laboratory work in science, as schools in their country may have lacked these facilities. Consider outlining typical lesson formats, structures, and expectations to the parents/carers and learner so they are prepared to some extent for these different classroom experiences.
- Provide translated copies of school behaviour policies and use an interpreter to help discuss these with parents and learners before the young person starts at the school. Be clear about any warning systems in place, and consequences of, for example, being late or incorrectly dressed/equipped.
- Take a similar approach with any other policies that you think will be helpful to discuss with learners and families in advance. For parents who have limited literacy in their home language, photos and visuals can be very helpful – for example, to support written information about dress codes and uniform. Make sure that families with limited funds have access to any help available with sourcing uniform and equipment.
- Make sure the learner knows their route to school and how to use any relevant public transport (where and when to take the bus; routes to and from the bus stop or station, etc.). Make sure they have a bus or other travel pass if required.
- Pay particular attention to supporting families as they complete and sign any consent forms. Make sure they understand what they are consenting to, using translations of the form and, where possible, a human interpreter to facilitate any clarifications or discuss any questions or concerns they may have.



Children need to know that school and home are talking.

EAL co-ordinator



ii. Home-school support

Where families feel connected to and have positive relationships with school staff, they are more likely to engage with school life. This includes supporting their children academically and reinforcing the school's behavioural expectations.

Pastoral staff can support and promote these outcomes through the following examples of good practice:

- Establish contact with parents or carers and make sure they know how to get in touch with you.
- Recruit parent ambassadors from different linguistic communities within the parent body, who can reach out to newly arrived parents.
- Make sure parents can access key information; for example, about practicalities like school times, free school meals, and uniforms, as well as about the curriculum. Make use of translated material, visual aids, and/or an interpreter to be sure the information is accessible. A bilingual outreach worker or a friend or relative of the learner's family might be able to help with translation and interpretation.
- Set up a weekly check-in with parents for the first half term, to share and listen to feedback and address any concerns.
- Where appropriate, explain how the school approaches and caters for additional needs, and understand that this may differ in other cultures. Listen to any concerns.
- Work with families to agree on strategies that respect the family's cultural values. Examples might include adapting uniforms and PE kits to meet conventions around modesty, or making sure food that meets religious dietary requirements is available and clearly labelled.

✓ Putting it into practice: What works and what doesn't?

Examples of good practice highlighted by our interviewees include:

- The EAL lead sending a newsletter to the families of newly arrived learners, with pictures of what the pupils have been doing in class. This allows families to stay updated without having to read and translate excessive text.
- Sending out invitations to curriculum events in local community languages, and having interpreters in attendance at the event.
- Organising or running ESOL classes for parents and families.



One of the most important questions that I asked when I did my initial bilingual interviews is ‘what do you want to be when you grow up?’

EAL & SEND consultant



B. Form tutors

As form tutor, you will have daily contact with your tutor group and will therefore get to know the new arrivals well.

You are also well placed to work alongside the EAL lead to identify, recruit, and train suitable buddies or peer mentors to welcome new arrivals, show them around, and offer them company at break and lunchtimes. Ideally, the buddies will share a language with the new learner, but this is not always possible. The most important factor is that they are warm, reliable, kind, and empathic.

Many schools set up buddy/peer mentor systems themselves, but there are also official schemes available, such as Hampshire’s Young Interpreters programme (bit.ly/young-interpreters-guide).

Other examples of good practice to consider include:

- During tutor time and any lessons taught in tutor groups, make sure the new arrival is seated with their buddies.
- Make sure the new arrival has the equipment they need. Bear in mind that families seeking asylum may have very limited funds and/or not be aware of what is required. Be prepared to give or lend stationery items, rather than penalise the learner for not having them.
- Check that the new arrival understands their timetable and can work out where they need to go for each lesson. Consider asking one of their buddies to check on them at changeover times.
- Make sure the new arrival knows where to go if they need help from an adult; this might be to you as form tutor, a designated member of the support staff, or the EAL lead. The learner needs to know where they can find this person. If they are early-stage learners of English, it might be useful to practise what they can say to ask for them by name (for example, after knocking on a staffroom door) or, if they are reluctant to speak at this stage, to write the name on a piece of paper for them.
- Signpost suitable clubs, study groups, and extra-curricular activities based on information from their admissions interview and anything else they have communicated to you about their interests. This can be a great way to aid social inclusion and raise the profile of talented new arrivals among their peers.
- Be aware of anti-immigrant and anti-refugee rhetoric that circulates on social media, and to which most pupils will certainly be exposed. Should this arise in class discussions, correct blatant untruths and reinforce the whole-school ethos of diversity and inclusion.



2. Gathering information

So, what can you do?

A. Pastoral staff in charge of admissions

If your school does not have a EAL lead, or they are unable to attend the admissions interview, then it may fall to you to cover this in the interview. You will need to:

- Find out if the learner:
 - Has any dietary requirements;
 - Requires access to a prayer room or similar.
- Gather information on:
 - The learner's background. This is especially important for displaced learners who are seeking asylum/refugees. You should aim to find out what is going on in the country/region from which they fled, but it is critical to approach this sensitively and avoid causing distress to families – after finding out where they have come from, you can find much of the information you need online. Any sensitive information disclosed about the individual experiences of refugee families should be shared with other staff where relevant, but strictly on a need-to-know basis.
 - The learner's state of mental and physical health. This is again especially pertinent for asylum-seeking and refugee learners, and likewise needs to be handled with the utmost sensitivity.
 - The learner's aptitudes, aspirations, interests, and hobbies. Pass these on to form tutors, careers advisors, and staff in charge of relevant clubs/teams.

Considerations around after-school clubs

Bear in mind that a learner's ability to participate in clubs and activities may sometimes be hampered by family responsibilities and expectations, such as doing housework or looking after siblings.

Some parents are reluctant to allow their children to stay after school, and in many countries, the concept of after-school clubs simply does not exist. The need to get buses home at certain times, and the distance to travel in rural settings, can also be a hindrance to any family without its own transport.

Nevertheless, attending clubs and joining teams that nurture learners' interests and talents is hugely beneficial – and worth overcoming obstacles for wherever possible. Some schools make club participation mandatory, framing it as an academic or curricular requirement to encourage parental support.

B. Form tutors

As form tutor, you can:

- Build on the initial information gathered in the admissions interview (see above), finding out more about the learner's background, health, interests, and ambitions through your ongoing observations and interactions with them.
- Be alert for signs of trauma and distress, such as withdrawal, aggression (including self-harm), or sudden academic drops. You can find further information in The Bell Foundation's EAL and SEND: Guidance for Integrated Provision in Schools (bell-foundation.org.uk/eal-send-guidance; p.100 onwards).
- If you have concerns about anything you see, consider asking the learner's subject teachers to share their observations. Learners can behave differently from one lesson to the next.
- Pass any serious safety concerns to the DSL following your school's normal process.
- Use information about hobbies and interests to signpost any clubs and teams that might be of interest (see [box](#) on page 54), and if assigning buddies or mentors, consider selecting one who shares an interest with the newcomer.



3. Tailored provision

Most schools already have robust pastoral systems in place that address the majority of students' needs – for those who arrive late into the system, as well as those of their peers. However, some of these students may need more tailored pastoral support, and a greater level of awareness from staff around the impacts and expressions of trauma.

Joining secondary school at a later stage can be socially isolating, as peer groups are often already well established. Therefore, creating bespoke opportunities to support social inclusion is essential.

Also bear in mind that, while all learners benefit from a calm and safe learning environment, zero-tolerance behaviour policies may not be immediately appropriate for recent arrivals who are still adjusting to a new country and culture – especially if they have faced war or persecution. It might be fairer to allow a late arrival some settling-in time during which they observe the policy in practice, to make sure they completely understand its implications for themselves. This helps avoid unintentionally punishing vulnerability rather than supporting it.

So, what can you do?

A. All pastoral staff

- If you have not already received trauma training, request this for yourself, key colleagues with pastoral responsibilities, and any other relevant staff.

- Download and read the UNHCR's Stress and Trauma Guidebook (bit.ly/stress-and-trauma).
- Point learners in the direction of quiet spaces available at lunch and break times, so they have somewhere to go if they are feeling overwhelmed.
- If you have any concerns about the psychological health of new arrivals, follow the school's normal process to refer them to suitable mental health practitioners, with parental agreement. Even if waiting lists are long, it is worth getting the process started. As with all learners, if you fear for their safety, report this to your Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL).
- Familiarise yourself with any local charities that work with asylum seekers/refugees; find out what they offer and consider whether any of your learners would benefit from a referral. You may also wish to think about inviting speakers from relevant charities into school to speak to staff and, where appropriate, to speak to students – either in groups or at whole-school assemblies.
- Find out if any local leisure centres, cinemas, or other recreational facilities offer free passes or subsidies for refugees. Local charities might be able to advise.

Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)

As DSL, your role is not to diagnose or treat trauma, but to safeguard the learner, ensure they are not at further risk, and coordinate support. Follow your school's safeguarding protocol. However, don't hesitate to demand professional translation services if you feel a child's safety is in doubt.

B. Pastoral leads/heads of year

- If part of your role is delivering whole-school or year-group assemblies, consider what you can do to make these accessible to learners in the earlier stages of acquiring English. For example:
 - Ensure that late arrivals from abroad understand the purpose of school assemblies, as they may not have encountered them before.
 - Check that assemblies are delivered using comprehensible English, and where possible with visual support to aid understanding (see bell-foundation.org.uk/comprehensible-english).
- Create opportunities to celebrate diverse cultures in school events, but avoid singling learners out or making them feel like spokespeople for their cultures.
- If learners are referred to you for exhibiting behaviours that do not meet the school's expectations, consider what they could be communicating and beware of inadvertently punishing vulnerability. For example, could the behaviour be an expression of frustration at being given inaccessible work, masking a fear of losing face, or part of a fight-or-flight response to stress? The UNHCR's free handbook for teachers of traumatised refugee children may be useful (bit.ly/stress-and-trauma).

- Use restorative conversations rather than one-strike punishments until the learner has had ample time to adjust and settle in. There might be times when an interpreter is necessary, particularly if there are nuances and cultural sensitivities to navigate.



They [assemblies] could be at least more accessible. They could use PowerPoint. They're mostly talking. They mostly stand in front of everyone, talking...

Learner



C. Form tutors

- Take the opportunity during tutor time to get to know the learner better, and use the insights you gain to tailor your approach. Share any relevant information with other staff to ensure consistent support and provision.
- Make sure all content in tutor time and assemblies is accessible; for example, consider using translation software or peer translation.
- Take every opportunity to make new arrivals feel part of the tutor group; involve them in discussions, class forums, and day-to-day form-group business to foster a sense of belonging from their very first day. You may need to provide translated materials or other scaffolds to enable their participation at first.
- If other staff come to you with concerns about the behaviour of a newly arrived learner who is in your tutor group, use your next tutor time as an opportunity to revisit school expectations with the whole class, making sure that the learner understands without singling them out.



If you know you have a new student with no English coming, then change the seating plan, place a child next to a person who speaks the same language or is from the same country.

EAL consultant



4. Support for next steps

Students who arrive late at secondary school, whatever the reason, are usually painfully aware that the timing is not ideal. In some cases, this can lead them to a sense of despondency, dislocation, or reluctance to fully commit to school life, especially where lack of English and/or previous education presents a barrier to exam success on their first attempt.

It is important to reinforce hope, aspiration, and a sense of future. Help and encourage learners to explore their options – and show them what is possible by mapping out a path, with achievable milestones, to reaching their goals.



Any child who enters into a school has to have somebody who's looking at a long-term plan for that child. When it comes to children who are in crisis or who are new to English, it often becomes a day-to-day plan. What do they need today? There might be nobody thinking what this child wants to do in five years' time, so somebody has to have a flight plan in mind for that child when they are out in the world and how they are going to become the people that they have the potential to be.

EAL & SEND consultant



So, what can you do?

A. Form tutors

If you are a Year 10 or 11 form tutor, you will be having conversations around choices for post-16 study with your form. Make sure that newly arrived learners are involved and aware that this applies to them too.

- Consider providing translated versions of any materials for the new arrival, for example using AI or translation software. Check whether local colleges can provide translated versions of their prospectuses and other materials for you to share with learners.
- Consider inviting former students from the school to return and talk to current learners about the choices they made and their life beyond Year 11. If possible, include former students from various linguistic backgrounds, especially those who also arrived later into the education system. Meeting other learners who arrived in similar circumstance and achieved their aspirations can be a powerful motivator and source of inspiration. You might want to liaise with the careers and/or EAL lead to facilitate this.
- If your new arrival has a careers interview or tutorial with the school careers specialist, consider arranging for a suitable staff member or peer who shares a language to go along and interpret.
- Collate information from subject teachers about how the learner is performing across the curriculum. Ask them to also consider how they might perform in time as their proficiency in English improves, based on aptitude and attitude. Pass this on to the careers lead, and also include it in any references you write for college places.



All late arrivals have individual careers appointments early in the year in Years 10 and 11, to ensure college and aspirations are addressed as soon as possible. When needed, this includes meeting with parents.

Survey response



B. Careers leads

- Tailor careers provision to ensure it is appropriate for late-arriving learners, in line with Gatsby Benchmark 3: “Addressing the needs of each student”. You can record and map activities against the benchmarks on Compass (bit.ly/careers-and-enterprise-digital-products-and-resources).
- Gather information about courses available at all local colleges and sixth forms that will accept learners who may not yet have achieved a grade 4 in GCSE English, and any colleges that offer bridging years for students. For example, some colleges in Coventry and Warwickshire offer a three-year programme designed to support progression to further study for learners at the earliest stages of proficiency in English. Your regional Careers Hub will be able to help with this. Share any information with learners and their families.
- Gather information about ESOL courses available at college, especially those that combine ESOL with GCSE retakes or level 2 or 3 courses, such as BTEC and NVQ qualifications.
- Over time, develop a relationship with college staff involved in admissions and transition, and also any college ESOL/inclusion staff. Introduce them to the EAL staff at your school so they can work together on transition.
- If you run careers interviews or tutorials with learners, make sure you include late arrivals and guide them through the paths they can take to their chosen career. If English-language proficiency is a temporary barrier, reaching their goals will take longer –but emphasise that with dedication and resilience they can be achieved. Mapping their path out in stages, with concrete milestones, can help provide a sense of purpose and direction.
- Help learners with the practicalities of filling in college application forms.
- College open days can be very fast paced and confusing for recently arrived learners. If you can, arrange for the learner to be accompanied by staff, such as the EAL lead or a member of support staff.
- Develop a list of local employers who come from different linguistic communities and may be able to offer work experience to new arrivals who share a language spoken by staff/employers.
- Offer support to ensure work experience placements are meaningful and clearly understood. Late-arriving students may not be familiar with the concept of work experience, and are unlikely to have the contacts to secure a useful placement themselves.
- Provide learners with a copy of The Bell Foundation’s Post-16 education guidance for recently arrived learners (bell-foundation.org.uk/post-16-guidance), which is available in 10 languages as well as English, and offers a thorough overview of the system.

Example in practice: Events for recently arrived learners

The Ethnic Minority and Traveller Achievement Service (EMTAS) team at one local authority we spoke to provided a notable example of good practice in the form of an event aimed specifically at Ukrainian students.

Organised by the EMTAS and hosted by a local school, the event included speakers from Refugee Education UK; local education providers, including the university; and Ukrainian students themselves. Translators and interpreters were in attendance, making it accessible to all Ukrainian families, including the very newly arrived.

Building on this success, similar events have since been organised for other resettled learners, including Afghanis and Syrians.



Guidance for support staff

Support staff

The Education Endowment Foundation’s guidance on the effective deployment of teaching assistants (bit.ly/deployment-tas) recommends assigning them roles that “scaffold learning and develop pupils’ independence”.

It also emphasises that they should supplement, rather than replace, subject teachers and that “pupils who struggle the most should spend at least as much time with the teacher as other pupils, if not more” (EEF, 2025, p.7). It is important to stress that teachers must retain responsibility for all learners in their classes and liaise and plan with support staff to most effectively help those who need it.

The support staff role is broad and highly varied. For example:

- Support staff who work with late-arriving learners may be deployed within the mainstream classroom or to run interventions outside it, or a mixture of both.
- They may be employed with a specific EAL-related brief, or a more general support-for-learning brief that includes learners who use EAL.
- Some support staff working with EAL learners may share languages with those learners, others will not.
- Some will have had extensive EAL-related training or experience, while others might be new to the field.

Due to this diversity, this section is intentionally broad in scope, and different subsections will be relevant to different readers depending on their context and role.

Support staff can help late-arriving learners who are at the early stages of English-language acquisition in a variety of ways; for example, by:

- Contributing to the creation of a welcoming classroom environment;
- Supporting their adjustment to a new school and country;
- Helping to reduce isolation and promote social inclusion;
- Helping to reduce language barriers and provide scaffolding;
- Supporting the development of independent learning and metacognitive strategies.

The remainder of this section is divided into two main parts, focusing on supporting late arrivals in the mainstream classroom and in intervention groups, respectively.

Supporting late arrivals in class



1. Welcome

- Make sure you can pronounce the learner's name correctly and that you know which language(s) they speak.
- Look out for opportunities to foster social inclusion, such as encouraging the learner to take part in group discussions.
- Consider varying who you work with during a lesson. Older learners often find having a teaching assistant who supports only them in class to be stigmatising rather than welcoming. If they see that you move around the class helping various students, they are likely to feel included rather than spotlighted. This will also encourage other members of the class to view the new arrival as resilient rather than dependent.



2. Gathering information

- Plan with the teacher so you both know what you are doing in advance. Ask the teacher if there is anything they would like you to look out for in terms of previous subject knowledge or aptitude.
- Take note of areas where the learner demonstrates prior knowledge or aptitude, as well as areas where they might be struggling. Report your observations on both skills and challenges to the teacher.
- Look out for any connections the student makes with other learners and feed this back to the teacher and form tutor, so they can bear this in mind when making seating plans.
- As always, share any concerns with the relevant staff in line with your school's normal processes and procedures.



[Late arriving students in mainstream class have] ... access to bilingual dictionaries. We've also got laptops that they can have from the library. They can have in-class support as well. So it really depends on what that student feels they need. Sometimes some students don't want someone sort of sitting there... they kind of just want to be left alone with a laptop...

HLTA



3. Tailored provision

- When supporting late arrivals who use EAL in class, the aim is to reduce language barriers and provide scaffolding so learners can accelerate their English-language development and access subject content as soon as possible. In-class support might take the form of visuals and bilingual resources – such as bilingual dictionaries,

electronic translators, glossaries, and translation apps – as well as peer support, or differentiated worksheets. Consult with the teacher to plan effective, bespoke support, and try to accommodate the learner’s preferences wherever possible.

- Access helpful resource sites, including The Bell Foundation, for downloadable materials to use in class with EAL learners (see bell-foundation.org.uk/learning-resources/). These materials aim to ensure high standards in terms of subject learning, with scaffolds to support learners’ language demands.
- Consider using mini whiteboards to model sentence structure or break down answers.
- If learners are unfamiliar with using translation tools or dictionaries, spend some time showing them how (see bell-foundation.org.uk/bilingual-dictionaries/).
- Feed back to the teacher about how the learner responds to the scaffolding provided and uses it for learning. This will help the teacher to plan and ensure that provision is continuously tailored as the learner progresses.
- Consider ways you can support the teacher to focus their time on learners who need the most help. One approach could be to oversee the rest of the class as they engage in pre-planned activities set by the teacher, allowing the teacher to work more closely with the late arrival or a group that includes them.
- Support the development of learners’ metacognitive skills, including the ability to check their own understanding, seek clarification, plan their work, and reflect on what has helped.

Supporting late arrivals in intervention groups

According to the Education Endowment Foundation, “The evidence shows that teaching assistants can support pupils effectively through structured interventions. However, these need to be carefully considered, monitored, and linked to the classroom to ensure positive outcomes for pupils” (2025, p.4).

✓ Putting it into practice: What works and what doesn’t?

Learners often welcome small-group interventions as a calm space where they can begin to find their feet and meet other learners with similar needs or backgrounds.

Learners we spoke to said it helped them feel safe and to connect with others. They also welcomed the opportunity to focus specifically on aspects of English that enable them to access the content of mainstream classes and to move swiftly towards full inclusion.



I feel comfortable because I want to enjoy it because I see other people like me learning English... in those lessons, I learned some more things how to make sentence or how to speak English better.

Learner





1. Welcome

It is important to help learners relax and feel safe in intervention groups.

So, what can you do?

- Spend some time on ice-breaking and getting-to-know-you activities, to encourage group camaraderie and help develop social English.
- Make sure everyone can pronounce each other's names.
- Dedicate some time to revising basic topics from the induction sessions. For example, go over how the school functions (structures, routines, rules, etc.), provide clarification where needed, and invite students to ask any questions.
- Model and explain behaviours that are expected in class and school to avoid cultural misunderstandings. This could include classroom norms such as hand-raising, eye contact, working in pairs or groups, and acceptable voice levels. For example, in schools in some countries learners may be expected to remain silent unless nominated by a teacher, to stand up to answer a question, or to look down when talking to an adult.



2. Gathering information

If you are the main or sole staff member in charge of small-group or 1:1 interventions, you are in a privileged position to get to know newly arrived learners.

You will be able to observe how well they read and write in English and, to an extent, in their other language(s), and how much subject knowledge they bring with them from previous schooling. They might talk to you about their hopes and ambitions, and may choose to disclose information about their past experiences.

So, what can you do?

- As you develop a picture of the student's literacy skills and levels, feed this back to the EAL lead and subject teachers. You might also be able to add your observations to their pupil profile (see bell-foundation.org.uk/learner-profile) or holistic assessment.
- Encourage learners to use their first or preferred language to access curriculum content and for some writing tasks. Even if you don't share their language, you may be able to make a general judgement about whether they seem to read and write easily and fluently, or whether they are hesitant.
- If you are running subject-related interventions (see below), keep notes on what learners seem to already know, what is new to them, and what they find difficult. Share this with the subject teacher.

- If a late arrival shares with you their ambitions for the future, let their form tutor and/or the careers lead know. The school can then explore ways of setting the learner on the right path to achieve their goals.
- Feedback to the teacher about how the learner responds to the scaffolding provided and uses it for learning. This will help the teacher to plan and ensure that provision is continuously tailored as the learner progresses.
- If you suspect a learner may have a SEND in addition to using EAL, refer them to the SENDCO and the EAL lead. In one school we spoke to, the intervention teacher noticed that a late arrival, who was progressing verbally but not with reading and writing, was struggling to read. This student was referred for tests, and was found to have limited vision.
- As with any student, if a recently arrived learner discloses information about abuse, or that makes you fear they are unsafe, report this to your Designated Safeguarding Lead immediately.



3. Tailored provision

It is crucial that tailored interventions are informed by regular input from subject teachers, so that what is covered in intervention lessons corresponds to what is being covered in the mainstream. Without frequent communication with teachers, interventions might miss key areas or waste valuable time by repeating content.

So, what can you do?

- Prioritise subjects in which the learner will be entered for a GCSE. Prepare the students with key vocabulary and concepts needed for upcoming learning.
- Recap and revisit material from recent lessons/modules and go over any key concepts that the students found particularly challenging.
- Pre-teach concepts and content for upcoming lessons.
- Focus on curriculum-related vocabulary.
- Focus on typical language structures that are used in class. For example:
 - Predictions (“What do you think will happen if...?”);
 - Reasoning (“This proves/shows that...”);
 - Cause and effect (“Acid rain affects water quality because...”);
 - Sequencing (“first... next ... then ... finally ...”) (see [bell-foundation.org.uk/focusing-on-grammar-patterns](https://www.bell-foundation.org.uk/focusing-on-grammar-patterns)).
- Rehearse asking and answering questions as it might occur in the classroom (see [bell-foundation.org.uk/questioning-strategies](https://www.bell-foundation.org.uk/questioning-strategies)).

- Model and rehearse note taking, for example using a graphic organiser. Encourage the learner to use their home or preferred language for this if they find it helpful (see bell-foundation.org.uk/graphic-organisers).
- Model and rehearse reading and interpreting instructions as they are given in textbooks and GCSE papers – for example by identifying, translating, and clarifying command words (explain, analyse, describe, etc.).
- Model and rehearse written answers to questions, including GCSE exam practice questions. Use dictogloss, gap fills, sentence stems, and substitution tables for this, with the aim of gradually reducing the level of scaffolding until the learner can attempt an exam question (see bell-foundation.org.uk/dictogloss, bell-foundation.org.uk/scaffolding, bell-foundation.org.uk/information-gap-activities, bell-foundation.org.uk/speaking-and-writing-frames).
- Feedback to the teacher regularly so they can monitor the learner’s progress.

Literacy and phonics

Some learners face a double disadvantage: they enter the English school system late, while having also missed out on education elsewhere – and therefore lack reading and writing skills in any language. Others may be literate in a language that uses a different script, but be unfamiliar with the Latin alphabet.

- Seek advice from both the literacy and EAL leads in your school. Their combined expertise should yield a plan for the best way to teach reading and writing to an older learner who is new-to-English or at the early stages of English acquisition. The aim should be to blend English-language acquisition with literacy skills.
- Work from the assessment conducted by the EAL or literacy lead and talk to them to set suitable targets.
- Create a safe, inclusive environment. Learners may be feeling despondent, self-conscious, or even ashamed of their lack of literacy. Talk openly with them about how learning can sometimes be hard.
- Work from what the learner can do, whether this is oracy skills or literacy in another script.
- Emphasise the fact that the learner is already proficient in at least one language and can use this to help them become more so in English.
- Consider sharing stories about people who have overcome challenges and thrived despite arriving late into English education system. This might be your own, those of former students, or famous people such as Alek Wek, Maya Ghazal, and Peter Paduh.

i. Running literacy or phonics interventions:

- Establish the basics, for those who need it. Dedicate a short part of the sessions to:
 - Phonics and decoding: Cover letter recognition and phonemic awareness if needed, using age-appropriate but accessible materials (see section on [phonics schemes](#) below).
 - Handwriting practice: Include practice in forming letters and writing clearly for learners unfamiliar with the Latin script. This can also be done at home.
- Dedicate most of the sessions to literacy-building strategies, such as:
 - Reciprocal reading, which builds comprehension through guided dialogic reading and practises prediction, clarification, questioning, and summarising techniques.
 - Content-integrated reading, using real or adapted curriculum texts. Focus on identifying and learning key words using highlighting or scanning techniques (see bell-foundation.org.uk/reading-for-meaning).
 - Studying dual-language texts, using translation software to focus on key words. If the learner reads and writes in their home language, this can help them notice similarities and differences.
 - Compiling bilingual glossaries or word banks for different subject areas.
 - Matching words or sentences on cards to pictures. Follow this by taking away the word/sentence cards and ask learners to try to write them using the pictures as prompts. Keep the focus on curriculum-related vocabulary.
 - Games like word/picture bingo, using subject-specific vocabulary. Follow up by providing learners with a checklist of key words to take into their mainstream lessons, and asking them to tick the words off when they hear or see them in context.
 - Explicit vocabulary instruction, focusing on tier 2 and 3 words and practising reading, writing, and saying them in context. Word webs can be helpful.
 - Talk-to-writing activities, such as picture sequencing followed by scaffolded text construction. Link these to curriculum topics (e.g. the water cycle, electrical circuits) wherever possible (see bell-foundation.org.uk/from-talk-to-writing).
 - Simple dictations or gap fills using GCSE key words (see bell-foundation.org.uk/dictogloss).
 - Consider using comic strips and graphic novels, as these link visual meaning to text.
 - Consider digital activities, such as online quizzes and surveys.
- Link literacy skills to future pathways:
 - Prepare learners for future exams (e.g. entry-level English, ESOL, GCSE) where appropriate.
 - Link literacy to age-appropriate and relevant life skills, such as filling out forms and understanding written instructions and signage.

ii. Using a phonics scheme

A phonics scheme can be used to teach essential decoding to learners who are new to reading or to the Latin script. It provides clear, incremental steps to learning to read, a task that may feel overwhelming to late arrivals facing reams of undecipherable print. These schemes can also aid motivation by breaking things down into achievable chunks.

However, for students who arrive late to their secondary education, time is limited, and a full step-by-step phonics scheme is likely to be too slow. It is therefore important that phonics instruction is combined with curriculum literacy and applied within real curriculum content.

- When selecting a phonics scheme, remember that older learners need age-appropriate material, and that EAL learners need to learn new sounds and words in context for them to be meaningful.
- After teaching a particular sound or blend, identify examples in subject texts across the curriculum. Or, instead, use the words from curriculum texts as a starting point for phonics work. This helps reinforce learning through relevance and context. For example, after teaching the short a sound (/æ/), identify it in words from maths questions such as *angle*, *add*, *subtract*, *match*.
- Try dictations of short, curriculum-based sentences that focus on key phonemes (e.g. *we drew a rough graph to show our findings* (phoneme /f/).
- Break down longer curriculum words into syllables. You could try a sorting activity for this. For example, you could take words connected to a module on climate change and sort them into words of one syllable (rain, coast); two syllables (acid, carbon); three syllables (energy, emission); and four syllables (environment, sustainable).
- Teach common prefixes and suffixes such as *un-* and *-able* and how they help to understand curriculum-relevant words such as *unsustainable*, *unbeatable*.

It is unlikely that any one scheme will be sufficient on its own. Consider selecting one and adapting it to suit the needs of your learners, using ideas and strategies from the sections above. Late-arriving EAL pupils who have little or no literacy skills will need to learn phonics as part of language instruction, not instead of it.

When selecting a phonics scheme designed for older students, look for the following features that may be helpful for EAL learners:

- Materials designed for learners with very low reading ages in English, and learners who can decode but need help with fluency and comprehension;
- Materials and images that are age-appropriate and designed to teach meaning as well as decoding skills;
- Speaking and listening tasks that reinforce meaning and offer speaking practice.

Opportunities for support and collaboration with the charity sector

Opportunities for support and collaboration with the charity sector: An overview

There are many examples of charities that support recently arrived young people who use EAL, helping them and their families to settle into the country as well as offering English-language tuition and support with school work. We spoke to representatives of charities working with late-arriving learners in Bristol, Oxford, Kent, and London, but many other such charities exist throughout England. Some are specifically aimed at refugee/asylum-seeking young people, while others have a broader remit.

This section provides an overview of work done by the charity sector in this field, and highlights examples of best practice and collaboration between charities and schools. We hope this will provide inspiration for those in both sectors, who wish to work together in the best interests of young people.

Overview

Charities in this field offer a broad range of provision for young people who use EAL. For example, they may:

- Work with recently arrived teenagers while they wait for a school or college place;
- Work with late arrivals who have already started school or college;
- Offer orientation programmes, providing support for late arrivals in a new school or city;
- Provide help and tuition in English-language learning, literacy skills, curriculum subjects, homework support, and other areas;
- Offer mentoring schemes, sometimes with a specific focus, such as raising learners' aspirations.

What can schools do?

Find out which charities work with young people locally and what they offer. Your local authority and the local community are good places to look for information.

Designate a member of staff as a link person to co-ordinate support between charities, families, and school.

Orientation programmes



[English lessons are...] followed by what we call an information session ... about things that they need to know to live in this country, for example, the asylum process or respect and consent, friendships, grooming and internet safety.

Charity orientation programme coordinator



The goal of orientation programmes is to help newly arrived learners feel secure, learn about life in England, and improve their English while they wait for a school place. Some take place over the school summer holidays, so learners can begin school in September feeling more established.

Orientation programmes can help new arrivals to understand aspects of UK life that may be new to them, such as LGBTQ+ rights, gender roles, and laws and norms around consent. It may also include sessions aimed at overcoming stigma around mental health conditions and providing advice on options like counselling.



... we explain depression, anxiety, and PTSD and just kind of normalise the fact that mental health issues are, you know, happen to people and particularly to people who've had a lot of hardship.

Charity orientation programme coordinator



At the end of the programme, the charity provides a report for the school to which the learner will be progressing, outlining what has been covered and any key observations.

What can schools do?

Develop an open dialogue with local providers about useful content for orientation programmes, including skills and language functions that will equip young people for starting at your school.

Provide key information about your school (curriculum, uniform, timings of school day) that the orientation schemes can share with the young people who will join you.

Mentoring and tutoring

Charities we spoke to emphasise the relationships formed through mentoring and tutoring, which often have a lasting, positive impact on students' progress and confidence in schools. The terms "tutoring" and "mentoring", often used interchangeably, refer to distinct types of support, each with its own focus. Tutoring has more of an

academic or skills-based focus, often measurable in terms of academic progress, whereas mentoring is more concerned with holistic development and emotional support, and with offering guidance and advice.

Both mentoring and tutoring can be offered by suitably checked adult volunteers and by peers. Charities train mentors and some try to match them to learners who share a home language, cultural background, or interests to create a supportive and personalised service. Some charities also offer workshops to train young people from migrant and refugee backgrounds to become young trainers and peer mentors. Charities may offer to train peer mentors within schools, or to deploy volunteers in school time. Alternatively, this can take place outside of school.

Tutoring support from charities for late arrivals might include:

- English-language tuition, including general conversational English as well as subject-specific language;
- Curriculum support to catch up in subjects such as maths or science;
- Digital literacy: support in using technology including educational platforms and tools;
- Exam preparation, for example for home language GCSEs.

Mentoring support might include:

- Cultural orientation, such as explaining everyday school routines or English customs;
- Social integration, such as introducing learners to clubs, sports teams, or community groups inside or outside of school;
- Checking in: listening to learners' thoughts and feelings, helping them process their journey in a new school and country, and supporting them to navigate challenges, such as feelings of isolation or anxiety;
- Next-steps support: helping learners to see their pathway to achieving their career and life aspirations;
- Guidance on navigating the internet and social media, if this is new to learners.

What can schools do?

Find out which local charities offer tutoring, mentoring, and/or peer-mentor training.

Collaborate with charities to enable them to offer the best support, tailored to each learner's individual needs and aspirations.

Talk to charity mentors and tutors about the next steps on offer for learners, and discuss ways of working together to help learners on the path towards achieving their career goals.

Where peer-mentoring training is on offer from a local charity, encourage suitable students from your school to volunteer.

One charity we spoke to, which recruits volunteers from local universities, among other places, described the reciprocal benefits of mentoring and tutoring. For example, their volunteers have often told them that “... it is their way of coming outside the university bubble and connecting with the diversity of the community of the cities they live in”.



Making friends is another massively important thing for them, especially friends who speak the same language. Since they [unaccompanied asylum-seeking children] don't have family members here, friends become their family.

Charity programme manager



Social inclusion

Charities often run schemes aimed at helping recent arrivals to explore, integrate, and participate in the local community. Some examples include:

- Events and workshops for learners and their families, such as cookery, art, or drama – often in partnership with community organisations;
- Visits to places of interest;
- Leisure and social activities, such as cricket, football, and picnics;
- Female-only groups for young women to find their feet, make connections, and explore their interests.

What can schools do?

Find out what is available locally and how to refer learners and families.

Offer to display promotional material for these events in school or in newsletters to families.

Consider inviting representatives into school to talk about what they do.



Conclusions

It is undeniable that students arriving from abroad and joining the English school system at upper Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 face challenges. But they are not a homogenous group, and the complexity and nature of these challenges will vary.

As with all EAL learners, their level of proficiency in English is pivotal to their chances of school success, with those arriving after the start of Year 9 having even less time to catch up. Levels of prior education and literacy in their first language(s) will affect the ease with which they acquire the levels of English needed for GCSE and other exams. Many late-arriving learners will also face additional pressures, such as insecure immigration status, inadequate family accommodation, poverty, culture shock, and sometimes stress and trauma.

However, young humans are a resilient group, with a seemingly infinite capacity to adapt and survive. Adults who support late-arriving EAL learners in schools and through charities demonstrate remarkable dedication and empathy, while schools consistently prioritise the wellbeing of all their students. Despite the many challenges posed by restricted funding, as well as a sometimes-hostile political climate and media, success stories continue to emerge – a testimony to the determination and tenacity of this group of learners and the commitment of the professionals who work with them.



Kindness is powerful for people who have just come from journeys where they have seen so much malice.

Charity programme manager



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