

This guidance is intended to support senior leaders, teachers and EAL coordinators who are seeking to hear and learn from multilingual learners as part of a Whole-School Self-Evaluation of their EAL provision.

What is it?

Pupil voice refers to meaningfully involving students in decisions that affect their education, school environment, and overall learning experience. It highlights the importance of listening to, valuing, and acting on students' opinions and ideas to help shape teaching practices, school policies, and the wider school culture.

The Pupil Voice proforma here is designed to support the self-evaluation of your EAL provision, offering a set of questions tailored for multilingual learners at both primary and secondary levels.

Why is it important?

Multilingual learners often face distinct challenges, including learning an additional language, cultural adjustment, and accessing the curriculum. Actively listening to their voices provides valuable, first-hand insight into these experiences, allowing schools to develop more effective and responsive provision.

Without intentional action, the voices of multilingual pupils can be overlooked in student leadership, councils, and school decision-making processes. By creating accessible and inclusive opportunities for their participation, schools can ensure that multilingual learners are fairly represented in shaping policies, practices, and the overall school culture.

How does it connect to the whole school self-evaluation?

The Pupil Voice proforma will inform the following dimensions in the Whole School Self-Evaluation:

- A. Inclusive vision, values, attitudes, and behaviours;
- B. Inclusive governance and leadership of EAL provision;
- F. Curriculum, teaching, and support of multilingual pupils.

How does it work?

Before:

- Identify pupils who will take part in the Pupil Voice focus group. We suggest groups should be small (between 4-6 members)
- Get to know the profiles of pupils participating in the group conversation (languages spoken, English language proficiency, time and situation of arrival to the UK and school, educational background)
- Consider whether interpreters, bilingual staff, or peers who speak the same languages are needed. Likewise, consider whether a translated copy of proforma questions is necessary
- When asking pupils if they would like to participate, be clear about why the focus group is happening (e.g., to hear their views on EAL provision, school experience, etc.)

- Provide students with a copy of the Pupil Voice proforma (primary or secondary) prior to the event so they have time to reflect and take notes on their responses.
- Reassure students there are no right or wrong answers; their opinions matter.
- Determine how you will capture the conversation, in line with the school's consent process (audio recording, taking notes, video recording) and set up any necessary equipment.

During:

- Be aware that cultural norms may affect participation (e.g., reluctance to share anything negative). For this reason, we suggest pupils run the focus group themselves; asking and responding to the proforma questions using their notes as needed. Or you might want to have a familiar member of staff help facilitate the conversation
- Create a safe, relaxed environment and choose a quiet, informal space, rather than a formal meeting room. There should be no risk of other people coming into the room.
- Arrange seating in a circle to encourage conversation and equality, reminding pupils that there are no right or wrong answers.
- Create a set of ground rules, such as, everyone gets a chance to speak, nothing said will be shared outside of the room, respect each other's views, etc.
- Start with an ice breaker to get the conversation going. For example, "Say your name, one language you speak, and one thing you like about your culture".
- Record the conversation however you choose to do so.

After:

- Analyse the conversation and share findings with senior leadership, exploring how these insights can inform and strengthen the self-evaluation of your EAL provision.
- Reflect on potential actions arising from your findings and include these in the recommendations section of the Whole school self-evaluation.
- Follow up with pupils by showing them how their feedback is being used and any changes that have been made to improve EAL provision.