



# The EAL Programme at ICS Primary School

## What is EAL?

EAL means **English as an Additional Language**. EAL is **content-based** instruction which is designed to help new students participate in the mainstream curriculum from their very first day at ICS. This means they are taught English *through* grade-level academic lessons, which have been adapted to meet their needs. It is not an EFL (**English as a Foreign Language**) course, teaching English grammar and vocabulary in isolation. Some students may have had EFL lessons in their home country, but the English that is required for academic learning is quite different, and our programme is designed to help students to learn all subjects along with their grade-level classmates.

## EAL Programme models

At ICS, EAL and classroom teachers work together to meet students' language and academic needs. Support for EAL students follows two models: **mainstream** and **pull-out**.

**Mainstream:** In this model, an EAL teacher works in the mainstream classroom, with the classroom teacher. EAL teachers provide support for individual students, and teach alongside classroom teachers. **All** of the students in the EAL programme receive mainstream support. This allows students to follow the mainstream curriculum, and allows EAL and classroom teachers to monitor students' progress on a daily basis. An EAL teacher in the classroom can also provide support for students who have recently exited the EAL programme. Mainstream support is given during Language and Unit of Inquiry periods.

**Pull-out:** In this model, students who are new to the English language (or have had limited exposure to English) are pulled out of the mainstream class for more direct instruction in basic communication skills and strategies for reading and writing. Content vocabulary from the mainstream classroom is also taught and reinforced at a comprehensible level. Here students can practice communicating in English in a smaller group setting. These pull-out classes take place during Language lessons. These students receive pull-out classes as well as mainstream support.

EAL and mainstream teachers meet weekly to plan classes and adapt materials.

## Who has EAL?

Students in grades 1 to 5 who have not been previously schooled in English are screened by the EAL department. Observations are recorded by the EAL and classroom teachers, and an EAL test in Speaking, Listening, Reading and Writing is administered to determine each student's level of English proficiency. If a student is considered to require EAL support, a timetable is established with the classroom teacher.

## How long does it take to learn English?

Many students become fluent in spoken English very quickly. Research has demonstrated that it takes only 1 to 2 years to develop competency in spoken English. However, when English is required for academic purposes, as it is at ICS, the process may take much longer, from 4 to 7 years.

## How are EAL students assessed?

Classroom and EAL teachers monitor students' progress continuously. Children have the same projects and assignments as other students in the class, and are assessed on these. Classroom reports are sent home periodically, and EAL reports are sent home twice a year. Teachers fill out an EAL observation checklist to assess students' performance in Speaking, Listening, Reading and Writing. The EAL department also administers tests in these areas at the end of each school year.

### **How can parents help EAL students at home?**

It is very important for children to know that their parents support their efforts to learn in a new language. Children come to school with a great deal of previous knowledge in their first language, and parents should continue to develop this at home. Research has shown us that **the most important factor in learning a second language is a well-developed first language**. Parents can read to their children and discuss books in their first language. Or, if the children can already read, parents can provide stimulating, age-appropriate reading material at home. It is also helpful for students to read about Unit of Inquiry topics in their first language.

When helping children with homework, parents should discuss material **in their first language**, to ensure understanding. Homework is an area in which EAL students often require support at home, and it is important for parents and students to know that teachers at ICS allow for students' varied levels of English and do not expect EAL students to hand in homework completed in perfect English. It is more important for students to complete homework assignments in their own words, even though they may contain grammar mistakes, than to hand in long, complicated pieces of work they do not understand or have copied directly from a parent's translation or from a book. It is very helpful for students to have a bilingual dictionary (English-First Language/ First Language-English), to use at school and at home.

### **Who are the EAL Teachers?**

There are four EAL teachers currently working in the Primary School, Ms. Savannah Navarro, Ms. Cynthia Arreola, Ms. Nicola Minchin and Ms. Josefina Mase. The EAL teachers are available to speak with parents about their children's progress. Appointments may be made through the office.

### **Further reading:**

- *A Parents' and Teachers' Guide to Bilingualism*, by Colin Baker, available from [www.multilingual-matters.com](http://www.multilingual-matters.com), also available in Spanish, *Guía Para Padres y Maestros de Niños Bilingües*.
- *The Power of Reading*, by Stephen Krashen, available from Greenwood Publishers [www.greenwood.com](http://www.greenwood.com).

## **ENGLISH AS AN ADDITIONAL LANGUAGE**

### **E is not only for English. In EAL, E also stands for:**

**Empathy:** understanding and compassion are important to children working in a new language.

**Expression:** by expanding vocabulary the children will find it easier to communicate.

**Environment:** we create a place where there is an open door to communication with other cultures and languages in our school.

### **A is not only for Additional. In EAL, A also stands for:**

**Aid:** help and support

**Action:** through scaffolded learning experiences students gain the skills and knowledge to take sustained and meaningful action.

**Agency:** learning English and content through English allows students to become agents of their own learning.

### **L is not only for Language. In EAL, L also stands for:**

**Learning:** EAL students not only learn English, but reinforce skills needed for the wider school curriculum.

**Lessons:** which are carefully planned and tailored to meet the children's individual needs.

**Link:** EAL is the link between the language and the curriculum. Communication is vital among EAL teachers, class teachers and parents. In this way we can all help the children to reach their language and learning potential at school.

### **For more information, please contact the EAL Coordinator in the Primary School:**

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