St Columba’s College

English as an Additional Language (EAL) Policy

This policy applies across the College at all age ranges including Early Years, Prep and Senior Schools.

St. Columba’s College is conducted in the educational tradition of the Brothers of the Sacred Heart. As such we accept young people, appreciating their individual uniqueness and recognizing that they are on a life-long journey of growth.

Policy owner: LMC
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Section 1  Principles
Section 2  Procedures
Section 3  Practice
Section 4  Teaching Strategies
Section 5  Parental/Community Involvement
Section 1  Principles

All pupils need to feel safe, accepted and valued in order to learn. For pupils who are learning English as an additional language, this includes recognising and valuing their home language and background. As a school, we are aware that bilingualism is a strength and that EAL pupils have a valuable contribution to make. We take a whole school approach, including ethos, curriculum, education against racism and promoting language awareness.

Students who are not native English speakers and are learning English as an additional language are recognised as having diverse needs which need appropriate support. It is also recognised that bilingual speakers have a richer language experience than their monolingual peers, and can use their skills and knowledge of one language to enhance their understanding of others. It is also acknowledged that literacy skills in one language are transferable skills, so help literacy development in another language. Students who are not native English speakers are only noted on the College Learning Needs register in cases where they have a barrier to learning or evidence of additional needs. The process of learning a new language is not defined in legislation as a special educational need and this is reflected in College practice.

In practice, due to the nature of the school and entry procedures, some EAL pupils do not require language support. For those that do, the procedures and practice detailed in this policy apply. The College aims to take specific action to help students who are learning English as an additional language by developing their spoken and written English and ensuring their access to the curriculum.

Section 2  Procedures

a. Teaching EAL should be based on accurate knowledge of students' needs and attainments, and include ways of monitoring the effectiveness of overall provision.

b. Students learning EAL are entitled to the whole College curriculum and all their teachers have responsibility for teaching English as well as subject content.

c. All teachers structure lessons appropriately and use language in ways which support and stimulate development of English.

d. The English and Learning Support departments play a lead role in assisting students in developing their English skills, written and spoken.

e. Each individual’s needs, skills and experiences should contribute both to target setting and to be used as a tool for raising standards.

Section 3  Practice

a. The Admissions process should identify students' home/heritage languages through the initial interview. This information should be recorded on the concern list for circulation to staff alongside concerns of other nature.
b. The Admissions Office provide information and brief the Head of Learning Support in the Senior school or the Learning Support co-ordinator in Prep and the student’s tutor and other pastoral staff to undertake responsibility for the student in more detail, so an evaluation process can begin immediately.

c. A variety of resources, activities and practical tasks are likely to be used to support understanding and learning.

d. Bilingual learners are grouped with competent English speakers. Improvement is promoted by good example, rather than correction. Literacy inaccuracies are regarded as developmental.

e. Staff receive appropriate training in the issues of working in linguistically diverse classrooms and in developing a repertoire of strategies for meeting curriculum requirements

f. Senior school experience is that some students need provision for EAL. Those whose native tongue is not English are usually fluent bilingual speakers on entry. Where a need for support is identified, an individualised programme is put in place for each student, coordinated by the SENCO based on their assessment of the student’s needs. This may involve a differentiated curriculum package. In the Prep, non-English speakers are supported through intervention, one on one support and specific teaching of vocabulary for rapid progress in language acquisition.

g. To ensure individual needs are catered for, students who are not native English speakers are profiled during year on year transitions and when transferring between phases of learning, including KS2 to KS3.

Section 4 Teaching Strategies

Where a pupil’s home language is not English, staff are made aware and the following teaching strategies used as appropriate:

a. Classroom activities have clear learning objectives and use appropriate materials and support to enable pupils to participate in lessons.

b. Key language features of each curriculum area, e.g. key vocabulary, uses of language, forms of text, are identified.

c. Enhanced opportunities are provided for speaking and listening, including both process and presentational talk, drama techniques and role play. Pupils have access to effective staff and peer models of spoken language.

d. Additional visual support is provided, e.g. posters, pictures, photographs, objects, demonstration, use of gesture.

e. Additional verbal support is provided, e.g. repetition, modelling, peer support.

f. Use is made of collaborative activities that involve purposeful talk and encourage and support active participation.
g. Where possible, learning progression moves from the concrete to the abstract.

h. Discussion is provided before, during and after reading and writing activities.

i. Scaffolding is provided for language and learning, e.g. talk frames, writing frames.

j. Where possible, we provide opportunities for children to use home language in play and learning to support their language development at home as well as ensuring sufficient opportunities to learn and reach a good standard in English language.

Section 5   Parental/Community Involvement

Staff strive to encourage parental and community involvement by:

a. providing a welcoming induction process for newly arrived pupils and their families/carers.

b. using plain English and translators and interpreters, where appropriate and available, to ensure good spoken and written communications.

c. identifying linguistic, cultural and religious background of pupils and establishing contact with wider community where possible.

d. celebrating and acknowledging the achievements of EAL pupils in the wider community.

e. recognising and encouraging the use of first language.

f. helping parents understand how they can support their children at home, especially by continuing the development of their first language.