

EAL (English as an Additional Language) Policy for Acer Academy

1. Introduction

This policy is designed to support pupils with English as an Additional Language (EAL) who are attending our special needs school, which caters specifically for pupils with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and Social, Emotional, and Mental Health (SEMH) needs. We recognize that pupils with EAL may face additional challenges in communication, social interaction, and learning, especially when coupled with the complexities of ASD and SEMH. Our goal is to ensure that all pupils have equal opportunities to succeed academically, socially, and emotionally in a supportive and inclusive environment.

2. Aims and Objectives

The primary aims of this policy are to:

- Provide an inclusive educational environment for all pupils, including those with EAL and special educational needs.
- Ensure that pupils with EAL are given appropriate support to develop their English language skills, enabling them to engage with the curriculum and interact with their peers.
- Recognize and address the specific barriers to learning faced by pupils with ASD and SEMH who are also EAL learners.
- Promote effective communication and collaboration between staff, parents, and external agencies to support the needs of pupils with EAL, ASD, and SEMH.

3. Identification of EAL Pupils

Pupils with EAL will be identified upon entry to the school through:

- Information gathered from parents/carers, including language spoken at home.
- Consultation with previous schools or settings, where applicable.
- Initial assessments of language proficiency, both in English and in their first language(s).
- Ongoing observations of pupil interaction, communication skills, and academic progress.

4. Teaching and Learning Strategies

To support the development of English language skills in EAL pupils with ASD and SEMH, the following strategies will be implemented:

- **Differentiated Teaching:** Tailor learning activities to meet the diverse needs of EAL pupils, considering their level of language proficiency, communication styles, and sensory processing needs.
- **Visual Supports:** Use visuals such as pictures, symbols, and social stories to aid understanding of key concepts and instructions.
- **Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC):** Where appropriate, incorporate AAC systems to support pupils who struggle with verbal communication.
- **Structured and Predictable Routines:** Provide clear routines and schedules to reduce anxiety and support engagement with learning.
- **Peer Support:** Encourage positive peer interactions, fostering social inclusion through buddy systems, group work, and collaborative activities.

- **Use of First Language:** When possible, support pupils in their first language to scaffold understanding and promote learning in English.
- **Speech and Language Therapy:** Collaborate with speech and language therapists to provide targeted support for communication development.

5. Social, Emotional, and Mental Health (SEMH) Considerations

Understanding the social, emotional, and mental health needs of pupils with EAL, ASD, and SEMH is essential for effective learning. The following approaches will be emphasized:

- **Emotional Regulation Support:** Use social stories, sensory breaks, and personalized strategies to help pupils manage emotional regulation challenges.
- **Safe and Supportive Environment:** Create a safe, predictable, and sensory-friendly classroom environment that reduces stress and anxiety.
- **Individualized Learning Plans (ILPs):** Develop and implement individualized plans that address both academic and emotional needs, with regular review and updates.
- **Social Skills Development:** Focus on the development of social communication skills, using structured interventions and role-playing activities tailored to the pupils' developmental stage.
- **Therapeutic Support:** Collaborate with therapists and other professionals to provide targeted support, such as art therapy, play therapy, or trauma-informed approaches.

6. Assessment and Progress Monitoring

Pupils' progress will be monitored regularly through:

- Formative assessments that focus on both language development and academic achievement.
- Observations of social interaction, emotional regulation, and behavioral progress.
- Regular meetings with the SENCO (Special Educational Needs Coordinator), EAL coordinator, and relevant professionals to review the progress of each pupil.
- Involvement of parents/carers in progress reviews to ensure a holistic approach to supporting the pupil's needs.

7. Professional Development and Training

All staff will receive regular training on:

- Strategies for supporting EAL learners, particularly those with ASD and SEMH.
- Understanding and addressing the communication and emotional needs of pupils with ASD and SEMH.
- The use of visual supports, AAC, and other assistive technologies.
- How to foster an inclusive and supportive classroom environment.

8. Parent and Carer Involvement

We value the active involvement of parents and carers in their child's education. To support this, we will:

- Provide translated materials and/or interpreter services for families who speak languages other than English.
- Encourage open and regular communication between parents, teachers, and support staff, including through parent meetings and consultations.
- Offer guidance and support to parents in helping their children practice English at home, where appropriate, and understand their child's social and emotional needs.

9. Partnership with External Agencies

We will work closely with external agencies, including:

- Local authority EAL support services.
- Speech and language therapists.
- Educational psychologists and other specialists in ASD and SEMH.
- Community organizations that support families with EAL and special educational needs.

10. Conclusion

This EAL policy is a commitment to providing a comprehensive and personalized approach to supporting pupils with ASD, SEMH, and EAL needs. By implementing differentiated teaching strategies, promoting emotional and social development, and working collaboratively with families and external agencies, we aim to ensure that all pupils can thrive in an inclusive, nurturing, and language-rich environment.

Policy Review: This policy will be reviewed annually to ensure its effectiveness and to adapt to any emerging needs within the school community.

This policy could be adjusted to reflect the specific needs and ethos of your school, but it provides a foundation for supporting EAL students within a special needs context.