

Some ideas for teaching pupils with EAL during the Covid-19 pandemic - secondary phase

“Of teachers who were able to report on the impact on the English language skills of pupils who use EAL...59% of secondary teachers reported observations of language loss in one or more language skill area.” Bell Foundation report¹ 2021, using NFER data from 260 secondary schools

100% of teaching staff reported finding it challenging to support their EAL learners (particularly non-fluent in English) during school closures - Secondary responses from the Lambeth Survey² 2021

*Several organisations have tried to analyse the effect the recent disruptions to normal schooling have had on pupils, including those with EAL. Here are some reflections from secondary teaching staff and senior leaders, citing challenges and ways of working which in their opinion were successful during this difficult time. They have been gathered from the Lambeth Schools survey² responses**

**42 survey responses from teaching staff and senior leaders at Secondary, All-through and Special schools*

Firstly, what were some of the overall challenges during lockdown?

“Making sure all EAL parents were clear with any new Government messages and with school expectations during lockdown. Tracking and tracing students’ engagement in lessons and work sent to teachers takes a long time. Dealing with any other issues such as Free school meals vouchers, IT or any others.” EAL Coordinator

“The challenges with engaging and supporting EAL pupils during school closure have come in multiple forms...The EAL department are stretched thinly. Also, we are unable to provide the same levels of support that we would in the classroom, which impacts EAL students more than many others.” Subject Teacher

Staffing challenge

“I wasn’t able to teach EAL lessons to those onsite in school due to teaching other subjects in school” EAL Coordinator

“Number of EAL lessons has decreased due to EAL teacher/lead taking up curriculum lessons (as directed by Headteacher)” EAL Coordinator

Communication challenge within schools

“I haven’t had any news from the EAL department on what they are doing/how I can help.” Subject Teacher

“I haven’t looked at EAL provision on school website so not sure what is there.” Subject Teacher

Language difficulties

“It is difficult in terms of engagement. We have an excellent EAL department in our school, who do extensive work with students with minimal grasp of the English language, yet we have many EAL students and many families who speak less English than their children, which means engaging families can be challenging” Subject Teacher

IT challenge for remote learning

“Some students did not have internet access, so it was hard to keep track/communicate with those particular students.” Head of Faculty

“Difficulty accessing learning without teacher support. Some of our non fluent pupils will have regressed in term of acquisition” Progress Leader

“The challenge is in terms of IT access. Contacting home to explain about initiatives or check on wellbeing. Students can use translate facility more easily with on line learning.” SENDCO

“We invited EAL withdrawal students to have EAL/English GCSE lessons on site. They all agreed to come. The challenge is to support them in other subjects in online lessons.” EAL Coordinator

“I think the problem is when EAL combines with low computer literacy and parents who aren't able to offer support with RL because they are working or not familiar with school work/computers themselves.” Subject Teacher

“We have resources, including an online programme (Flash Academy), but student engagement is still low.” EAL Coordinator

(Family engagement is) “Generally very positive, although if families do not want support it can be difficult to provide it.” EAL Coordinator

How were schools able to overcome these challenges?

Communication at school and with home

“Having previously built great support networks with Pastoral/Parents/Subject Teachers has helped to ride the wave of the Covid 19 upheaval” EAL Coordinator

“Translators sourced to communicate with families. Highly differentiated work” Headteacher/Principal - Special School

“Strong work of EAL co-ordinator in keeping EAL focus in place across the curriculum and providing EAL sessions online.” SENDCO

“We have also supported parents during parents evening by gathering information from the class teachers and having parents evening online with the EAL team in first language instead of meetings with teachers. This is also the case with current Y9 meetings for Y10 options.” EAL Coordinator

“I have contacted parents individually, I have set meetings with them and I have set up 1-2-1 support classes for students who used to be supported in school.” EAL Coordinator

“Effective EAL departments are really supportive in engaging families, taking away the burden of this from teachers and guaranteeing attendance to lessons. This has been effective in our school.” Subject Teacher

“Key workers in place - with native language where possible. Increased staff CPD on provision for EAL during lockdown periods. Opportunities to attend school where barriers were considered too challenging remotely.” Headteacher - All through school

“I provided personal phone calls in Spanish to the family in need of support” Head of Year

IT and internet access

“We have ensured all EAL students have access to IT and have tracked their attendance to lessons and whether they are completing and submitting work sent by class teachers. All members of the EAL team have been added to Google Classrooms that have EAL supported students in so we can either join in with the online lessons or support the students with the set tasks.” EAL Coordinator

“We have been successful in engaging students as our EAL students have been frequently attending 'Live' lessons.” Subject Teacher

“Development of dialogue with these students that enabled them to feel more confident in asking questions about their learning.” Assistant Headteacher/Principal

“Issuing laptops. 1-1 sessions” Head of Faculty

Extra support for remote teaching and learning

As reported in the table below, taken from Lambeth Survey², the home activities judged by teachers to have the most positive impact on pupils were extra teaching support on an individual/small group basis, followed by telephone support. Activities seen as having low impact were third party software, paper lessons- both translated and untranslated- and televised lessons. This could be interpreted as the need for a coach or tutor to help pupils get started and/or guide them through each task.

Home learning activities used by schools	% secondary teachers using this activity	Impact 1=greatest 10=least
Extra teaching support on a group basis (online)	65%	1
Extra teaching support on an individual basis (online)	71%	2
Telephone support with a bilingual member of staff	71%	3
Online lessons translated into different languages	41%	4
Online translator (e.g. google translate)	82%	5
Online English language materials/activities	71%	6
Online software from 3rd party providers	53%	7
Paper lesson resources translated into different languages	53%	8
Paper lesson resources untranslated	59%	9
Television lessons	71%	10

“The EAL dept was able to set classes on TEAMS for students 1-2-1 to support with language learning as well as support with completing work in other subjects. The Portuguese, Spanish, Italian etc (mother tongue classes clubs) have carried on online and this has been very useful for students to keep learning their target mother tongue.” EAL Coordinator

“Intervention - English as an additional language classes weekly for one hour. Subscription to lingua scope for individual practice. Translated resources/support resources for all lessons. Weekly phone call from EAL coordinator.” Head of Faculty

“Examples of how to differentiate for EAL learners. Online support” Headteacher/Principal

“Extra 1-2-1 support, provided online and differentiated work, provided online” Headteacher/Principal

“EAL department has tried to support students by joining them on the calls. Also working with those who attend school to provide the support even more to assist the students.” Maths Teacher

“EAL students had extra lessons /P7 on a Thursday” Assistant Headteacher/Principal

“Translated resources. Subtitles in live lesson. Drop in one-on-one sessions” Science Teacher

“Clear steps and working out for students to follow mathematically. Work set at an accessible level. Taught lessons by speaking slowly and repeated instructions / steps to assist further. It was really difficult virtually but was able to use a number of resources to support them further.” Maths Teacher

“Clear explanation. Use of visualiser to explain and consistent assessment of progress”
Subject Teacher

Extra support on site

“Having EAL as vulnerable group a success, as used as an opportunity to work on Basic English and Maths development.” EAL Coordinator

“EAL learners who were normally withdrawn for EAL lessons come to school to have these sessions as normal as we consider them 'vulnerable'. We created 'EAL lockdown timetable'.” EAL Coordinator

“This year we have had an influx of LAC students from Afghanistan with very little schooling in Y9 and 10. School closures would have affected them more if we had not invited them to come to school as part of our Vulnerable group as they would have not been able to access the online lessons due to their level of English.” EAL Coordinator

What were teachers' impressions of pupils with EAL after returning to school?

“There is an obvious concern for the long term impact of COVID on EAL learners but also on other groups of learners so intervention may be positive across a wide range cohort”
EAL Coordinator - All through School

“I believe mostly students were happy to come back to school and motivated to continue their learning, it's delayed their learning a bit.” Subject Teacher

“Students were keen to learn but had made little to no progress during lockdown 1 and over the summer.” EAL Coordinator

Covid restrictions means year groups can't mix so beginner intervention lessons have decreased from 6 lessons a week (mixed year groups) to 2 lessons a week (single year group).” EAL Coordinator

“Large gaps in learning, slowed down progression” Science Teacher

Were there any pupils more impacted than others?

“Y11 students especially non-fluent ones have been affected the most because they are under pressure to pass/get a good grade for GCSE exams.” EAL Coordinator

“New to English pupils, especially those Looked After and/or asylum seekers and refugees.”
Mainstream Teacher - All through school

“Spanish - negative”(impact) Subject Teacher

“It's more disadvantaged EAL students who are impacted particularly. We have high numbers who are FSM and PP. Compared to those who aren't, they seem to not be as impacted.” EAL Coordinator

“Evidence from our on-line learning suggests that no one ethnic group has suffered more than others - progress prior to lockdown was considered good amongst EAL learners but attainment was down on previous years” EAL Coordinator

And how can they all be further supported in school?

“Schools must continue to monitor and support EAL learners on return to school and put in place additional opportunities for catch up support where possible - this can be in opposition to many school risk assessments and dependent on staffing and money.” EAL Coordinator - All through school

“EAL students will undeniably need additional lessons to focus on English, they should be withdrawn from some lessons for this.” Subject Teacher

“Catch up classes are helpful if they fit the students' needs and are not ad-hoc. Most students ask me to help them with catching up work that they have missed or fallen behind rather than what I believe they need. If students are up to date with work done in subject classes, then they are more open to accept more specific work that they need help with such as language work.” EAL Coordinator

“Use catch up fund to provide tutors for disadvantaged EAL students, investing in external programmes (e.g., Flash Academy), laptops/iPads to loan” EAL Coordinator

“Apps like Duolingo for English learners could help.” Subject Teacher

“Small group / 1-1 teaching is in place and I think that is a good step.” Subject Teacher

“Ensuring dedicated small group time which allows for clear explanations of learning.”

EAL Coordinator

There are difficulties with one to one and small group teaching of English, however popular. Firstly, very few subject teachers want pupils withdrawn from their own lessons. Secondly, a significant increase in staffing would be needed. Thirdly, all such intervention is monitored by OFSTED. Withdrawal from the mainstream must be documented, structured, monitored and time limited.

Further recommendations for teaching during possible future school closures

“With closure and lessons moving over to on-line learning perhaps like with SEND we needed to provide some additional support for EAL learners online where there were concerns - EAL is a very difficult area to support online but that is not an excuse - perhaps the best possible support is to provide additional booster support as all learners arrive back in school.” EAL Coordinator - All through School

“Early stage EAL learners in school every day as part of Vulnerable group to work with EAL team on Maths and English basic skills as well as to be supported on Maths and English Online lessons.”

EAL Coordinator

“1-2-1 classes where the students can have tailor made classes catering for different student’s needs have been having a positive impact. However, these classes are not very frequent and the impact could have been greater if the students attended more than once a week. Being part of the classes where EAL students struggle and to see what the students need help with in English/Maths/Science etc has been very helpful.” EAL Coordinator

“Ensuring dedicated small group time which allows for clear explanations of learning.”

EAL Coordinator

“Share online resources and online teaching. Children can be in touch with the class teachers via online learning” SENDCO

“Create an EAL Programme” Support Teacher

“Create a robust uniform system across Lambeth to support students who struggle with EAL”

Maths Teacher

Other ideas from senior leaders for future teaching of pupils with EAL

“I believe that we need to re-establish learning routines, manage well-being and assess gaps/ misconceptions and progress - at this point we will understand how much impact there has been and what needs to take priority in terms of focus and catch up.”

Headteacher/Principal - All through school

“Increase direct work with teachers and families” Assistant Headteacher/Principal - All through School

“Making the most of technology to differentiate homework that includes English proficiency related training tasks e.g. Dictation, speaking presentations, gamification of English learning” Head of Faculty

References:

- 1) *Language and learning loss: The evidence on children who use English as an Additional Language*, Rachel Scott, The Bell Foundation 2021
- 2) *The Impact of School Closure on Pupils with English as an Additional Language: Evidence from teachers, school leaders, pupils and parents*, LB Lambeth 2021

With thanks to all staff who responded to this survey

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