



AISL
HARROW
SCHOOLS
哈罗学校

ENGLISH LANGUAGE ACQUISITION

Policy, purpose and philosophy (HS17)

APPLIES TO:	All AISL Schools
AISL RESPONSIBILITY:	CEdO
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Educational Excellence *for* Life and Leadership

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AISL Harrow Schools serve children for whom English is not their first language and as such they will acquire English through an AISL Harrow education. In Harrow LiDe Schools, English language acquisition is a primary focus within the educational model. Therefore, each student is entitled to have access to highly effective and personalised experienced to support the acquisition of English.

This policy document sets out the purpose and philosophy that underpins the approach to supporting English language acquisition.

1. PURPOSE

Outline the AISL Harrow approach to English language acquisition drawing on evidence of impact from schools within the Group and research beyond.

2. PHILOSOPHY

The approach to English language acquisition is founded on research within the field with a specific focus on East Asia. The following are fundamental pillars on which the AISL philosophy is founded.

1. Recognition that many AISL Harrow students are Sequential language learners

A **Sequential** language learner comprises a student who is familiar with one language (e.g. Putonghua) but is then introduced to a second language (e.g. English). The typical example of sequential learning is when a non-English speaking child enters an English-dominant classroom (Pinter, 2006). In sequential language acquisition, the way in which the second language is introduced and maintained is vital. In particular, it is important that languages are clearly separated rather than one person inconsistently using a mixture of two languages.

2. Education that is Additive for language acquisition

An **additive** language education continues to strengthen the First Language (L1, Mandarin) and uses it as a means of supporting in the acquisition of a Second Language (L2, e.g. English). Cummins (2009) presents evidence that this approach is most successful in realising bilingualism and proficiency in L2, with outcomes in L1 not being diminished as a consequence of introducing L2. Furthermore, L1 is used to help establish basic interpersonal communication skills (BICS) and then to build cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP). This distinction is important, as learners typically acquire BICS before CALP, so educators must account for this within the curriculum and in teaching. [This is especially important for Harrow LiDe and Harrow Hong Kong Children School \(HHKCS\).](#)

3. Provide **Immersive** experiences in L1 and L2

There is compelling evidence that established theory and practices for bilingualism between European languages cannot be directly applied for Mandarin and English (Xiong and Feng, 2018). Indeed, it seems that the cognitive processes differ when learning Putonghua or English (Cheng, 2012). However, immersive experiences in L1 and L2 is consistently reported to have a positive impact on language acquisition (Xiong and Feng, 2018). Therefore, the learning opportunities are designed to provide immersive experiences in English and utilise native language speakers which is also has been demonstrated to assist in L2 acquisition. [This is especially important for Harrow LiDe and Harrow Hong Kong Children School \(HHKCS\).](#)

4. **Connection** between L2 with L1

It is widely reported that understanding the basic rules of L1 will support the development of a second language. Cummins (2009) explains this through his 'interdependency theory'; that is learning L1 and acquiring conceptual understanding in L1 allows transfer to L2 to be more effective than learning in L2 alone. The common underlying proficiency in L1 accelerates acquisition in L2; for example, if a child understands the concept of honesty in L1, all they have to do is acquire a label for this concept in L2.

It is important, therefore, that the curriculum provides immersive learning opportunities supported by opportunities when concepts acquired in L1 are linked directly with L2. This will occur through thematic pedagogical approaches or when concepts are consolidated in L1 and then applied in English. That means that even in curriculum domains in which L2 dominates, it is essential for pupils to have opportunities to access knowledge and discuss concepts in L1. Content and language integrated learning is widely reported to be an effective means of acquiring L2. Therefore, AISL Harrow school not an English only environment and the best way for children to acquire English as a second language is for schools and families to continue to support and consolidate their first language. [This is especially important for Harrow LiDe and Harrow Hong Kong Children School \(HHKCS\).](#)

5. Implement a whole school approach for CLIL

Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) is an approach to promoting L2 (English) across all curriculum domains. It comprises utilising a set of common approaches to building linguistic proficiency through the acquisition of contents specific language. For instance, teachers of physics, art and PE can employ similar approaches to promoting oracy or speaking. This can reinforce and strengthen the impact of immersive experiences in English.

It is important to recognise that achieving fluency in a second language is a long-term endeavour, with reports indicating that to 5-7 years is needed to realise the aim (Cummins, 1994).

3. IMPLICATIONS FOR CURRICULUM

The curriculum must be structured so that pathways are provided to assist students with English language acquisition providing that is appropriate for their need. The curriculum experience will develop the structures required to listen, speak, read and write in English.

Assessment of English proficiency in listening, speaking, reading, writing and overall score will be used to determine the support needed for each student. There will then be multiple pathways within the curriculum to enable the child to acquire the level of English need to thrive academically and personally. These pathways may include:

- Mainstream curriculum pathway with differentiated learning opportunities provided to maximise access to the curriculum
- Targeted support from a Teaching Assistant (or equivalent) or ‘push-in’ support from the EAL department
- ‘Pull-out’ programme by the EAL department. Small groups for interventions wherever possible – students need to be active and receive plenty of teacher time during the sessions
- Intensive English programme in which the student, for a short period, has narrower curriculum opportunities with more time dedicated to English
- Intensive English programme that over a longer-term period with a sustained narrower curriculum opportunities

For the students experiencing one of the pathways listed above, English curriculum plans contain learning objectives that are as specific to acquiring L2 and are aligned with the English proficiency framework (see Assessment below). Curriculum pathways in Senior School comprise:

- English as a second language IGCSE, or
- English as a first language IGCSE, or
- English as a first language IGCSE and English literature IGCSE

In the sixth form, students may select an International standardized English examination that best positions the student for access to university, for instance IELTS.

4. IMPLICATIONS FOR PEDAGOGY

“There is an ever-evolving range of resources that can be drawn upon to enhance language acquisition; these can be used both within and beyond the classroom or mainstream curriculum.”

To establish strong foundations for English language acquisition, a number of pedagogical approaches are implemented. These have been selected based on evidence of impact in the context of China and with Chinese learners. These pedagogical approaches are:

- Age appropriate, specific EAL programme in place, allowing children to build the four skills of English as identified by the child’s needs (Listening, Speaking, Reading, Writing)
- Phonics
Read Write Inc is the recommended programme for all AISL Harrow Schools for Early Years and Pre-Prep and Upper School to adopt to more suitable programme for teenagers
- Reading
Structured reading schemes is to be employed (e.g. Accelerated Reader, Star Reader etc.). Currently there is not a dominant scheme with evidence of impact. Therefore, Li De Schools will implement an evaluation of impact of a range schemes before affirming a long-term strategy
- Writing
Talk for Writing is the recommended approach to developing writing skills with full application of the programme in Lower School. Upper School to adapt use of Talk for Writing for developing writing skills based around similar topic areas to non ESL/ EAL class curriculum.
- Oracy
Voice 21 are recommended as the model for promoting oracy across AISL Harrow Schools

Relevant resources to support with EAL provision:

- Reading Progress (TEAMS) for supporting pronunciation and the development of vocabulary based around GSE/CEFR/IELTS levels, enables support in tone, pronunciation and comprehension of what has been read
- MyOn/ Accelerated Reader: training required for librarian and also tutors to support in Upper School, records can be kept, competitions motivate students
- Read Theory: online for development of lexile levels
- Use of Chat GPT to support marking language adaptable for all levels of learners within the classroom (same text/ key words/ key concept provided within resources for classroom teaching)
- Other excellent resources include: Life, Reading Explorer, Great Writing, Pathways – all series have levels from Foundation (A1) to Advanced (C1+). The key is a curriculum/resources that ENGAGE the students

Pedagogy at school level is designed to meet the needs of students and the context of the school. Impactful pedagogical approaches include but is not limited to:

- Draw on native speakers of Chinese to scaffold learning and to make cross-curriculum links in learning
- Links L2 with concepts developed in L1
- Is personalised so that individuals and small groups of pupils receive precise instruction designed to develop language
- A language rich environment that learners can draw on as engage in their work
- Concrete and visual cues are used to help establish language

- Focused opportunities for listening and speaking; including practice of pronunciation
- A classroom culture that promotes high levels of wellbeing, respect and self-esteem. It encourages risk taking and celebrates progress.
- Informed by accurate and reliable assessment data
- Set high expectations for learners

For best practice in generic pedagogical approaches, it is recommended AISL Harrow Schools refer to the Great Teaching Toolkit by Professor Rob Coe.

Classroom Approaches

“Language support is a feature of all teaching (and all teachers) across the curriculum.”

Shared expectations and strategies of how teachers can expose and build language use

- Key vocabulary identified and explicitly taught
- Use of widget to help visually support language development and understanding (also used for phonetic breakdown of vocabulary)
- Use of red/ green card to show understanding of learning rather than putting hand up, teacher circulates and can provide 1:1 close support if needed
- Classroom strategies (see below) to support EAL students are prioritised and focused – e.g., vocabulary focus in term 1/year 1, AfL focus in term 2, sentence level focus in term 3, etc.
- Recommended strategies:
 1. Comprehensible input and AfL
 2. Vocabulary
 3. Sentence level
 4. Text level – modelling (I do, we do, you do)
- Rubrics – rubrics created which inform practice in the above areas (see HBJ vocabulary rubric for example)
- Staff have time to meet to share practice and feedback on the above strategies (e.g., via R&D groups, PLCS, triads, etc.)
- Recommended strategies are discussed at department meetings (every meeting? Once a month?)

Outside Class

‘Learning another language is not only learning different words for the same things but learning another way to think about things.’ Flora Lewis

Progress in language understanding and comprehension relies on students being immersed in the language in and out of the classroom. Although use of Language 1 should not be removed, exposure to Language 2 should be increased. This can be obtained in the following ways:

- a. Reinforcing language around the campus
 - i. Access to the library and resources at break and lunch times
 - ii. Bilingual signage and inspirations VI around the school
 - iii. Language areas/ benches
- b. Holistic education

- i. Celebration of language specific International Days (World Book Day, World Poetry Day)
 - ii. Accessible language in Assemblies and events.
 - iii. Celebrating student successes in language awards and progress
 - iv. Using the House Programme to encourage language development (e.g. LS and US reading buddies)
 - v. Tutor time includes exposure reading, writing, listening and speaking. This can include watching daily news, silent reading, debates and various writing tasks
- c. CCA/ECA/ LSA
- i. Including courses that nurture language (e.g. Debate/ Model UN/ Creative Writing)
 - ii. CLIL strategies support the learning of courses
 - iii. Showcases and end-goals demonstrate language skills
- d. Boarding Programme
- i. A wide variety of activities that encourage English
 - ii. Extra English support sessions at night
 - iii. Reading time at night
 - iv. Creating opportunities for boarding students and first language students to mix
- e. Home- School support
- i. Suggested reading lists shared
 - ii. Suggested online resources
 - iii. Students in intervention cohorts receive weekly feedback

5. IMPLICATIONS FOR ASSESSMENT

“It is established that students who fall below expectations for their grade level in GSE scores will require specific intervention programmes to support them to be able to access the curriculum.”

English proficiency is to be assessed using a standardised measure, Pearson's Global Score for English (GSE). The linguistic profile of a learner GSE provides serves as a 'passport' that assists teachers in shaping appropriate learning opportunities in English and providing targeted intervention and support across all curriculum areas. GSE is a framework benchmarked against the CEFR and allows for standardised measures of performance in the four skills areas.

Assessment of English in LiDe occurs on two dimensions. The first relates to language acquisition and involves a score provided through GSE assessment. Expectations for student attainment at the end of each academic year is presented in the table below. Attainment against learning objectives set out in Medium Term Plans is assessed in an ongoing manner and informed by HS15b: Student monitoring and assessment policy.

English Proficiency	CEFR		GSE	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6	Grade 7	Grade 8
	C	C2	85								+++
		C1	76							+++	++
	B	B2+	67						+++	++	
		B2	59					+++	++		--
		B1+	51				+++	++		--	---
		B1	43			+++	++		--	---	
	A	>A2	36		+++	++		--	---		
		A2	30	+++	++		--	---			
		A1	22	++		--	---				
		<A1	10		--	---					

“There is a recognition that there are different starting points for different children learning English. However, all students across all grades are expected to make excellent progress from this starting point.”

- Revise expected levels for each year group for current school situations
- Be clear on a target level for improvement (% or raw score) taking into account when students enter the school and GSE level to start
- Clear expected number of points to improve as a target, but recognise that an improvement of 5 points in one year is seen as excellent progress

6. OPERATIONAL PERSPECTIVES TO DELIVERING THE CURRICULUM

The local EDB prescribes a proportion of curriculum time dedicated to the direct teaching of English for each grade. However, there is a proportion of the curriculum that allows for school specialisation, which is utilised to maximise opportunities for English. Lessons are typically 40 minutes in length in consistency with local requirements. CCAs and SCA serve as further opportunities for access to English language input.

Each school is inspected periodically and is required to demonstrate it is compliant in delivering the CNC. This entails demonstrating coverage of the content in the CNC, utilisation of textbooks and workbooks along with ensuring only approved reference materials are available to pupils.

7. STRUCTURES & STAFFING

“It is recognised that there is a need for structures within the school & specialised staff to support, implement & monitor language acquisition strategy and progress.”

- Intervention programme for students who cannot access curriculum.
- Staff recruitment and timetabling reflects language needs of students.
- Lead teacher who is ideally an EAL specialist. This may be another staff member appointed to the role depending on phase of development of school.
- EAL teacher qualifications – Minimum CELTA or equivalent.
- Structured CPD programme for Language Support (CLIL). Possibly standardised across group.
- All staff are informed of nature of school at interview and given specific questions related to experience with EAL learners.
- Quality Assurance – Learning walks, observations etc. are tied to classroom approaches which support EAL students.
- Positive culture around Language Support (CLIL) is generated through celebrating and sharing good practice in briefing, department meetings, CPD sessions, School communications.
- Student progress with language is recognised, celebrated, and rewarded. House points, certificates, letters home, student lunches, student prizes, etc.