



CHESTNUT HILL SCHOOL

ENGLISH AS AN ADDITIONAL LANGUAGE (EAL) POLICY

Chestnut Hill School

Document type	Education Policy
Policy owner	Head of School
Version	2026/27 – Wales
Last review	September 2026
Next review	September 2027

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1.0 Purpose, scope and terminology

1.1 Purpose and scope

Chestnut Hill School is an independent specialist school in Wales. English is the principal language of instruction, but the school recognises that learners may use Welsh, English and/or one or more other home or community languages. This policy sets out how the school identifies, supports and monitors learners for whom English is an additional language (EAL), while valuing bilingualism and multilingualism as strengths.

The policy applies to all learners, including learners with additional learning needs (ALN), and to all staff who teach, support, assess, safeguard or communicate with those learners and their families.

1.2 Definition of EAL and multilingual learners

For the purposes of this policy, a learner is considered to have English as an additional language when they have been exposed to, use, or are developing proficiency in a language other than English and require support to access learning through English. This may include a learner whose first or home language is Welsh, as well as learners who use other languages.

- EAL describes a language-learning profile; it is not, by itself, an additional learning need or disability.
- A learner may be fluent in social English while still requiring support with the more complex language of learning and the curriculum.
- A learner may have EAL and ALN at the same time. Assessment must consider both without assuming that one explains the other.
- The school uses the terms home language, first language, additional language, bilingual, multilingual and plurilingual respectfully and according to the learner and family context.

2.0 Welsh legal and national context

2.1 Independent school requirements in Wales

The school will maintain a curriculum and teaching arrangements that meet the Independent School Standards applicable in Wales, including suitable provision for language, communication, literacy and the individual needs of pupils. The school will ensure that language barriers do not prevent a learner from accessing education, communicating needs, participating in school life or being safeguarded.

2.2 Equality, ALN and language

This policy is implemented alongside the Equality Act 2010, the Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act 2018 and the Additional Learning Needs Code for Wales 2021. Language difference must not be treated as evidence of ALN. Where there are concerns about learning, communication or development, assessment will take account of the learner's language history, proficiency across languages, communication profile and previous educational experience.

Where a learner has an Individual Development Plan (IDP), or an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHC plan/EHCP) maintained by an English placing authority, the school will take the plan into account when arranging language access and support. Welsh terminology and Welsh school procedures remain the school's operating framework.

2.3 Welsh language and multilingualism

The Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011 gives Welsh official status in Wales. Chestnut Hill recognises and respects the linguistic context of Wales. The school is English-medium and does not operate a Welsh-medium or bilingual teaching model. Welsh is used incidentally within school life, while learners who speak Welsh at home or as a stronger language are supported to use that language where it helps communication, inclusion, well-being or access to learning. The school also values the other home and community languages used by learners and their families.

As an independent school, Chestnut Hill does not present Curriculum for Wales guidance as a statutory curriculum requirement unless a specific legal provision applies. However, relevant Welsh Government guidance is used as a source of good practice when planning language, literacy and communication support.

3.0 Principles and aims

3.1 Core principles

- Every learner's language repertoire is an asset. Staff will promote dignity, belonging and confidence in using languages.
- English language development will be supported without requiring learners or families to stop using Welsh or another home language. The school does not expect learners to develop Welsh proficiency as part of this EAL policy unless this is relevant to an individual learner's needs, circumstances or agreed educational provision.
- Learners will be given meaningful access to the curriculum from the point of admission; support will not be delayed until they become fluent in English.
- Language support will be age-respectful, developmentally appropriate and responsive to ALN, communication and sensory needs.
- Learners will not be discouraged from using Welsh or another home language to think, understand, communicate, regulate, maintain relationships or demonstrate knowledge. Where Welsh is used by the school more generally, this will usually be incidental rather than as the language of curriculum instruction.
- High expectations will be maintained. Reduced English proficiency must not be confused with reduced cognitive ability.
- Assessment will distinguish, as far as possible, between language acquisition, gaps in prior education, ALN and other factors affecting progress.

3.2 Expected outcomes

The school aims for learners with EAL to increase their confidence and proficiency in English, participate fully in learning and school life, maintain positive connections with their home language(s), develop effective communication and literacy, and make progress from their individual starting points.

4.0 Identification, admission and assessment

4.1 Information gathered on admission

- language(s) used by the learner and family, including whether Welsh is a first, home or regularly used language;
- language(s) used for previous education and literacy;
- length and type of previous schooling, including any interrupted education;
- current proficiency in listening, speaking, reading and writing in English and, where known, other languages;
- preferred communication methods, including AAC, BSL, symbols, Makaton or other systems;
- any IDP, EHCP, healthcare plan, speech and language information or relevant professional assessment;
- any interpreter or translation requirements for the learner or family.

4.2 Language acquisition assessment and review

The school may use the Welsh Government five-stage language acquisition model as a best-fit framework for identifying and monitoring a learner's development in English where English is an additional language. The model recognises progression from Stage A (new to the language of instruction) to Stage E (fluent), and that conversational language can develop more quickly than the academic language needed for learning. References within Welsh Government materials to Welsh as an additional language do not mean that Chestnut Hill delivers a Welsh-language acquisition programme; Welsh is used incidentally in school unless an individual learner requires specific support through Welsh.

Assessment will use a range of evidence, including observation, work samples, curriculum access, communication with family and professionals, and the learner's response across different contexts. No single test or score will be used in isolation.

4.3 Distinguishing EAL from ALN

Where progress is slower than expected, staff must consider whether the difficulty is evident only in English or across the learner's languages and communication contexts. The school will avoid identifying ALN solely because a learner is acquiring English. Equally, genuine ALN will not be overlooked because a learner has EAL. Advice may be sought from the ALNCo, speech and language therapy, educational psychology or other relevant professionals, using an interpreter where necessary.

5.0 Teaching, learning and support

5.1 Classroom practice

- Explicitly teach key vocabulary, sentence structures and subject-specific language.
- Use modelling, visuals, objects, demonstrations, graphic organisers, repetition and pre-teaching where helpful.
- Allow additional processing time and check understanding without relying only on yes/no responses.
- Use structured talk, paired work, rehearsal and supported opportunities to communicate.
- Provide accessible texts and resources without unnecessarily reducing cognitive challenge.
- Build on prior knowledge and language skills, including knowledge gained through Welsh or another language.
- Use assessment methods that allow the learner to demonstrate understanding in ways that are not wholly dependent on advanced English where this is appropriate.

5.2 Home languages and translanguaging

Learners may use Welsh and other home languages as tools for thinking, comprehension, communication and learning. Staff may use bilingual resources, key-word lists, translated materials, dual-language texts and translanguaging approaches where these improve access for an individual learner. This is an access and inclusion strategy rather than a whole-school bilingual teaching approach. The purpose is to build understanding and support development in English while respecting the learner's broader linguistic identity.

Families will be encouraged to continue communicating in the language or languages in which they are most confident. Strong development in a home language can support broader language, literacy, identity and family relationships.

5.3 AAC and communication support

For learners who use AAC or have complex communication needs, EAL support will be integrated with their established communication system. This may include symbols, communication boards, PECS, Makaton, BSL, switches or communication devices. Staff will avoid assuming that limited spoken English means limited understanding and will work with relevant professionals to maintain consistent communication approaches.

6.0 Welsh language and Welsh-speaking learners

6.1 Welsh-speaking learners

A learner whose first or stronger language is Welsh may also meet the school's definition of EAL where English is additional to their existing language repertoire. Such learners will not be expected to stop using Welsh in order to access the school. As Chestnut Hill is English-medium, teaching will normally be delivered in English, but where practicable the school may use Welsh-language or bilingual materials, Welsh-speaking staff, external support or family knowledge to help an individual learner understand routines, curriculum content and key communication.

Staff will recognise that a Welsh-speaking learner may have strong language and literacy skills in Welsh while still developing academic English. Assessment and planning should therefore identify what the learner already knows and can do through Welsh, rather than judging ability only through English.

6.2 Incidental Welsh in school life

Chestnut Hill is an English-medium school in Wales. Welsh is used incidentally within school life rather than as a language of formal curriculum delivery. This may include familiar greetings, simple everyday words and phrases, signs or labels, references to Welsh culture and local context, and natural opportunities that arise during the school day. The purpose is to recognise the school's Welsh context without placing an expectation on learners to study or achieve proficiency in Welsh through this policy. Welsh language, culture and identity will be treated respectfully, and learners who already speak Welsh will be supported to retain confidence in using it.

7.0 Safeguarding, communication with families and interpreting

7.1 Safeguarding

Limited English must never create a barrier to reporting a concern, making a disclosure or being heard. Staff will use the school safeguarding procedures and will ensure that a learner has an effective means of communication. Where a safeguarding matter requires interpretation, the school will use an appropriately competent and impartial interpreter or translation service wherever necessary. Children, peers or family members should not normally be used to interpret safeguarding disclosures or other sensitive information.

Staff must check understanding carefully, record the language or communication method used where relevant, and avoid leading questions. A learner's apparent agreement, silence or limited response must not be interpreted as informed understanding without appropriate checks.

7.2 Parents, carers and translation

The school will make reasonable arrangements to communicate key information to parents and carers in a form they can understand. This may include translated written material, telephone or face-to-face interpretation, bilingual communication, accessible formats or digital translation tools for low-risk routine information. For formal, legal, safeguarding, medical, consent-related or complex matters, an appropriate professional interpreter or reliable translation service should be used where language barriers would otherwise affect understanding or participation.

Names, preferred forms of address and pronunciation will be respected. Staff will check rather than assume a family's preferred language and method of communication.

8.0 Roles and responsibilities

8.1 Head of School and senior leaders

- ensure this policy is implemented consistently and reviewed against current Welsh requirements and guidance;
- ensure staff have access to appropriate training, advice and resources;
- ensure language access is considered in safeguarding, curriculum, assessment and family communication;
- monitor the progress, participation and outcomes of learners with EAL and address barriers to inclusion.

8.2 Teachers and wider team

- know which learners use English as an additional language and understand their language and communication profiles;
- plan explicit language support within ordinary teaching rather than treating EAL as separate from curriculum learning;
- respect Welsh and other home languages and use them as an access or communication resource where appropriate;
- adapt communication, resources and assessment while maintaining appropriate challenge;

- record and share concerns about progress, communication or safeguarding through the school's established systems;
- work with the ALNCo and relevant professionals where EAL and ALN may overlap.

9.0 Monitoring, evaluation and review

9.1 Monitoring learner progress

Progress will be reviewed from the learner's starting point and may include progress in English language acquisition, curriculum access, communication, participation, independence and literacy. Evidence may be gathered through lesson observation, work scrutiny, teacher assessment, language acquisition descriptors, pupil voice, family feedback and relevant multidisciplinary or statutory reviews.

Where the learner has an IDP or EHCP, relevant language-access strategies and outcomes should be reflected in planning and reviewed as part of the appropriate person-centred or annual review process. EAL progress may also be considered in termly school reviews and multidisciplinary meetings where relevant.

9.2 Policy review

This policy will be reviewed at least annually, and sooner where there is a significant change in Welsh legislation, national guidance, school provision or the linguistic profile of learners. The next scheduled review is September 2027.

Appendix 1 – Five-stage language acquisition model

The school may use the Welsh Government five-stage language acquisition model as a best-fit reference for learners acquiring English. The stages are not age or ability labels and learners may show features of more than one stage at the same time. Any Welsh-as-an-additional-language descriptors within national materials are not used to create a school-wide Welsh-language programme; Welsh at Chestnut Hill is ordinarily incidental unless individual learner needs require otherwise.

Stage	Broad descriptor	School response
A	New to English	High level of contextual, visual and communication support; establish safety, routines and key language.
B	Early acquisition	Build everyday communication, core vocabulary and sentence structures; scaffold curriculum access.
C	Developing competence	Extend academic language, reading/writing and subject vocabulary; reduce scaffolds carefully.
D	Competent	Target more complex academic language, inference, precision and extended communication.
E	Fluent	Learner can operate confidently across curriculum contexts; continue to monitor nuanced academic language where needed.

Appendix 2 – Key references

- Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations 2024 and Welsh Government independent schools registration and operational guidance.
- Equality Act 2010.
- Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act 2018.
- Additional Learning Needs Code for Wales 2021 and current Welsh Government ALN guidance.
- Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011.
- Welsh Government/Hwb: language and literacy guidance, including the Five Stage Model for language acquisition, used where relevant to learners acquiring English.
- Welsh Government: Principles for teaching language and literacy in Wales (2026).
- Chestnut Hill School Safeguarding Policy and other relevant school policies.