"My children are happy at Lawnswood. They feel much safer than they did at their last school and they are making much better progress."

"When I first started school I couldn't speak English. Now I have lots of friends and can understand all my lessons."

"Thank you for helping my son. We are very happy he is doing so well and settled so quickly."

"My Peer Mentor really helps me. It is good because she speaks my language and explains homework I don't understand."

We are deeply impressed with your ongoing commitment to asylum seekers and a culture of welcome.

Outstanding!

School of Sanctuary Committee

English as an Additional Language at Lawnswood School

Many languages, one school

A safe and welcoming place for all

The EAL Students

At Lawnswood School, 65% of students come from minority ethnic backgrounds and 44% of students within the school speak English as an additional language. Our largest cohort of EAL students is of Pakistani/Kashmiri heritage and, at home, speaks a mix of Urdu and Punjabi. Our pupils come from over 55 countries; we have many Arabic speakers from the Middle East and international arrivals from The Far East, Africa and Europe. Amongst our students there are over 65 different languages spoken.

There is huge diversity within the EAL student cohort. Some of our students are from families studying overseas at UK universities while others are from families who have moved to Leeds for work or arrived in the UK as asylum seekers and refugees. We are a recognised 'School of Sanctuary', providing a safe and welcoming place for all.

The EAL Department

EAL Learning Base

In 2012, we opened our EAL Learning Base , providing a classroom for EAL students to come for additional language support. We are one of the few schools in Leeds lucky enough to have a dedicated department to support pupils for whom English is not their first language.

Here students attend lessons for English language support in reading, writing, speaking and listening as well as support with their other subject lessons. We also hold intervention groups, reading groups, and lunchtime and after school clubs in the base. Students can drop in at any time for pastoral support. The base is equipped with language booths, a small library, computers and many other resources to support new to English students.

Staff

At Lawnswood School, we have an EAL Coordinator and two dedicated EAL Teaching Assistants who support our EAL students. We also have various volunteers from the community who come to help support the EAL students with their learning. Sixth Form EAL Peer Mentors also give their time freely to help out with students and parents.

New to English Arrivals

Each academic year, we have around 40 new starters for whom English is not their first language. These students come from different backgrounds and have very different levels of English, experiences and needs. Individualised language plans are drawn up to best support these students.

New arrival induction process

The EAL Coordinator attends the initial meeting with parents/carers and the new student(s) in order to gain important background information. Students then spend time in the EAL learning base where they are assessed and inducted into life at Lawnswood School. Assessments are carried out in reading, writing, speaking and listening in addition to maths tests and writing assessments in the student's home language. Through this process, we are able to ensure students are set correctly, and Individual Language Plans are drawn up to inform all teaching staff of their needs. All students are issued with a vocabulary book, home language dictionary, given two EAL targets and enrolled on the school reading scheme.

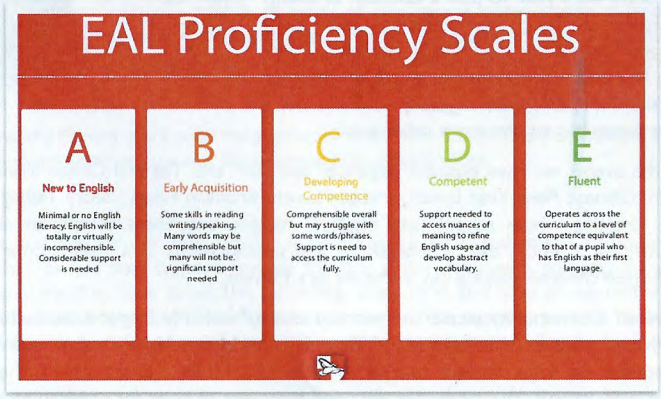
Students are given a couple of buddies from their form group. This can be an English speaking pupil as well as someone who speaks their home language to help them settle in quickly and form friendships. Where appropriate, an EAL Peer Mentor is also assigned - these are older pupils who have previously arrived new to the country themselves and speak the same language as the new pupil.

Students receive specialist support from dedicated Teaching Assistants and are monitored closely. After 6-8 weeks, a review meeting takes place with parents and student(s).

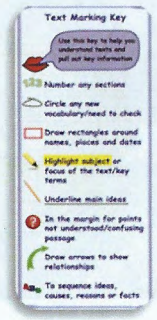
Advanced Learners of English

It takes 2-3 years to develop conversational English and between 5-10 years for these students to operate on a par with their English speaking peers. Once new to English arrivals have progressed beyond Step Level 5 (Level C on the Proficiency Scale below), they are considered Advanced Learners of English but still need some level of support and differentiation.

Students born in the UK who have a home language other than English also fall into this group alongside pupils from second and third generation families who have a heritage other than English.



At Lawnswood School, we continue to raise awareness of ALE learners and their needs across the different departments and we work collaboratively to meet the needs of these students. Through tracking, support and, where necessary, providing writing and reading intervention programmes we aim to increase the attainment of these students.



Enrichment Activities

As part of our EAL induction programme, we encourage students to get involved with as many enrichment activities across the school as possible. This is an excellent way to meet new friends, learn English faster and be part of the Lawnswood community.

The EAL department runs a homework club, KS4 revision group and drop-in support for EAL students.

Diversity Forum

The Diversity Forum has been running for 3 years and we collaborate each year to plan a calendar of events that promote inclusion and celebrate our many cultures and encourage community cohesion. We won The Namaste Youth Project award in 2018 for our diversity work. We meet regularly at lunchtimes and after school and we have leaders in every year group but involve many other pupils.

Some of the events we have planned, organised and run are: Tea and Coffee from Around the World, Chinese New Year Lunch, Eritrean Lunch, Brazilian Fiesta , Story Telling in home languages, creating whole school faith displays, refugee awareness assemblies and tutor period activities, a whole day of workshops and presentations at a rural primary school teaching English children about a day in the life as a Muslim…..

We organised a community picnic and worked closely with My Bright Kite, a charity that supports young refugees. We interviewed Gulwali Passarlay, an Afghan author, and created a video resource for high schools to use to understand more about child refugees and welcoming new arrivals. We made bracelets and messages of hope for children in a camp in Jordan. We always take on new projects and try to make sure all pupils backgrounds, faiths and cultures are appreciated and valued.

Parents and the Community

New arrival parent meeting

Welcoming families of EAL students and working in partnership with them is key to supporting EAL students and their learning. We have regular contact with parents and a parent meeting for new arrivals 6-12 weeks after students start. At this meeting, parents find out how their children are settling in, ways to support them and more about our education system. Parents also have an opportunity to get to know other parents who are new to the country. Our website has links to a variety of languages and we often invite parents to join us for cultural events and celebrations.

Community partnerships

We have established partnerships with many of our parent communities. In addition, we have formed contacts with the Chinese and Arabic Language schools in Leeds and are working together to support students learning for home language GCSEs. Friends of Lawnswood work with us to support refugee and asylum seeker families.

Our Diversity Forum work with rural primary schools and link to other schools across the world to share best practice and foster productive relationships.

Coffee Mornings

A coffee morning for our EAL families is held twice a term and this is an opportunity to meet other people and support families forming closer links with parents. Parents often bring questions they have about UK schooling, share food and have an opportunity to find out more about what is on offer for them in Leeds. We support parents to find English classes, volunteer work and employment. It's a great way to meet staff and new friends.

Transition

The EAL Coordinator is part of the Year 7 transition team and visits primary schools to gain background information on EAL students. EAL assessments are carried out alongside Year 7 tests for those students who need further support.

EAL Training

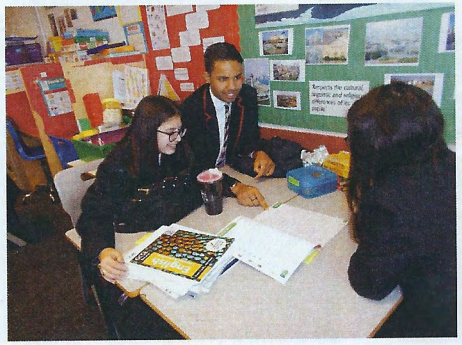
Our EAL Coordinator works as an EAL consultant for the local authority and delivers EAL workshops to trainee teachers across the city for the Red Kite Learning Alliance. She also delivers EAL training for York University and has shared best practice and contributed to research on welcoming refugees and asylum seekers at an Erasmus Conference in Holland. As a school we are highly regarded within Leeds for our EAL good practice and regularly advise other schools who come to visit our department. Our EAL team is experienced and regularly attend training sessions to keep up to date on the latest developments.

Whole school training

Training teaching staff in the needs of EAL learners is a vital part of supporting our EAL learners. EAL training is part of the new staff induction and this is enhanced by other regular focused training sessions. We have EAL Champions within most departments and staff are now able to adapt their own materials to better support EAL learners.

EAL Peer Mentors and Sixth Form EAL Mentors

A number of Sixth Form and Key Stage 4 students who were once new to the country themselves have been trained to support new to English EAL students. They regularly support with learning, homework clubs, translation and interpreting for parents and are an invaluable asset to the school.



Going Forward

At Lawnswood School, we are committed to improving our practice so that the needs of our EAL students are met. Through individualised learning programmes, intervention and support we will continue to further raise the attainment of EAL students across the curriculum.

We aim to build effective and consistent teaching strategies, differentiation and resources within departments to give our staff the confidence to meet the needs of our ever growing number of EAL students.

We constantly review our practice and are currently developing and improving relationships with parents and the community. We are looking at ways to encourage the parents of our minority ethnic groups to become more involved with the school and their children's education.

For more information or any queries please contact:

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