



### **English as an Additional Language Policy**

This policy seeks to standardise the College's approach to addressing the needs of students for whom English as a medium of spoken and/or written communication is affected by their lack of exposure to the language across a range of social and academic contexts.

The College is wholly committed to inclusion and equality of opportunity and aims to ensure that students with English as an Additional Language (EAL) requirements are fully supported in accessing the curriculum as well as other aspects of College life. The needs of overseas boarding students are especially important in this regard - the College's duty of care to these students is such that they should be encouraged to integrate into the wider life of the College and the local community as seamlessly as possible. Access to an appropriate linguistic toolkit is essential in this regard.

### **What is English as an Additional Language?**

EAL: EAL stands for 'English as an Additional Language'. EAL learners already speak one or more languages and are also learning English as an additional language. We now use the term EAL rather than EFL (English as a Foreign Language). Some learners of English may be more familiar with the abbreviation ESL.

First language: The term means a person's mother tongue or the language acquired first. It is also known as the native language. First language can also refer to the language the child feels most comfortable using in a multilingual situation.

### **Broad Aims and Objectives**

- RIC is committed to providing equal access for all students to the broad and balanced curriculum to which they are entitled through high quality classroom teaching.
- We place a high priority on the need to provide the best possible education for EAL students, no less than for students for whom English is the first language. Our EAL students are entitled to opportunities for educational success that are equal to those of our students whose acquisition of English has already matured.
- Students are not regarded as having a learning difficulty solely because the language of their home is different from the language in which they are taught. EAL students are not placed on SEN registers or taught in SEN groups unless they have specifically identified educational needs. When deemed appropriate, the EAL specialist will liaise with the Learning Support department in order to ensure testing and suitable access arrangements.

- Some students may at times require a more specialised programme than the majority of students of the same age to enable them to communicate at all levels - creating a bespoke programme of EAL support based on specific individual needs is therefore important and the Department operates with the flexibility and the fluidity to enable such adaptations to occur.
- EAL students are not a homogenous group; their needs vary according to a range of factors. Indeed, some students will require long-term support. On the other hand, some EAL students may arrive at the school with their English language at a sufficiently high level, so need no support beyond familiarisation, for example, with the structure of IELTS.
- We recognise that the multilingualism of our EAL students enriches our College and our community.

### **At the point of Admission**

The Department will work closely with the Admissions team to determine from agents, parents and previous educational establishments the quality of the student's English proficiency. School records and reports should be shared with the College and where possible informal assessments of linguistic competence are made by senior staff during admissions interviews over Zoom or Google Meet or, less commonly, face-to-face. It may be a precondition of acceptance to study at the College that students undertake tutoring in English prior to arrival - specific details will be made clear to agents and parents.

The majority of our overseas students seek admission to the College at 16, and they aim to study a range of academic and vocational courses. A reasonable level of competence in academic written and spoken English is therefore a requirement - for Sixth Form entry, IELTS overall level of 6 (with a minimum of 5.5 in each element) is preferred - and candidates will undertake an accredited on-line Linguaskill General English Test prior to arrival at the College as well as a full baseline assessment when they arrive to determine their level of English proficiency and to enable the College to plan for their needs. The College reserves the right to insist on students attending EAL lessons if a higher IELTS score is required for them to access university courses or if additional EAL support is required for them to access A level or (i)GCSE teaching. The College will charge EAL fees for this if such support is deemed necessary.

Upon arrival, students will be guided by senior staff regarding the appropriateness of selected courses in the context of their Linguaskill and baseline scores. Subject tutors will be apprised of individual students' English language capabilities in order to inform their planning. A full academic review of performance is provided by half term in the autumn to ensure that access to the curriculum has been established. Further advice and guidance on the suitability of courses will be offered against the backdrop of this data as well as in the context of a review of how EAL support is functioning.

### **Ongoing Support**

Students identified as requiring additional support for English will be identified and timetabling will reflect their needs. Currently, those students in Year 10 and Year 11 have between three and five hours per week allocated for CIE iGCSE English as a Second Language and for general EAL support,

while in the Sixth Form the allocation is four hours weekly. In exceptional cases, students may have as many as seven hours weekly dedicated to English provision. As the College seeks to offer overseas boarders places from Year 9 in September 2024, this allocation will be reviewed in the academic year 2023-2024. Currently, students in Year 10 or Year 11 may follow a bespoke international programme - perhaps a hybrid course or a Year 11 foundation course. However, the College strives to place EAL students into their appropriate year group programme with peers of the same age. Their academic programme may be amended in line with their language needs - Year 11 students may study iGCSE English as a Second Language rather than iGCSE English Language and English Literature; withdrawal from other academic subjects may be required in order to increase exposure to EAL; ancillary EAL provision may be timetabled during supervised study at specific lunchtime periods and/or after the end of the school day - but the focus remains on students attaining access to the full programme of academic of study as soon as is possible.

We strive to set EAL classes by language ability but this is not always possible. However, tuition is in small groups - usually no more than ten students - and is supplemented by one-to-one sessions as appropriate and where it is impossible, due to timetabling or as a result of specific student needs, for a student to fit into sets.

The College does not encourage EAL students, once in situ, to study with an independent English tutor.. Attendance at our EAL classes is mandatory throughout for Lower School students until such time that their English allows them unimpeded access to the whole curriculum; for Sixth Form students who have been assessed as needing support attendance is mandatory until they have secured a 6.5 minimum IELTS score (with a minimum of 5.5 in each element), at which point they will be allowed to focus in this time on preparation for terminal examinations and any outstanding course work. It is important that students regard their EAL support lessons in the same light that they regard other academic lessons: they should be well-prepared, should complete all homework tasks in a timely manner and contribute fully in class. In return, EAL students will receive specialist provision and a structured, topic-based course designed to improve competency in the areas of reading, writing, speaking and listening, as well as developing accuracy in the use of grammar and widening vocabulary. Our coursebooks will provide guidance and practice in answering examination and IELTS questions at different levels, and regular assessment, including detailed written reports, will enable students to have confidence in the level at which they are working as well as a clear understanding of how to access higher band skills.

## **IELTS**

Most of the College's EAL students who aspire to further academic study and university admission, will be guided through the IELTS process by the Department - as such, much of the work of the Department is focused on providing preparation for all sections of this nine band scale assessment. The test results give an overall score - universities will look for at least 6.5 on this measure - and 5.5 in each component scores. With the IELTS examination available on a number of dates throughout the academic year, students have tended to book their own tests at our nearest centres, which are now in [London](#). The Department will explore the option from September 2023 of making group bookings on two occasions annually, so that the majority of our candidates can be catered for at examination level. Students will be welcome to make their own bookings outside of these group slots. It is important students pay attention to IELTS Test Report Form arrivals at the college. The

main address for this is 37 Star Hill ME1 1XF. IELTS preparation classes are offered for more advanced students in the first half of the autumn term and again in the spring term to prepare them for the specific demands of the examination and to offer practice assessments. These fast-track courses will comprise students in Year 12 and Year 13 who have been identified by their specialist teachers as regularly producing work of a standard that demonstrates high proficiency in English across all four IELTS skills.

It is important to stress that EAL provision in the Sixth Form should not merely revolve around students acquiring an IELTS grade that is acceptable to universities. Our programmes of study in the Lower School and Sixth Form are designed to be holistic and to offer social, cultural and pastoral opportunities as well as academic. Regular trips and visits are an integral part of the departmental offer. Students here for two year courses should recognise that our curriculum seeks ongoing stretch and development in all aspects of spoken and written English and enables students to fully access and excel in their programmes of study. Such stretch and development is always reflected upon students' needs and interests.

### **The Department**

Comprising five members of staff, two of whose sole teaching responsibilities are to the Department, the EAL Department is staffed by experienced and well qualified practitioners, most possessing a CELTA diploma or the equivalent as well as Master's degrees. There are two classrooms devoted to EAL teaching and a well resourced area with up to date texts and course books as well as our own teaching materials. Graded readers are available for students to borrow and each student has their workfile stored in Rooms 32 and 42. Schemes of work are in place for each year group, and provision for Year 9 students will be drawn up ahead of the expansion of Boarding in September 2024.

The Head of English currently oversees the work of the Department, while the Vice Principal (Academic) is the broader line manager on all EAL-related matters. In the event of complaints about EAL provision, these should initially be made to the Head of English. If they are not resolved at this level then they should be brought to the attention of Senior Management through the Vice Principal (Academic) in the same way as any other matters of academic concern.

### **Training and Liaison with Academic Departments**

The Department offers academic English support to English as an Additional Language students. These are general academic guidelines EAL specialists put in place for students to succeed academically. There is work being done on more specific academic purposes and these are liaised with Heads of Department. Despite this, the Heads of Department should raise concerns about a student's accessibility to English with EAL specialists in the first instance. Most EAL students will have a plan of action in place for support before beginning their academic timetable; however, some students may not have been diagnosed upon entry and subject teachers should be conscious of those aberrant aspects of reading, writing, speaking and listening in class and through homework that may indicate the need for EAL intervention. The Department enjoys fruitful working relationships with Heads of Department in this respect but is keen to offer a more formal series of training opportunities in the academic year of 2023-2024 to assist colleagues both in the process of understanding EAL needs but also to consider the most effective ways of delivering material to students for whom English is not a first language. The use of subject specific terminology and the

dissemination of conceptualised ideas are both particular challenges to the classroom practitioner in this regard.

### **Fees for EAL Provision**

There is an additional fee for English as an Additional Language/IELTs lessons as set out in this year's fee schedule.

The College reserves the right to insist on students attending EAL lessons if additional EAL support is required for the student to access teaching appropriate to the qualifications they intend to undertake: (i)GCSEs or A levels dependent upon age. This will be determined by an English language assessment undertaken on entry.

For A level students, all those who have not secured an (i)GCSE with a listening or speaking component 5 or C or above in English will undertake an English test on arrival. Should the student be deemed to require additional English lessons in order to access future university courses, the cost of this tuition will be added to that student's fees. In some instances, this may include pupils with an international passport. In such instances, some universities may require an IELTS test certificate upon entry.

### **Welfare of EAL Students**

At RIC up to 60% of our student body is international with students coming from up to 40 different countries to study with us. The decision to leave behind their family and relocate around the world to be educated is a huge one and one that comes with challenges that we as boarding schools should be aware of in order to make this transition as easy as possible. RIC implements many different activities and always provides a listening ear for our students to voice their concerns. This is discussed in lessons in forms of debates and ongoing discussions.

When moving to a new school, international students leave behind their social support networks which can be difficult to re-establish in a new country where there are more social barriers than students are used to. This can be particularly problematic for students moving from different cultures where close relationships are promoted, to a country where we have a more individualistic society. It is our role then to make sure students are supported in re-establishing social support in their new surroundings, both with staff members and more importantly in finding friends. In order to support this, the curriculum for English takes into account topics such as integration, British fundamental values, safeguarding as well as multiculturalism. This is taught alongside introduction to GCSEs and A-level British education.

Making friends in a new school can be intimidating and when there is a language barrier and cultural differences to navigate this task can become even harder. It has been shown that one of the main factors in how quickly students adapt to their new country is how soon they establish a friendship group. Students who find themselves to be the only member of a certain nationality or culture have been shown to make more international friendships and this is facilitated by encouraging them to mix with others in boarding who may share common interests. For those who find they belong to a larger cultural group they find it easier to make connections with others in their group as they will have an understanding of the cultural background and the possibility of a shared first language. This

is not to be discouraged as students must feel settled but it would be advised to help them consider meeting others from outside of this comforting bubble to give them a more varied student experience. The English department has published a dissertation on factors involving English language development and vocabulary acquisition. This is available upon request.

Studies have shown that international students desire contact with home students to enrich their experience of studying in another country. These are the relationships we therefore endeavour to facilitate. In boarding this is done through trips and activities, especially with our boarding induction programme. There are additional induction activities, which take place at the beginning of the academic year with the whole year group.

Research has shown that despite the desire to have contact with home students, international students are often put off from approaching them, as they feel they already have set social groups due to their shared cultural background. What we make apparent to our international students is that a lot of the Rochester cohort each year are new to the college and although they may share a cultural background, they too are in a position of not knowing anyone; and are probably also finding the prospect of meeting new people quite daunting. In order to support students, there is a buddy system in place to make students feel at ease.

It has been shown that sharing accommodation with people from other cultures facilitates social interactions which can be built upon to form the basis of friendship. Students have their own individual bedrooms but the houses are mixed culturally and students can spend time together in the shared communal areas. Organised cultural themed food nights also help to break down some of the barriers that exist between international and British students in boarding. Bonding over food is something common to most cultures and experiencing new things allows for an open mindedness leading to conversation. Food brings people together and has the ability to help international students overcome other stressors in their relocation to a new country.

We are aware of the stresses of moving to a new country to pursue education for our international students. They will be experiencing new culture, new educational experiences, working in a different time zone and navigating making new friendships. All these stressors can have a negative impact on student health and yet international students may be reluctant to step forward and speak to someone about their issues. Barriers to seeking help with health and mental health can be poor and awareness of the support available and how to access it, language barriers and/or the perceived stigma of asking for help and any impact disclosing a problem may have a detrimental effect on academic performance. Therefore, we place great importance on ensuring students know where to turn when they are in need and that a greater understanding of mental health is given to those who may not have been given an understanding of its negative effects prior to their move to the UK.

The boarding team, including our International Coordinator and our Student Services and Pastoral teams operate an open-door policy where students can drop in and talk about any issues they may be facing. If any member of staff is unable to deal with an issue personally, they will pass this to the appropriate member of staff.

The onsite college nurse and nursing assistant work closely with the boarding team and pastoral staff to ensure our students are well cared for and their health needs addressed. We also have close links with the doctor's surgery where our students are registered. Our Personal tutors, House Parents and boarding team work as one to pass messages about student progress and welfare and monitor students' experiences so as to ensure they have the best time possible and gain the most from their experience.

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