



# English as an Additional Language in Primary Schools in 2008

Inspectorate Evaluation Studies

PROMOTING THE QUALITY OF LEARNING

The Inspectorate wishes to thank  
Talbot Senior National School, Bawnogue, Clondalkin, Dublin 22  
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## FOREWORD

This report presents the findings of a thematic evaluation of provision for pupils who are learning English as an additional language (EAL) in Irish primary schools. The evaluation was conducted in 2008 and was intended mainly to inform a Value-for-Money (VFM) review of EAL provision in primary schools that was being undertaken by the Department of Education and Skills. Many of the findings of the Inspectorate evaluation were first published in 2011 as a major section of the report arising from the Department's VFM review, *Language Support for Migrants: a Value-for-money Review of Expenditure on the Education of Migrant Students at Primary and Post-primary Level Who Do Not Speak English (or Irish) as a First Language 2001/02 – 2009/09*. This report provides further data and analysis from the evaluation.

The evaluation was carried out in the course of WSE (whole-school evaluation) inspections in thirty schools from September to December 2008. Inspectors used interviews, questionnaires and focus groups to gather data from principals, members of boards of management, members of in-school management, teachers, pupils and parents. Inspectors also observed teaching and learning in almost 300 mainstream classrooms and 90 support settings. The Inspectorate would like to thank the schools, teachers, parents and pupils who contributed to this research and who shared their professional and personal views and insights.

The increased numbers of EAL pupils in Irish schools over the past decade has challenged our schools to adapt their practices and policies. It has also stimulated policy development at system level. The response of the Department of Education and Skills has included the allocation of additional teachers, funding of various agencies to develop curriculum, resources and materials and the provision of continuing professional development for teachers.

In the period since the Inspectorate's evaluation of EAL and the Department's VFM review were carried out, the Department of Education and Skills and the Office of the Minister for Integration have published the *Intercultural Education Strategy, 2010-2015*. The strategy is about thinking, planning and doing things differently, conscious of diversity and the need to create intercultural learning environments. Resources committed to the strategy include continued funding for EAL in primary and post-primary schools, funding for English classes for adult migrants and the provision of an information portal regarding the educational resources available for newcomers, entitled Accessing Intercultural Materials (AIMS). This portal is for the use of students and their parents as well as educators, researchers and policy makers. It is accessible through the websites of Department of Education and Skills ([www.education.ie](http://www.education.ie)) and the Office for the promotion of Migrant Education ([www.integration.ie](http://www.integration.ie)).

*English as an Additional Language in Primary Schools* affirms the good practice that is widespread in schools and offers recommendations that will help us to respond to the needs of a more diverse and heterogeneous society in the years ahead. The evaluation found that the ethos and climate of the schools evaluated were very supportive of the inclusion of EAL pupils. This is a particularly welcome finding as it is vital to the successful integration of 'newcomer' children into Irish society. There are positive findings also regarding the quality of teaching and learning, especially in the EAL support setting. The evaluation found that there was scope for more effective differentiation of class programmes and lessons for EAL pupils. It found that these pupils would benefit from closer collaboration between mainstream class teachers and EAL support teachers. The report also identifies a need for more effective use of assessment by schools so that they can identify pupil needs accurately, address them effectively and measure progress.

This report provides important insights into how primary schools have responded to the challenges of diversity, inclusion and language teaching. The report complements *Looking at English as an Additional Language: Teaching and Learning in Post-Primary Schools*, which is published separately by the Inspectorate. Along with other reviews of EAL provision undertaken by the OECD and the ESRI, these reports form a substantial contribution to the policy-making process.

# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Increasing diversity in Irish society

During the decade to 2008, Ireland experienced a period of unprecedented economic growth. This was accompanied by a significant increase in the number of migrant workers and their children settling in Ireland. Data (ESRI, 2009) indicate that these newcomers to Ireland come from a range of different countries, and are diverse in terms of nationality, ethnicity, legal status and language skills. A significant number of newcomers are from the eastern European countries that completed their accession to the European Union in 2004.

In three-fifths of schools, the backgrounds and needs of the pupils are much more diverse than ever before. The Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI) reported in 2009 that 60% of primary schools had newcomer pupils enrolled. In one in ten schools, these pupils comprised more than 20% of the school population. They comprised more than 50% of the school population in 2% of schools. This presents challenges for schools that have little experience of managing cultural and linguistic diversity. The ESRI (2009) estimates that approximately 30% of the newcomer pupils enrolling in Irish schools speak English as part of their linguistic repertoire. This report focuses on the remaining 70% and also on pupils born in Ireland (often of newcomer parents) for whom English is not the first language of the home and community. In this report, they are all referred to as 'pupils learning English as an additional language' (EAL pupils). This term acknowledges that these pupils already speak at least one other language and are now acquiring English in an English-speaking environment.

### 1.2 Educational supports for EAL pupils

The Department of Education and Skills<sup>1</sup> established the Refugee Language Support Unit (RLSU) in 1999. Among other tasks, the RLSU was asked to develop English language programmes and materials and to provide training for EAL support teachers and school principals. In 2001 the RLSU became Integrate Ireland Language and Training (IILT).

In 2000 the Department published an *Information booklet for schools on asylum seekers*, giving details of additional teacher allocations to provide language support, and outlining the role of the RLSU in providing resources and training. The booklet offered guidance with regard to the integration of newcomer pupils, making reference to issues such as enrolment, intercultural ethos and education, in-school support structures and curriculum. Additional teaching hours of up to two full teaching posts were allocated for the delivery of EAL support. The EAL support posts allocated to schools were temporary as the numbers of EAL pupils fluctuated from year to year and schools were required to make annual applications for the allocation of teaching hours. Schools that received an EAL support teacher also received Department funding to enable them to purchase

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<sup>1</sup> Formerly the Department of Education and Science and hereinafter the Department

resources and participate in continuous professional development (CPD). Schools that had between three and thirteen non-English speaking pupils were given Department grants to enable them to employ fully-qualified teachers to teach EAL on a part-time basis. Schools with fewer than three EAL pupils were expected to provide for the educational needs of those pupils from within existing school resources. The main objectives of this Department intervention were to enhance the educational provision for non-English speaking pupils, improve their levels of comprehension and literacy and contribute to their social inclusion and participation in Irish society.

The temporary nature of EAL support posts and the difficulties associated with recruiting experienced primary teachers to these positions during the period 2000-2005 were highlighted during a small-scale north-south research project conducted by Yarr and Lazenby-Simpson (SCoTENS, 2005, p.14). They concluded that the uncertain nature of EAL support posts resulted in regular changes of staff that impacted negatively on the consistency and success of the EAL provision. They reported difficulties in planning for EAL in these contexts and they concluded that EAL posts were subsequently held in 'low regard' and managed in an 'ad hoc' way by schools.

In 2007, in response to the significant continuing increase in the numbers of EAL pupils, the Department issued Circular 53/07, *Meeting the needs of pupils for whom English is a second language*. It raised the existing maximum number of teaching posts for EAL support posts to six per school, and provided guidelines on the appropriate use of this greatly increased allocation. The circular emphasised the importance of inclusive practices both in the academic and social areas of school life, and the school's responsibility for using the additional teaching resource in the most effective way for the target pupils. It also made explicit reference to the development of English language proficiency, giving three broad proficiency levels, based on the *English Language Proficiency Benchmarks* developed by IILT.

*Table 1.1 English-language proficiency levels*

Level 1	Level 2	Level 3
Very poor comprehension of English and very limited spoken English	Understands some English and can speak English sufficiently well for basic communication	Has competent communication skills in English

The circular also referred to the assessment kits that IILT was then devising for the initial and ongoing assessment of English language proficiency. It was stated that the additional teaching posts being funded by the Department were intended to address the language needs of pupils who were assessed as having a language proficiency of either level 1 or 2. According to the terms of the circular, these pupils were to receive supports for a period of two years. In special circumstances, the school could make application for continued supports for pupils to access EAL teaching after the two-year period.

In the context of the Department of Finance budget for 2009, Circular 53/07 was superseded by Circular 15/09 *Meeting the needs of pupils learning English as an additional language (EAL)*. The circular reduced the allocation of EAL support posts, while reiterating the inclusive principles of 53/07. The circular included the following table, linking the proficiency levels given in 53/07 with the levels used in the IILT *Primary Schools Assessment Kit*.



Table 1.2 English-language proficiency levels used in Primary Assessment Kit

Levels used in primary assessment kit			
Level 0	Level A1	Level A2	Level B1
Absence of any English language proficiency	Can understand and use basic words and phrases in a social and school context	Can understand, read and write simple English and can speak English sufficiently well to exchange information	Can function well enough in English to be fully integrated into the mainstream classroom
Proficiency levels used prior to publication of the primary assessment kit			
Level 1		Level 2	Level 3
Very poor comprehension of English and very limited spoken English		Understands some English and can speak English sufficiently well for basic communication	Has competent communication skills in English

Circular 15/09 placed an increased emphasis on the use by schools of the *Primary Schools Assessment Kit* and the maintenance of school records concerning the language proficiency levels of EAL pupils. The circular required schools to direct EAL support principally to pupils who had not achieved Level B1. Support was to encompass all four language skills: listening, speaking, reading and writing.

The numbers of EAL pupils in primary schools and the allocation of EAL support teachers had increased significantly between 2001 and 2009. There were seventy EAL support teachers in primary schools in 2001 and this number had grown to 826 teachers by 2005/2006. Following the additional allocations granted in 2007 this figure had further increased to 2,192 EAL support teachers in primary schools. By 2009, about 34% of primary schools had sought language support. Of the schools to which support had been allocated, 39% did not have a full teaching post, over a third had one or two EAL support posts and just under a quarter had three or more posts (Department of Education and Skills, 2011). The ESRI calculated that in the school year 2007/8 approximately 44,000 newcomer pupils were enrolled in Irish primary schools. As a direct consequence of circular 15/09, it is estimated that the number of EAL teachers working in primary schools was reduced from 2,100 in 2009 to approximately 1,500 in 2010.

As well as dealing with the allocation of resources to schools, Circular 53/07 and Circular 15/09 also set out key pedagogical principles of EAL teaching and learning. These principles informed the evaluation criteria used by inspectors during the evaluations on which this report is based. These evaluation criteria are presented at the beginning of each relevant subsection in chapters four and five. Both circulars are reproduced in full in the appendices to this report.

In December 2011 there were further reforms to how EAL support posts would be allocated to schools. It was decided that, with effect from September 2012, every primary school would get a general allocation of support-teaching posts/hours to cater for both EAL pupils and pupils with learning difficulties or high-incidence special needs. The allocation would be based on the number of mainstream teaching posts in the school. Schools were to have autonomy on how to deploy the teachers in these posts

between language support and learning support. It was announced that there would be additional support for schools with high concentrations of EAL pupils.

### **1.3 Language in the *Primary School Curriculum***

While most Irish primary schools and teachers had little experience until recently of providing for EAL, it is of benefit that the curriculum for these schools places a strong focus on language in general, and oral-language development in particular. One of the principles of the *Primary School Curriculum* (1999) is that language is central to the learning process (Department of Education and Science, 1999, Introduction, p.4) and to a child's emotional and social development. It is acknowledged that oral-language activities should be used as a teaching strategy in every area of the curriculum.

Language helps the child to clarify and interpret experience, to acquire new concepts and to add depth to concepts already grasped. In view of this crucial relationship between language and learning the curriculum incorporates the use of talk and discussion as a central learning strategy in every curriculum area. This facilitates the exploration of ideas, emotions and reactions through increasing complex language, thus deepening the child's understanding of the world.

(Department of Education and Science, 1999, Introduction, p.15)

The *Primary School Curriculum* recognises that children learn language but that they also learn through language. The development of social language and language that facilitates learning are important elements of the teaching approaches promoted. Specifically, oral language is accorded particular importance in the curriculum as it is a "crucial factor in the development of the child's cognitive abilities and it facilitates the acquisition of social and communicative skills" (Introduction, p.45). The English curriculum is structured so that pupils develop both receptive and expressive language skills. The higher-order thinking skills of developing cognitive abilities through language and developing emotional and imaginative responses through language are equally emphasised.

In the *Primary School Curriculum*, the curricular area of Language comprises English and Irish. Most primary school children learn both languages and this experience is intended to "extend the child's linguistic experience and deepen cultural awareness" (Introduction, p.27). The curriculum recognises that schools in which English is the first language (L1) of the school and the principal medium of instruction usually cater for pupils whose mother-tongue is English. In these contexts Irish is the second language (L2) of the pupils. In Gaelscoileanna and schools in the Gaeltacht, Irish may or may not be the language of the home but is used as the medium of instruction and therefore is the first language (L1) of the school. English in these contexts is taught as the second language (L2) of the pupils.

The *Primary School Curriculum* also refers to the fact that pupils' linguistic and cultural awareness is enhanced through their experience of learning a foreign language through the Modern Languages in Primary Schools initiative. However, as the curriculum was devised prior to the significant increase in the number of EAL pupils enrolling in primary schools, it does not include a specific programme for EAL.



## **1.4 Resources to support EAL provision**

### **1.4.1. Integrate Ireland Language and Training (1999 – 2008)**

Between 1999 and 2008, the RLSU/IILT devised and made available a range of resources for use in primary schools. It developed *English Language Proficiency Benchmarks* in 2000 (revised in 2003) together with a version of the European Language Portfolio. These were framed within the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) for languages.

In 2006, IILT published *Up and Away: A resource book for English language support in primary schools*. This resource incorporated the curriculum framework for language support specified in the *English Language Proficiency Benchmarks* and outlined 13 units of work. Additional materials were provided to assist teachers in the observation of EAL pupils in the mainstream class and included advice on the silent phase and facilitating language instruction in the four skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing). These materials were available to teachers through the IILT website and were provided at professional development events.

Continuous professional development was provided to schools on a limited scale by IILT until 2008. This in-service focused on those teachers working in EAL support roles, many of whom held temporary posts. Professional development courses were not available to mainstream class teachers. In 2005 it was estimated that 400 primary teachers had completed professional development courses provided by IILT. Many of the teachers working in EAL support roles left these posts in order to take up permanent teaching positions in mainstream class settings. As new teachers were appointed to the vacated EAL support posts, the demand for professional development courses continued to grow.

In 2008, the IILT's role in curriculum development and resource development was taken up by the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA). A range of IILT-developed resources is available on the NCCA web site. These and other materials regarding intercultural education are available in a repository of information and resources in the 'parent and community' area of the Department of Education and Skills website under the heading 'Accessing Intercultural Materials' (AIMs).

### **1.4.2 National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA)**

The NCCA published *Intercultural Education in the Primary School: Guidelines for Schools* in 2005. These guidelines are designed to contribute to the "development of Ireland as an intercultural society based on a shared sense that language, culture and ethnic diversity is valuable" and to enable pupils to develop a "shared ability and sense of responsibility to protect for each other the right to be different and to live free from discrimination" (NCCA, 2005, p.5). The guidelines provide advice on school planning, classroom planning, teaching approaches and methodologies, assessment, and language and interculturalism. They also include useful material on supporting the learning of EAL in the mainstream classroom (p164).

*English as an Additional Language in Irish Primary Schools: Guidelines for Teachers* was published by the NCCA in 2006. The guidelines were significant in that they acknowledged that in learning English and Irish, the pupil would build on the language and literacy skills that he/she had attained in the home language. The publication acknowledges that the literacy skills learned already in the home language will be transferable to learning English. The following recommendation is made.

Children's first languages continue to be important in their linguistic, social, and cognitive development. Therefore it is important that the school would use every opportunity to respect the children's native languages and encourage continued development of these languages, where possible. (NCCA, 2006: 165).

The *Guidelines* provide an overview of language learning, describe how school and classroom planning can support the needs of the child for whom English is an additional language and outline different teaching methods for developing children's language learning and for monitoring the child's progress in mainstream settings. The guidelines were disseminated to schools but were not accompanied by a national inservice programme.

### **1.4.3 Support services**

All primary teachers received considerable supports during the initial implementation phase of the *Primary School Curriculum*. They received ongoing supports in relation to the teaching of English and Irish from 1999 – 2008. Specific programmes to assist language learning and improve literacy were also introduced into some schools through Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS), a Department initiative aimed at alleviating the effects of educational disadvantage. When IILT ceased to operate in 2008, its role in providing professional development supports for primary teachers in the sector was taken over by the EAL team from the Primary Professional Development Service (PPDS) in the academic year 2008/2009.

Seminars that were provided for EAL support teachers addressed issues such as language acquisition, effective EAL teaching, the use of the English Language Proficiency Benchmarks, planning, team teaching and assessment. There were separate seminars for school principals, which explored the role of the principal in areas such as planning and staff development. The materials used in the professional development programmes and other useful resources are available at [www.ppds.ie](http://www.ppds.ie).

### **1.4.4 Teacher education providers**

In 2007 Coláiste Mhuire, Marino developed on-line professional development courses for primary teachers on teaching English as an additional language. These courses were offered to primary teachers as part of the Irish National Teachers' Organisation (INTO) summer course programme of that year. It was also offered in the summer of 2008 and in 2009 as a component of Coláiste Mhuire's suite of courses. An eight-module autumn

course, 'Introduction to teaching English as an additional language', was also offered in 2007 and 2008, in association with the INTO. To date, in the region of 1,600 teachers have participated in the course.

## **1.5 Summary**

The education of children who are learning English as an additional language is a new challenge within Irish primary education. The Department of Education and Skills has responded to this challenge in three ways: it has allocated additional teachers to provide supplementary teaching for EAL pupils; it has funded a range of agencies to develop the curriculum, resources and materials to support teaching and learning; and it has provided continuing professional development for teachers in a systematic way through the PDST and through its support of summer in-service programmes. Department policy on provision for EAL pupils has been further developed through the experience of these initiatives. The *Primary School Curriculum* provides sound theoretical principles to inform language teaching. The *English Language Proficiency Benchmarks* provide a framework specifically designed for EAL pupils and are informed by international research and best practice emanating from provision in similar education systems. These developments provide the foundation for comprehensive provision for EAL pupils.

## CHAPTER 2

# EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

### 2.1 Scope of the evaluation

In the late 1990s and the early 2000s, whole-school evaluations (WSE) conducted by the Inspectorate in primary schools looked at provision for EAL pupils as part of the evaluation of support for pupils generally. In 2007, the Department identified EAL provision as an area for more focused evaluation, and the Inspectorate began planning and preparatory work for a national evaluation of EAL provision in both primary and post-primary schools. At the same time, the Department's Integration Unit commissioned *Language Support for Migrants: a Value-for-money Review of Expenditure on the Education of Migrant Students at Primary and Post-primary Level Who Do Not Speak English (or Irish) as a First Language 2001/02 – 2009/10*. A number of agencies, including the ESRI, also conducted research in this area. However, the Inspectorate was in the unique position of being able to observe and evaluate the learning experiences of EAL pupils in the classroom and in support settings.

This report is based on an evaluation that the Inspectorate carried out in thirty primary schools. The Inspectorate has also carried out an evaluation of EAL provision in fifteen post-primary schools. The report on the post-primary evaluation is being published separately.

The evaluation of provision for EAL pupils in a sample of primary schools was undertaken as part of whole-school evaluations (WSE) that were being conducted in these schools. The procedures developed for this evaluation were based on the established WSE processes that are published in *A Guide to Whole-School Evaluation in Primary Schools* (Department of Education and Science, 2006). In order to gather additional information in relation to the provision for EAL pupils, supplementary questions and emphases were included in the WSE schedules and instruments used. The evaluation instruments and procedures were piloted in two schools in 2008 and subsequently amended in the light of this experience. The evaluations on which this report is based were conducted between September and December 2008.

### 2.2 Evaluation objectives

The purposes of the evaluation were to

- evaluate the quality of teaching and learning of EAL in mainstream classes and in support settings
- evaluate the quality of whole-school planning for the inclusion of EAL pupils and review the extent to which this planning reflects principles of inclusion and respect for cultural diversity
- review the progress that EAL pupils are making in oracy, literacy and numeracy
- establish the views of EAL pupils and their parents regarding their inclusion in the life of the school and the education provided
- ascertain the impact of the training and supports that teachers have acquired in preparation for teaching these pupils
- contribute to policy making at system level in respect of EAL provision in schools

## 2.3 Methodology

Inspection teams gathered data through the use of a range of approaches, including questionnaires, interviews, document review, focus groups, meetings with school personnel and observation of teaching and learning. The following table provides an overview of the data base for this evaluation.

*Table 2.1: Data generated for the evaluation of EAL provision in primary schools*

<b>Data base for the EAL evaluation</b>	
Number of primary schools evaluated	30
Number of mainstream class settings evaluated	394
Number of EAL support settings evaluated	90
Number of interviews conducted with	
• <i>boards of management</i>	30
• <i>parents' associations</i>	30
• <i>Principals</i>	30
• <i>focus groups of pupils</i>	24
• <i>interviews with in-school management teams</i>	30
Questionnaires (completed)	
• <i>Senior pupils (EAL and native pupils)</i>	981
• <i>Parents (parents of EAL pupils and native pupils)</i>	1365

All schedules and questionnaires were returned to the Evaluation Support and Research Unit of the Inspectorate for analysis and formed the main evidence base for this report. Additional information on each method used to generate data is outlined below.

### (a) School information form

Prior to the in-school evaluation all principals completed a school-information form, which included specific questions on provision for EAL in the school. Information was sought regarding enrolment procedures, assessment, attendance, parental involvement, the nationalities of pupils, languages spoken, specific posts assigned to teachers to co-ordinate EAL and pupils' learning outcomes. Several sections of this form required principals and school personnel to self-evaluate the quality of provision for EAL pupils in their school.

### (b) Questionnaires

Questionnaires were administered by class teachers to the pupils in a senior class at the start of the in-school evaluation phase. The parents of these pupils also completed questionnaires. The questionnaires focused on whole-school issues such as school climate, management of the school, feelings of safety and security, opportunities to engage in curricular activities, relationships with school personnel and other students.

To assist parents in completing the questionnaire, the document was translated into a range of languages. A list of the languages used is provided in an appendix to this report. Table 2.2 presents data regarding the place of English in the language repertoire of parents who completed questionnaires.

*Table 2.2: Parents who completed questionnaires: country of birth and the place of English in their language repertoire*

Total number of parents who completed questionnaires	1365
% of parents who were born in Ireland and whose first language is English	63%
% of parents who were born outside of Ireland and whose first language is English	15%
% of parents who were born outside of Ireland and whose first language is not English	20%
% of parents born in Ireland and whose first language is not English	2%

A total of 981 pupils completed questionnaires in the senior classes in 24 schools (the pupils in five junior schools in the sample did not complete questionnaires and questionnaires were not returned in the case of one senior school). The following table presents data regarding the place of English in the language repertoire of the pupils who completed questionnaires.

*Table 2.3: Pupils who completed questionnaires: country of birth and the place of English in their language repertoire*

Total number of pupils who completed questionnaires	981
% of pupils who were born in Ireland and whose first language is English	75%
% of pupils who were born outside of Ireland and whose first language is English	10%
% of pupils who were born in Ireland and whose first language is not English	<1%
% of pupils who were born outside of Ireland and whose first language is not English	14%

**(c) Focus group of pupils**

A focus group was convened with a sample of EAL pupils in a senior class during the in-school evaluation phase. A member of the school staff was present at each of these meetings. The focus group provided an opportunity for the reporting inspectors to engage with EAL pupils to establish their experiences in school. Focus groups were convened in 25 schools.

**(d) Interviews with school personnel**

As part of each whole-school evaluation, interviews were held with the board of management, the principal, representatives of the parents' association, the in-school management team and members of the support team.



**(e) Classroom observation**

A total of 394 mainstream classroom settings were evaluated. This number includes three EAL teachers who were assigned to work in a mainstream context. Inspectors observed an English lesson and a Mathematics lesson in each classroom. They also observed the teaching of 90 full-time EAL support teachers and three shared/part-time EAL teachers.

Each mainstream classroom visit lasted 1.5 hours and each inspection visit to EAL support settings lasted two hours. The inspectors gathered information on various aspects of practice, including the learning environment, the range of teaching approaches employed and differentiation. They reviewed a variety of documents, including class teachers' curriculum plans, pupils' work and records of pupils' progress.

**(f) Review of pupils' learning**

Inspectors interacted with pupils in classrooms, asked questions and listened to pupils as they discussed elements of their work in English and Mathematics. Samples of pupils' work were evaluated at each class level. Inspectors also examined progress reports and the results of formative and summative assessment

**2.4 School report**

Following each whole-school evaluation, the inspector(s) prepared an evaluation report that identified the individual school's strengths and areas for improvement. The whole-school evaluation reports were structured under the following headings:

- The quality of school management
- The quality of planning (whole-school planning and classroom planning)
- The quality of teaching and learning
- The quality of supports for students

Each report was discussed with the teaching staff and board of management of the school concerned prior to publication. The school was provided with opportunities to respond to the report, orally and in writing. The school reports are available on the Department website at [www.education.ie](http://www.education.ie).

**2.5 Evaluative terms used in this report**

The following qualitative terms are used in the report. These derive from the quality continuum that informs all Inspectorate evaluations. The quality continuum is set out in *Looking at our School: An Aid to Self-Evaluation in Primary Schools*, which is available in the Inspectorate section of the Department web site [www.education.ie](http://www.education.ie).

*Table 2.4: Qualitative terms used in this report*

Qualitative term	Approximate operational level	Other terms used
Very good	Significant strengths	Very good; highly commendable; of a very high quality; highly effective; very successful; few areas for improvement
Good	Strengths outweigh weaknesses (more strengths than weaknesses)	Good; effective practice; good quality; valuable; competent; fully appropriate provision but some areas impacting on student learning require improvement
Fair	Weaknesses outweigh strengths (more weaknesses than strengths)	Scope for further development; fair; provision has evident weaknesses impacting on student learning
Weak	Significant weaknesses (uniformly weak)	Poor; unsatisfactory; insufficient; ineffective; requiring significant change, development or improvement to improve student learning; experiencing significant difficulties

The following quantitative terms are used in this report.

*Table 2.5: Quantitative terms used in this report*

Quantitative term	Approximate percentage of occurrence
Almost all	More than 90%
Most	75-90%
Majority	50-74%
Less than half / A significant minority	25-49%
A small number / less than a quarter	16-24%
A few	Up to 15%

## **2.6 Structure of the remaining chapters**

Chapter three of this report provides contextual information about the schools, teachers and EAL pupils that participated in the evaluation. Chapter four presents inspectors' findings regarding the management of different aspects of EAL provision. Chapter five presents findings regarding teaching, learning and assessment. The views of parents, pupils and school personnel are also included in these chapters. Finally, chapter six presents a summary of the main findings and recommendations.

# CHAPTER 3

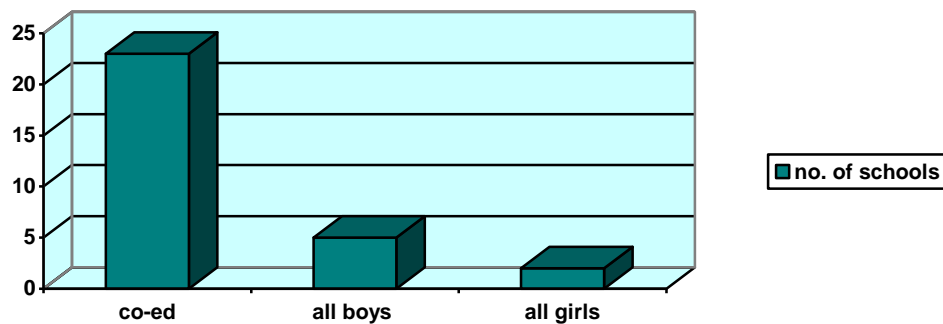
## THE SCHOOLS EVALUATED AND THEIR EAL PUPILS

### 3.1 Contexts of the schools evaluated

The thirty primary schools selected were schools that had a significant enrolment of EAL pupils and were already scheduled to have a whole-school evaluation. The schools were all located in urban areas or large provincial towns. The majority of the schools were under the patronage of a religious denomination. Two schools in the sample were multi-denominational, under the patronage of Educate Together.

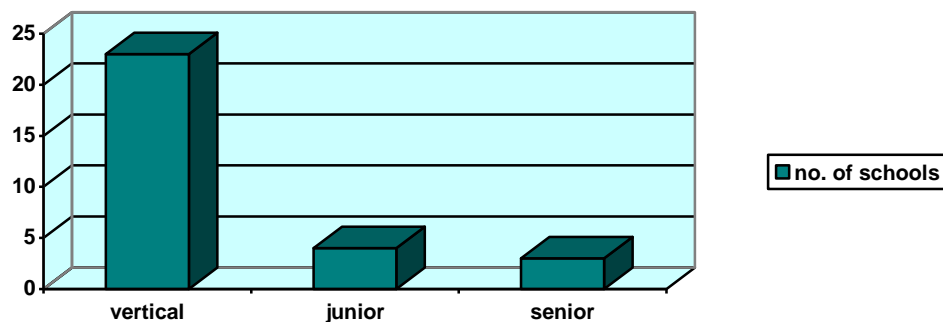
Figure 3.1 shows the number of co-educational, all-boys and all-girls schools evaluated. Two of the co-educational schools were co-educational for the infant and junior classes only, with just girls enrolled from second to sixth classes.

Figure 3.1: Number of co-educational, all-boys and all-girls schools in the sample



Some of the schools in the sample were what is known as 'vertical schools', providing a programme for pupils from junior infants to sixth class. Others catered specifically for either junior or senior classes. Figure 3.2 shows the number of each type of school in the sample.

Figure 3.2: Number of vertical, junior and senior schools in the sample



Educational disadvantage was recognised as a significant factor in eight schools in the sample. Four schools were participating in DEIS. A further four schools had received supports from earlier Department programmes aimed at alleviating educational

disadvantage. In three of these eight schools, EAL pupils comprised between 36% and 69% of the total enrolment. In two of these schools EAL pupils comprised a percentage of total enrolment that was below the average for the schools evaluated.

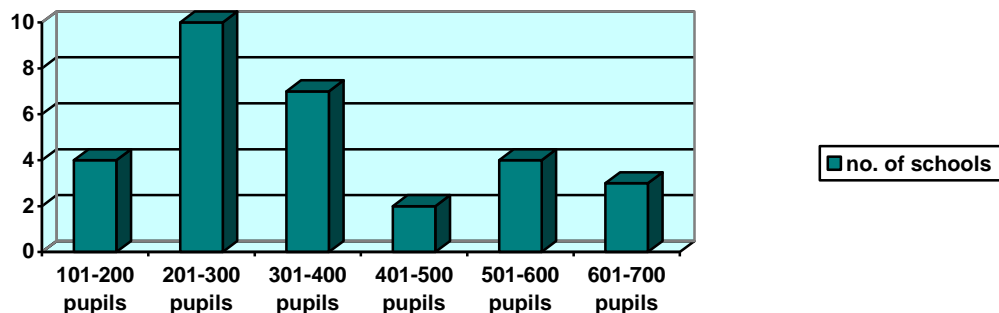
### 3.2 EAL support teachers

Almost all of the primary schools in the sample had access to full-time EAL support teachers. Only one school shared its EAL support teachers with other schools. There was an average of three EAL support teachers in the schools evaluated. However, three schools had six posts. EAL support teachers varied significantly in terms of their classroom experience. The average number of years for which they had been teaching was fourteen. However, some were recently qualified teachers with only one year's experience while others had extensive teaching experience in mainstream class settings. Most of the EAL support teachers had less than two years' experience in the EAL role.

### 3.3 Size of schools and number of EAL pupils

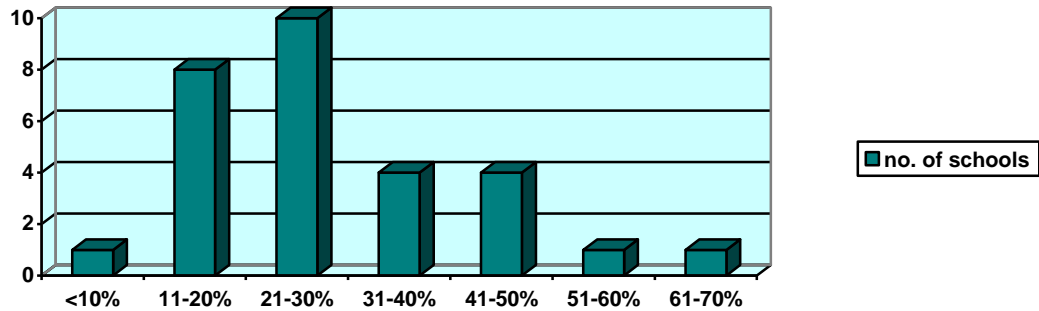
There were 10,684 pupils enrolled in the 30 schools. There were 2968 EAL pupils, comprising almost 28% of the total enrolment. In individual schools, EAL pupils as a percentage of total school population ranged from 8% to 69%. Figure 3.3 shows the number of schools in each size category.

Figure 3.3: Number of schools in each size category



In almost two thirds of the schools evaluated, EAL pupils comprised less than 28% of the total school population. In two schools the majority of the school population were EAL pupils. This is illustrated in figure 3.4.

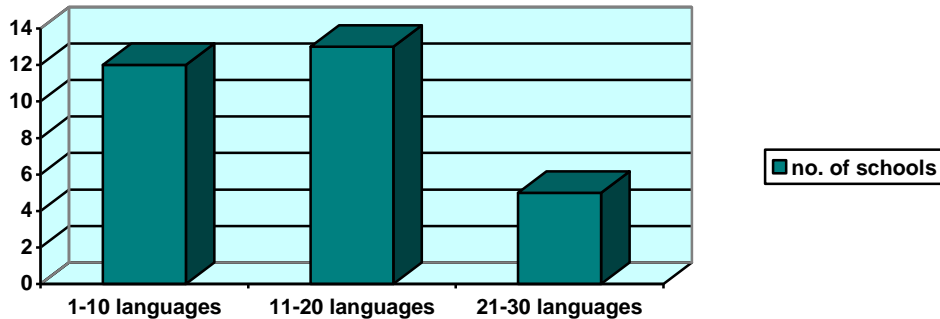
Figure 3.4: EAL pupils as a % of total enrolment



### 3.4 Home languages of EAL pupils

In the schools evaluated, seventy-nine different home languages were spoken by the EAL pupils. On average, there were fourteen different home languages in each school. However, the number of languages spoken in each school varied from five to thirty. Almost one quarter of EAL pupils spoke an African language and almost one fifth of EAL pupils spoke Polish. A smaller number of pupils spoke Lithuanian, Filipino and Arabic. Figure 3.3 outlines the range of languages spoken.

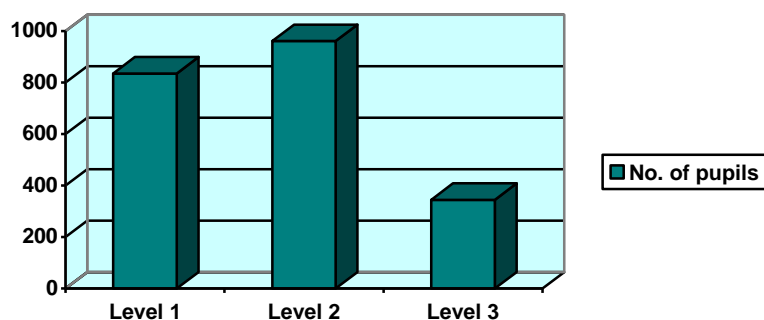
Figure 3.5: Number of home languages spoken by EAL pupils in the schools evaluated.



### 3.5 EAL pupils and language support

Principal teachers were asked to state the numbers of EAL pupils at each of the three levels of need described in Circular 53/07. Data were returned on approximately two-thirds of the EAL pupils in the schools evaluated. The levels reported by the schools are shown in Figure 3.6 below.

Figure 3.6: Number of EAL students at each level of English-language proficiency, as reported by schools



The percentage of EAL pupils who were not receiving language support varied from 1% of the EAL population in one school to 43% in another. In most of the cases in which EAL pupils were not receiving support from the EAL teacher, this was because their language proficiency was considered by the school to be good enough to enable the pupils to participate fully in their mainstream class. A small number of principal teachers reported that some pupils did not receive support because the school's allocation of support teachers was insufficient to meet the needs of the school population.

### 3.6 Summary

EAL pupils in primary schools are not a homogeneous group. When they enrol in Irish primary schools, these pupils may speak a range of home languages and may have varying experiences of schooling in their first language. The age at which EAL pupils enter the education system varies. They come to schools with different literacy levels, knowledge and skills. Most EAL pupils have different cultural and social experiences to pupils born in Ireland. Their understanding and expectation of school and of education are shaped by their cultural backgrounds. Many parents of EAL pupils will be in a position to provide support for learning and language development at home and at school. Other parents may not be able to provide this assistance to their children. About two-thirds of EAL pupils will require intensive supports in learning English. They receive these supports from teachers with a range of teaching experience and qualifications.

In the majority of schools evaluated, EAL pupils comprised less than one-third of the total pupil population. However, there is evidence that there are high concentrations of EAL pupils in some schools serving disadvantaged areas. This finding is supported by the research conducted on EAL pupils by the ESRI (2009) and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 2009).



## CHAPTER 4

# THE MANAGEMENT OF PROVISION FOR ENGLISH AS AN ADDITIONAL LANGUAGE

### 4.1 Introduction

Managing the provision of English as an additional language in primary schools is a relatively new challenge for boards of management, principals and members of in-school management teams. It involves recruiting and allocating suitably qualified teachers to EAL teaching posts, co-ordinating supports within schools and providing suitable accommodation and resources for teaching and learning. Part of the management task is to ensure that teachers access relevant teaching materials and continuous professional development and that parents are fully informed about the provision for their children. It also involves principals and teachers in supporting pupils who are unfamiliar with the school community and its culture and who have to learn about the school's routines and practices while also learning English for the first time.

This chapter presents findings regarding the quality of school management in terms of

- the characteristic spirit of the school
- the work of the board of management in
  - managing staff
  - managing the professional development of staff
  - managing resources and accommodation,
  - managing communication with parents
  - managing pupils
  - managing enrolment procedures
  - managing the age-appropriate placement of pupils
- the work of the principal and the in-school management team
- managing whole-school planning for EAL pupils
- managing curricular planning for EAL pupils and language across the curriculum

In this chapter and chapter five, the evaluation criteria used by inspectors in the schools evaluated are presented at the beginning of each relevant subsection. The criteria are intended to assist in the interpretation of the findings and also to highlight the elements of good practice that should underpin provision for EAL pupils. Exemplars of good practice, as observed and described by inspectors, are also given in some cases.

## 4.2 Characteristic spirit of the school: school ethos

### Evaluation criteria

School ethos is considered to be very good when the following features are present.

- The school creates a positive ethos that actively reflects, values and affirms linguistic, ethnic and cultural diversity.
- A culture of mutual respect for learners, staff and the wider community is promoted.
- Multilingual welcome signs are prominently displayed in the school's reception areas.
- Pupils are encouraged and facilitated in maintaining a connection with their own culture and language through curricular activities and displays.
- Racism is actively addressed and challenged.

The school ethos, character and spirit play a key role in determining the extent to which children feel a valued member of the school community. 96% of schools evaluated had devised mission statements that clearly articulated the philosophy of the school and that succeeded in establishing a strong sense of purpose among the members of the school community. These statements reflected a respect for diversity and inclusion and the schools' openness to enrolling pupils from a wide range of religions, backgrounds and nationalities while endeavouring to maintain and nurture each school's unique characteristic spirit. In many schools the open, welcoming ethos was evident in the multi-lingual displays in corridors, classrooms and shared areas. The characteristic spirit of the schools was evident in the respectful manner in which the members of the school community related to each other and in the good quality relationships that EAL pupils had with other pupils, the staff and the rest of the school community.

85% of principals stated that their school affirmed and valued EAL pupils' home languages. Evidence of this support for linguistic diversity included the use of greetings and other words from the EAL pupils' home languages in the classrooms and the celebration, during intercultural week, of the diversity of languages spoken by EAL pupils. Some schools encouraged EAL pupils to translate messages for other pupils and established a peer 'buddy system' where pupils who spoke the same language as a new EAL pupil helped to include the new pupil in activities and introduced him/her to the routines of the school. School personnel observed that EAL pupils spoke their home language in the school yard but that this was not a barrier to their socialisation with other pupils through English or their integration into the school. However, it is not clear whether pupils were encouraged to speak their first language with their peers during mainstream class activities. A small number of inspectors noted that schools did not promote the use of the home language as an important aspect of the child's linguistic development.

The responses of pupils and parents to questionnaires indicate that the schools evaluated were successful in creating a positive school climate characterised by openness and concern for all pupils. Almost all pupils stated that they felt safe and well cared for in their schools. This finding is also reflected in the parents' views. Almost all parents strongly agreed or agreed that the staff of their school showed concern and care for the welfare of the pupils.

***Exemplar of good practice taken from an inspection report on an infant school***

This school has a very positive atmosphere. Pupils are regularly affirmed for their participation in school life and for their efforts and achievements. All pupils, whatever their language, culture or country of origin, are treated equally. Multilingual welcome notices are prominently displayed in the school's reception area and pupils are encouraged and supported in maintaining links with their own culture. The school's mission statement asserts that the school strives to provide a well ordered, caring, happy and secure atmosphere.

***Exemplar of good practice taken from an inspection report on a vertical school***

The school's ethos is communicated to all parents through its intercultural and enrolment policies. Religious celebrations and events form an important part of the life of the school. The school's aim is to promote the full personal and social development of its pupils. The success of the school in achieving this aim is evidenced through the wide range of activities available to all pupils at the school. Pupils from 32 different nationalities currently attend the school. Pupils who are multilingual are valued as important members of a diverse and inclusive school community. The school celebrates the richness and diversity of the school community through its international day and displays around the school.

### **4.3 Management of EAL pupils**

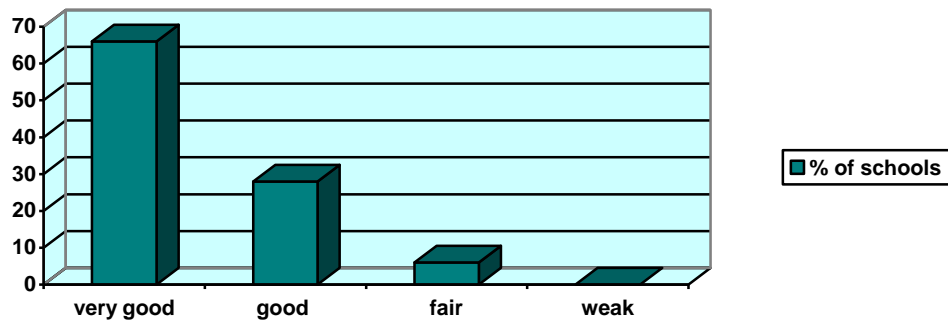
**Evaluation criteria**

Management of EAL pupils is considered to be very good when the following features are present.

- EAL pupils are valued members of the school community and are treated with equality, fairness and respect.
- The pastoral needs of the pupils, including those pupils with specific learning, emotional or social needs are managed very effectively and pupils' holistic development is nurtured.
- EAL pupils are eager and motivated in their learning.
- Pupils co-operate fully with the school's rules, code of behaviour and initiatives to prevent bullying.
- Pupils demonstrate high levels of confidence and self-esteem.
- Pupils participate enthusiastically in curricular and extra-curricular activities.

The management of EAL pupils and their involvement and engagement in the life of the school were considered good or very good in 94% of schools. Inspectors commented on positive classroom atmospheres and they noted that pupils were motivated and engaged. Pupils and teachers were respectful of each other and pupils were observed to offer their full co-operation to teachers, visitors and support staff. Inspectors commented on the very good routines and structures in place in schools and the careful supervision and monitoring of pupils during the evaluations. The inspectors' judgements in this area are illustrated in figure 4.1.

Figure 4.1: Management of EAL pupils' engagement in the life of the school



School assemblies were used to celebrate diversity, affirm progress and give pupils an opportunity to display their work. Many schools had invested considerable energy into Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE). As a result, most pupils were confident and highly engaged. In most schools, pastoral-care duties were included among the responsibilities of the in-school management team. Pupils participated enthusiastically in curricular and extracurricular activities.

Parents' and pupils' views, as recorded in questionnaires, support the overall findings of the inspectors' evaluations. Over 98% of parents strongly agreed or agreed that there was respect between teachers and pupils in the school. The majority of pupils knew a teacher that they could talk to in their school if they had a problem. A slightly lower number of pupils (81%) stated that they liked to talk to their teachers. Almost all (99%) parents considered that their school encouraged the pupils to behave well.

#### 4.4 The work of the board of management in managing provision for EAL pupils

##### Evaluation criteria

The work of the board is considered to be very good when the following features are present.

- The board of management's role in managing provision for EAL reflects the principles of equality, diversity and inclusion.
- The board of management monitors the quality of EAL teaching and learning.

EAL pupils are entitled to a range of high-quality teaching and learning experiences, irrespective of their social background, culture, race, gender, or level of ability. The responsibility for this provision rests with the board of management. This evaluation found that the majority of boards of management (83%) managed the provision for EAL pupils effectively. One-third of boards had very good practice in this area. The boards of management discussed issues in relation to the enrolment of EAL pupils and made decisions about staff deployment and the provision of accommodation and resources.

Figure 4.2: The work of the board of management in managing the provision for EAL pupils



76% of boards discussed or were aware of the educational provision for EAL pupils. The boards of management were knowledgeable about the organisation of supports for EAL pupils and about the initiatives and strategies that were being undertaken in the school to improve teaching and learning. They were aware of the educational achievements of EAL pupils. Effective boards of management reviewed the models of provision in their schools at regular intervals. The majority of boards funded the continuous professional development of staff.

School self-evaluation and review processes rarely engaged with the views of the board of management about provision in the school. Where weak practice was found, boards of management were generally unaware of standards in literacy and numeracy in their schools and had no overview of how the EAL pupils were progressing in these contexts. It is essential that boards of management be aware of their obligations and responsibilities under the Education Act 1998 in terms of monitoring the provision and outcomes for pupils in their schools.

## 4.5 Managing enrolment procedures

### Evaluation criteria

Enrolment procedures are considered to be very good when the following features are present.

- There are clear and transparent arrangements in place for the admission, enrolment and induction of EAL pupils in the school.
- Policies on transition to post-primary school are in place and are highly supportive of EAL pupils.
- Initial meetings are held with parents prior to pupils' enrolment in order to inform parents with regard to school routines, rules and procedures, curriculum content, school holidays, events and activities.

The majority of boards had discussed and responded to the increasing diversity of the pupil population and the issues regarding staff and accommodation that arise from enrolling EAL pupils. As a result, one-quarter (26%) of schools had revised their enrolment policy. In the majority of schools (63%) the principal was responsible for

enrolling EAL pupils, in line with the schools' policies on enrolment. In these schools the principal met with the parents and the EAL pupil to discuss the enrolment form, and provided parents with information on book lists, uniform, code of behaviour, school rules, and key school policies. In a number of schools, the language-support teacher and the deputy principal, together with the principal, met the family on enrolment day and explained the nature of the supports that were available to the child in the school. In a significant minority of schools, interpreters were provided to facilitate enrolment meetings.

Where effective practice was in evidence, boards of management had considered the induction of EAL pupils into the school and had developed procedures for the transition of pupils from junior to senior schools or from primary schools to post-primary schools.

One primary school had established a specific club to support EAL pupils. The club enabled parents to establish close ties with the school and to identify and resolve any issues or difficulties that their children were experiencing in the early phase of their schooling. This school also had established another club to provide opportunities for EAL pupils to converse in their home languages.

#### **4.6 Managing the age-appropriate placement of pupils**

##### **Evaluation criteria**

Placement is considered to be very good when

- Pupils are enrolled in age-appropriate settings and a range of differentiated supports is provided for the social and cognitive development of the EAL pupils.

In 93% of schools, inspectors found that EAL pupils were placed in age-appropriate settings. In two schools, pupils were enrolled in classes not suitable for their age. The enrolment of children in age-appropriate settings is necessary to provide for the cognitive and social development of pupils and to ensure that they experience challenge in their learning experiences.

Principals reported that age-appropriate placement of pupils was sometimes complicated by various factors such as different practices in school attendance and enrolment in the pupils' countries of origin. School principals reported that many parents of EAL pupils did not provide school personnel with documentation relating to their children's previous schooling or educational experiences. Most schools depended on the oral information that parents provided regarding previous educational experiences.



## 4.7 The principal's role in managing educational provision for EAL pupils

### Evaluation criteria

The principal's work is considered to be very good when the following features are present.

- The principal leads and manages the whole-school provision for EAL pupils.
- The principal has a deep understanding of EAL pupils, their backgrounds and their learning needs.
- The principal promotes an inclusive learning environment where pupils who are multilingual are valued.
- The principal provides very effective curriculum leadership in the area of EAL.
- Outcomes of learning are monitored very effectively and arrangements for curriculum planning, assessment, review, recording and reporting are clear and work very well.
- The principal monitors the quality of teachers' schemes of work, educational initiatives and curriculum provision within the school.

In questionnaires, almost 98% of parents considered that their school was well-managed. While inspectors found that 90% of principals provided good or very good overall leadership and management in their schools, only two thirds (66%) of principals were judged to manage and lead the provision for EAL pupils effectively.

Effective principals had a clear vision for the school and were supportive of the school's ethos. They played a pivotal role in managing EAL provision in the school and made consistent efforts to develop a good knowledge and awareness of the EAL pupils, their backgrounds and their learning needs. Some principals had established links with other agencies, including the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS), to access supports for migrant families.

The principals who ensured effective provision for EAL pupils supported ongoing and frequent collaboration between the EAL support teachers and mainstream teachers and established formal structures to support collaborative planning. They usually appointed a senior member of staff to co-ordinate the provision for EAL pupils and ensured that EAL support teachers had appropriate qualifications and experience. They encouraged the teachers to access training appropriate for their roles in supporting EAL pupils. Principals organised effective accommodation for pupils and this was particularly important when EAL pupils arrived without notice during the course of the school year. The principals led the policy development process for EAL provision and were central to decisions regarding the models of support that would be provided.

Effective principals were open and approachable and developed good relationships with teachers, parents and other members of the school community. Some principals organised social and cultural events in their schools, such as multicultural week, intercultural days, and the celebration of cultures, languages and festivals of the diverse pupil population. The schools participating in initiatives to combat educational disadvantage had the benefit of home-school-community liaison (HSCL) co-ordinators.

The principals of these schools worked closely with the HSCL co-ordinators in linking with parents and involving them in the life of the school. Effective principals nurtured teamwork and collaboration and created environments that supported the full inclusion of EAL pupils in school life.

All of the primary principals stated that the introduction of EAL pupils into the school had been a positive experience. They noted that cultural diversity enriched the life of the school. Many of the principals referred to EAL pupils as being highly motivated, keen and competitive learners with a very positive work ethic. In some schools high-achieving EAL pupils had helped to raise the overall standards in the school. Only two principals made reference to parents' fears that the enrolment of EAL pupils would lead to a decline in standards in the school.

24% of principals referred to the difficulties associated with managing the diversity of cultures within the school and the differing expectations that parents from different cultures had of the education system. Additionally, some principals referred to variation between cultures with regard to managing children's behaviour. Principals spoke of the need for pastoral care programmes, the prioritising of social skills such as turn taking and the placing of additional emphasis on inclusion issues within classroom routines.

#### **4.8 The role of in-school management in provision for EAL pupils**

##### **Evaluation criteria**

In-school management is considered to be very good when

- A member of the in-school management team is assigned to co-ordinate the provision for English as an additional language.

Effective principals ensured that a senior member of staff was appointed to co-ordinate provision for EAL pupils in the school and that curricular plans and organisational policies for EAL provision were devised on a whole-school basis. 56% of schools had assigned a special-duties teacher to co-ordinate supports for EAL pupils. The responsibilities assigned to these co-ordinators varied from school to school. Principals reported that post holders were assigned duties such as the maintenance of records, links with other agencies, enrolling and inducting pupils, assessing pupils and advising other teachers. Other organisational duties included management of timetables and grouping of pupils for support teaching. Some co-ordinators managed the induction of EAL pupils in the school and had a co-ordinating role over the programmes devised for EAL pupils. They organised a buddy system for EAL pupils and managed the pastoral care of these pupils.

Members of the in-school management team also co-ordinated the development of whole-school policies on intercultural education, policies on English as a subject and the inclusion of an intercultural perspective in plans for other curricular areas. They also had responsibility for liaising with classroom teachers in relation to EAL and communicated with individual parents, explaining school policies and other school priorities. Some co-ordinators also led the planning activity among the EAL support teachers and advised

and sourced appropriate materials for use in EAL support-teaching settings. In a small number of schools, EAL co-ordinators were responsible for ensuring the smooth transition of pupils to post-primary school and liaising with the HSCL teachers in that school.

Almost three-quarters (72%) of in-school management teams were considered to contribute effectively to whole-school approaches for co-ordinating EAL provision. Where whole-school provision was co-ordinated, there were effective communication procedures between EAL support teachers and mainstream class teachers. The teachers co-ordinated their planning for EAL pupils and inspectors noted that supports were provided in a way that minimised disruption to the mainstream classes and also ensured that EAL pupils did not miss out on mainstream class lessons in Mathematics and English. 73% of in-school management teams were considered to have effective communication with the diversity of parents in the school. In two schools, pastoral care and other organisational and curricular issues regarding EAL were undertaken exclusively by the EAL support teachers. This approach was considered by inspectors to be less effective than a whole-school approach to managing EAL provision.

#### **4.9 Managing whole-school planning for EAL pupils**

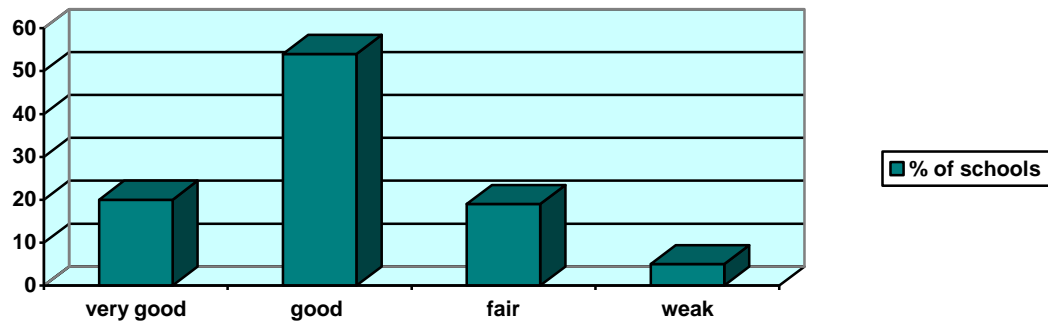
##### **Evaluation criteria**

Management of whole-school planning is considered to be very good when the following features are present.

- The board of management, parents, teaching staff and the wider community have contributed actively to the school's policies on inclusion, enrolment and intercultural education.
- Whole-school plans recognise the importance of providing pupils with EAL with full access to the curriculum.
- Whole-school plans value diversity, promote confidence and a sense of belonging in the school and develop language as a central component of the school.

Formal and informal policies and practices have a significant impact on the experience of pupils and other members of the school community. Whole-school planning for EAL pupils is central to the school context where EAL pupils are enrolled. The policies and curricular plans developed will shape the pupils' total experiences of school and are crucial to their success in formal education.

Figure 4.3: Quality of whole-school planning for EAL pupils



The evaluation found that the quality of whole-school planning was good or very good in three quarters of schools. 83% of boards of management had an active role in the development of organisational policies in relation to the provision for EAL pupils, which included policies on enrolment, attendance and communication with parents.

52% of boards of management had devised a plan for the inclusion of pupils from different minorities in the school. Most inspectors commented that these policies were also reflected in the schools' mission and ethos statements.

63% of schools had devised policies on intercultural education or were in the process of devising these policies. Inspectors found that less than one third (30%) of schools incorporated an intercultural perspective into all whole-school plans. In some schools comprehensive policies were devised but they failed to identify or nominate a teacher responsible for overseeing their implementation or they did not provide adequate advice and direction to guide the practice of the class teachers. In other schools, inspectors recommended that the diversity of the school population be acknowledged and celebrated in the school plan.

#### 4.10 Managing curricular planning for EAL and language across the curriculum

**Evaluation criteria**  
 Management of curricular planning for language is considered to be very good when the following features are present.

- Whole-school plans in each curriculum area emphasise the importance of language development.
- There is a whole-school strategy to enable EAL pupils to access the language of the curriculum.
- Whole-school plans for EAL pupils set out strategies to support language acquisition and development.

Over two-thirds of schools (68%) devised good or very good curricular plans for EAL and language across the curriculum. Only one school had not devised any plan for EAL. Some EAL plans were described by inspectors as comprehensive while others were

considered to be generic in nature and only made reference to provision for EAL pupils within the curriculum plan for English.

Some of the curricular plans examined were developmental in nature and were evolving as schools devised procedures and built expertise on how to cater for pupils with EAL within their specific contexts. Most of the plans referenced guidelines from the Department of Education and Skills and the IILT. In a significant minority of schools, the classroom practices and whole-school approaches to managing provision for EAL pupils were progressive and had developed ahead of the written policy. In these instances inspectors recommended revising the policy so that it would reflect current practice.

Most EAL plans included specific information on organisational issues within the school and provided clear guidelines to teachers on how to manage pupils at the different stages of language acquisition. In a small number of schools inspectors noted that some plans needed to provide more specific advice and guidance to teachers on how to manage pupils during the silent phase.

A central element of the policy for EAL provision in three quarters of the schools evaluated was the assessment of EAL pupils. One quarter of schools did not assess pupils formally when they enrolled in the school. Inspectors advised schools to outline how pupils were going to be assessed and to clarify the procedures for assessing pupils on an ongoing basis. 53% of schools had not given sufficient attention to how pupils would be enabled to learn the content of the curriculum or manage the language demands of the various curricular areas. These schools were advised to consider how pupils' academic language would be developed in order that pupils with EAL could access the full curriculum.

#### **4.11 Management of EAL support posts**

##### **Evaluation criteria**

Management of EAL support posts is considered to be very good when the following features are present.

- The school assigns experienced and enthusiastic teachers to the role of EAL teacher.
- The school has created clear roles for the EAL teachers.
- Teachers have accessed continuous professional development in the area of language teaching and in the development of intercultural understanding.
- Formal and effective structures are in place that provide for the dissemination of teachers' acquired knowledge and expertise among all school staff.

76% of boards of management allocated teachers effectively to EAL support roles.

Almost all of the schools in the sample employed teachers with recognised teaching qualifications in primary education. Only one school in the sample employed unqualified teachers. In a small number of schools, EAL support teachers were graduates of universities but did not hold recognised teaching qualifications. Some of the EAL support teachers had completed courses in Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL). While a number of these courses are very substantial and widely recognised internationally, the usual context of TEFL is outside the mainstream educational system in countries where English is a foreign language. By contrast, the focus in EAL is on the teaching of pupils within the mainstream system in an English-speaking environment in order to assist their access to, and progress through, the curriculum, and their integration into the school community.

It appeared that, in general, the discretion accorded to schools under Circular 15/09 to organise its teaching supports to best meet the needs of the pupils was not fully understood or exercised. In most of the schools evaluated, EAL teachers provided dedicated support to pupils on a withdrawal basis and through specific in-class supports. In general they did not have mainstream class teaching duties except in a support context. Only three schools reported using the allocation of EAL teachers in mainstream class settings.

***Exemplar from an inspection report highlighting very good practice***

Teaching posts are deployed effectively to meet the learning needs of all pupils, including EAL pupils. Two of the EAL posts are used to teach mainstream classes. This results in a reduction in the overall size of classes in the school and provides opportunities for increased differentiation of teaching and learning in order to meet the significant range of individual pupil need in classrooms, particularly in relation to language proficiency. Delivery of EAL support by the four remaining EAL teachers is on a withdrawal basis whereby small groups of EAL pupils attend the EAL teachers in a room shared by the four teachers and their pupils. There is a good level of collaboration and consultation among the EAL teachers and between the EAL and mainstream class teachers in planning for and delivering support to EAL pupils.



#### 4.12 Managing the continuous professional development (CPD) of staff

##### Evaluation criteria

Management of CPD is considered to be very good when the following features are present.

- Teachers have accessed CPD in the area of language teaching and in the development of intercultural understanding.
- Formal and effective structures are in place that provide for the dissemination of teachers' acquired knowledge and expertise among all school staff.

In 74% of the schools evaluated, the whole-school plan made provision CPD for teachers, including EAL support teachers, in the area of EAL education. Inspectors found that CPD was good in 62% of the schools. In some schools the professional development of staff in EAL focused only on those teachers working in EAL support roles. Very good provision was in evidence in only one school evaluated. A significant minority of whole-school plans made no provision for teachers' CPD in the area of EAL education.

Teachers availed of courses provided in their local teachers' centres and information from these courses was disseminated at staff meetings by the EAL team. Some teachers completed on-line courses in EAL provision and others accessed courses on intercultural education and the promotion of an inclusive classroom. In one school the EAL team members collaborated on a handbook to share advice with the mainstream class teachers. In a small number of schools the EAL support teachers up-skilled other members of staff in assessment practices. In some schools, teachers had received little if any CPD to support them in their roles. In these cases, boards of management reported that they lacked financial resources to fund CPD courses or that the members of staff who worked as EAL support teachers were unqualified and held temporary positions.

Inspectors observed that the constant re-assignment of teachers from support roles to mainstream class settings impeded the development of specific expertise in the area of EAL in some schools. They recommended that EAL support teachers be provided with a defined period of time to work in the support-teaching context and that this be sufficiently long for them to develop their expertise in EAL teaching and learning. Very good practice was in evidence in one school, in which most of the staff had completed online courses in teaching EAL and attended a seminar on EAL. Training courses on intercultural education were also provided for special-needs assistants and parents.

#### 4.13 Managing accommodation and resources for EAL teaching and learning

##### **Evaluation criteria**

Management of accommodation and resources is considered to be very good when the following features are present.

- Dedicated rooms are available for the provision of language-support teaching.
- The learning environment is stimulating and challenging.
- A wide range of resources is available and used effectively and creatively to support the development of pupils' learning needs.

The physical environment plays an important role in assisting the inclusion of EAL pupils. Most boards of management (87%) ensured that the accommodation provided for EAL teaching and learning was of a high standard. Inspectors commented on the provision of attractive and stimulating school environments.

Most schools had a broad range of curriculum materials that were well-organised and managed. Classrooms provided print-rich environments and many schools had libraries that were stocked with graded reading materials. A small number of schools had interactive white boards in mainstream classrooms and ICT was used effectively to support teaching and learning in these settings. A small number of schools had accessed dual-language books and resources that were designed to be free of cultural stereotypes and bias. Schools used a range of materials to support language development, including photographs, audio-visual materials and oral-language materials devised by various English education authorities for EAL pupils. Schools also used materials developed by IILT.

Inspectors made recommendations in 15% of schools regarding the provision of classroom libraries with a broad range of reading materials, to include picture dictionaries and dual language books.

#### 4.14 Managing communication with parents

##### **Evaluation criteria**

Management of communication with parents is considered to be very good when the following features are present.

- There are clear structures in place for involving parents of EAL pupils in in-school and out-of-school activities.
- Information with regard to EAL pupils' background and language is sensitively ascertained.
- The HSCL co-ordinator organises language classes for parents of EAL pupils and attendance at these classes is good.
- Activities are arranged that encourage parents to participate in school events and activities.

96% of parents surveyed considered that there was good communication between their school and home. 98% of parents found parent-teacher meetings and other events organised by the school in relation to the education of their children to be helpful and informative. 97% of parents stated that they felt welcomed when they visited their child's school.

Principals were asked to indicate their agreement or otherwise with statements regarding the engagement of parents of EAL pupils in school life. The following table presents the findings.

Table 4.1: Principals' views on links with parents of EAL pupils

	Yes	No
EAL parents visit the school regularly.	85%	15%
Parents interact with the support teachers only.	4%	96%
It is difficult to engage EAL parents in school activities and organisations.	57%	43%
Parents' proficiency in spoken English constrains their contact with the school.	25%	75%

Principals reported that most parents of EAL pupils visited the school regularly and interacted with the principal, classroom teachers and EAL support teachers. This is a positive finding. In some schools, principals and other members of the in-school management team were accessible to parents in the early morning before school and after school to discuss any emerging issues.

More than half of the principals found that it was difficult to engage parents of EAL pupils in school activities and organisations. Principals reported that work commitments sometimes limited EAL parents' opportunities to link with the school or support their children's education. In some schools, parents, including parents of EAL pupils, were involved in paired-reading activities and worked under the guidance of the class teacher in supporting classroom-based reading initiatives. One school organised talks and seminars for parents to assist them in supporting their children's education. A small number of schools invited parents to attend assemblies and religious events during the school day. Only one quarter of principals found that parents' level of spoken English constrained their contact with the school.

The inspectors' findings are critical of the level of communication between schools and parents of EAL pupils. Two-thirds of boards of management (68%) were evaluated as being effective in their efforts to involve parents of EAL pupils in the life of the school. 10% of parents' associations had EAL representatives on their committees. Some schools included parents of EAL pupils in sub-committees that organised religious celebrations in the schools.

While most (89%) boards of management communicated whole-school policies to parents, including parents of EAL pupils, inspectors were of the view that these approaches were only effective in half of the schools (52%) evaluated. Only one quarter of schools had translated whole-school plans and policies into the home languages of

EAL pupils. Inspectors recommended that plans and policies be made available to parents through school websites, newsletters, and in written, translated documents. Principals and boards of management acknowledged that the translation of school documentation into different languages posed a considerable challenge and many schools did not have the financial resources to fund these translations.

Where good or very good practice was in evidence, schools had established formal communication structures with parents and there were clear procedures for dealing with parents' concerns. Some schools had devised 'welcome packs' for EAL parents and pupils to assist them in becoming familiar with the school. A small number of schools offered English language lessons to parents.

***Exemplar of very good practice from an urban, disadvantaged school***

Communication with the parent body is facilitated through the homework journal, a regular newsletter and the school's informative and attractive website. All parents are met individually and as a group upon their child's enrolment and key school policies are disseminated. An opportunity to discuss each pupil's progress is facilitated through the annual parent-teacher meetings and many teachers meet parents at the beginning of the school year to build home-school links. Where necessary, some parents are accompanied by translators for meetings within the school and the services of the home-school-community-liaison (HSCL) teachers are employed to assist communication. A written report on all aspects of development and learning is issued at the end of each academic year. Further efforts to communicate with parents are evident in the school's annual open day, where parents are invited into their child's classroom to observe and celebrate the work and achievements of the class.

***Exemplar of very good practice from an inspection report***

The principal and other members of the staff support an 'open-door policy' and are available to meet with parents of EAL pupils. A range of strategies has been devised to communicate with parents including the school's website, which is updated weekly, the school newsletter, the class diary, and the school information booklet. The school hosts a multicultural week as well as other events to celebrate specific identities and these engage parents of EAL pupils in school activities and allow all pupils to explore a number of cultures, languages and festivals. A range of curricular and extra-curricular activities is organised to promote the involvement of EAL pupils in the life of the school. School assemblies and clubs for EAL pupils support the promotion of an inclusive school ethos. Pastoral care is prioritised and a positive, inclusive and SPHE rich whole-school ethos is fostered.

#### **4.15 Summary**

The overall findings indicate that the quality of school management of provision for EAL pupils was good or very good in four fifths of the schools evaluated. The most positive outcomes related to schools' management of pupils and the establishment of a positive climate and ethos. Significant strides have been taken by boards of management to establish inclusive schools characterised by the principles of equality and mutual respect. Boards of management used the resources allocated to schools effectively and the management of staff, resources and accommodation were strengths of the provision. Principals and in-school management teams were effective in most settings in ensuring good-quality provision for EAL pupils. The areas for improvement identified by the evaluation included the need for schools to assign responsibility for the co-ordination of EAL provision to a member of the in-school management team. This teacher would be expected to lead the development of whole-school approaches to EAL provision.

Whole-school planning for EAL shapes EAL pupils' total experiences of school and are crucial to the child's success in school. The evaluation highlights that whole-school planning for English as an additional language was good or very good in over two-thirds of schools evaluated. In one third of schools there was a lack of cohesion in whole-school EAL policies and curricular plans.

# CHAPTER 5

## TEACHING, LEARNING AND ASSESSMENT OF ENGLISH AS AN ADDITIONAL LANGUAGE

### 5.1 Introduction

The provision of high-quality teaching for all pupils, including EAL pupils, is the professional responsibility of teachers, schools and boards of management. It is a process that involves planning learning goals for EAL pupils on the basis of their language needs and strengths, using teaching strategies and approaches that maximise pupils' opportunities to develop social and cognitive language and providing opportunities for pupils to use this new language in a variety of contexts. It involves mainstream teachers and support teachers working collaboratively to provide optimum learning experiences based on their pupils' assessed needs.

Inspectors evaluated the quality of teaching and learning in English and in Mathematics in 394 classrooms, focusing specifically on the provision for EAL pupils in these settings. The work of ninety EAL support teachers was also evaluated. This chapter presents the inspectors' findings regarding key aspects of the teaching and learning process in both mainstream and support-teaching settings. It presents findings regarding the quality of planning, the effectiveness of the teaching strategies used and the quality of pupils' learning in English and Mathematics.

### 5.2 Planning for EAL pupils

#### 5.2.1 Planning by mainstream class teachers

##### Evaluation criteria

Planning by mainstream teachers is considered to be very good when the following features are present.

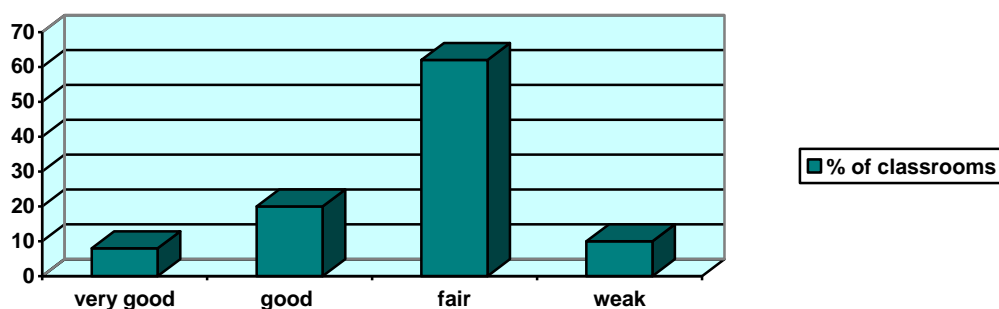
- Teachers' planning takes account of the language demands of the curriculum, including the subject-specific vocabulary required in subjects such as Mathematics, History, Geography and Science.
- Challenging learning experiences across all areas of the curriculum are planned so that EAL pupils develop cognitively while being supported in their language acquisition.
- Teachers differentiate their planning to take into account the learning needs of EAL pupils.

There was evidence that most teachers benefited from the extensive CPD provided for primary teachers over the past decade to support the implementation of the *Primary School Curriculum*. In general, teachers demonstrated a good understanding of the key message about the centrality of language in the curriculum. However, there is further work to be done to ensure that teachers appreciate that language proficiency provides the basis for academic success. Classroom planning for EAL pupils was poor or fair in the majority of class settings (72%). Just over a quarter of teachers made specific provision for EAL pupils in their planning. Inspectors observed that whole-class planning dominated and that these plans were generic

and did not reflect the learning needs of the EAL pupils within the specific class settings. Good practice was noted in over a quarter of class settings, where mainstream class teachers and EAL support teachers set specific targets for pupils in Mathematics and English.

Inspectors were of the view that teachers over-emphasised the acquisition of social language and did not place sufficient emphasis on the development of the cognitive language that pupils required to access the curriculum. There was little evidence in short-term or long-term plans that teachers planned to differentiate their lessons or programmes to meet the needs of EAL pupils in mainstream classes.

Figure 5.1: Quality of classroom planning for EAL pupils in mainstream class settings



**Exemplar of very good practice from an inspection report on an urban school**

The quality of classroom planning is very good. Mainstream class teachers prepare comprehensively, ensuring breadth and balance in their long-term and short-term plans. Collaboration among teachers of similar class levels has led to coherence in the delivery of the curriculum across classes. In the majority of instances the specific learning objectives of the *Primary School Curriculum* are outlined in short-term planning. In the early years, in particular, formative assessment data is used to inform teachers on pupil needs and to identify short and long-term learning outcomes. In an increasing number of instances the monthly progress record is used to identify ongoing pupil attainment of planned outcomes and to inform future planning. In general, differentiation to meet pupils' specific learning needs is practised.

## 5.2.2 Planning by EAL support teachers

### Evaluation criteria

Planning by EAL support teachers is considered to be very good when the following features are present.

- Pupils' individual language programmes are based on their assessed competences in the four language skills.
- EAL support teachers and mainstream classroom teachers undertake collaborative planning, which outlines specific targets for EAL pupils.

A more positive picture of planning emerges in the work of the EAL support teachers. 69% of teachers demonstrated good or very good practice in planning for the stages of language development. Most teachers based their planning on the thirteen themes devised by *Integrate Ireland Language and Training (IILT)*. Individual plans and group plans incorporated specific targets based on the pupils' language needs. These plans responded to individual needs, identified pupils' strengths and built upon previous learning. Individual learning programmes contained specific learning targets that were informed by diagnostic testing as well as input from the class teacher, support teacher, parents and special-needs assistants. The targets outlined in these plans were specific, measurable and realisable within the defined period of the plan.

Only half of the EAL support teachers collaborated with mainstream class teachers when devising individual learning programmes for EAL pupils. Where good or very good practice was in evidence, teachers worked as a team and had formal and informal meetings usually at the beginning of each term and subsequently each week to plan specific programmes and targets for EAL pupils. In these settings, mainstream teachers had copies of individual learning programmes for pupils in their classes. Team meetings were held on a weekly basis to monitor pupils' progress. Effective collaborative plans focused specifically on the EAL pupils' learning needs, identified language demands across the curriculum and made provision for the development of specific language and opportunities to develop language in each curricular area. Plans were discussed with parents and parental input was encouraged and accommodated.

In larger schools where very good practice was in evidence, EAL support teachers were assigned to work with specific class groups. Most collaborative planning took place after schools.

Where poor or fair practice was observed, inspectors noted that a whole-school approach to collaborative planning was not established and there was a lack of awareness of the value and the need for teachers to co-ordinate their teaching for EAL pupils. The lack of time for planning within the school day was cited as a reason for teachers not engaging in this form of collaborative work. Where poor practice was in evidence there was also a lack of communication with parents about the programmes planned.



### 5.3 Inclusion of EAL pupils in mainstream class settings

#### **Evaluation criteria**

Inclusion of EAL pupils in mainstream settings is considered to be very good when the following features are present.

- All teachers have a clear understanding that they have responsibility for EAL pupils, even where there are EAL support teachers available.
- EAL pupils are included in mainstream classroom work. Classroom teachers are aware that they need to assist EAL pupils to learn English and to learn the content of the curriculum.

#### **Responsibility for EAL pupils**

In three-quarters of classroom settings, teachers were aware of their responsibility for the instruction of EAL pupils and they actively sought to involve EAL pupils in lessons. Teachers gave EAL pupils individual attention and provided them with supports when engaging in different tasks. Where good or very good practice was in evidence, teachers liaised formally and informally with the EAL support teachers. In many cases, EAL support teachers worked in the mainstream classroom alongside the class teacher.

#### ***Exemplar of very good practice from an inspection report***

Class teachers assume full responsibility for teaching the EAL pupils in their own classrooms. The support of EAL teachers is complementary to mainstream class teaching. Mainstream class teachers and EAL support teachers use a classroom observation schedule to monitor EAL pupils in their mainstream class. The observations noted on this schedule inform the programme planned by the class teachers. Where an EAL pupil presents with a significant learning need, the information from the formative assessment is used by the EAL support teacher to plan a specific, intensive programme that is delivered in a withdrawal setting.

#### **Level of inclusion of EAL pupils in the mainstream class**

The participation of EAL pupils in English lessons taught by the mainstream class teacher was good in over four fifths of classrooms. Where good or very good practice was in evidence, class teachers differentiated activities in accordance with pupils' language proficiency. Visual cues were used effectively to assist pupils' understanding. In one school, the teachers consulted EAL pupils about their preferred learning approaches and these were incorporated into lessons where appropriate. Pupils had many opportunities to engage in group work and pair work and interacted with their peers, who served as useful role models with regard to the use of cognitive language. There was skilful questioning by teachers to elicit sustained oral contributions from EAL pupils.

The level of inclusion of EAL pupils in Mathematics lessons was good or very good in 86% of classes. Teachers used concrete materials effectively to develop EAL pupils' understanding of mathematical concepts and the language of mathematics was reinforced throughout the lessons. Gestures, visual cues and symbols were used to support understanding and to involve the pupils.

## 5.4 Quality of teaching provided to EAL pupils

### Evaluation criteria

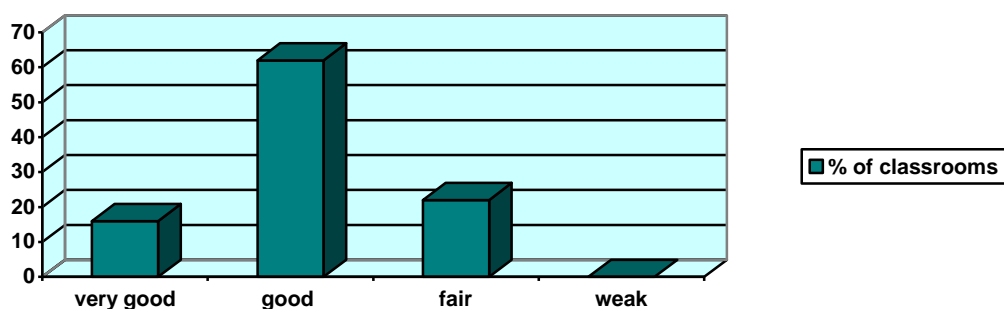
Teaching of EAL is considered to be very good when the following features are present.

- Teaching approaches based on active learning strategies are selected and succeed in enabling pupils to engage with the class programme.
- Participation and engagement are optimised through the judicious use of a combination of methods, including direct instruction, teacher-modelling, role-play, games, play, structured group work, and experiential learning.
- Graphic organisers, keyword exercises, scanning and predicting are effectively used in the teaching of reading.
- Language skills are consistently reinforced in innovative learning contexts.
- EAL pupils are affirmed in using their first language.
- Classroom routines are predictable and explicit.
- Whole-school plans in each curriculum area emphasise the importance of language development.

### 5.4.1 Teaching in mainstream classrooms

Almost all parents (97.7%) were happy with the education provided to their children in the schools evaluated. 95% of parents were of the view that their school had high expectations for all children. 98% of parents considered that their children were making good progress in schools. 92% of parents felt that school reports gave them helpful information about their children's progress.

Figure 5.2: Quality of mainstream class teaching in meeting the needs of EAL pupils



Inspectors found that the provision for EAL pupils was good in over 60% of classroom settings. Very good practice was in evidence in 16% of classrooms. In these cases, teachers provided cognitively challenging activities for pupils across the curriculum and supported their understanding of concepts through the use of symbols and visual clues during the emergent language phase. EAL pupils had opportunities to use language in meaningful contexts and engaged in role play, pair work and group work. They had access to their peers who modelled language for them and who engaged in talk and discussion with them.

Oral-language skills were developed in discrete lessons and also as a part of reading and writing lessons. There was a good balance of whole-class, pair and group work.

Active learning was promoted and pupils were provided with a good range of co-operative tasks. Appropriate strategies that were observed included brainstorming, word games and drama. Teachers used a variety of questioning techniques to stimulate higher-order thinking. In general, many pupils were provided with opportunities to extend vocabulary, make oral presentations regarding their work, and to talk and discuss in small groups. Where very good practice was observed, there were clear links between the development of the pupils' skills in listening, speaking, reading and writing. 97% of parents considered that their child was encouraged to express opinions and to listen to the views of others at school. Buddy systems were used effectively in some schools to support pupils' learning.

Teachers modelled the reading process effectively through the use of novels, large-format books, interactive white boards and classroom displays. Good attention was placed on word recognition and the development of comprehension skills. Strategies for reading included individual silent-reading periods, shared reading and paired reading of texts. Schools encouraged pupils to read a range of materials and EAL pupils maintained reading logs and completed book reviews. Some reading materials provided for EAL pupils reflected different cultures. Teachers encouraged pupils to read with meaning, understanding, fluency and expression.

In over one fifth of classrooms practice was fair. The range of teaching approaches was limited and there was a need for greater differentiation of the work in order to meet the needs of the pupils. In some schools, oral language was taught through games and tasks that were not co-ordinated or did not contribute to the development of oral skills in a progressive and developmental manner. Where practice was weak or fair, a limited range of reading materials was provided for pupils and instruction was usually textbook-focused rather than based on the needs of the pupils.

***Exemplar of very good practice from an inspection report***

The teachers are committed to developing their expertise in EAL teaching, and the board of management facilitates continuing professional development. Team teaching is used successfully to support pupils with learning needs, including those with language needs. The EAL support teacher works to provide individual or small-group support in the mainstream class setting. Priority is given to EAL pupils in the infant classes. The language programme devised for EAL pupils is based on the language themes identified by the IILT and relevant and achievable learning targets are devised. Pupils in the 'silent' and emerging phases of language instruction are well supported. The language support teacher works collaboratively with classroom teachers in planning the programmes for EAL pupils.

## 5.4.2 Quality of EAL pupils' learning in English and Mathematics

### Evaluation criteria

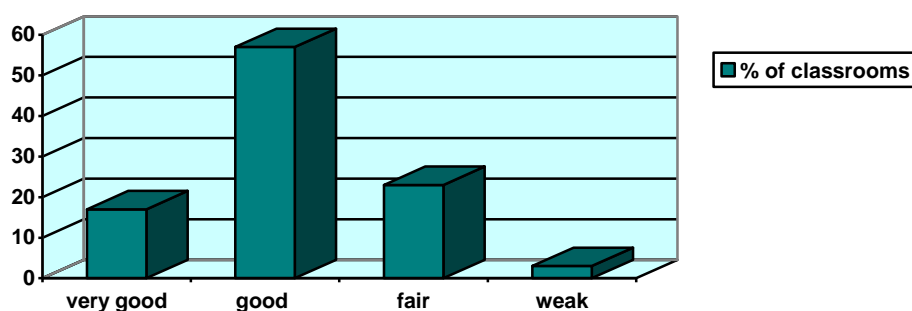
EAL pupils' learning in English and Mathematics is considered to be very good when the following features are present.

- Records indicate that pupils make satisfactory progress with reference to the English Language Proficiency Benchmarks.
- Achievement is evident in listening, spoken interaction, spoken production, reading and writing.
- Pupils demonstrate a good grasp of vocabulary, grammar, phonology and writing skills.
- Pupils demonstrate consistent progress in curricular areas.

Parents in the schools evaluated agreed or strongly agreed that their children were making good progress in language development in English. 95% of parents agreed or strongly agreed that their children had good English language skills. 93% of parents also felt that their children had good English reading skills and a similar number of parents (92%) felt that pupils had well-developed writing skills.

Inspectors found that the quality of EAL pupils' learning was good or very good in 74% of classroom settings.

Figure 5.3: Quality of pupils' learning in language, reading and writing



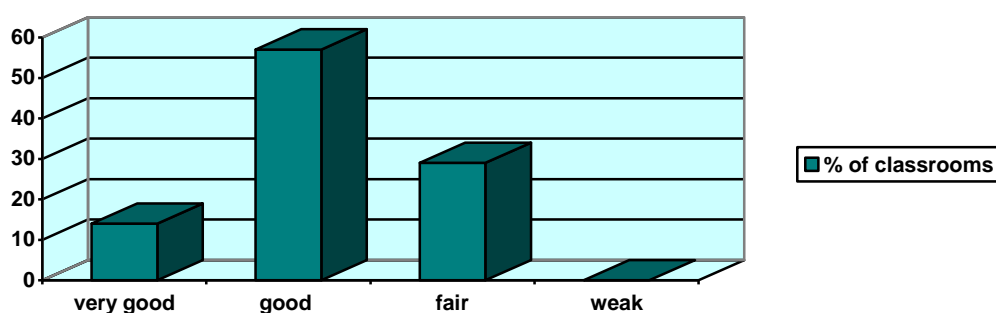
Where good or very good learning was in evidence, pupils were described as expressive and able to use a good range of language to discuss topics, and answer and compose questions. Pupils were able to review novels and discuss plot, characters and settings. Pupils' writing in a variety of genres was good to very good in most class settings.

Where good or very good practice was in evidence, teachers ensured that all tasks, reading materials and writing assignments were differentiated in accordance with pupils' language proficiency. Most EAL pupils experienced success in these activities and undertook their work with confidence. Pupils in almost all schools engaged enthusiastically in their learning. In a number of schools, inspectors commented that EAL pupils were progressing as well as their peers, with some pupils' progress being described as "remarkable". In most schools, records of pupils' progress indicated that

EAL pupils were generally making very good progress with reference to the English Language Proficiency Benchmarks.

Pupils' learning in Mathematics was good or very good in 71% of class settings. In some schools EAL pupils were achieving as well or better than their peers who had English as a first language. Inspectors commented that Mathematics is one of the subjects in which EAL pupils achieve success early. Some teachers and principals were of the view that children from eastern European countries did not find the mathematics programme as challenging as the programmes they had experienced in their home countries. These children had been used to undertaking mathematical tasks and problems which demanded more complex understanding. Inspectors noted that the quality of EAL pupils' learning varied according to their language competence and conceptual development.

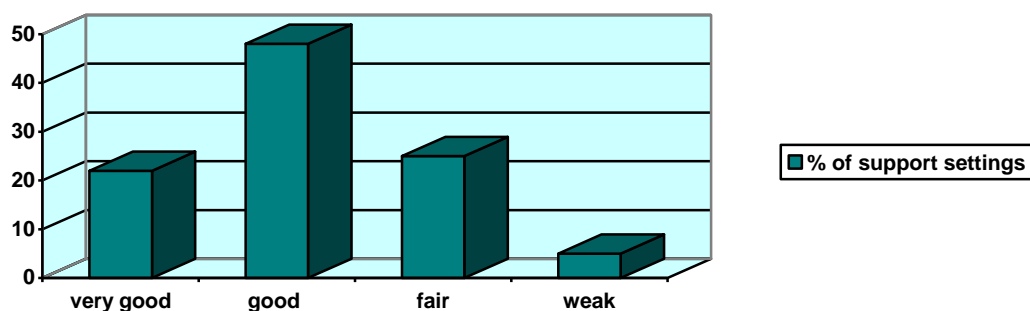
Figure 5.4: Quality of EAL pupils' learning in Mathematics



Inspectors generally advised schools to differentiate work for Mathematics, to incorporate more group work and to place a greater focus on the language of Mathematics. They also recommended that schools, in addition to whole-school analysis of the outcomes of standardised tests, should track the progress of EAL pupils as a distinct cohort.

### 5.4.3 Quality of language supports provided by schools for EAL pupils

Figure 5.5: Quality of the language supports provided for EAL pupils



The majority of schools (83%) organised language support for EAL pupils effectively or very effectively. 90% of EAL support teachers provided supplementary teaching to

EAL pupils on a withdrawal basis. This supplementary teaching was often provided to small groups of pupils with similar language proficiency. In twenty-three schools, support was given to individual pupils who required specific interventions. Where good practice was in evidence, there was a balance of in-class support and withdrawal of pupils for dedicated supports. Very good practice in some schools included an entirely in-class programme for pupils in junior infants so that their experience of school would not become fragmented.

In most schools, good efforts were made to timetable supports for EAL pupils in such a way as to minimise disruption to the mainstream classes and also to ensure that EAL pupils did not miss out on the same subject repeatedly.

***Exemplar of very good collaborative planning from an inspection report***  
EAL support teachers collaborate with mainstream class teachers by sharing information about the outcomes of assessment on an ongoing basis. The EAL support teachers regularly observe their pupils through the use of an in-class observation schedule and these observations have become a core element of teaching and learning. Meetings between EAL teachers and mainstream teachers regularly occur after school to plan in-class and withdrawal activities to support the developing needs of the EAL pupils. Mainstream teachers have become very aware of the needs of EAL pupils and this informs their long-term and short-term planning.

#### **5.4.4 Quality of EAL support teaching**

**Evaluation criteria**  
Support teaching for EAL pupils is considered to be very good when the following features are present.

- EAL support teachers use appropriate teaching methods to meet the language needs of the pupils.
- The lessons have clear aims and learning outcomes.
- Overall pupil progress is in keeping with ability and teaching targets set.

Almost all EAL support teachers provided good or very good quality teaching in the support setting. Inspectors commented on the commitment and professionalism of the teachers. EAL support teachers provided stimulating learning environments that were print-rich and well resourced. Real-life materials such as newspapers, magazines, timetables, TV schedules and other materials were used in many lessons. EAL support teachers placed very good emphasis on building pupils' self-esteem and confidence in small group settings.

Very structured teaching was evident in the lessons, which facilitated pupils to experience active learning approaches that allowed for peer interaction and language development. Aspects of good practice included the use of a wide range of resources and teaching methodologies including direct instruction, play, games and group work. In some cases, very effective use was made of visual resources to enhance meaning

and learning for EAL pupils. Song-singing was used with pupils in infant and junior classes to introduce pupils to the rhythm and sounds of different words. Pupils were supported by the use of gestures and visual aids by the teachers. Pupils were given adequate time to respond and to speak. They were encouraged in their attempts to communicate and their language skills were reinforced effectively. Seating arrangements allowed pupils to make direct eye contact with the teacher and their peers and to witness good language role-modelling. Questioning was used effectively and teachers adjusted their questioning according to individual pupils' needs. Very good pre-teaching of language, which is essential for learning concepts and skills in Mathematics and in other areas of the curriculum, was observed in some withdrawal settings. Teachers demonstrated particular empathy with pupils in the silent and emerging phase of language acquisition. Where several EAL support teachers were working in a school, inspectors commented that they worked as a cohesive unit, implementing similar programmes and sharing good practice.

Where fair or weak practice was observed, inspectors noted that while language games and other activities were in evidence, the communicative purpose of these games was insufficiently clear. In two schools, inspectors commented that a considerable proportion of newcomer pupils with fluent English continued to receive supplementary teaching from EAL support teachers. These pupils did not need to be withdrawn for language support and required instruction at a more challenging level. One inspector commented, "Some pupils do not appear to need supplementary tuition at all." Inspectors noted that in some cases the content and the pacing of lessons were not sufficiently challenging for the pupils. It was observed that the work in some EAL settings was at a level and pace more suitable for pupils with learning needs than for pupils learning an additional language. Inspectors recommended that the tuition provided should be better aligned with the pupils' ability and needs.

#### **5.4.5 Quality of in-class support provided to EAL pupils in mainstream classes**

##### **Evaluation criteria**

In-class support for EAL pupils is considered to be very good when the following features are present.

- EAL support teachers work collaboratively with class teachers to ensure that the EAL pupils' learning needs are met within the class and in support teaching contexts.

Three fifths of schools had made provision for in-class supports for EAL pupils in English. A similar number of schools organised in-class supports for EAL pupils in Mathematics. Even where in-class supports were provided, inspectors commented that these supports were at an early stage of development and were in operation in a small number of classrooms in each school. A significant minority of schools provided in-class supports in every classroom.



In-class supports were most effective when experienced EAL support teachers worked alongside classroom teachers. In these settings EAL pupils were working with their peers and learning through listening to other pupils with similar abilities and greater language skills as they discussed, debated, and worked formally and informally. Where good practice was observed, language-rich classrooms were created and opportunities were provided for EAL pupils to hear and engage in extended, sustained talk.

Highly effective team-teaching structures were in place in one fifth of schools and these were characterised by teachers sharing learning objectives, co-ordinating the use of resources and providing differentiated teaching. In a small number of schools, the EAL support teachers worked alongside mainstream teachers to support language development in subjects that have high language requirements such as History, Geography and Science.

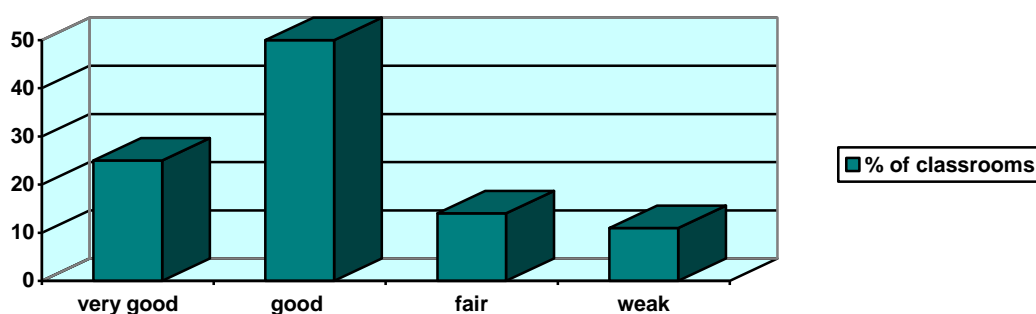
## 5.5 Assessment

### Evaluation criteria

Assessment of EAL pupils is considered to be very good when

- Pupils' competences in the four language skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing) are assessed.
- The progress of EAL pupils is tracked and monitored on an ongoing basis.
- Assessment information informs teaching and learning.

Figure 5.6: Quality of assessment practices



Pupils in the schools evaluated were initially assessed using materials devised by IILT and the *Primary School Assessment Kit*, which was distributed to schools in June 2008. Where very good practice was in evidence, pupils were assessed in the four language skills of listening speaking, reading and writing. Most schools carried out initial assessments on EAL pupils at an appropriate interval after enrolment. These assessments informed the types of supports provided for EAL pupils and determined whether pupils were given supports in their mainstream classroom or on a withdrawal basis.



Most schools supplemented these assessments with teacher-devised assessments of pupils' linguistic competences. Schools also maintained folders of pupils' work. In the 25% of classes where very good practice was observed, individual learning programmes were based on the outcomes of these assessments.

Two thirds of EAL support teachers demonstrated good or very good recording of pupils' progress and maintained very good records of assessment data. In a significant minority of schools, however, inspectors observed that mainstream class teachers were not familiar with the work being done by the EAL support teacher and did not have a copy of the specific plans devised for the pupils in their class. Mainstream class teachers' own planning for assessment in these schools was often insufficiently specific and usually included reference to teacher observation. In a number of schools, the individual plans devised for EAL pupils were insufficiently specific to begin with and this made the monitoring of learning outcomes difficult to undertake. In most schools, inspectors identified scope for greater use of assessment information in devising individual targets and learning programmes for pupils and as a basis for the differentiation of in-class supports.

In two thirds of mainstream class settings, assessment was a core element of teaching and learning. The teachers in these classrooms used a wide range of assessment modes and the results of formative and summative assessment were used effectively to inform teaching. Results were analysed at a whole-school level and pupils were provided with additional supports on this basis. Classroom teachers used criterion-referenced tests, word-identification checklists, pupil profiles and diagnostic tests. Teachers monitored pupils' written work closely and provided constructive and affirmative feedback. Where assessment practices were well-established in schools, many of the teachers engaged in reflection with their colleagues with regard to assessment outcomes. These teachers used weekly tests, checklists and other teacher-devised assessment tools to check pupils' progress. Monthly progress records were used effectively in some schools to monitor pupils' progress.

Where practice was weak or fair, teachers did not always adapt their teaching to reflect the results of assessment. Inspectors commented on the lack of whole-school approaches to assessment in one-third of schools. They also noted that short-term targets should provide the basis for more frequent and ongoing assessment and that there is a need for a clearer understanding that assessment is a key element of effective teaching and learning.

## **5.6 Summary**

The findings about the quality of teaching are very positive overall. There was good or very good practice in evidence in three quarters of mainstream class settings. This is a very positive finding given that most of the teachers in the schools evaluated had not received specific professional development in the area of teaching EAL pupils. Teachers demonstrated high-quality teaching skills in EAL and created rich learning

environments for the pupils. They assumed responsibility for EAL pupils' learning and included them in all classroom activities and routines. They provided a range of visual aids to support the development of language and conceptual understanding. Pupils in these classes were given rich opportunities to use language during collaborative learning tasks, drama, role play, working with a peer or their 'buddy' and in giving oral feedback. Pupils' learning was scaffolded and supported as they moved towards the forms of language used in reading and writing.

The aspect of provision which required most development and improvement was the quality of mainstream classroom planning for EAL pupils. There was a significant lack of planning for EAL pupils. While mainstream class teachers usually had copies of the individual learning programmes that were devised by EAL support teachers, these plans were not used as a basis for the differentiation of lessons and programmes for EAL pupils. There is a need for all teachers to become familiar with the *English Language Proficiency Benchmarks* and the staged learning outcomes that should be the focus of mainstream planning for EAL pupils. All teachers need to be more aware of the language demands of the *Primary School Curriculum* and the importance of integrating the teaching of cognitive language into lessons in all curricular areas. Lessons in each curricular area should have a clear focus on the language of instruction and should seek to develop all four language skills: listening, speaking, reading and writing. Teachers of EAL pupils should use modelling, scaffolding and other strategies to facilitate EAL pupils' participation in learning tasks and to support their language development.

One of the most significant findings of the evaluation is that the quality of teaching provided by EAL support teachers was good or very good in almost all schools. The weaknesses in provision included an over-dependence on withdrawing pupils from mainstream classrooms for support and the limited use of in-class supports for EAL pupils. There was also a lack of collaborative planning between mainstream and EAL teachers. While the quality of assessment was considered to be very good or good in 75% of the schools evaluated, inspectors observed that EAL pupils would benefit from the development and implementation of whole-school approaches to assessment. They were also of the view that more attention should be given to the available assessment data when planning lessons and programmes.

## CHAPTER 6

# MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### 6.1 Introduction

The findings of this evaluation of provision for EAL pupils in thirty primary schools are generally positive. The additional teachers appointed under the terms of Department circulars 53/07 and 15/09 were deployed effectively by most schools. Boards of management, principals and school staff had worked collaboratively to devise a range of whole-school policies and procedures to address the inclusion and learning needs of EAL pupils. Materials and resources, including those provided by the NCCA and the IILT, were used effectively to guide teaching and learning programmes. In particular, the introduction of the *Primary School Assessment Kit* was seen as a vital development and schools were beginning to use this resource to assess pupils' language competencies. However, there was scope for assessment practices in schools to be developed further. Some schools had made good use of CPD to build the capacity of their staff to meet the needs of EAL pupils. The role of mainstream class teachers as language teachers needed to be further emphasised, however, and teachers would benefit from further CPD on the stages of language acquisition and the implications for teaching and learning.

The focus of the Department's educational strategy for EAL pupils is twofold: to ensure that pupils learning English as an additional language will be fully included in the life of the school community; secondly, to ensure that these pupils develop conversational and social fluency in English and the cognitive and academic language that is required for them to experience success within the Irish education system. The recommendations in this chapter are made with a view to sustaining, developing and improving the provision of primary schools generally and are based on the good practice in evidence in the schools evaluated.

### 6.2 Managing provision for EAL pupils in schools

In most of the primary schools evaluated, school management was effective in providing for EAL pupils. Good systems were in place to support pupil enrolment and in almost all schools pupils had been assigned to age-appropriate groups. Good learning environments and resources were provided. Almost all schools employed teachers with recognised primary teaching qualifications.

- School management should ensure, through appointment procedures and provision for CPD, that class teachers and EAL support teachers have the knowledge and skills to make effective provision for EAL pupils.
- School management should ensure that EAL pupils are enrolled in age-appropriate classes.

### **6.3 The organisation of supports for EAL pupils**

Most schools used the resources available in a co-ordinated and judicious manner. The dominant model of provision was integration in a mainstream class, with an EAL support teacher withdrawing pupils in small groups for supplementary teaching. Occasional in-class support was also evident. The over-dependence on withdrawing pupils from mainstream classrooms for support and the limited use of in-class supports for EAL pupils were highlighted in this evaluation as areas requiring improvement.

- School management teams should be cognisant of the flexibility that is accorded to schools in the deployment of EAL teachers and they should use their discretion to ensure that EAL support teaching is organised and co-ordinated in the way that best meets the particular needs of the EAL pupils in their school.
- EAL support teachers should implement a variety of interventions, providing mostly in-class supports in mainstream classrooms, as well as supplementary teaching for EAL pupils in small-group settings.

### **6.4 Inclusive school environments**

The boards of management of the schools evaluated had endeavoured to create inclusive schools characterised by principles of equality and mutual respect. A positive climate and ethos were evident, along with effective practice in the management of pupils. Parents and pupils were overwhelmingly positive about the atmosphere in their schools. While parents responded favourably to questions about home-school communication, inspectors identified shortcomings in the quality of communication with parents. In a significant minority of schools, efforts had not been made to involve the parents of EAL pupils in the life of the school. The overarching climate of inclusion created in the school community provides a most important backdrop to the work of everyone in the school. The school's characteristic spirit, mission and values inform the development of school policies and guide the actions of staff and students. It is important that boards of management recognise how positively influential they can be in this regard.

- Boards of management should ensure that their mission statements emphasise the way in which the cultural and linguistic diversity of its pupils can enrich the learning and lives of the school community.
- Boards of management should ensure that their enrolment policies are inclusive of EAL pupils. They may find useful guidance in this respect in the publication *Toolkit for Diversity in the Primary School* (IILT/SELB, 2007).
- Boards of management should agree and implement procedures for pre-enrolment meetings with EAL pupils and their parents, during which the school could gather key information regarding the new pupil's educational history. Where necessary, schools should also invite a member of the school community who speaks the home language of the pupil and his/her parents to attend this meeting as an interpreter.

- Schools should devise and implement strategies to ensure that there is effective two-way communication with parents of EAL pupils and that these parents are enabled to participate in school life and support their children's education.
- Schools should ensure that special arrangements be put in place to support EAL pupils in the transition from primary to post-primary school.

## **6.5 Leading EAL provision**

In the majority of schools the principal provided effective leadership of EAL provision. The principal, as instructional leader in the school, can foster a culture of classroom planning and whole-school planning in schools so that students with diverse backgrounds, capabilities and learning needs can progress towards their full potential. Principals have a key role in overseeing the co-ordination of supports for EAL pupils and evaluating their impact on EAL pupils at various stages of their education. Strong support from the principal for the co-ordination of EAL makes an important difference to the quality of provision experienced by EAL pupils.

Where effective practice was identified, a senior member of staff, usually a special-duties teacher, had been given responsibility for co-ordinating and leading EAL provision in the school. All of the school principals were positive about the contribution of newcomer pupils to their schools and about the consequent cultural diversity in their school communities. In a significant minority of schools there was a need for more systematic co-ordination of EAL provision.

- Schools should assign responsibility for leading and co-ordinating provision for EAL to a member of the in-school management team.
- The EAL co-ordinator should
  - ensure that specific targets relating to EAL pupils' learning are devised
  - set in place structures for the ongoing assessment and recording of the achievement of EAL pupils
  - carry out annual reviews of the EAL supports and programmes provided in the school
  - lead the school in developing policies on intercultural education, equality and language across the curriculum.
- Principals and boards of management should ensure that key whole-school policies and procedures be provided to parents in their home languages in so far as this is possible. Schools may find the generic documents that are available on the Department of Education and Skills website useful.

## **6.6 The quality of teaching**

The findings about the quality of teaching are very positive. There was good or very good practice in evidence in three quarters of mainstream class settings. Where mainstream class teaching was considered by inspectors to be very good, a key element

was that the class teacher understood that that language proficiency is the key to all pupils' learning outcomes and that he/she was the main language teacher for EAL pupils in that class. Very good mainstream class teachers enabled EAL pupils to understand and use the specialist vocabulary required for each subject so that they could acquire the knowledge, skills and attitudes that the *Primary School Curriculum* aims to develop. The quality of teaching provided by EAL support teachers was good or very good in almost all schools.

- It should be recognised that every teacher is a language teacher and every lesson a language lesson. All mainstream class teachers, in preparing lessons in different curricular areas, should plan to teach the specific vocabulary and language skills that pupils will need to achieve the lesson objectives. Lessons, activities and resources should be differentiated accordingly.
- Schools should ensure that their curricular plans set out cross-curricular strategies for teaching language.
- Schools should dedicate time to allow teachers to discuss and agree a common whole-school approach to teaching EAL, so that the pupils concerned may experience continuity in the development of their language skills.
- EAL teachers should timetable EAL support so that EAL pupils do not miss out on the same subject repeatedly.

## **6.7 Planning for EAL pupils**

Whole-school policies and plans for EAL had been developed in the majority of schools and many were in the process of developing whole-school approaches to provision for EAL pupils. The aspect of provision that required most development and improvement was the quality of mainstream classroom planning for EAL pupils. The most significant weakness in the majority of classrooms was an insufficient focus by mainstream class teachers on planning a differentiated programme for EAL pupils. The weaknesses in planning highlighted the fact that all mainstream class teachers were not fully aware of the English Language Proficiency Benchmarks and the staged learning outcomes that should guide the learning outcomes for EAL pupils. The importance of integrating the teaching of cognitive language into lessons in all curricular areas was not fully recognised.

There was also a lack of collaborative planning between mainstream and EAL support teachers. Teachers in both roles gave insufficient attention to planning co-ordinated programmes of work. In half of the schools evaluated teachers did not use the available assessment data as a starting point for their planning and teaching.

- Mainstream class teachers should differentiate learning targets, activities, supports and resources as appropriate, in accordance with pupils' English-language proficiency.

## **6.8 Assessment and recording of progress of EAL pupils**

There was a critical absence of comprehensive assessment data in schools. Around half of the schools evaluated did not have a systematic approach to planning, assessment and recording of progress. This made it difficult for schools to fully meet pupil needs and to report accurately on the progress of cohorts of EAL pupils.

Effective assessment is integral to good teaching. Through systematic assessment processes the teacher comes to know the learner's strengths and establishes the foundations for further learning. Feedback for pupils about their progress supports the learning process. The introduction of the *Primary Assessment Kit* enables all schools to effectively evaluate individual language competence across the four language skills.

- Support teachers and classroom teachers should examine all sources of classroom assessment, to ensure that the progress of every EAL student is monitored and periodically benchmarked.
- Schools should assess pupils' proficiency in each of the four language skills.
- Systematic records of assessment data should be maintained and copies shared with class teachers, parents and where appropriate, pupils.

## **6.9 Capacity building and school self-evaluation**

Significant progress has been made in recent years in equipping schools and the system to provide effectively for EAL learners. Very significant financial investment has been made over the last several years in terms of teacher allocations, teacher professional development and in the development of resources. The Department and individual schools should seek to ensure that EAL pupils are getting the best possible return on this investment.

- School management should build on the in-school expertise available among staff by providing structured opportunities for teachers to share good practice and planning strategically to develop the capability of the staff as a whole.
- Schools should foster team teaching so that teachers can learn from each other and collaborate in the development of their approaches to EAL teaching.
- CPD should be provided at whole-school level to improve the capacity of mainstream class teachers and EAL support teachers to support EAL pupils at the different stages of language acquisition. This should address the use of cross-curricular strategies for language development, and differentiation of lessons in the mainstream setting.
- Monitoring all aspects of provision for EAL should be integrated into the normal management processes of the school. Teaching staffs should work collegially to monitor, evaluate, review and adapt school policies, programmes and classroom interventions. They should adopt an evidence-based approach to decisions

regarding interventions to support pupils. EAL pupils and their parents should be consulted as part of this self-evaluation.



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## APPENDIX 1

### Circular 0053/2007

An Roinn Oideachais agus Eolaíochta,  
Corn a Madadh,  
Baile Atha Luain,  
Co. na hIarmhí.



Department of Education and Science  
Cornamaddy,  
Athlone,  
Co. Westmeath

**To: The Managerial Authorities of Primary, Secondary, Community and Comprehensive Schools and to the Vocational Education Committees**

## **Meeting the needs of pupils for whom English is a second language**

### **INTRODUCTION**

The purpose of this Circular is to assist schools in providing an inclusive school environment to meet the needs of pupils for whom English is a second language and outline the resources that are available to assist schools in this task.

### **CREATING AN INCLUSIVE SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT**

An inclusive school environment reflects values and affirms linguistic, ethnic and cultural, diversity. It is important that schools have policies and procedures in place that promote and facilitate the inclusion of all children. The school's commitment to creating an inclusive school environment should be evident in the school plan, the promotion of parental involvement, the provision of equality of curriculum access, the facilitation of professional development opportunities and in whole-school and classroom practice. Pupils should also be encouraged and facilitated in maintaining a connection with their own culture and language through curricular activities and displays.

### **THE ROLE OF THE LANGUAGE SUPPORT TEACHER**

Language support teachers are appointed to assist schools in providing additional language support teaching for pupils. In collaboration with parents and class teachers, language support teachers identify pupils requiring additional support, administer the assessment materials developed by Integrate Ireland Language and Training, devise appropriate language programmes, deliver the programmes and record and monitor pupils' progress. It is important that expertise is shared and good practice is communicated and disseminated in order to optimise the opportunities pupils have for developing their proficiency in English.

### **ASSESSMENT OF PUPILS' LEVELS OF LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY**

In order to assist schools in assessing pupils' levels of language proficiency, the Department of Education and Science has commissioned assessment packs to assist in determining language proficiency of pupils and these will be distributed to all schools shortly. The tests of English

language proficiency contained in this pack were compiled by Integrate Ireland Language and Training (IILT), which is a campus company of Trinity College, Dublin, funded by the Department of Education and Science. The tests have been designed for use at primary level. The tests are being adapted to make them more age appropriate for use in post primary schools. However, the primary tests may be used by post primary schools in the interim.

The tests of English language proficiency are based on IILT's English Language Proficiency Benchmarks (revised version, September 2003), and are structured with reference to three proficiency levels (1, 2 and 3) as set out in the table below.

Level 1	Level 2	Level 3
Very poor comprehension of English and very limited spoken English	Understands some English and can speak English sufficiently well for basic communication	Has competent communication skills in English

The English Language Proficiency Benchmarks specify what pupils should be able to achieve in English at each level and thus reflect the task-based approach to teaching and learning promoted by IILT. Tasks have been selected to reflect what pupils encounter daily in the classroom. Scoring procedures have been designed to achieve accurate results, provided the tests are administered strictly according to the instructions provided. All documentation in relation to the administration of tests must be retained by the school for audit/inspection purposes.

#### ALLOCATION OF ADDITIONAL TEACHER SUPPORT

The level of additional teacher support allocated to primary and post primary schools will continue to be determined by the number of enrolled pupils for whom English is a second language and the associated assessed levels of pupils' language proficiency.

It is necessary for schools to apply for the additional allocation certifying the number of such pupils enrolled on form NN1 for primary schools and form NN 07/08 for post primary schools as already notified to all schools.

The table under sets out the resources that can be accessed to cater for such pupils where the number of pupils in the school is 14 or more:-

Number of pupils	Posts	Number of pupils	Posts	Number of pupils	Posts
14 to 27	1	42 to 64	3	91 to 120	5
28 to 41	2	65 to 90	4	121 or more	6

Schools with less than 14 pupils will have their needs addressed as outlined in previous circulars. It is a matter for the school authority to deploy this teacher allocation having regard to the proficiency levels of individual pupils involved and in line with their evolving needs.

The allocation of additional language support teachers is based on allowing schools flexibility in the deployment of support. It is recommended that pupils receive additional language support teaching in the classroom or in small withdrawal groups in addition to the support they receive from the class teacher. It is intended that this revised allocation facilitates and provides for a high level of flexibility and will enable schools to successfully meet the needs of pupils who require additional language support teaching.

A defined whole-school policy in relation to the identification of pupils requiring support, assessment of pupils' levels of language proficiency, programme planning, recording and monitoring of pupils' progress and communication with parents are key features of effective language support provision. While duties and responsibilities vary in every school context, it is important that the roles of all school personnel in relation to meeting the needs of pupils for whom English is a second language are clearly defined and understood by all. It is important that expertise is shared and good practice is communicated and disseminated in order to optimise the opportunities pupils have for developing their proficiency in English.

Additional teaching hours are made available for schools catering for pupils with significant English language deficits assessed as having a language proficiency of either level 1 or 2. Should these extra resources be required for individual pupils for longer than two years, details of the assessed level of language competence and specific details of how the school has addressed the needs of these pupils in the previous two years must be outlined. Details must also be outlined of how it is proposed to optimise the opportunities of the pupils for whom an additional year is being sought.

The allocation is subject to confirmation by the school authority of actual attendance by the pupils through their inclusion in the school's certified October Returns.

Schools must retain a copy of all relevant documentation for audit purposes.

#### **USEFUL MATERIALS AND RESOURCES**

A wide range of materials and resources has been developed to assist schools in meeting the needs of pupils for whom English is a second language. The following is a list of materials that schools may find useful in responding to linguistic, cultural and ethnic diversity.

Department of Education and Science (DES) (2003) Looking at our School: An Aid to Self-Evaluation in Primary Schools, Dublin: (DES).

Development and Intercultural Education (2005) Global and Justice Perspectives in Education: A Literature Review, Dublin: Church of Ireland College.

Irish National Teachers Organisation (INTO) (2005) Intercultural Education in the Primary School, Dublin: INTO.

Irish National Teachers Organisation (INTO) (2002) INTO Intercultural Guidelines for Schools, Dublin: INTO.

National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) (2005) Intercultural Education in the Primary School, NCCA: Dublin.

National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) (2005) English as An Additional Language in Irish Primary Schools, NCCA: Dublin.

As part of its continuing commitment to assisting teachers in creating inclusive school environments, the Department of Education and Science is currently involved in a North-South project with the Southern Education and Library Board and Integrate Ireland Language and Training to develop a practical toolkit for primary schools. The aim of the toolkit will be to support the inclusion of pupils for whom English is a second language in primary schools through incorporating best practice and providing suggestions, concrete ideas, exemplars and materials for use by all school staff. It is proposed to distribute this toolkit to all primary schools, both North and South, in the 2007/8 school year.

#### **AVAILABILITY OF SUPPORT**

The Regional Office Service of the Department of Education and Science will assist schools in relation to implementation of this circular.

Integrate Ireland Language and Training (IILT) provides training and materials to assist schools in meeting the needs of pupils for whom English is a second language. A wide range of teaching resources has been developed by IILT and is available at [www.iilt.ie](http://www.iilt.ie). IILT may be contacted directly at 126 Pembroke Street, Ballsbridge, Dublin 4; Telephone: 01 6677232/6677295; Fax: 01 6643726; E-mail: [info@iilt.ie](mailto:info@iilt.ie).

Johnny Bracken  
Principal Officer  
Primary Teachers Section  
Section  
May 2007

Anne Killian  
Principal Officer  
Post Primary Teachers

**Chairpersons of Boards of Management and Principals should bring this circular to the attention of members of the Board and teachers and should retain a copy for future reference.**

### Circular 0015/2009



## DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND SCIENCE SCHOOLS DIVISION

### To: The Managerial Authorities of Primary, Secondary, Community and Comprehensive Schools and to the Vocational Education Committees

#### Meeting the needs of pupils learning English as an Additional Language (EAL)

##### 1. Introduction

Arising from the decisions made in Budget 2009 new arrangements are being put in place for the allocation of EAL support posts to schools. These new arrangements replace the current allocation arrangements that are set out in Circular 53/07 which is hereby rescinded.

The resources allocated to schools to meet the needs of pupils learning English as an Additional Language (EAL) are additional to the other supports and funding provided for schools. All pupils including migrant pupils (irrespective of their English language proficiency) are counted for the regular pupil teacher ratios in schools.

The budget measures will mean that the level of EAL support will generally be reduced to a maximum of two teachers per school, as was the case before 2007. However, there will be some alleviation for the position of those schools where there is a significant concentration of pupils learning English as an additional language as a proportion of the overall enrolment.

The new arrangements are outlined in Section 6.

##### 2. Creating an inclusive school environment

An inclusive school environment reflects values and affirms linguistic, ethnic and cultural diversity. It is important that schools have policies and procedures in place that promote and facilitate the inclusion of all children. The school's commitment to creating an inclusive school environment should be evident in the school plan, the promotion of parental involvement, the provision of equality of curriculum access, the facilitation of professional development opportunities and in whole-school and classroom practice. Pupils should also be encouraged and facilitated to maintain a connection with their own culture and language through curricular activities and displays.

##### 3. The role of the EAL support teacher

EAL support teachers are appointed to assist schools in providing **additional** EAL support teaching for pupils. The EAL pupil remains the responsibility of the mainstream class teacher at primary level and the subject specialist teachers at post primary level who will work closely with the EAL support teachers. In collaboration with parents and mainstream class teachers, EAL support teachers identify pupils requiring additional language support, assess pupils' proficiency in English using the assessment materials, devise appropriate language programmes, deliver the programmes and record and monitor pupils' progress.

They share their expertise with mainstream class teachers and assist in developing and disseminating good practice to support the development of students' English language proficiency.

**4. Deployment of EAL support teachers within schools**

It is a matter for the school authority to deploy this teacher allocation having regard to the proficiency levels of individual pupils involved and in line with their evolving needs.

The allocation of EAL support teachers is based on allowing schools flexibility in the deployment of support. It is recommended that pupils receive additional EAL support teaching in the classroom or in timetabled EAL lessons for small groups in addition to the support they receive from the class teachers.

Clear and effective arrangements for the identification of pupils requiring support, the assessment of pupils' levels of language proficiency, programme planning, the recording and monitoring of pupils' progress and communication with parents are key features of effective EAL support provision. All of these features should be delineated in the school's policy on EAL support. While duties and responsibilities vary in every school context, it is important that the roles of all school personnel in relation to meeting the needs of pupils learning English as a second language are clearly defined and understood by all. School policy and practice should promote the sharing of expertise and good practice, and encourages communication amongst staff in order to optimise the opportunities pupils have for developing their proficiency in English.

**5. Primary and Post-Primary Assessment Kit**

The Primary and Post-Primary Assessment Kits are a useful tool for schools to determine the initial language proficiency of each pupil and to evaluate how well pupils are progressing with their language skills in English. The tests will help to establish a pupil's level of English on arrival in school, monitor progress over time in language support and identify the point at which a pupil no longer requires additional language support. Primary and Post- Primary EAL teachers are receiving training in the use of these kits during the current academic year, 08/09.

At this stage, it is not proposed to oblige schools to base all their applications for EAL support on the assessments carried out using the language assessment kit. However, schools will be asked to use the assessment kit if they are seeking EAL support for pupils for an additional year beyond the 2 year period.

The table below outlines the levels of proficiency that were used when assessing pupils' language ability prior to the publication of the Primary/Post-Primary Assessment kits. The table also includes the nearest equivalent levels for those schools using the Primary/Post-Primary Assessment Kits.

**N.B.** Pupils with very little English may be initially assessed as at Level 0 (see Primary Assessment Kit, p.16 and Post-Primary Assessment Kit, p.12). Level A1 in the Assessment Kit should be their first learning target.



<b>Proficiency levels used prior to publication of Primary and Post-Primary Assessment Kits</b>			
Level 1	Level 2		Level 3
Very poor comprehension of English and very limited spoken English	Understands some English and can speak English sufficiently well for basic communication		Has competent communication skills in English
<b>Nearest equivalent levels using Primary and Post-Primary Assessment Kits</b>			
Level 0	Level A1	Level A2	Level B1
Absence of any English language proficiency	Can understand and use basic words and phrases in a social and school context	Can understand, read and write simple English and can speak English sufficiently well to exchange information	Can function well enough in English to be fully integrated into the mainstream classroom

The English Language Proficiency Levels specify what pupils should be able to achieve in English at each level and thus reflect the task-based approach to teaching and learning. Tasks have been selected to reflect what pupils encounter daily in the classroom. Scoring procedures have been designed to achieve accurate results, provided the tests are administered strictly according to the instructions provided.

EAL support resources are made available for schools catering for pupils with significant English language deficits assessed as having a language proficiency of either Level 1(0 or A1) or Level 2 (A2) based on the allocation thresholds outlined below.

All documentation in relation to the administration of tests must be retained by the school for audit/inspection purposes.

## **6. Allocation of resources for EAL support:**

### **6.1. Schools with fewer than 14 pupils requiring EAL support**

Grant aid is allocated at primary level to facilitate the Board of Management in funding the provision of part-time EAL support whilst at post primary level EAL support is allocated on the basis of part-time teaching hours.

### **6.2. New arrangements for allocation of full-time EAL support posts (See Appendix for outline of examples of support)**

The table below sets out the full-time resources that can be accessed to provide EAL support for pupils in the first two years:

<b>No. of posts</b>	<b>No. of pupils that require EAL support</b>
1 post	14 to 30 pupils
2 posts	31 to 90 pupils

### **6.3. Alleviation measures for schools with substantial number of pupils requiring EAL support**

This will involve up to 2 additional EAL support posts being allocated on the following basis:

<b>No. of posts</b>	<b>No. of pupils that require EAL support</b>
3 posts	91 to 120 pupils
4 posts	121 and over

**Pupils for the 3<sup>rd</sup> and subsequent EAL support posts to be counted on the following basis:**

- one for one basis where pupil has less than 1 year of EAL support
- two for one basis if a pupil has between 1 and 2 years EAL support (i.e., a weighting system will be applied so that every 2 of these pupils that have already had EAL support for between 1 and 2 years will be counted as 1 pupil for the purposes of meeting the allocation thresholds for EAL support posts).

**Potential additional posts by appeal**

- Primary schools where at least 25% of their total enrolment is made up of pupils that require EAL support (pupils with less than B1 (Level 3) proficiency) can lodge an appeal to the Primary Staffing Appeals Board for a review of their proposed allocation for 2009/10 under the above rules. The following amendment will be made to the existing criteria for making appeals to the Staffing Appeals Board –
  - Where the Appeal Board is satisfied that having considered the circumstances outlined by the school and having regard to the high number of pupils requiring EAL support additional post(s) may be approved to support the educational needs of such pupils
- Post-Primary or VEC schools where a significant number of the total enrolment is made up of EAL pupils with less than B1 (Level 3) proficiency can lodge an appeal for a review of their proposed allocation.
- Post-Primary or VEC schools where a significant number of EAL pupils with less than B1 (Level 3) proficiency are in third year or in the senior cycle can lodge an appeal for a review of their proposed allocation.  
Post-Primary and VEC schools can lodge an appeal to the Independent Appeals Board at Post-Primary level.

**7. Important points to note when counting pupil numbers**

- In determining all allocations for EAL support those pupils that have had the least amount of EAL support must be counted first.
- Schools must use 1 September 2009 as the reference date for determining how many years EAL support has already been given to pupils.
- Schools must take into account any EAL support provided to pupils in previous school(s) attended
- Pupils for 3<sup>rd</sup> and subsequent EAL support posts are counted on a one for one basis if they have had less than 1 year of EAL support and a two for one basis if they have between 1 and 2 years EAL support.
- If the Department is satisfied that EAL support is required for an additional year beyond the 2 year period (see 8 below) then such pupils will be counted on a three for one basis for the purposes of meeting the allocation thresholds for all part-time and full-time EAL support posts.

Allocations of EAL support posts will be given on a provisional basis pending confirmation of actual enrolment on 30 September. In exceptional circumstances, if a significant number of students requiring EAL support are enrolled after 30 September, then the school may apply for additional resources.

**8. Applications for EAL support for pupils beyond the 2 year period**

All applications for EAL support for pupils for an additional year beyond the 2 year period will be dealt with on the following basis:

- The application in respect of such pupils must include details of how the school has addressed the language needs of these pupils in the previous 2 years.
- The application in respect of such pupils must outline how it is proposed to optimise the opportunities of the pupils for whom an additional year is being sought.
- Each pupil for whom EAL support is sought beyond the 2 year period must have an assessment carried out using the Primary or Post Primary Assessment Kit. The assessment must have been carried out within 3 months of the date of submission of the

- application for EAL support to the Department and must show that the pupil has not attained Level B1 proficiency. The actual assessments do not need to be submitted to the Department but retained in the school and kept available for inspection.
- If the Department is satisfied that EAL support is required for an additional year beyond the 2 year period then such pupils will be counted on a **3 for 1** basis for the purposes of meeting allocation thresholds for all part-time and full-time EAL support posts (i.e., a weighting system will be applied so that every 3 of these pupils that have already had EAL support for 2 years or more will only count as 1 pupil for the purposes of meeting the allocation thresholds for all part-time and full-time EAL support posts).

**9. General**

There is an option of additional language support through Irish for pupils in schools that provide instruction through the medium of Irish provided those pupils first language is neither English nor Irish. This option is only available for pupils who otherwise qualify under the terms of this circular and will not be provided for pupils whose first language is English.

**10. Application forms**

The same form should be used at primary level to apply for grant aid and for EAL support posts. Please click here [EALP1.doc](#) to download Primary Application Form EAL/P1 and here [Form NN09.10.doc](#) for Post Primary Application form NN 09/10. Please note that queries regarding the Circular may be E-Mailed to

Primary Schools - <mailto:PrimaryAllocations@education.gov.ie> and  
Post-primary Schools – <mailto:Allocations@education.gov.ie>

Hubert Loftus  
Principal Officer  
Primary Teacher Allocations  
Allocations  
March, 2009

Anne Killian  
Principal Officer  
Post Primary Teacher

## Appendix to Circular

**The following sample cases help illustrate the new allocation arrangements for fulltime posts:**

Sample cases	Current position	Position for 2009/10 using above allocation method set out in this circular and below
School with 121 pupils that have had less than 1 year of language support	6 posts	Total 4 posts* calculated as follows  2 posts automatically for first 90 pupils  3 <sup>rd</sup> post for next 30 pupils (91-120 counted 1 for 1) 4 <sup>th</sup> post – 121 pupils
School with 121 pupils that have had between 1 and 2 years language support	6 posts	Total 3 posts* calculated as follows  2 posts automatically for first 90 pupils  3 <sup>rd</sup> post for remaining 31 pupils counted as 15.5 on 2 for 1 basis
School with between 14 to 30 pupils that have had less than 2 years of language support	1 or 2 posts	1 post*
School with between 31 to 90 pupils that have had less than 2 years of language support	2 to 4 posts	2 posts*
School with 120 pupils (40 of whom have had less than 1 year of language support and the other 80 pupils have had language support for between 1 & 2 years)	5 posts	3 posts* calculated as follows:  2 posts automatically for first 90 pupils (the 40 pupils that have had less than 1 year EAL support must be counted first) 3 <sup>rd</sup> post for remaining 30 pupils counted as 15 pupils on 2 for 1 basis

**\* Potential additional posts by appeal set out in Section 6.3 of Circular and below.**

Primary schools where at least 25% of their total enrolment is made up of pupils that require EAL support (pupils with less than B1 (Level 3) proficiency) can lodge an appeal to the Primary Staffing Appeals Board for a review of their proposed allocation for 2009/10 under the above rules. The following amendment will be made to the existing criteria for making appeals to the Staffing Appeals Board –

- *Where the Appeal Board is satisfied that having considered the circumstances outlined by the school and having regard to the high number of pupils requiring EAL support additional post(s) may be approved to support the educational needs of such pupils*

Post-primary or VEC schools, where a significant number of their total enrolment is made up of EAL pupils with less than B1 (Level 3) proficiency can lodge an appeal for a review of their proposed allocation.

Post-primary or VEC schools where a significant number of EAL pupils with less than B1 (Level 3) proficiency are in third year or in the senior cycle can lodge an appeal for a review of their proposed allocation.

Post-Primary and VEC schools can lodge an appeal to the Independent Appeals Board at Post-Primary level.

## APPENDIX 3

### The list of languages into which the questionnaires for parents were translated

#### Primary schools

Albanian  
Arabic  
Bengali  
Bosnian  
Bulgarian  
Chinese  
Croatian  
Estonian  
Filipino (Tagalog)  
French  
Greek  
Hindi  
Hungarian  
Igbo  
Kannada  
Kurdish  
Latvian  
Lithuanian  
Malayalam  
Polish  
Portuguese (Brazil)  
Portuguese (Portugal)  
Romanian  
Russian  
Shona  
Slovak  
Spanish Bolivian  
Swahili  
Ukrainian  
Urdu  
Urhobo  
Yoruba  
Zulu

