ALFRI – Accreditation

by Language for Results International

For exceptional EAL provision

Assessors' Report

Assessment date: 20/12/2022

Preface

This report follows Accreditation by Language for Results International (ALFRI), an accreditation scheme for international schools to demonstrate the quality of their English as an Additional Language (EAL) provision run by The Bell Foundation.

The Bell Foundation is a charity which aims to overcome exclusion through language education by working with partners on innovation, research, training and practical interventions. It accredits regional Centres of Expertise in the UK to build sustainable provision for learners who use English as an Additional Language (EAL) and offers Language for Results International, a high-quality suite of training, tools, resources and accreditation for international schools underpinned by the latest research and designed with learner impact at the forefront.

ALFRI focuses solely on the quality of EAL provision in international schools and offers a specialist focus. It does not include other aspects, such as safeguarding and safer recruitment, student welfare, facilities, boarding, or the financial viability of the school and its accounting procedures. It supports international schools to evaluate, develop and improve their leadership and educational provision for plurilingual pupils who use EAL. Schools which successfully complete the accreditation process receive a quality mark.

1. Context

Oryx International School, Doha, Qatar, part of the Orbital group, resolved to start the application process for ALFRI accreditation in September 2022. After an initial meeting with the assessors, where the school's current policies and practices were briefly discussed against each of the assessment criteria, it was mutually agreed that the school was ready to proceed with the submission of evidence. The school submitted its evidence for assessement on 17/11/2022 and it was awarded accreditation.

2. Final outcome and summary of findings

Final outcome

The school meets the accreditation criteria. It will be accredited for the quality of its EAL provision for three years.

Summary of findings

Strengths
The evidence submitted paints a picture of a school where the cultural and linguistic diversity of the pupils is celebrated and where this distinctive ethos regarding the value of EAL pupils is clearly visible and embedded within the school's activities, and valued by pupils, parents and staff. EAL provision is a school priority for the school's leadership team and there are systems and procedures in place to ensure that the solid EAL policy is operationalised successfully. There are multiple and varied opportunities for professional learning for school staff. Pupils who use EAL achieve impressive learning outcomes, as demonstrated by attainment and progress data.

Areas for consideration
The school would benefit from: 1) Supporting staff to become more intentional in their exploitation of home languages within the classroom setting beyond use of translation as a scaffolding. 2) Ensuring that continuing professional development for individual staff members and specific departments is fully relevant and appropriate to their needs, or appropriately differentiated to take account of the different starting points, previous knowledge, experience and expertise of individuals (See detailed comments for each criterion below)

3. Detailed findings

Dimension 1: Inclusive vision, values, attitudes and behaviours	
Outcome:	Exemplary/Leading
Comment:	The evidence submitted paints a picture of a school where the cultural and linguistic diversity of the pupils, and the unique nature of Oryx's student body is celebrated and where this distinctive ethos regarding the value of EAL pupils, is recognised in many school policies and practices. This is evidenced by the school's mission, values and guiding principles which have at the heart of them a focus on global citizenship. This focus appears to be promoted widely on the website and throughout the school and can be seen in school signage, displays and importantly embedded within the curriculum, and teaching and learning.
	Parental involvement appears to be very good, and parents/caregivers clearly play an active role in school life from organising events to influencing decision making via the Parent Teacher Student Association. Effort is made to ensure families feel welcomed, valued, and connected to each other, and the wider school community.
	Feedback from parents is good as evidenced by some of the quotes submitted as evidence.
	Since the final accreditation meeting with The Bell Foundation the school has successfully been awarded accreditation by the Council of International Schools, in which quality of EAL provision was widely praised.

Dimension 2: Inclusive governance and leadership for EAL	
Outcome:	Exemplary/Leading
Comment:	The submitted evidence demonstrates that student and staff feedback is collected, analysed and used to inform school wide teaching and learning for pupils using EAL as well as appropriate professional learning activity for staff. The samples submitted for accreditation show that staff feel supported by the EAL department and have received training which has contributed to them feeling more confident in meeting the needs of their learners. Feedback from pupils shows that they largely enjoy their classes, understand their language targets and feel supported by key staff. Monitoring and evaluation data including informal observations, joint planning meetings, specific EAL learning walks, and attainment data is consistently used to inform decisions around appropriate in- class and/or withdrawal support. The EAL lead, with support and input from the senior leadership team, also draws upon this data to make informed decisions about professional learning for staff which then feeds through to the School Development Plan. The data also enables the EAL team to create more informal learning opportunities for staff during joint planning or in-class support.

Dimension 3: Whole-school language(s) policy	
Outcome:	Exemplary/Leading
Comment:	The school's language policy is aligned to its vision, mission and values and has recently been updated (October 2022) to incorporate Orbital group wide priorities, the specific context for learners using EAL at Oryx International and more recent learning from training run by The Bell Foundation. The updated policy, which was reviewed by parents, staff and SLT, is a comprehensive document which provides clear direction in many relevant dimensions of EAL provision. There are clear guidelines, explaining the roles of different staff with reference to EAL provision, as well as a clear outline of relevant processes. It uses the most recent and best available evidence regarding the time it takes pupils who use EAL to transition from new to English to competent and fluent in English, inclusive approaches, and EAL assessment to inform its approach to meeting their needs and to help them to achieve their full potential. The policy refers to EAL entry and exit, however in the document it is not entirely clear how decisions are made regarding what support is provided, for how long, how this is monitored. During the accreditation meeting the EAL lead was able to provide a very sensible and comprehensive overview of how these decisions are, and it would be recommended that these processes are captured within the EAL policy document.
	Overall, the evidence submitted suggests that the policy is being enacted across the school, for instance, through the awareness and use of EAL-friendly strategies, through a prominent a focus on EAL training for school staff and through the celebration of multilingualism across the school.
	Suggestions:
	include more detailed information about how decisions are made regarding EAL support
	1. Outline how the EAL policy links to other relevant policies that the school uses which may/should include a focus on pupils using EAL. This might include a Language policy or Literacy policy.

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Dimension 4: Continuing professional development and learning for EAL	
Outcome:	Exemplary/Leading
Comment:	The evidence provided shows a varied, impact focused CPDL programme around EAL provision that is well planned and integrated into broader school CPD and forms part of the school development plan.
	There is evidence of both internally delivered INSET sessions and external courses such as those by The Bell Foundation focused on developing EAL provision. Four staff have completed the Teaching English in Multilingual Classrooms (TEMC) Lexis Education course, and more are due to take the course in 2023. Staff from across the school have completed training including teaching staff from both primary and secondary stages.
	Evidence shows that immediate feedback from CPDL activity is taken using impact forms which encourages teachers to reflect on the personal impact of the training content and state how they will share this information with colleagues. There is evidence that indicates some teachers using strategies learned about via CPDL in both their planning and lesson materials.
	The evidence provided indicates that all EAL specialists are appropriately qualified, and one staff member has completed the Lexis Education Tutor Training and can provide their TEMC course to internal staff. Staff at Oryx have been asked by Orbital to share their expertise with staff opening a new Orbital school in the region and will offer TEMC training to staff at the new school, which is evidence that the school's practice is beginning to be involved in capacity building beyond the school.
	Suggestions:
	1. Taking into account the staff-turnover at Oryx, consider how the school can ensure EAL-focused CPD continues to be available to newly joining staff and that longer-serving staff still have access to relevant EAL CPD opportunities.
	2. Look for ways to ensure that EAL-focused staff development is not just delivered via INSET/meetings but allows teaching staff opportunities to experiment, reflect, refine and share classroom practice in collaboration with colleagues.

Dimension 5: Assessment and placement of plurilingual pupils	
Outcome:	Exemplary/Leading
Comment:	The evidence submitted demonstrates that the school has a well-developed and effective admissions process. EAL assessment is made part of the mainstream admissions process. EAL assessment data for new arrivals is recorded and shared with relevant staff. The admissions process is based on both a CAT4 assessment and, for those students identified as requiring English language support, a structured zoom interview. Discussions with parents (using interpreters if required) are used to gain additional information. Placement looks beyond language proficiency and also looks to put students in classes with children who share a language or with plurilingual learners of similar proficiencies to facilitate intensive support. There are systems for sharing admissions information and this information is used to inform EAL support and the creation of individual support plans. Once admitted, students are categorised according to the amount of support they require (starters, movers and flyers). Students are withdrawn during MFL lessons for intensive EAL support for up to 5 sessions per week according to their proficiency. There is evidence provided that subject teachers are using The Bell Foundation Assessment Framework to assess student progress and set targets and this information is shared with the EAL team via a tracking spreadsheet. In addition, curricular assessment is adapted for plurilingual learners so that they are better able to access these assessments and demonstrate their learning. Assessors were provided with verbal evidence that moderation activity takes place around the agreement of which level of EAL support a pupil receives. Suggestions: 1. You might want to consider re-labelling your 'starter', 'mover' and 'flyer' bands as this terminology comes from the Cambridge Young Learner English Proficiency exams which are aligned to the CEFR in a very different way to how you are using these terms at Oryx (for Cambridge: Starters = pre-A1, Movers = A1 and Flyers = A2 on the CEFR – all three of which would roughly fall under

	Bands A-B in The Bell Framework). In addition, the Cambridge exams measure general English proficiency whilst The Bell Framework measures language use in the context of the curriculum, so they are not measuring the same thing. This disparity may cause confusion to staff, or resistance from students or parents who have encountered the Cambridge exams previously as they are quite widely used, especially in European countries and the private English Language Teaching sector as a whole.

Dimension 6: Curriculum, teaching and support of plurilingual pupils	
Outcome:	Exemplary/Leading
Comment:	Teaching and learning for EAL follows a school-wide teaching and learning policy document which outlines expectations of staff and learners.

The content of EAL tuition is based on the Assessment Framework targets which helps anchor them to the curriculum and topics are tailored to student interests. Joint planning meetings take place with subject teachers and the EAL team to ensure that

Evidence is provided of a wide range of support strategies such as word banks and mats, story maps, group discussion, sentence starters etc. There is evidence that use of translation strategies are widely embedded. E.g., the use of the translator apps during class to enable students to glean the meaning of key texts, the provision of glossaries and sentence frames with translations. Samples of student work suggest that learners feel comfortable using their home languages to plan written work and make notes of translations to strengthen understanding when reading.

Assessors could not find evidence of oral translanguaging strategies and could not ascertain whether teachers are comfortable directing the use of home language in the classroom.

Students receiving EAL support are assigned targets linked to The Bell Foundation framework, and there is evidence that these are made explicit to students by copying them into their books and highlighting them when they are met. This is also evidence of development of metacognitive and self-regulation strategies around students' own language learning.

Recommendations:

1. Something to consider is supporting staff to become more intentional in their exploitation of home languages. For example, creating a classroom home language policy that specifies in which contexts and task types use of home languages is useful. This will help move beyond use of translation as a scaffolding tool to build a clear 'house-style' of pedagogical translanguaging that works in your setting. |

	2. Whilst it is positive that teachers are using the Bell Foundation descriptors to inform language targets for learners, consider whether having students copy these verbatim into their books without mediation is the most effective way to communicate these targets. The descriptors are designed for use by teachers so may require some mediation to make them more clearly accessible to learners, especially at primary level.

Dimension 7: Learning of plurilingual pupils	
Outcome:	Exemplary/Leading
Comment:	The evidence provided demonstrates that pupils are achieving outstanding results. 2022 was the first year a Y13 cohort graduated, and the A-level results allowed students to get in to a wide range of respected university programmes worldwide. The assessors were unable to ascertain which of these graduating students would have required EAL support during their school career. Due to the relative newness of the school longer term trends in the final academic achievement of the school's plurilingual learners is still being collected. There is a clear and explicit focus on developing students as global citizens evidenced both in curricular planning documents and in extra-curricular events such as the Model UN The school's EAL provision received a commendation during the COBIS accreditation, and the report also notes the school's strong commitment to promoting internationalism (see comment on Dimension 1). Regarding the development of a plurilingual identity, this is evident in the translanguaging strategies used and in the enrichment activities (see comment on Dimensions 1 and 6 above) Recommendations 1. Ensure that records of which students have received targeted EAL support are kept, and analyse data on their achievements and results, even once targeted support is no longer required, so that you can evidence the achievement of your plurilingual learners and identify any gaps in provision. 2. Continue promoting and developing the intentional use of students' existing language repertoires to support learning, ensuring that use of students' home languages is not only viewed as a scaffolding tool, but a means to develop students' plurilingual identities and their social-emotional well-being.

Assessors

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