

Ethnic Minority Achievement Service



Assessment of pupils with English as an additional language - advice and guidance in the investigation of possible Special Educational Needs

The identification and assessment of the special educational needs of children whose first language is not English requires particular care. It is necessary to consider the child within the context of their home, culture and community. Where there is uncertainty about an individual child, schools should make full use of any local sources of advice relevant to the ethnic group concerned, drawing on community liaison arrangements wherever necessary.

Special Educational Needs Code of Practice, 2001

With thanks to: Milton Keynes EMASS. 2004 Guidance on the assessment of EAL pupils who may have Special Educational Needs

NALDIC ITTSEAL website August 2010 – SEN and the Code of Practice

NB. In the first instance, any BME pupil causing concern should be referred to EMAS for further discussion, advice and guidance. Please do not put SEN procedures into action until you have consulted EMAS for advice. See contact details at end of document.

Points to consider

When seeking to identify whether an EAL pupil may also have special educational needs, schools must take the following points into consideration before beginning SEN support for the pupil. Careful tracking and monitoring of all pupils will ensure early identification of slow progress.

- Lack of competence in English must not be equated with learning difficulties
- A full understanding of the languages the pupil speaks and the current use and proficiency in them is essential
- Schools should look carefully at all aspects of a pupil's performance across the curriculum to establish whether perceived problems are due to limitations in their command of English
- Parental engagement is critical in identifying pupil need- parents must be consulted and kept informed of any school concerns
- Use of trained interpreters is essential in clarifying language needs or special educational needs
- Robust induction procedures should ensure that all relevant educational information about a new to English pupil is shared with school thus avoiding any initial misunderstandings about pupil ability.
- Schools should also be aware that if pupils with EAL make slow progress, this may not just be due to their unfamiliarity with English- they may have learning difficulties
- As with any BME pupil causing concern, schools should contact EMAS for further advice in relation to EAL pupils' progress before deciding on a particular course of action.

Triggers for concern

The list below is not comprehensive but is indicative of a need to look into pupil progress in more detail.

- Language acquisition progress below expected norm
- Unusually slow work rate compared with peers
- Little response to teacher or peer intervention
- Specific weakness in English language development e.g. poor verbal comprehension, limited vocabulary and use of expression
- Poor listening and attention skills
- Specific weakness in English literacy skills, e.g. difficulties in reading, comprehension or limited unaided writing
- Gap between cognitive ability tests (CATs) and reading age at KS3/4
- Very low EYFS scores at end of YR
- Poor ability in first language
- Inability to acquire basic number concepts
- Parent expressing concern over pupil's progress in school
- Pupil has difficulty in subjects which are less language dependent.
- Pupil shows signs of distress, difficulty with social skills, is withdrawn or other indicators of emotional or behavioural problems

Possible reasons for these concerns

Before deciding whether the above triggers for concern indicate a pupil with SEN a range of possible reasons for these concerns should also be considered and addressed. These may include:

- The culture and ethos of the school, or the curriculum, are not inclusive
- There has been insufficient time or opportunity for the establishment of proficiency in English
- Teaching and learning have not been differentiated appropriately for a developing bilingual pupil
- The pupil has developed good conversational English, but has not been supported to become fully proficient in the formal academic language necessary for learning
- The pupil is experiencing the emotional effects of racism or other stressful life events, particularly in the case of newly arrived or refugee pupils

- There is a specific language disorder
- The pupil has been identified previously with Special Educational Needs

First language assessment

Accurate first language assessments are useful to give an indication of a pupil's general language development. Age appropriate competence in first language will usually indicate that the pupil has English language acquisition needs rather than SEN. If, after appropriate pupil tracking and assessment against EYFS or NC levels, it is decided that a first language assessment would provide useful information then the following prompts should be taken into account. With some languages it is important to identify the same dialect of the first language when considering interpreting needs.

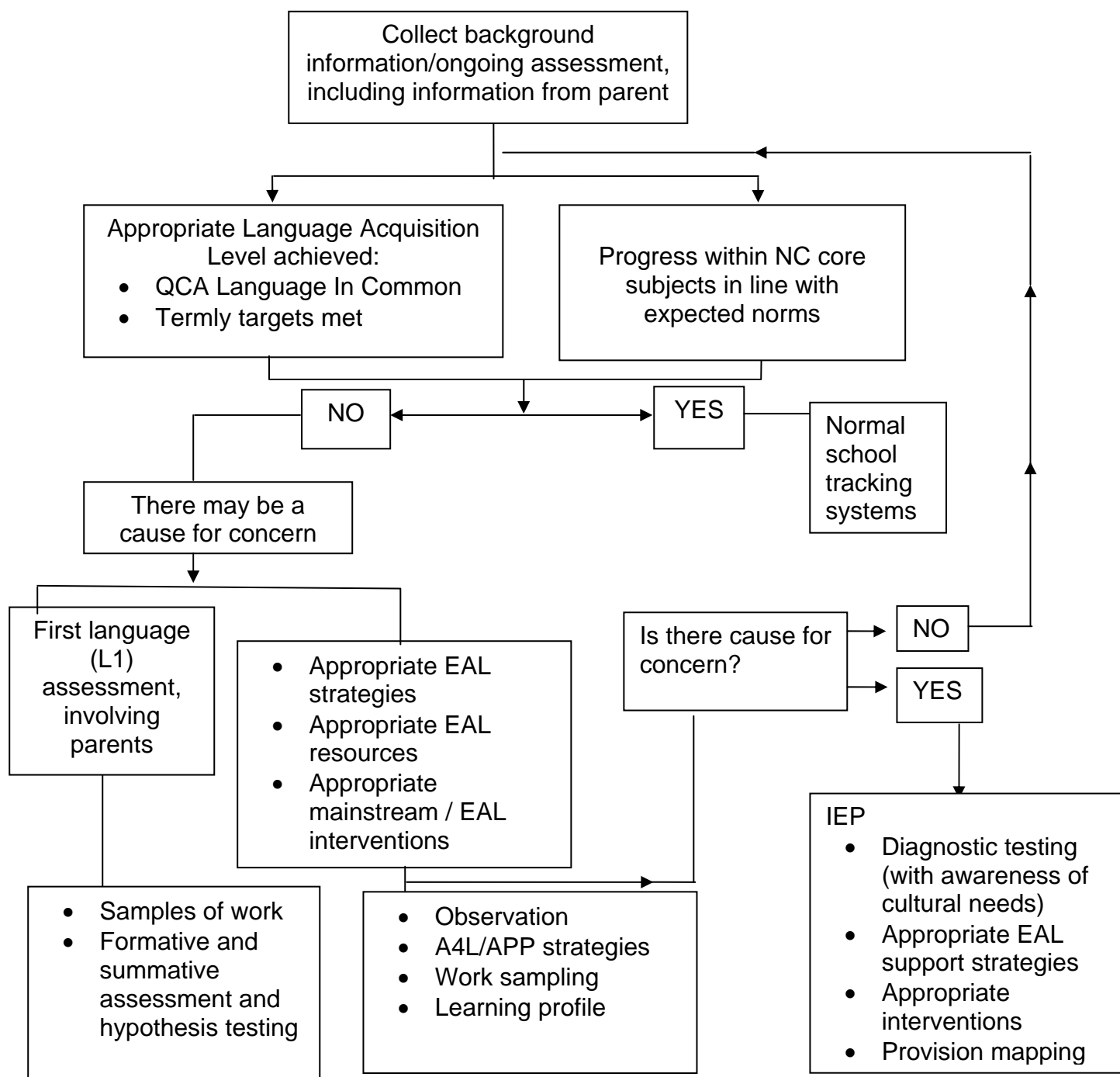
- Schools will have to consider arrangements for trained interpreters to conduct any assessments with school/EMAS staff
- Parents must have given permission for a first language assessment and if possible be involved in the process
- If possible, interpreters should be previously known to the pupil.
- The pupil should feel comfortable where the assessment takes place – sometimes it may be more appropriate to carry it out at home, especially for a young pupil
- First language assessments should focus on age appropriate language which should be known i.e. the social language used in the home and language taught in school. Major gaps in areas in which the pupil has had ongoing opportunities to learn may indicate learning difficulties.
- There may not be a clear correspondence between first and second language; for example, if a child is more competent in first language this may highlight an EAL learning need rather than SEN. This should be considered in discussion with the interpreter.
- The pupil may have limited competence in first language because one or both of the parents are second or third generation UK born and may provide a limited first language model themselves.

Please contact EMAS for further advice and support in carrying out first language assessments

Flow chart to determine language or learning need.

If a pupil with EAL is making less than expected progress it may be useful to follow the flow chart below to identify which course of action to take.

Please contact EMAS for support at any point in this process.



See also www.emas4success.org > **New to English** > Advice & Guidance

- Advice and guidance on pupils new to English
- Action Planning for Early Stage Bilingual learners
- EAL Pupil assessment pack

Whole school planning > Advice to schools > Policy for the Induction and Assessment of Newly Arrived Pupils

Further advice and guidance

NALDIC ITTSEAL website August 2010 – SEN and the Code of Practice gives a clear account of the context and procedures necessary in accurately identifying SEN in EAL pupils <http://www.naldic.org.uk/ITTSEAL2/teaching/Response.cfm>

For further discussion and examples of what IEPs may need to cover in the case of a bilingual child, see the Portsmouth EMAS web site. Also check the Portsmouth EMAS website for the full list of the 'SEN or EAL?' filter questions:

<http://www.school-portal.co.uk/GroupWorkspaces.asp?Groupid=922201&Workspaceld=1568041>

The SEN Code of Practice has a chapter on partnership with parents.

<http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/docbank/index.cfm?id=3724>

Milton Keynes LEA's Handbook Guidance on the Assessment of EAL Pupils who may have Special Educational Needs:

http://www.mkweb.co.uk/emass/documents/website_EAL_SEN_Artwork.pdf

Achievement for All – new project from DCSF to provide the very best opportunities to ensure children and young people with SEND fulfil their potential. DCSF ref 00782-2009, available from <http://nationalstrategies.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/node/225595>

EMAS contact details

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