

EAL specialists and support staff in schools

The range of adults involved in supporting the language and curriculum learning of pupils for whom English is an additional language is wide. It may include:

- [EAL or EMA consultants](#)
- [EAL or EMA co-ordinators](#)
- [EAL teachers](#)
- [Bilingual teaching Assistants, EAL teaching assistants and Higher Level Teaching Assistants](#)
- [Other support staff including nursery nurses, learning mentors and learning support staff](#)

These staff may be located within a specialist team or department (particularly in the case of schools with a significant percentage of EAL and ethnic minority learners) or within Inclusion or Pupil Support teams or departments. School based specialist staffing is largely limited to schools with significant numbers of bilingual or ethnic minority learners. In mainly monolingual areas, specialist consultants, teachers and support staff employed by the local authority (LA), may undertake short term placements, peripatetic support in schools or offer advisory visits when a new pupil learning EAL is enrolled.

EAL or EMA Consultants

The specialist role of EAL consultant has been strengthened by a Primary National Strategy initiative to promote the use of EAL consultants to assist primary schools to address the needs of EAL learners, particularly those at a 'more advanced' stage in their learning of English. It has produced [a range of materials](#) to support professional development and practice. EAL primary and secondary consultants are normally employed by the local authority and generally focus on whole school development and particularly mainstream teacher professional development rather than the provision of specialist teaching support for EAL learners.

EAL Co-ordinators

With workforce remodelling, a growing trend appears to be the employment of teachers who manage EAL learning through a team of bilingual and EAL specialist assistants and other support staff. Many such specialists will be called EAL or EMA co-ordinators. In some schools this role is carried out by the SENCO, Inclusion or Learning co-ordinator. These staff may not necessarily have EAL specialist expertise.

Recent DfES/Primary National Strategy guidance (2006) outlines possible responsibilities for this role in relation to: leading and managing; teaching; curriculum development; and working with communities. These include:

- data collection, analysis and interpretation
- advising on specific provision for underachieving children learning EAL – targeting resources including the deployment of bilingual and EAL support staff, the organisation and design of interventions, etc.
- advising on CPD for all staff
- completion of action plans and targets linked to school improvement
- planning and teaching with colleagues in order to develop expertise in meeting the language and learning needs of bilingual children
- supporting the adaptation of intervention programmes
- working with colleagues to develop appropriate resources
- supporting colleagues to develop their knowledge of the linguistic, cultural and religious backgrounds of children and their families and the social and political factors which affect their lives
- devising and enacting strategies to ensure that parents and carers understand the school's approach to learning and teaching and can participate as key partners

Source [Appendix 2 Coordinating the provision for children learning EAL](#), Introductory Guide - Supporting School Improvement *Excellence and Enjoyment: Learning and teaching for bilingual children in the primary years* DfES, 2006

Although not specifically included above, the EAL/EMA co-ordinator will often play a lead role in supporting trainees and newly qualified teachers to work with EAL learners.

Specialist EAL Teachers

Specialist teachers of EAL work with class and subject teachers by drawing on their specialist knowledge and understanding of second language acquisition and bilingualism to develop the English language skills pupils need for social interaction and for learning. These specialist teachers' additional knowledge of teaching and learning strategies makes an important contribution to the planning and delivery of a curriculum which draws on bilingual pupils' prior experience, is culturally relevant and meets their English language learning needs.

Specialist EAL teachers use strategies and skills to support the learning of English as an additional language in a curriculum context. They understand how to draw on: pupils' prior knowledge, including their proficiency in their first language and English; socio-economic and cultural background; their motivation and attitude to English and learning; their learning styles; personality and sense of identity. EAL teachers will take account of the academic and social purposes for which learners need to use English, the time it takes to gain proficiency in spoken and written language, whilst at the same time, recognising the need for pupils to learn the curriculum content (South, 1999)

Although there are no official national standards for EAL specialists, NALDIC published [The EAL teacher: Descriptors of Good Practice](#) (Franson, 2002) which described a common core of knowledge, skills and understanding. This publication was commissioned by the DfES and articulates the specialist teacher's role in:

- the teaching and learning of pupils with EAL
- the assessment, monitoring and recording of EAL pupils' progression
- the wider professional role of the EAL specialist

More recently, NALDIC has published a statement on [Promoting EAL Teacher Professionalism](#) which highlights five aspects of the specialist EAL teacher's knowledge and skills in relation to:

- Patterns of complex additional language development and bilingualism
- English as a complex linguistic system
- Language as part of social, cultural and multimodal practices
- Classroom (school) as a language ecology
- Teaching as community building and resource management

Bilingual Teaching Assistants, EAL teaching assistants and Higher Level Teaching Assistants

In investigating the roles of bilingual teaching assistants (BTAs), Martin-Jones and Saxena (2003) observed BTAs acting not only as a bilingual resource for teachers in working with pupils at an early stage of learning English, but also as providers of valuable support for learners; making links between home and school based contexts for learning. BTAs who share a language and cultural heritage with pupils are uniquely able to build on forms of knowledge and cultural experience brought from pupils' homes, so activating their prior knowledge and enhancing their access to the curriculum. Bilingual teaching assistants need to apply considerable skill and expertise in their work. Many have already qualified as higher level teaching assistants (HLTAs) although not all HLTAs working with EAL learners are bilingual.

Bilingual teaching assistants and higher level teaching assistants work under the direction of class and subject teachers. The [National Occupation Standards for Teaching Assistants](#) and [Professional Standards for Higher Level Teaching Assistants](#) provide a background to support student teachers to manage the classroom participation of these staff effectively and draw on their expertise in addressing the needs of pupils with EAL.

Specialist teachers of EAL and bilingual and specialist teaching assistants work with class and subject teachers to develop the language and learning of bilingual pupils and make an important contribution to race equality and inclusion.

Other support staff

In recent years, the range of additional adults working with EAL and bilingual learners in classrooms and schools has expanded. These adults may include monolingual teaching, learning or support assistants, learning mentors, learning support staff and nursery nurses. In many schools, there are not enough bilingual learners to attract any additional funding through EMAG, or the funding is too little to employ specialist staff. Some schools in this situation rely on teaching or learning assistants. These staff are often managed by the SENCo. Student teachers may need opportunities to discuss the expertise and expected roles of such staff with more experienced colleagues in their placement schools.

References

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[Qualifying](#)

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