

**ALFRI – Accreditation**  
**by Language for Results International**



**Assessors' Report**

**Britannica International Shanghai, Orbital Education**

Assessment date: 07/12/2021

## 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

Britannica International Shanghai, part of the Orbital Education group of international schools, resolved to start the application process for ALFRI accreditation in October, 2021. 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 assessment on 22/11/2021 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

The criteria for all seven dimensions have been met. The school has demonstrated that it is at the 'implementing' stage for six out of seven dimensions of EAL provision and 'exemplary/leading' in one dimension

### Summary feedback

<b>Strengths</b>
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 starting to feed through to policies, and practices across the school. The EAL policy is informed by a strong and relevant body of evidence. There are multiple and varied opportunities for teacher CPD, and professional learning around EAL provision does appear to be a school wide priority. The leadership team ensure that EAL learners make good progress through embedded assessment practices and high expectations regarding the quality of student experience. The curriculum is logically sequence and fully inclusive of pupils using EAL.
<b>Areas for consideration</b>
Overall, the submission would have benefited from explanation beyond titles, as in some cases the evidence provided needed some narrative explanation to help the assessors understand the links between the examples provided and how these evidenced specific criteria. See the comments for the seven dimensions for specific suggestions.

### 3. Detailed findings

<b>Dimension 1: Inclusive vision, values, attitudes and behaviours</b>	
<b>Outcome:</b>	Exemplary/Leading
<b>Comment:</b>	<p>The submitted evidence shows how both the cultural and linguistic diversity that is present in the school and what the school community has in common are showcased and celebrated in whole-school events, such as the events organised by the parents' group 'Friends of Britannica', United Nations Day, International Day, and mother Tongue Day.</p> <p>The school has a Global Citizenship policy, a World Languages programme that includes both home languages and modern foreign languages, and internationalism lessons promote students' understanding of their role as global citizens in the wider world. The school also organises interpreters for parents' meetings to ensure that staff and parents can communicate successfully, and translations of key communications are translated into Mandarin.</p> <p>The use of displays with high-frequency and high-utility language alongside visual support, cue-cards and texts in the students' home languages and modern foreign languages provide a rich and stimulating environment for the acquisition of additional languages, maintenance of home languages and the development of plurilingual identities, as well as for managing behaviour and distributing cooperative learning roles.</p> <p><b>SUGGESTION:</b></p> <p>The school might benefit from considering how explicit references to 'native speaking teachers' in the website cast a deficit, potentially discriminatory light on local staff who use English as an additional language, how it can help perpetuate the unfounded perception that native speakers make ideal teachers only by virtue of an accident of birth or possession of specific passports (and thus contradicts the Equal Opportunities policy), and how the promotion of such teachers can offer unachievable, impossible and outdated models for children.</p>

## Dimension 2: Inclusive governance and leadership for EAL

### Outcome:

Implementing

### Comment:

The submitted evidence demonstrates that student satisfaction feedback, parent feedback and feedback from EAL staff and heads of year is sought and collected. How exactly this feedback is used to inform the School Development Plan (SDP) and decisions about policies, practices and resource allocation is less clear.

The evidence gives some indication that the Head of EAL reports on EAL at SLT level, so that they have the information they need to monitor the quality of provision and students' learning. However, how exactly senior leaders and governors draw on this data to support and challenge the EAL staff and teaching staff in general with regard to EAL provision is not clear. Evidence from the inspection report suggests that it is left to departments to decide how to use assessment data to support future teaching.

The evidence shows that leaders monitor the quality of teaching and learning through lesson observation. The submitted reports, however, focus mostly on what teachers and teaching assistants do and little or not at all on the impact of staff's practices on the learning of pupils using EAL. They do not offer feedback to move the teachers' and teaching assistants' development forward in this area.

Priorities regarding EAL provision are identified in the SDP. Current relevant initiatives focus on aligning the group's language guidelines with the school's policy and procedures, with a clear emphasis on the promotion of languages provision, which includes work on reviewing a number of policies and implement innovations. As this important and potentially impactful work is currently underway with an estimated completion date of June 2022, this aspect of Dimension 2 cannot be said to be fully implemented yet at the time of accreditation.

Suggestion:

- Consider conducting targeted observations or learning walks with a focus on EAL to collect more specific data on how well pupils using EAL are progressing and are supported to do so.

**Dimension 3: Whole-school language(s) policy**

**Outcome:**

Implementing

**Comment:**

The school's language policy is aligned to its vision, mission and values. The policy provides guidelines, explains the roles of different staff with reference to EAL provision, and outlines 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 (including integration in mainstream lessons), and EAL assessment.

The guidelines section refers to withdrawal or in class support sessions for students in Year 1 – Year 13 to support language acquisition, with a specialist EAL teacher. It is not entirely clear, however, how long students remain in withdrawal lessons or from which mainstream subject lessons they are pulled out. Nor is it clear how the students are placed into EAL lessons in relation to their baseline level, and what happens once pupils start making progress in their English language development.

The evidence shows how key aspects of the policy are communicated to parents, and how they are encouraged to support their children's EAL development. Evidence provided for other dimensions gives some indication that the policy is being enacted, for example, the use of EAL -friendly strategies, the deployment of teaching assistants for in-class support, etc.

The assessors were not able to gauge how the EAL policy links to other relevant policies which may/should include a focus on pupils using EAL.

Suggestions:

There is room for improvement in the current school EAL policy to ensure further clarity and consistency of procedures and practices. A reviewed version of the policy could:

- include more detailed information about how decisions are made regarding withdrawal practices
- clarify how WIDA assessments are used, and in what cases

**Dimension 4: Continuing professional development and learning for EAL**

**Outcome:**

Implementing

**Comment:**

This dimension has been assessed as implementing, because there is sufficient evidence of CPD activity related to EAL. However, there is also room for improvement in the current approach.

The school has a CPD policy in place which states its approach to professional learning and the types of activities and events that count towards CPD across the school, from externally run courses to in-house activities, such as shadowing and observing more experienced colleagues, action research, coaching and mentoring, development meetings, training days, learning walks, etc. It frames professional learning as leading to improvements in the quality of the educational experience for all students in the school. The policy establishes clear expectations regarding the alignment of professional development priorities to the targets included in the SDP for whole school, sector, curriculum and individual needs identified in Staff Performance Management reviews; and regarding monitoring and evaluation of CPD.

The evidence provided shows that EAL staff attended relevant external courses run by The Bell Foundation, Lexis Education and WIDA standardisation sessions. The inclusion of slides for CPD in EAL also suggest that in-house CPD is provided for teachers, although it is not clear how often CPD sessions have an explicit focus on EAL, or whether what is learnt in such sessions is enacted in teachers' practices. There is evidence of staff evaluating the usefulness of the CPD they took part in, including intention to apply what they have learnt in their practice.

The evidence provided does not show whether board members, leaders and staff are routinely involved in EAL-related CPDL or whether leaders take an active part in school CPDL initiatives focused on EAL as leaders or participants. Nor does it establish whether other front-line staff has access to CPDL that enables them to communicate effectively with plurilingual learners and their parents.

From the evidence submitted it can be inferred that the school only or mostly provides CPD on EAL for teachers and teaching assistants, and that this mainly consists of external courses and INSETT sessions.



Suggestions:

The potential for impact can be increased by:

- increasing the alignment between the generic CPD policy and the CPD approach and practices adopted for the professional learning of staff in relation to EAL
- going beyond attendance at external courses and in-house sessions, and developing a coherent, cohesive and evidence-informed approach to CPD in EAL that provides opportunities for teachers to rehearse and practise new strategies, supports teachers through the challenges of implementation and provides them with applicable feedback that moves their teaching forward
- adopting a whole-school approach to CPD in EAL, with leaders and non-teaching front line staff attending relevant training
- senior leaders actively participating in CPDL activities related to EAL, as leaders or participants

**Dimension 5: Assessment and placement of plurilingual pupils**

**Outcome:** Implementing

**Comment:** Overall, this dimension has been assessed as implementing, as there is sufficient evidence of assessment of pupils using EAL which makes use of a range of assessment instruments. However, there is room for improvement, particularly in terms of developing a simpler, more cohesive and more user-friendly approach.

Initial assessment gathers information from pupils and their parents through the admissions and enrolment form in the admission’s booklet. Informal observation and/or cognitive assessments are conducted for all students depending on their age and stage. If students are identified as using English as an additional language, then assessment of pupils’ levels of proficiency in English is conducted as well to identify those pupils who may have additional EAL support needs.

The EAL initial assessment procedure includes diagnostic teacher assessment of students’ language proficiency, EAL specialists’ observation of students that teachers feel may need support, and EAL assessment audits using Bell Foundation materials produced in the UK and contextualised within the National Curriculum as initial identification process, followed by American WIDA screener assessments, used to identify if a student is a candidate for EAL support. The evidence does not include a rationale for the use of two different assessment frameworks with different levels/bands of proficiency in English, and it is not clear how the school reconciles the differences between the six WIDA levels and the five Bell Foundation bands into a simple, user-friendly and coherent framework.

Students’ progress within the EAL support programme is monitored on an ongoing basis through an extensive and comprehensive quarterly audit of all English as an Additional Language learners. Interim assessment is used to determine if pupils using EAL have met the exit criteria using the WIDA Model progress and placement assessment. This tools is also used summatively at the end of the year to assess all the pupils using EAL who are receiving EAL support.

A reporting process is in place to ensure that parents are well informed about their children's progress throughout the year. Termly Pupil Parents meetings are also held, with interpretation available.

Suggestion:

- The school may want to consider including additional information in the admission form about languages other than native languages, as well as an indication of where the parents would assess their child(ren) on the four domains of language use.
- Consider including moderation and standardisation of assessment in-house, as well as training in EAL assessment for all teaching staff (as part of the CPD programme)

**Dimension 6: Curriculum, teaching and support of plurilingual pupils**

**Outcome:**

Implementing

**Comment:**

The school has a generic Teaching and Learning policy in place which sets clear expectations regarding the quality of students' experiences and prescribes specific practices. There is some room for improvement in this policy, particularly as it promotes VAK learning styles, a theory for which there is no robust evidence that it leads to improved learning and reinforces practices that may in fact be counterproductive (see Learning styles | EEF (educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk)). The influence of the inclusion of this theory in the policy on the beliefs and practices of the EAL team can be seen in the submission.

With respect to the curriculum for EAL, the school offers a Sheltered Curriculum for those pupils using EAL who are new to English or at the early stages of language acquisition, which integrates the development of the four domains of language use.

It is clear from the evidence that translanguaging practices are an integral part of EAL pedagogy. Teaching materials draw on pupils' existing language repertoires to clarify meaning (See comments in Dimension 1 above).

The evidence provided (two lesson plans and accompanying materials with a focus on fables) demonstrates careful and effective lesson planning. The lesson plans include stretch and challenge for high achievers, differentiation, scaffolding for those pupils using EAL who need it, and extension tasks for fast finishers.

The lesson materials are logically and pedagogically sequenced, give pupils a clear sense of direction through the use of learning intentions (expressed as WALT statements) and make use of models, worked examples and helpful prompts, such as substitution tables, word mats, writing frames and text planners to scaffold learning.

Evidence from the inspection report corroborates that differentiated teaching and assessment strategies and resources are used to meet the needs of individual pupils using EAL.

The evidence shows a focus on metacognition, particularly in the displays that refer to the practices of good language learners, the use of assessment for learning strategies, such as exit tickets focusing on success criteria, the planned facilitation of independent work with adequate guidance, and in explicitly teaching and supporting learners to plan their work.

Students in the EAL programme have access to Learning Village, which is used for self-paced learning at home.

It is less clear how exactly learners are supported in mainstream lessons, and how lessons that teach subjects and topics other than English integrate English language support for pupils using EAL.

Given the make-up of the school's cohort, some of the student to teaching assistant ratios are insufficient, particularly as there are many pupils using EAL working at Bands A and B, and needing significant support.

Suggestions:

The Learning and Teaching policy could be reviewed to include the latest best evidence to ensure that the strategies and practices it includes promote impactful learning of pupils using EAL.

Consider improving teaching assistant to student ratios to enable more robust support for the pupils using EAL who need it.

<b>Dimension 7: Learning of plurilingual pupils</b>	
<b>Outcome:</b>	Implementing
<b>Comment:</b>	The evidence suggests that pupils using EAL make good progress. Most students in EAL lessons make progress and improve in their proficiency in English, and then go on to achieve good results in secondary.

## Assessors

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