

Assessment of Children and Young People with English as an Additional Language Including Kent Steps



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Children, Families and Education



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Assessment of Children and Young People with English as an additional language including Kent Steps

1. Introduction

In Kent schools 3.4% of children and young people are recorded as having English as an additional language. Throughout Kent over 90 languages are used by children and young people with varying degrees of competency. In order for children and young people learning English as an additional language to achieve their potential it is important to continuously assess their progress in language development.

The definition of 'bilingual pupil' used in this document applies to all children and young people

“who use or have access to more than one language at home or at school - pupils who are living and learning in more than one language. It does not necessarily imply full fluency in all languages.” (1)

This document seeks to give a brief guidance on all areas of assessment for bilingual children and young people, from their initial arrival, formative assessment and assessment for learning. More detailed information on assessment for learning is included in the Primary National Strategy and the Key Stage 3 Strategy.

Kent Steps is the framework for assessment for English as an additional language which is currently recommended for use in Kent schools. The framework is suitable for the assessment of the development of English by bilingual children and young people and caters for the language needs of children and young people whose bilingualism may otherwise not be properly recognised e.g. Gypsy Traveller and Afro-Caribbean. (p.12)

2. Multi-lingual and Bilingual Children and young people

Children and young people who have English as an additional language, come from a wide variety of backgrounds. They may speak or have contact with two or more languages and will have varying degrees of competency in each one.

“Bilingualism where two or more languages are spoken fluently has been shown to provide a cognitive advantage. However for this to occur, a positive attitude to all the languages spoken is necessary both at home and at school.” (1)

The circumstances which result in a bilingual child arriving in schools are many and varied. They may include:

- Children born in the UK whose family use a language other than English at home and who may have had little exposure to English before coming to school. This may include those from a Gypsy Traveller background.
- Children born outside of England whose family move to the United Kingdom for economic reasons.

- Children whose parents are seeking asylum in the UK and who may have had limited or interrupted previous education.
- Unaccompanied minors who are separated from their family and often arrive during Key Stage 3 or 4.
- Children who may appear to speak English but who come from an oral culture and whose first language may not be recognised e.g. Gypsy Traveller languages such as Romani or in the case of Irish Travellers, Shelta or Gammon. Some families from oral cultures are reluctant to share information about their language.

Young people who arrive during the later stages of education have to acquire a new language at the same time as adding to their knowledge of the curriculum. This represents a serious challenge especially to those young people who have limited literacy skills in their first language. However, there are many examples of late arriving young people who, having literacy skills in their first language, do go on to achieve good grades at GCSE. (2)

3. Developing English as an additional language

Acquiring English as an additional language is a dynamic and continuous process.

- Research has shown that a child can acquire basic competency in English as an additional language in two years but to develop the higher order skills needed for academic progress can take up to seven years or longer
- It is important not to underestimate the continuing need for support for those more advanced bilingual learners (children and young people with a number of years exposure to English) (3)
- The newly arrived bilingual child and the more advanced learner are both at risk of underachievement if their need for on-going language support is not recognised and catered for.
- Effective assessment procedures can help to identify the differing needs of these groups and thus ensure their continued progress.

4. Why assess English as an additional language?

The on-going and continuous assessment of a child's proficiency in English as an additional language cannot be done through NC English levels alone for a number of reasons.

- NC English levels measure the attainment of learners in English as a subject and not the level of language proficiency in English as an additional language across the curriculum
- A teacher needs to know what level of proficiency in the use of English a child has in order to effectively assess, plan and monitor the child's progress in the curriculum.

The Kent Steps framework which incorporates the QCA EAL steps (4) can be used for both summative and formative assessment in terms of a bilingual learner's English language development.

It can

- Be used to track the progress of children and young people from different ethnic and language backgrounds

- Inform and monitor the impact of interventions designed to address the needs of bilingual children and young people
- Be used to plan, set targets and decide on the appropriate support needed to meet the language development needs of the children and young people

5. Initial Assessment

Assessment of children and young people with English as an additional language is a continuous process which begins with the gathering, on the child's arrival in school, of background information to establish their previous experiences and current level of achievement.

This information should be gathered over the first few weeks of settling in. (5) Materials used for assessment should be as free from cultural bias as possible.

An initial profile of a child could be compiled through:

- Interview with the parents (using an interpreter if necessary)
- Previous school records if available
- Observations in a variety of situations by teachers and support staff
- Informal assessment procedures e.g. discussions with the child, shared reading, unaided writing
- Short formal tests (these should be treated with caution and considered only alongside other sources of evidence)

The profile developed should be used as a starting point for teachers in planning the next steps for the pupil and should be continuously updated as part of the normal cycle of assessment, planning and review.

“Generally, bilingual pupils should be placed in chronologically appropriate year groups. Initial placement in low ability sets is not helpful because pupils new to English will benefit more from access to strong models of English language and confident learners” (1)

6. The role of First Language in assessment

As part of an initial profile, assessment of proficiency in the first language can be very helpful in determining a child's previous experience and current level of achievement. It can also give indications of a child's general language development, particularly when there are concerns about progress.

When using the first language to assess it is important to consider whether or not the child or young person's schooling has been entirely in English. If it has been, they will probably be more proficient in English in the academic domain and be unlikely to be able to talk about academic subjects in their first language.

- The focus for First language assessment should be on language commonly used in the home setting, language previously encountered in school and language in familiar contexts
- Gaps in areas of language which should be familiar to pupil in their first language may indicate learning difficulties.

In some formal tests it is possible to translate words or phrases into first language if this is usual practice for the pupils. However, this should be done with caution as

- Some languages do not have a written form
- There may be inexact correspondence between the two languages
- It can be difficult to ensure that the correct dialect of a language is being used (some languages have many dialects)
- Ideas and concepts do not always transfer from one language to another
- Common utterances in one language may be unusual in another (1).

7. Assessment for Learning

Bilingual learners need to know where they are in their learning, what the next steps are and how they can make progress. The key features of assessment for learning are

- Learning intentions are shared and understood
- Feedback focuses on learning intention
- Responses to children's work are based on guidance for improvement
- Children and young people evaluate their own and others' work
- Data is used to inform planning for progress
- Self esteem is raised through assessment.

Additional points to consider when working with bilingual children and young people

- If possible bilingual adults could discuss and explain learning objectives and elicit understanding
- Feedback should be culturally sensitive and constructive with errors seen as an opportunity for learning

(Excellence and Enjoyment: learning and teaching for bilingual learners contains a section on Planning and Assessment for learning for children learning English as an additional language due out in June 2006)

8. Distinguishing between EAL and Special Educational Needs

When a bilingual learner's progress gives rise for concern it is important to investigate a wide range of factors. The list of factors includes possible sensory, social, emotional and behavioural needs as well as conditions for learning within the classroom and school. (6) Failure to progress through the Kent Steps could also indicate possible additional concerns.

"A child must not be regarded as having a learning difficulty solely because the language or form of the language of the home is different from the language in which he or she will be taught" (7)

"The identification and assessment of the special education 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."(8)

Kent Steps

for assessment of English as an Additional Language (9)

Kent Steps assessments are evidenced by profiles of work, both oracy and written gathered from across the whole curriculum.

Profiling

Profiling means conducting a thorough and contextual assessment of a child's language, supported by evidence

Profiling is an intrinsic part of assessment and should actively encourage recognition of progress in first language and cultural experience.

- Profiling should include oracy and reading as well as writing. This should measure how far expectations and targets have been met and serve as a guide for future work including planning for individual and group targets. Spoken language activities can include whole class interaction (e.g. answering teacher's questions), group work (listening and showing active involvement, turn-taking, echoing modelled contributions to a discussion, answering and asking questions), and individual pupil-pupil and pupil-teacher interaction. It is important to acknowledge, record and if possible evidence use of first language in oracy too.
- An initial profile should be completed as soon as possible after arrival allowing for a period of settling in.

A termly profile is appropriate to track and cater for changing needs as language develops rapidly. Late arrivals (children and young people entering the UK education system in the later stages, where their curriculum access may be severely hampered at first) need frequent reviews of work in selected curriculum areas, to enable teachers' planning and target setting to respond to their progress.

Points to consider when using Kent Steps

1. Children and young people have reached a step when most of their behaviours under normal classroom/learning conditions without intensive support are covered by a given descriptor.
2. The set of descriptors is for the entire statutory school age range and should be interpreted in the context of the age of the child. This is particularly relevant to reading and writing and assessments should relate to normal expectations for the child's peer group.
3. A 'Step' for each of the 4 modes is determined using the descriptors. The 4 scores are then aggregated to determine the overall 'step' or level of language acquisition.

4. Where children and young people are literate in their first language there may be a wider spread of steps across the 4 modes of language.
5. Where a child comes from an oral culture and tradition there may also be a greater differential between the 4 modes of language e.g. Listening and Understanding, Speaking, levels may be higher than Reading and Writing
6. Schools using the Pupil Achievement Tracker will be able to include Kent Steps levels as a characteristic and so track the progress of pupils learning EAL in various ways. It could give data to help identify those EAL children and young people who are in need of additional support and act as a means of monitoring the impact of any intervention programmes.

Notes on Profiling

LISTENING & UNDERSTANDING , SPEAKING

This brief overview can be based on day to day observation. It should give evidence from a range of contexts such as:

- whole class presentations and interaction
- small group activities
- one to one dialogue with teacher
- pair work
- social interaction with peers

and should distinguish between:

- sustained listening
- response to direct questioning and/or structured turn-taking
- collaboration in discussion
- comments or questioning initiated by the child

READING

Assessment of reading should be based on knowledge of the child's reading experience and strategies over a period of time, preferably including an annotated text/ miscue analysis to examine in detail her/his approach to stretching, but achievable text.

NOTE: It is important to distinguish between decoding and reading with understanding. In this context decoding means "speaking the written words". This is of course a necessary part of the process but is not sufficient to meet the criteria of reading with understanding. Pupils literate in a first language with a similar phonetic code to English may be able to decode fluently. Each descriptor should be carefully interpreted to ensure that reading for meaning is assessed appropriately. Simply listening to the pupil read is insufficient to establish whether the pupil has understood the text.

WRITING

Profiling should include examples of writing from across the curriculum.

When assessing writing it is helpful to bear in mind the following questions.

- Is the overall meaning of the writing clear?
- Does the writing reflect the child's classroom language experience?
- Does the writing reflect the child's personal experiences?
- Does the writing convey an understanding of the classroom work underlying the task? (10)

LISTENING AND UNDERSTANDING

Starter (S0)

Pupils are working towards Step 1 and show very little understanding of any basic spoken English.

Early beginner (S1)

Pupils listen attentively for short bursts of time. They use non-verbal gestures to respond to greetings and questions, and they follow simple instructions based on the routines of the classroom. When possible, they listen to their first language.

Beginner (S2)

Pupils understand simple conversational English in familiar contexts. They listen and respond to the gist of general explanations by the teacher where language is supported by non-verbal cues, including illustrations. They demonstrate some understanding of classroom language after some repetition or explanation.

Threshold (S3)

Pupils understand and respond appropriately to individual straightforward comments or instructions addressed to them and closed questions asked in a supportive context. They listen attentively to a range of speakers, including teacher presentations to the whole class. They respond appropriately when the teacher addresses them in a small group. They demonstrate interest when listening to whole class discourse.

Secure (S4)

Pupils follow what others say in familiar contexts. They respond appropriately to sequences of instructions. They respond appropriately to a range of question types, including open questions.

Consolidating (S5)

Pupils show evidence of understanding the gist of lesson content. They understand conversations when the subject of the conversation is mainly concrete and have some understanding when figurative and idiomatic expressions are included. (i.e. they understand both informal language and aspects of more formal and academic language.)

Competent (S6)

Pupils understand conversations when the subject is abstract with figurative and idiomatic expressions. They participate in social and academic school interactions delivered at normal speed and participate as active speakers and listeners in group tasks. They understand more complex academic and specialist discourse when the content is accessible to them. When allowance is made for cultural references, pupils understand idioms and figurative language.

Independent (S7)

Pupils have the range of listening skills necessary to participate fully within the curriculum and can be fairly assessed using the National Curriculum. In addition, it is important throughout, where applicable, to value the pupils' attainment in language(s) other than English.

SPEAKING

Starter (S0)

Pupils are working towards step 1 and speak very few words of English, using gestures and first language to communicate with others.

Early beginner (S1)

Pupils echo English words and expressions drawn from classroom routines and social interactions to communicate meaning. They express some basic needs, using single words or short phrases in English and use first language where applicable.

Beginner (S2)

Pupils join others in predictable and repetitive responses and copy talk that has been modelled. They make intelligible single word and telegraphic utterances in social contexts. They use some standard English grammatical structures in simple social contexts.

Threshold (S3)

Pupils speak about matters of immediate interest in familiar settings. They convey meaning through talk and gesture and can extend what they say with support. Their speech is intelligible, but may be grammatically incorrect. They have sufficient functional vocabulary for everyday needs.

Secure (S4)

Pupils speak about matters of interest to a range of listeners, use sustained, connected utterances and have a range of longer phrases and sentences drawn from social and curriculum contexts. Their speech shows some grammatical complexity, for example in expressing relationships between ideas and sequences of events.

Consolidating (S5)

Pupils sustain organised, connected speech in academic conversations and modify their language to suit the context. They use an increasing range of academic and abstract vocabulary.

Competent (S6)

Pupils use language appropriately across the curriculum for different academic purposes but some minor errors may still be evident. Their discourse shows functional control of English and features expected in academic discourse. To suit the context, they vary their vocabulary which includes abstract, technical and idiomatic elements.

Independent (S7)

Pupils have the range of speaking skills necessary to participate fully within the curriculum and can be fairly assessed using the National Curriculum.

In addition, it is important throughout, where applicable, to value the pupils' attainment in language(s) other than English

READING

Starter (S0)

Pupils are working towards step 1 and read very little or no English.

Early beginner (S1)

Pupils participate in reading activities and differentiate English print from pictures. They know that English print is read from left to right and from top to bottom. They recognise their names, a few familiar words and identify some letters of the alphabet by shape and sound. They may build on their literacy in another language.

Beginner (S2)

Pupils associate straightforward sounds with letters in English and predict what the text will be about. They read words and phrases that they have learned in different curriculum areas and follow parts of a text read aloud.

Threshold (S3)

Pupils read a range of familiar words, and identify initial and final sounds in unfamiliar words. They establish some meaning when reading aloud phrases or simple sentences, and use contextual clues to gain understanding. They respond to events and ideas in poems, stories and non-fiction.

Secure (S4)

Pupils can read simple texts, use their knowledge of letters, sounds and words to establish meaning when reading familiar texts and guess meanings of unfamiliar words from the context. They comment on events or ideas in poems, stories and non-fiction.

Consolidating (S5)

Pupils use more than one strategy, such as phonic, graphic, syntactic and contextual, in reading unfamiliar words and extracting information from a variety of texts. They recognise some features of different genres.

Competent (S6)

Pupils read a range of complex texts and infer meaning beyond the literal. They use deduction and hypothesis to develop understanding and analyse and evaluate text. Pupils appreciate culturally embedded references and idioms they have come across or can deduce from the context.

Independent (S7)

Pupils have the range of reading skills necessary to participate fully within the curriculum and can be fairly assessed using the National Curriculum.

In addition, it is important throughout, where applicable, to value the pupils' attainment in language(s) other than English

WRITING

Starter (S0)

Pupils are working towards step 1 and do not yet produce any written English.

Early beginner (S1)

Pupils use English letters and letter-like forms to convey meaning. They copy or write their names and familiar words, and write from left to right. They may write in their first language (but not all languages have a written form).

Beginner (S2)

Pupils attempt to express meanings in writing, supported by talking or drawing. Their writing is intelligible to themselves and a familiar reader, and shows some knowledge of sound and letter patterns in English spelling and of the basic structure of sentences.

Threshold (S3)

Pupils produce recognisable writing. Most commonly used letters are correctly shaped, but may be inconsistent in their size, method of formation and orientation. They apply some regular and common spelling patterns. Pupils' writing conveys meaning and conforms to some patterns of English word order and sentence division.

Secure (S4)

Pupils use phrases and longer statements that convey ideas to the reader, making some use of full stops and capital letters. Some grammatical patterns are irregular and pupils' grasp of English sounds and how they are written is not secure. Letters are correctly shaped and orientated.

Consolidating (S5)

Pupils write in a range of appropriate grammatical structures when working in a framework which focuses on the genre (e.g. a writing frame which formats a report into specific sections). In free writing, pupils express their ideas in separate sentences or use simple connectives ('and' and 'but') rather than through complex sentences. To a certain extent, pupils adapt their writing to meet the demands of a range of genres.

Competent (S6)

Pupils produce appropriately structured and generally accurate work in a variety of familiar academic contexts with few errors. They apply organisational and other features to a range of genres, but may need to be cued to do this by the task.

Independent (S7)

Pupils have the range of writing skills necessary to participate fully within the curriculum and can be fairly assessed by using the National Curriculum.

In addition, it is important throughout, where applicable, to value the pupils' attainment in language(s) other than English

REFERENCES

- (1) DfES (2005) *Aiming High: guidance on the assessment of pupils learning English as an additional language*
- (2) Ofsted (2003) *The Education of Asylum-Seeker pupils*
- (3) Ofsted (2003) *Writing in English as an additional language in secondary schools and colleges*
- (4) DfES (2005) *A Language in Common: Assessing English as an additional language: Ref:/0196/2005*
- (5) Appendix A – Background Information Form
- (6) Hall D (2001).: *Assessing the Needs of Bilingual Pupils Living in Two Languages*
- (7) 1996 Education Act
- (8) SEN Code of Practice 2001 5.15
- (9) The Kent Steps are based on the DfES booklet, 'A Language in Common' with additional detail inserted by NASSEA and slight clarification to the wording by the Kent Minority Communities Achievement Service.
- (10) Gibbons, P, *Scaffolding Language, Scaffolding Learning*, (2002), New York, Heinemann

Further Reading

- DfES 2004: *Aiming High: Supporting Effective Use of EMAG* : Ref:/0283/2004
- Rosamond S. et al 2003: *Distinguishing the Difference SEN or EAL?* Birmingham Advisory & Support Service

Further Information on specific languages of Romani and Gypsy Traveller culture available from MCAS area Education bases

Information about Bilingual/Ethnic Minority Pupil

Full Name.....**DOB**.....**M/F**

Name child is called at home.....

Name child is called at school (if different).....

Origin.....Religion.....

Festivals observed
.....

Current School.....

Age when joined school.....

Current Year Group.....

Arrival date in the UK (if not British born plus year group on arrival).....

Length of previous schooling abroad, indicate nursery/pre-school etc.....

Language of instruction.....

Dates(s) of extended absences from schooling.....

Family view of important illnesses/other medical factors seen as important e.g. glasses
.....

Does child require any regular medication during the school day?.....

Dietary needs

Names of main carers and relationship to child:-
.....
.....

Names and ages of siblings

.....
.....

School correspondence should be addressed to:

Name/s.....

Most useful written language for the family.....

Is an interpreter needed for teacher to communicate with parents?.....

If so, who might this be?.....

Languages spoken at home.

By the pupil to: -

Mother.....Father.....

Grandparents.....Siblings.....

To the pupil by: -

Mother.....Father.....

Grandparents.....Siblings.....

APPENDIX A

Family impression of child's language use. Please indicate degree of fluency in the chart by writing A, B, or C.

- A** A little
- B** Fairly well
- C** Completely age appropriate

Name of language	Understands	Speaks	Reads	Writes	Frequency

Results of additional test/assessments

.....

Does the child attend any community classes or clubs?.....

Mother-tongue class.....

Language used/taught there.....

·
 Religious class.....

·
 Language used/taught there.....

Name(s) and address(es) of organisations.....

.....

Who is the contact person for the group/organisation?.....

Form Completed
 by.....

Date.....

APPENDIX B- This is an example of how a school has developed a Kent Steps profile sheet for use in their school. Other schools are welcome to use or adapt this form.

Tunbridge Wells Cluster
EAL Profile Sheet - Personal Student Support Plan.

Name	M/F	DoB	Admission date	UK School Entry Date	Home Language	Origin	Ethnicity
------	-----	-----	----------------	----------------------	---------------	--------	-----------

	Listening and Understanding	Speaking	Reading	Writing							
K E N T S T E P S											
T A R G E T S											
S T R A T E G I E S											
Profile 1	Date	Review	Profile 2	Date	Review	Profile 3	Date	Review			
L+U	S	R	W	L+U	S	R	W	L+U	S	R	W

Produced by J. Cooke at St. Gregory's Catholic Comprehensive School & D. Wilcock Tunbridge Wells Cluster ME and EAL Specialist Teacher

APPENDIX B- This is an example of how a school has developed a Kent Steps profile sheet for use in their school. Other schools are welcome to use or adapt this form.

Pupil Statement:

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Pupil Profile

Name: _____ School: _____ form: _____

1st Language: _____ Subject: _____

Listening & Understanding

Speaking

Reading

Writing

Other information:

Targets:

Teacher: _____ Aggregated language step: _____ date: _____

<i>This is an example of a completed Profile Sheet</i>
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Pupil Profile

Name:

School:

form: y6, Summer 2004

1st Language: Bhasa (Malay)

Listening & Understanding:

May 04: sought reassurance before carrying out writing task, but understood gist of activity. Used subject-specific maths language she had learnt on a number of occasions e.g. angles, but not harder words also used in lesson, e.g. complementary. July 04: in maths investigation on volume of boxes made from nets, approached task more systematically than rest of small group and demonstrated understanding of concept of volume, talked about packed cubes.

Speaking:

Apr 04: 1:1 chatted happily and with detail about home, brother etc. June 04: offered straightforward answers to closed questions in whole class Q/A session, with prompting from language support teacher. July 04: talked more confidently 1:1 and with group about transfer to new school but slightly shy about expressing personal view and reluctant to use words she wasn't completely sure about. Dictated 4 autobiographical sentences with prompts from language support teacher for detail.

Reading:

Mar 04: reading conference: used contextual and phonic cues, recognised genre (school fiction) and spoke enthusiastically about fiction various chats Mar-Jul 04: Loves reading, tackles books beyond her ability and talks about the story with pleasure. Misses much culturally referenced material but doesn't let it spoil her enjoyment of story. Does not enjoy non-fiction and tends to skim written task instructions too quickly.

Writing:

Mar 04 in-class observations: wrote simple sentences and basic connectives, mostly 'and'. Used supportive frameworks to structure writing. Tends not to adapt to genre, e.g. science recount was like story. May 04: sample Magic Box poem shows reliance on framework and model example and use of words without understanding? July 04 autobio writing basically correct but lacks detail, interest and length. Did try to use extended vocab, e.g. 'fasanating'. Has not yet got full command of tenses. Letter formation and punc OK.

Other information:

Targets:

Teacher:

Aggregated language step:

date:

APPENDIX D

pupil's name	M/F	date of birth	date arrived UK	date started UK school	home language	origin	ethnicity
--------------	-----	---------------	-----------------	------------------------	---------------	--------	-----------

school year	calendar year	school name	Terms 1 & 2					Terms 3 & 4					Terms 5 & 6				
			L&U	S	R	W	Agg	L&U	S	R	W	Agg	L&U	S	R	W	Agg
N																	
R																	
1																	
2																	
3																	
4																	
5																	
6																	
7																	
8																	
9																	
10																	
11																	
12																	
13																	
14																	

GUIDANCE NOTES

Home Language is the language other than English, the pupil encounters most at home. **origin** is the place (country, region) of birth of pupil or parents or that best describes the culture which carries the greatest influence at home.

Ethnicity, please use DfES code quoted under PLASC

STEPS Using the level descriptors as a guide, please write whole number 0-7. **L&U** = Listening & Understanding, **S**peaking, **R**eading, **W**riting. **Agg**= Aggregate, i.e. overall best fit combination of four component steps, reflecting achievement and and need.

APPENDIX D

pupil's name

<i>date</i>	<i>Please comment on additional factors that contextualise the assessment: e.g. pupil's use of first language: listening, speaking, reading, writing , social skills and cultural adjustment, years previous schooling, missed periods of education, additional/special needs, etc</i>