

ASSESSING ENGLISH PROFICIENCY OF EAL LEARNERS IN LAMBETH

Guidance Notes

1. Introduction

English Proficiency is a major factor in understanding how pupils with EAL achieve. From autumn 2016 onwards, all schools will have to include details of the English proficiency of pupils with EAL as part of the School Census. This paper aims to review the current EAL assessment systems in Lambeth and offer guidance in using the new national English Proficiency scales.

The paper covers:

- Existing Lambeth 4 Stages of Proficiency and assessment descriptors
- New national 5 Stages of Proficiency and assessment descriptors
- Proposed new descriptors to be used in Lambeth schools

2. Existing Lambeth 4 Stages of Proficiency and assessment descriptors

The EAL learning needs of pupils vary greatly from beginners to advanced learners. Throughout the 1990s and 2000s, four Stages of English have been widely used in Lambeth to describe the different stages of English through which pupils commonly progress (see Demie et al 2013).

These four stages range from beginner to fluent and are described below:

- Stage 1** ***New to English*** - Bilingual English learners who might be able to engage in classroom learning activities using their own mother tongue, but need support to operate in English.
- Stage 2** ***Becoming familiar with English*** - Bilingual English learners who can engage in all learning activities but whose spoken and/or written English clearly shows that English is not their first language. Their oral English is well developed but their literacy development in English is such that they need considerable support to operate successfully in written activities in the classroom.
- Stage 3** ***Becoming confident as user of English*** - Bilingual pupils whose oral and written English is progressing well and who can engage successfully in both oral and written activities, but need further support for a variety of possible reasons, for example pupils who are achieving considerable success in subjects such as mathematics and science but much less in others such as English or in Humanities, which are more dependent upon a greater command of English.
- Stage 4** ***Fully fluent in English*** - Bilingual pupils whose use of English and engagement with the curriculum are considered successful and who do not require additional language support.

The four stages are also widely used in Lambeth schools as a diagnostic tool to analyse needs for future teaching, tracking progress and to provide baseline information for statistical purposes. In general it is a very popular assessment with local schools and has been used in Lambeth since 1988.

3. New DfE national 5 Stages of Proficiency and assessment descriptors

The new statutory measure of English Language Proficiency has been introduced by the DfE, to distinguish between those pupils at early levels of English development and those at the more advanced stages. It is suggested that this will enable funding to be better targeted and as the DfE states 'the new data will provide statistics on the groups of children with EAL, on their attainment and destinations and identify any additional challenges they or their schools face.'

It is therefore essential that all schools use the same measure, so the DfE has adopted the five-stage scale of English proficiency, which maps progress from beginner to fluent users of English. The list of national 'Proficiency in English' codes and descriptors are as follows:

- Code A.** ***New to English-*** May use first language for learning and other purposes. May remain completely silent in the classroom. May be copying/repeating some words or phrases. May understand some everyday expressions in English but may have minimal or no literacy in English. Needs a considerable amount of EAL support.
- Code B.** ***Early acquisition-*** May follow day to day social communication in English and participate in learning activities with support. Beginning to use spoken English for social purposes. May understand simple instructions and can follow narrative/accounts with visual support. May have developed some skills in reading and writing. May have become familiar with some subject specific vocabulary. Still needs a significant amount of EAL support to access the curriculum.
- Code C.** ***Developing competence-*** May participate in learning activities with increasing independence. Able to express self orally in English, but structural inaccuracies are still apparent. Literacy will require ongoing support, particularly for understanding text and writing. May be able to follow abstract concepts and more complex written English. Requires ongoing EAL support to access the curriculum fully.
- Code D.** ***Competent-*** Oral English will be developing well, enabling successful engagement in activities across the curriculum. Can read and understand a wide variety of texts. Written English may lack complexity and contain occasional evidence of errors in structure. Needs some support to access subtle nuances of meaning, to refine English usage, and to develop abstract vocabulary. Needs some/occasional EAL support to access complex curriculum material and tasks.
- Code E.** ***Fluent-*** Can operate across the curriculum to a level of competence equivalent to that of a pupil who uses English as his/her first language. Operates without EAL support across the curriculum.
- Code N.** ***Not yet assessed-*** The DfE will accept "N -Not yet assessed" where there has not been enough time for the assessments to take place for the Autumn Census 2016

4. Differences between existing Lambeth and new DfE scale

Teachers in Lambeth are very experienced in assessing the levels of a child's proficiency in English using the Lambeth Stages of English. However, they will need to consider four major differences between the two scales.

- The Lambeth scale has 4 stages of proficiency, whilst the new scale has 5.
- The Lambeth scale has different descriptors for each key stage whilst the new scale has only one set of descriptors to be used for children in reception classes through to those in KS4.
- Both scales are based on the best-fit principle. However, the Lambeth scales measure development and progress in three separate areas – speaking and listening, reading and writing, whilst the new scale has one set of generic descriptors, which are basic and only touch on each of these areas.
- Lambeth scales show numbered progression, stages 1 to 4, in contrast to the new scale which uses the letters A to E.

To support accurate assessment and help teachers adjust, a more detailed set of descriptors of the 5 Stage Proficiency in English scale is being provided to schools www.lambeth.gov.uk/rsu/eal-fluency-survey

5. Recommendations and rationale for the use of the 5 Stage Proficiency Scale

Following an exercise which mapped the basic descriptors from the new 5 stage scale onto the current Lambeth Stages of English, the following became apparent:

- Lambeth stage 1 was similar to the Proficiency Scale code A
- Lambeth stage 2 was similar to the Proficiency Scale code B
- Lambeth stage 4 was similar to the Proficiency Scale code E
- However, Lambeth stage 3 contained descriptors from both codes C and D. In trialling with case studies, it did appear that the children at the earliest level of stage 3 are best described as code C, with those at the more advanced levels of stage 3 at code D.

The recommendation for the autumn term School Census is as below. It is hoped that this will facilitate a smooth transition, avoiding re-assessment of all pupils with EAL and also provide time before the spring School Census for staff to ensure the accuracy of their assessments using the new Proficiency Scale. This will also be supported by moderation visits to some schools.

Existing Lambeth Stage of English for children with EAL	New National Proficiency in English Code for children with EAL
Stage 1	Code A
Stage 2	Code B
Stage 3	Code C Code D
Stage 4	Code E

It is important to remember that it takes on average 5 – 7 years to develop fluency in an additional language and although pupils may pass through stages A and B in a couple of years, they are likely to remain at stages C and D for longer. As with the earlier levels in the Lambeth Stages, no child at the stages A and B will be attaining age-related expectations. However, there may be children at stage D working at age-related levels and who will exceed expectations once they become fully fluent (code E).

Although proficiency in English is only required for children in reception classes upwards, teachers in Lambeth nursery schools have also used the Lambeth Stages to assess EAL fluency. A revised set of descriptors, which have been adapted to meet the requirements of the new 5 stage model, are therefore being introduced to nursery schools.

6. New Descriptors for Lambeth based on 5 Stages of English Proficiency - Reception to KS4

LAMBETH STAGE 1 (New to English)	LAMBETH STAGE 2 (Becoming Familiar)	LAMBETH STAGE 3 (Becoming Confident)		LAMBETH STAGE 4 (Fluent)
DfE STAGE A (New to English)	DfE STAGE B (Early Acquisition)	DfE STAGE C: (Developing Competence)	DfE STAGE D (Competent)	DfE STAGE E (Fluent)
SPEAKING AND LISTENING				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Silent period • May use first language for learning and other purposes • Copies/repeats some words and/or phrases • Uses single words or short phrases • Has very basic, limited range of vocabulary • Understands some everyday expressions and simple instructions in English. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uses spoken English for 'social' purposes • Participates in learning activities with support • Has limited awareness of grammar syntax • Vocabulary is widening but tends to be related to familiar contexts • Is acquiring some topic/subject specific vocabulary • Follows day to day social communication in English • Understands simple instructions • Follows narrative/accounts with visual support 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May participate in learning activities with increasing independence • Uses spoken English confidently but structural inaccuracies still apparent • Has a fairly wide vocabulary, which includes a growing bank of subject-specific words • Gives appropriate responses to a wider range of situations without the need for visual support • Able to follow more complex verbal input and some abstract concepts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oral English is developing well, enabling successful engagement in activities across the curriculum, but might need support to refine English usage • Speech is more complex and mostly demonstrates an awareness and appropriate use of the rule of grammar and word order, with fewer errors • Has a wide vocabulary • Some vocabulary gaps still evident • Usually copes with wide range of verbal input from variety of sources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can operate across the curriculum to a level of competence equivalent to that of a pupil who uses English as his/her first language • Is a fluent speaker of English in a full range of situations
READING				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minimal or no literacy in English 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May have developed some skills in reading • Copes with familiar words/word patterns and able to extract basic meaning from a familiar text 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May be able to follow more complex written English • Reads accurately but has difficulty interpreting complex texts related to the curriculum 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can read and understand a wide variety of texts • Still needs some support to access subtle nuances of meaning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can operate across the curriculum to a level of competence equivalent to that of a pupil who uses English as his/her first language • Is a fluent reader of English, (with matching understanding), in a full range of situations
WRITING				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minimal or no literacy in English 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May have developed some skills in writing • Can produce a small amount of independent writing with support from teachers/peers • Has limited awareness of grammar • Uses basic punctuation ie full stops and capital letters • Is becoming aware of basic phonemes and simple spelling patterns • Uses basic vocabulary 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Literacy will need ongoing support, particularly for understanding text & writing. • Strives towards more developed pieces of writing for a range of purposes • Demonstrates a growing awareness of grammar but some errors • Generally uses basic punctuation correctly, e.g. capital letters, full stops, questions marks and is demonstrating an awareness of a wider range of punctuation • Is producing improved spelling for a wider range of words • Developing a wider range of vocabulary 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Writes competently for a variety of purposes • Writing contains only occasional errors in grammar ie structure • Written English may lack complexity • Generally uses a wider range of punctuation (commas, apostrophes, inverted commas) and organizational devices accurately • Spells most words correctly • Uses a wide range of vocabulary, but needs support to further develop abstract vocabulary 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can operate across the curriculum to a level of competence equivalent to that of a pupil who uses English as his/her first language • Is a fluent writer of English in a full range of situations
Needs a considerable amount of EAL support	Needs a significant amount of EAL support to access the curriculum	Requires ongoing EAL support to access the curriculum fully	Needs some/occasional EAL support to access complex curriculum materials and tasks	Operates without EAL support across the curriculum