

Curriculum Framework Overview

Introduction

In many London schools, the majority of students are now speakers and learners of English as an Additional Language (EAL). These students often represent more than half of all ethnic minority pupils across London authorities against a national average (England and Wales) of 10% of the total school population. Students within this group are diverse and therefore have distinct language needs and learning trajectories; some students will have been born in the UK and educated through the medium of English from the age they started school, others, from increasingly diverse backgrounds, will have joined the school system mid-phase from their home or other countries, with or without previous schooling and literacy in first language. Teaching students who are developing skills in EAL from different starting points whilst they are also learning through the medium of English is now a commonplace challenge in classrooms for most teachers.

Rationale

The majority of pupils in schools in the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea are from ethnic minority heritage backgrounds, with over 100 different languages spoken. The Royal Borough has always taken an active interest in the learning and development of all its pupils, and in particular those from an ethnic minority background. In March 2004, the Royal Borough's Language Development Service conducted an audit of curriculum provision for ethnic minority students learning EAL as part of its work to support 14-19 initiatives. The audit concluded that while the Royal Borough is culturally and linguistically diverse, there should be more curriculum provision for students learning EAL. In particular, the audit identified a lack of curriculum opportunities for EAL learners to develop language and literacy skills to ensure their achievement and progression within the academic and vocational framework, thus not tapping the potential of all students.

The audit revealed that EAL learners at earlier stages of learning English were particularly at-risk of under-achievement. This growing group of students needs considerable support to successfully access academic and vocational subjects taught through the medium of English. Without specific support to develop their English skills from Entry Levels onwards, their achievement and access to continuing education and training is in jeopardy.

The audit recommended that the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea develop an EAL curriculum to enable such students to develop their English language skills in a way that prepares them for academic success and personal development in the school environment and beyond.