

Secondary EAL Overview for Parents

(EAL = English as an Additional Language)

The ISV Secondary EAL Register

Most learners at ISV are Non-Native Speakers of English. All students in the school are continuously developing their English fluency, both in terms of everyday language and academic language. ISV is an English Medium of Instruction school which means that most subject instruction is delivered through the English language. Students are learning language and content simultaneously: this can be very challenging, especially in the first 4 to 6 years of school attendance. Our learners and families are aiming for bilingual academic fluency, and this is a tough goal to achieve.

ISV expects students in Grade 9 and above to have achieved a level of English language fluency close enough to the native speaker equivalent for their age. Any fluency gaps to the grade-norm should be small enough to be no barrier to the student's progress in their subject studies. Learners in Grades 6 to 8 have larger gaps to grade-norm in their English language skills; these learners have had less time studying through English. ISV monitors the Grade Norm Gap (GNG) in English language proficiency for all Lower Secondary students. Students who display significant gaps are assessed carefully and, if necessary, placed on the EAL Register. These students receive targeted support and guidance to help them improve their English language skills more quickly than would occur without support, as well as to help prevent them from falling further behind.

The EAL Register flags learners as having a Grade Norm Gap (GNG) of either 'Moderate' or 'Severe'; this is roughly equivalent to being respectively a year behind, or two years behind the grade level for English language proficiency. At any given time, a significant percentage of Secondary learners may be either on the register, recently cleared from the register, or being monitored as possibly needing support. This is normal in an international school, and if a learner is placed on the EAL Register it should not be seen in a negative manner by families or students.

Learners may be placed on the register upon entry to ISV; they may join the Secondary register in Grade 6 having been on the Elementary EAL register in Grade 5; or they may be put on the register at any point in their Grade 6 to 9 studies following evidence of a significant GNG in language proficiency. Learners on the EAL Register usually need between 1-3 years of support in order to close the GNG sufficiently to clear the register. The time required varies and is often closely linked to the motivation and study routines of the student, as well as the level of support for good study routines provided by families.

As of August 2020, families of Secondary learners on the ISV EAL Register will be required to pay a fee for the service.

Common Features of Grade Norm Gaps in English Language Proficiency

The most important areas of English language proficiency where the GNG is apparent are the reading, writing and speaking skills. Strong reading skills are essential because so much of the knowledge presented at school must be read and understood. Fluency levels in writing and speaking are important for sharing and evidencing learning. As students move through each grade year their reading, writing and speaking skills become ever more advanced, as do the standards they must meet and the complexity of class materials. Students on the EAL Register usually display Grade Norm Gaps in each of the 3 skills, with certain skills being stronger than others.

Typically, learners on the EAL Register may be reading several years below their age; they may have limited ability to write and speak at length (limited fluency); and the spoken and written language they produce may lack range and accuracy, as well as organisation and cohesion. Evidence of Grade Norm Gaps may also include a lack of ability to use text types common to the curriculum for a learner's age level.

The EAL Team uses a range of evidence to assess learners before they are placed on the EAL Register. Evidence includes spoken and written fluency tests which all students take; NWEA tests results (reading, language & math skills); ISV exam grades; oral feedback from subject teachers, as well as samples of work; and observation in class. For learners new to ISV, entry tests are also taken into consideration.

ISV Secondary EAL Support Philosophy

According to the ISV Language Policy, ISV students learn together through the medium of English. Students are not streamed by English language ability, nor are they separated for sheltered instruction to allow their language ability to catch up with the grade-norm. ISV teachers are all considered to be language teachers: that is to say, all teachers must consider the differing language abilities of learners in their classes, and must use pedagogical techniques which support language and subject learning simultaneously. The EAL Team philosophy in Secondary is therefore to work with teachers to support planning and teaching for mixed English language abilities: this means that we use materials, techniques and tools which boost the success and language development of the EAL learners in the subject classroom.

The EAL Team will provide a certain amount of additional support as well as tasks for learners on the register to complete independently, however it must be remembered that Secondary students at ISV have full timetables and therefore may not receive separate lessons from the EAL Team. In this regard, parents may notice a difference in the EAL strategies between the Elementary and Secondary faculties at ISV.

Specific Support Given To Secondary EAL Register Learners

- Initial analysis of English language skills & creation of Learning Support Plan (LSP). This includes a meeting at the beginning and end of semester (first one with parents)
- Individual learning platform (e.g. Padlet) set up to anchor work, support and progress records. This is live and it hosts task & language support for LSP goals and ongoing subject work. The platform is accessible to school, students and parents.
- Tutorials (as required) between learner & EAL team to check-in regarding progress on LSP goals, home learning & learner autonomy (independent study & motivation).
- Routine meetings between EAL specialists and teachers of language-rich subjects (i.e. English, Humanities & Science). Meeting goals are to provide additional support for EAL Register Learners so as to boost engagement & success in subject learning sequences. Meetings involve discussion of teaching plans and creation of lesson stages and materials which reduce barriers to learning for students on the EAL Register.
- In-class support for individuals and/or small groups, with EAL specialists co-teaching alongside teachers of language-rich subjects. This will occur in specific learning sequences (not all classes), where teachers believe collaboration can provide the greatest benefit.
- Support in the use of tools that boost skills development and learner autonomy.
- English Skills Development classes twice a week. These are for all students in Grade 6 & 7, but specifically designed to enable fluency gains for those Learning Through an Additional Language at ISV. Routines and tools designed for this subject will be integrated into other language-rich subjects (through EAL specialist & subject teacher collaboration).
- EAL team support with ongoing dialogue & professional development in ISV Secondary Faculty for teaching to mixed abilities & to those Learning Through an Additional Language.

How we measure progress & decide when a student can be removed from the Secondary EAL Register

Learners on the ISV Secondary EAL Register have an individual Learning Support Plan (LSP) for every semester. The LSP goals are reviewed at the end of the semester, and a new LSP is created for the following semester. When learners are close to closing the GNG, this will be referenced in their LSP goals: for example, the goal may be to clear the register by the end of the semester. The EAL Team will consider all the available evidence and, if this indicates a closed GNG, then the student will be flagged for 'clearing' the register. Students with a clearing flag receive only monitoring from the EAL Team and, as such, no further payment for the EAL service is required. Should the learner's language skills slip back, they will be placed back on the register with an appropriate GNG flag. They will then receive support again and the family will be charged for this support.