



Personalising learning:

Using assessment to identify needs and accelerate learning in international schools



INTRODUCTION

International schools face a unique set of challenges when it comes to assessment. Not only do they operate in incredibly diverse educational and cultural contexts but they also cater to large numbers of children for whom English is not their first language. As much traditional assessment relies on verbal skills, this can be a problem.

Fortunately, there are solutions. Understanding generally precedes speaking and writing, so it's a good idea to include receptive as well as expressive language measures in any assessment. Embedding assessment in classroom practice on a regular basis will also help students with English as an Additional Language (EAL), as will a proper understanding of prior attainment. Then there are cognitive ability tests, which assess reasoning and may be better indicators of ability and potential for students who struggle with English.

The excellent work done by the Council for British International Schools (COBIS) to highlight the differing needs of students is especially noteworthy. Its Patron's Accreditation and Compliance scheme asks participating schools to ensure curricula benefit children with learning difficulties as well as those who are gifted and talented. The fact that many teachers in our survey, particularly in the Middle East and Europe, thought their schools identified and met the needs of these groups of students is testament to its efficacy.

The evidence from the UK and elsewhere is that any disadvantage EAL students may have in a curriculum delivered in English is soon nullified if their needs and potential are accurately identified. Indeed, in the UK, gaps in attainment are generally diminished by the time students take GCSEs. Elsewhere in this report we outline what steps teachers and schools can take to overcome any obstacles EAL students face. But nobody should be in any doubt that smart, well-targeted assessments are essential if the potential of widely differing students is to be realised.

Greg Watson is Chief Executive of GL Education



USING ASSESSMENT TO IDENTIFY NEEDS AND ACCELERATE LEARNING

Accurately identifying the learning capabilities of children, as well as any barriers to learning they may have, are the goals of all formative assessment. Assessing children whose first language is not English, however, presents an added complication, unless we assess in their own language. This report seeks to answer how much of a problem it is for international schools that have sizeable numbers of such students¹. It also asks teachers in international schools to what extent they think children with additional support or gifted and talented needs are not being properly assessed and identified.

Whatever obstacles students with EAL face, it does not mean their learning performance and needs cannot be reliably identified. As Ofsted says of EAL learners in the UK, their “conceptual thinking may be in advance of their ability to speak English” and it doesn’t believe the “cognitive challenge” should be reduced to take account of that – and most professionals would agree².

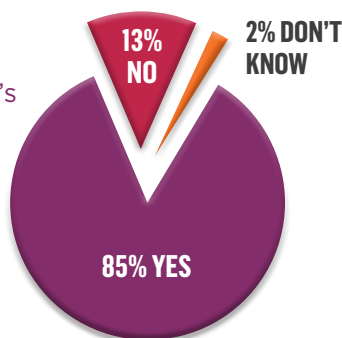
Moreover, as Sue Thompson, Senior Publisher at GL Education, points out: “With EAL students there is always the danger that teachers jump too quickly to the conclusion that language is the main barrier to learning when in fact it could be something completely different.”³

That said, there are measures schools can adopt to make assessments fairer for EAL students – additional training for staff, for instance, or using assessments that rely on cognitive abilities rather than English language skills – which are explained in more detail later in this report. But how big an issue is identifying children with different needs for international schools and teachers?

Report findings

GL Education asked teachers in international schools in Europe, the Middle East, India, China, Africa and the Asia Pacific region if they thought that the identification of a child’s need or potential was sometimes hampered by the fact that English was not their first language. The overwhelming majority (**85%**) thought it was; only **13%** said it was not.

Do you feel that the identification of a child’s needs or potential is sometimes hampered by the fact that English is not their first language?

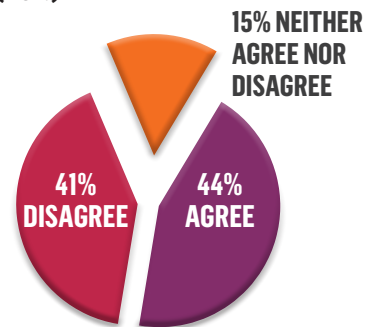


There was little regional variation on this point, though respondents in Europe were marginally less likely to see it as a problem (**81%**). Conversely, all of those in Africa (**100%**) said EAL could be a barrier to accurate identification of student need.

However, when it came to identifying children who were gifted and talented, respondents were far more divided. Well over two-fifths of teachers (**44%**) agreed that their schools didn’t do enough to identify gifted and talented children with only slightly less (**41%**) saying that they did.

The results varied fairly widely by region, with the majority of respondents in China (**55%**) and India (**57%**) saying their schools did not do enough, while those who disagreed outnumbered those who agreed in Africa (**57%**), Europe (**43%**) and the Middle East (**48%**).

I don’t think enough is done at my school to identify gifted and talented children



As Nicola Lambros, Deputy Head of King’s College, Madrid points out, high learning potential may easily be masked by having English as an additional language (see page 10). Older learners in particular can be hard to assess, according to the British Council, which recommends non-verbal and maths assessments, though it warns that “someone may be gifted and talented in other ways but not very good at maths”.⁴

Respondents were also split on the question of special educational needs awareness. Overall, more than half (**54%**) said they did not worry that SEN was under identified in their school, with under two-fifths (**38%**) saying that it was a concern.

Once again there were some interesting regional variations. Approximately two-thirds of respondents in Europe (**66%**) and the Middle East (**64%**) disagreed that there was under identification of SEN in their schools, while majorities in China (**64%**) and Asia Pacific (**55%**) took the opposite view. The large percentages of teachers who thought their schools were good at identifying SEN in the Middle East and Europe could well reflect the training programmes and accreditation systems promoted by COBIS, which are designed to embed best practice (see page 4).

Interestingly, however, substantial majorities in all regions apart from China had noticed an increase in awareness of SEN amongst parents, with almost three-fifths (59%) saying that they had and roughly half that proportion (31%) saying they had not.

Conclusion

Almost all respondents to the GL Education survey agreed that EAL students were at a disadvantage when it came to identifying their needs and potential. There are, however, steps that teachers can take to address any difficulties experienced as a result of language.

Misidentification of SEN and gifted and talented children was thought to be less of a problem, particularly in Europe and the Middle East, probably because schools had embedded a focus on SEN and gifted and talented in their best practice systems. Awareness of SEN among parents was on the increase across most regions.

Footnotes

1. 196 teachers in 49 countries outside the UK responded to the GL Education survey
2. Assessing EAL Learners, EAL Nexus, British Council, 2016
3. Assessment in Focus: Assessing Children with English as an Additional Language, GL Assessment, 2016
4. Gifted and Talented Learners, EAL Nexus, British Council, 2016

SUPPORTING PUPILS OF ALL ABILITIES AT COBIS SCHOOLS

Colin Bell, Chief Executive of the Council of British International Schools



Schools have a duty of care and support to pupils of all abilities, and this applies equally to members of the Council of British International Schools (COBIS). Our schools are not unlike independent schools in the UK, in that they take in students of all ages and with a wide range of abilities and aptitudes, and there will be times when pupils require additional help and support to meet their potential.

Parents who choose COBIS schools do so because they know their children will be getting a world-class education, based on the British model of schooling, and preparation for life beyond their education. Our schools teach in the medium of English and, regardless of nationality, 65% of COBIS students will attend a British university.

They choose us safe in the knowledge that whatever their child excels in, or learning challenges they face, they will be supported and helped along their educational journey by highly qualified teachers and a whole-school commitment to the highest standards.

Identifying barriers to learning

Barriers to learning need to be identified and overcome if every student is to succeed. Each COBIS school will approach this differently, often in tune with the educational practice of the country of location. All our schools have a special educational needs co-ordinator to oversee the school's SEND policy and liaise with colleagues on the range of interventions available.

COBIS schools often use a variety of tried and tested diagnostic tools from GL Education that enable them to put in early interventions and individual support when a learning challenge is discovered. These include the *Cognitive Abilities Test* to measure ability, the *Pupil Attitudes to Self and School* attitudinal survey, which identifies attitudinal barriers to learning, and the *Progress Test Series* and the *New Group Reading Test*, which measure attainment and literacy levels. Pupils with a suspected learning challenge may also take other screening and diagnostic assessments, such as the *Dyslexia Screener*. You can read about some of our member schools' approaches elsewhere in the report.

Our students may also have an additional barrier to learning, in that some speak English as an additional language (EAL). As this report identifies, teachers at international schools believe that EAL students are at a disadvantage when it comes to identifying needs and potential, and schools therefore need to be conscious of taking EAL into account in their assessment programmes.

Of course, implementing appropriate interventions for pupils who need it goes across the ability spectrum and students who are gifted and talented need to be stretched and challenged so that they, too, achieve their potential.

Our Diploma for International Teaching Assistants (DITA) and DITA for Early Years ensures that our schools have the appropriately trained and committed staff to provide individual, differentiated support in the classroom to those who need it. EAL pupils will benefit, too, from additional lessons to bring their language skills up to speed. It is an area of work we take very seriously, and we hold an annual conference every year for professionals working with EAL pupils so that practitioners can share expertise and good practice.

Our commitment to high standards of teaching and learning

Recently, COBIS introduced the new Patron's Accreditation and Compliance scheme, to which all of our schools will have to subscribe. While celebrating the existing excellent practice in our schools, it supports whole school improvement, and ensures the best possible educational environments for children and young people worldwide. That includes the design of curricula and programmes of study that benefit all of our students, including those with learning difficulties and young people who are gifted and talented.

To that end, schools will have to demonstrate the philosophy behind their curriculum, and how they provide continuity from one key stage of education to another. It will also have to set out what targets and interventions are put in place for pupils of different abilities. It is COBIS' most important piece of work in the past five years, and it recognises the complexities and individual circumstances in which schools operate.

cobis.org.uk



HOW SHOULD INTERNATIONAL SCHOOLS ADAPT TO THE INCREASING CHALLENGES OF SEN PROVISION?

By **Gráinne Boyle**,
Educational Psychologist, UAE

When I first moved to the Middle East in 2009, mainstream schools were focused on quality provision at whole school level and SEN was yet to become a priority for many schools. In the time since then, government mandates and support, greater availability of NASCO qualified SENCos and increased access to quality resources for assessment and intervention with children with special educational needs (SEN), has transformed the culture of education in the region.

These days, I have the privilege of working with some of the most innovative and forward-thinking education bodies that I have encountered in my career as a teacher and educational psychologist. Although we are not all there yet, I am happy to share some of the important successes that have enabled some to adapt to the increasing challenges of SEN in international schools.

Educational research indicates time and time again that excellent teachers are the basis for an excellent educational system. The SEN department is no different. We need qualified and experienced SEN teachers managing the needs of students with individual differences. The SEN department leader is a leader of mainstream teachers and they are a support service for inclusion of children in mainstream classes.

In my experience, this person needs to be a member of the school leadership team. This allows the SEN department to contribute to policy and support at whole school level, therefore impacting more effectively on whole class differentiation for teaching and learning. Most children with SEN should be accommodated at wave one, within the classroom setting, allowing for children with higher needs to be supported by wave two and three.

GL Education's survey findings, outlined in this report, indicate that 38% of respondents believe that SEN is under identified in their school. Identification, in all schools, not just international schools, should be organised and systematic. Every school has its own policy for identification of children that need support at wave two and three. In Dubai, new policy ensures that whole year groups are screened with international benchmarking tests for cognitive and academic skills at certain checkpoints. This allows us to analyse data at whole school level and identify individuals that may be at risk.

In recent times, many international schools have hired their own qualified educational testers in-house to conduct

further tests in identifying barriers to learning and potential evidenced-based interventions for a student.

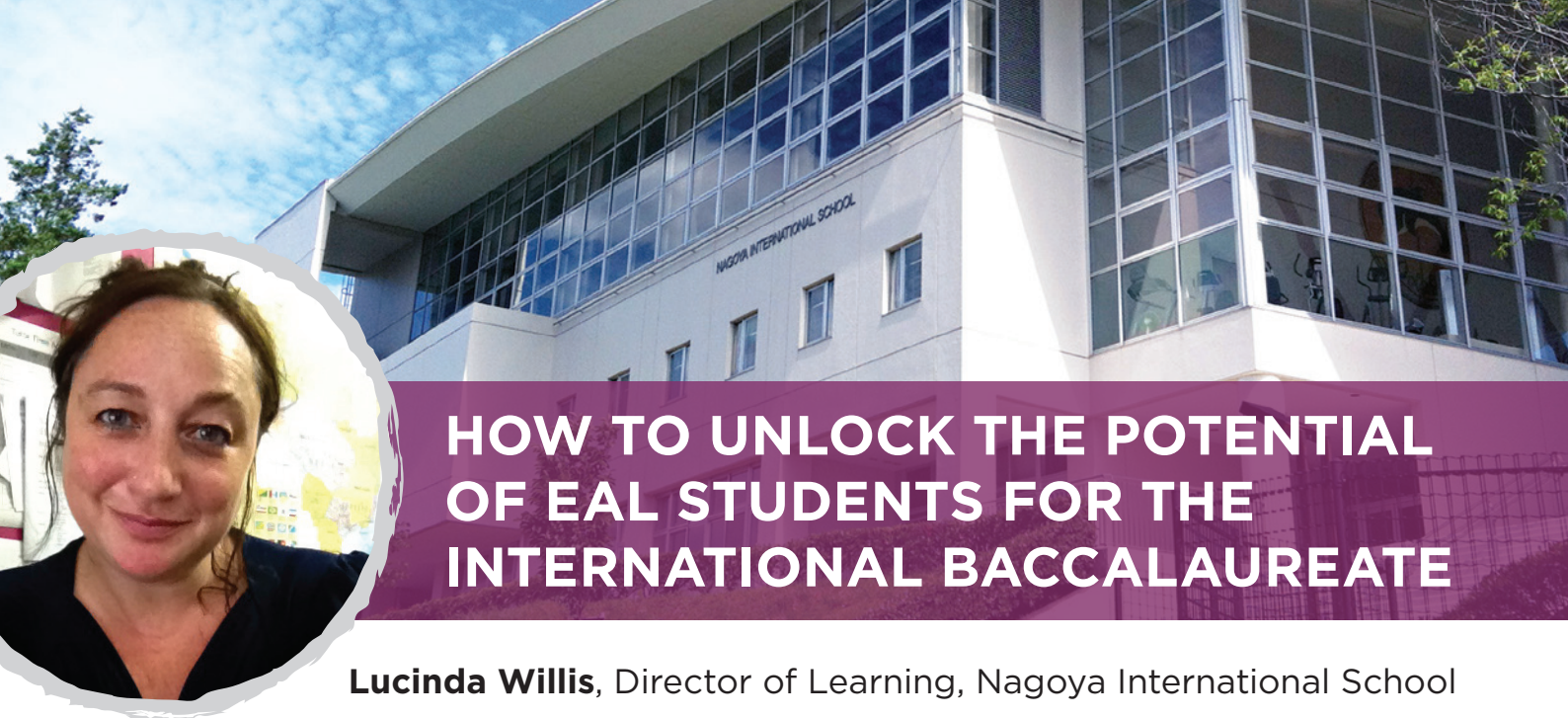
From September 2017, every British Curriculum exam centre is required to have its own educational tester on site. In addition to conducting assessments that inform interventions, this person can conduct testing that may inform exam concessions for secondary school students within their own school. In the past, much of this work was outsourced to the educational psychologist or other specialist service.

In addition to the obvious advantage of cost saving for parents and schools at British International Schools, this also enables any school to conduct sophisticated testing on site. Most importantly, this means that we can match evidenced-based and early interventions for a child within the school setting. This is also helpful for me, as the educational psychologist, when I visit a partner school in a remote region to conduct diagnostic testing. Parents of children with additional learning needs are provided with evidence that they may need to support a family's decision to refer their child for psychological assessment. Thereafter, I work in close collaboration with the parents, SENCo and educational tester to make sure that all primary concerns are accurately accounted for and the best assessment or consultation can be conducted in a timely and cost saving way.

Leading an international school SEN department can be both a challenge and a delight. I, for one, am reassured that we are making hugely positive strides towards successful and meaningful inclusion of children with SEN in our settings – I see it in my work with schools each and every day.

Innovation, collaboration and sharing of evidenced-based practice relevant to our unique regions between international schools are absolutely key. We have come a long way, in short time, but I look forward to seeing the continued and positive results that our efforts make for the students in our care.





HOW TO UNLOCK THE POTENTIAL OF EAL STUDENTS FOR THE INTERNATIONAL BACCALAUREATE

Lucinda Willis, Director of Learning, Nagoya International School

Great communication is at the heart of the IB programme, a curriculum framework designed to develop learners who express themselves and their ideas confidently, collaborate with each other and listen carefully to the perspectives of their peers. To engage fully with the programme, students need solid language skills and knowledge of the right vocabulary to understand the concepts being taught.

Of course, as an international school in Japan, children join us with wildly differing language abilities, from a very rudimentary grasp of English to native speakers and everything in between.

Like any skill, picking up English takes some children longer than others, which can make it very difficult to see an EAL child's aptitude when they first join the school. Are they attaining to the best of their ability despite the language barrier? Do we think it's their language holding them back when there is actually a different learning difficulty being masked?

So, how can we assess their potential and see what is really going on to help them be successful in their IB studies?

Unique information

Getting to know our children thoroughly and quickly is really important to us, so introducing a cognitive abilities test has been a priority. The *Cognitive Abilities Test (CAT4)* quickly provides unique information about children's verbal, non-verbal, quantitative and spatial ability.

Because it doesn't rely on what has already been learnt or English being a first language, we're able to get an equally accurate picture of EAL students' true abilities as we do for native speakers of English. Plus, information from *CAT4* supports teachers in focusing on the IB approaches to learning – such as communication and collaboration – and how to differentiate effectively according to the children in their class.

As the IB learner profile strives for students to be balanced and achieve intellectual, physical and emotional wellbeing, we've also recently piloted GL Education's attitudinal survey, *Pupil Attitudes to Self and School (PASS)*.

This helps us get a sense of where students see themselves and make sure we are creating an environment where they feel confident to take risks in their learning. Ensuring EAL children feel confident is crucial to IB success as a lack of language can quite easily lead to the loss of self-belief in their abilities.

Right strategies

We embrace diversity, so it's not about sugar coating the truth to pretend that everyone is good at everything. Rather, we're working to embed a growth mindset across the school – where all children understand they can improve in the subjects which do not come naturally to them. Focusing on each child's strengths in this way is key for EAL children.

For example, a native French speaker might have been top in his class in France but limited English competency means he attains towards the bottom in our school. With *CAT4* scores, we can see – and show him – that while his verbal score is low, his other scores are high. We can reassure him there is nothing to worry about, that we know he has the ability to achieve well, and that with time and the right support his language skills will come.

Conversely, if another child's scores are low across the board, they might need more intensive language support as well as further tests to ascertain if there are any additional learning needs. Again, we would discuss this with them, saying "we can see maths is a tricky subject for you, this is how we can help".

In both cases, we are emphasising the fact that EAL challenges can be overcome with the right strategies while building resilience in the face of change – another IB learner profile aim. If we get it right, we can help children take control of their learning, overcome any barriers to success and truly celebrate their achievements, no matter where their start or end points.

DEFINING, IDENTIFYING AND SUPPORTING GIFTED AND TALENTED STUDENTS

Nicola Lambros, Deputy Head, King's College, Madrid

How we define 'gifted and talented' students can vary enormously. Most definitions include reference to students who have a high learning potential or are exceptionally able which indicates these students are performing or have the potential to perform at a level significantly above their peers. Identifying these students, however, is not always straight forward: every student is an individual, and within international education it is more likely that a high learning potential may be masked by the challenges of cultural differences which result in unfamiliarity with the teaching and learning styles and methods found within the international school classroom or by having English as an Additional Language.

Good practice therefore dictates that we use a variety of tools and evidence, both qualitative and quantitative, to identify and monitor gifted and talented students as they progress through school. This may include parent and teacher observation, teacher professional judgement and summative and formative assessment results. However, very often students with EAL do not show their true potential in written tests due to literacy issues. Therefore, other useful indicators include aptitude tests, such as the *Cognitive Abilities Test (CAT4)*, as this provides information about a child's cognitive ability to work with numbers, shape and space therefore discounting the need for fluency in English language. Information such as this can reveal outstanding potential that may otherwise be masked.

Once schools have identified their gifted and talented pupils the needs of each pupil should be shared with staff so that they are able to support these students effectively. No one can deny the fact that student progress is determined by the quality of teaching they receive; students taught by the best teachers can make up to four times as much progress in a year as those taught by the weakest teachers. It is therefore crucial that teaching staff are equipped with the knowledge and skills required to effectively teach gifted and talented students.

A good starting point for this is to provide Individual Education Plans (IEPs) for each student identified as gifted or talented. These should provide clear teaching strategies that can be implemented consistently by all staff in class. Moreover, involving all teachers in the IEP reviews ensures all staff carefully monitor each student's progress and actively review the classroom strategies being used to support these students. This results in more learning conversations and improved pedagogical understanding which ensure effective differentiation and support mechanisms are employed consistently for gifted and talented students.

Very often a real love of learning is cultivated in exceptionally able students by the extra-curricular activities provided by schools. It is these activities which push exceptionally able students out of their comfort zone, challenge their thinking and provide the breadth of learning they so often desire. Furthermore, for some students these activities reveal exceptional talents, particularly for those who shine in the creative and performing arts or on the sports field. A well-developed extra-curricular programme is therefore essential in schools as without this an environment in which all students can identify and nurture their talents and abilities cannot be fostered.

An often over-looked barrier to learning is a student's academic self-efficacy. It is not uncommon for students who have exceptional talent or ability to feel unsuccessful and have a poor perception of their capabilities. Research has shown that this leads to poorer academic outcomes and underachievement. Some research has found labelling students leads to poor self-efficacy and anxiety; for more able students, this is because they feel they do not live up to the expectations placed upon them. It is essential therefore that schools carefully consider the need for setting and the language staff use around students, as these forms of feedback significantly impact a child's self-efficacy.

Employing language aligned with Growth Mindset can promote a strong self-efficacy, and promoting stretch and challenge events for all students ensures the more able have opportunities to coach and mentor other students whilst not feeling they have to prove the worthiness of their label. Using tools such as the *Pupil Attitudes to Self and School (PASS)* survey can effectively identify fragile learners (students of high ability with a poor self-efficacy) who are at risk of underachieving so that interventions can quickly be put into place. This should be a key strategy used in all schools if the full potential of all students is to be realised.



WHAT LIES BENEATH

Matthew Savage, Acting Principal,
International Community School, Amman



When I visited the vastness of Uluru in Australia a few years back, I was struck far more by what lies beneath; and yet everyone thinks they know this rockberg, when all they have seen is its famous red tip.

It seems to me that schools can often make the same mistake when identifying the needs and potential of their EAL students. Relying largely on a surface blend of professional judgement and raw attainment data, teachers can too easily conclude that they understand the child, and, therefore, that they are able to personalise their learning.

This error is common and problematic enough with students learning in their mother tongue. For those with English as an additional language, like many new students who join us at the International Community School Amman, the issues are even bigger, starker and more critical.

As we all know, so much of a child's chances are shaped by perception – their perception of themselves, and, often instrumental in shaping that, our perception of them. However, if our perception is based on surface data, without exploring what lies beneath, the whole process becomes fundamentally flawed.

Insight and foresight

How can we aim truly to 'know' each child, without the insight of a superhero or the foresight of a psychic? For us, the answer lies in student data, and the 'three As' of attainment, aptitude and attitude.

Whilst we recognise the value of the attainment data, it means little if unqualified by what we know about both a child's cognitive ability and also their attitudes to learning.

With so many of our students being EAL learners navigating a native English curriculum, they might appear at first glance to be performing below expected levels. There is then a risk that this could lead to low expectations and the dumbing down of their learning and teaching experience.

With the best intentions, in the past, some teachers have too easily and often made a false and dispiriting correlation between a student's competency in English and their academic potential. This has seen significant numbers of students fated to a schooling characterised by condescension and underachievement.

Now, however, we have the tools to help us complete the triangle from the outset – unearth a student's potential and, critically, understand the attitudes which may inhibit their ability to fulfil it.

Verbal deficit

Firstly, and most importantly, we use the CAT4 test when a child joins the school and at the beginning of each Key Stage thereafter. Beyond the grade distribution curves and end of Key Stage indicators which form the basis of our achievement and progress tracking, we make good use of the Standardised Age Scores. Uniquely revealing is a measure I call 'verbal deficit' – the difference between a child's non-verbal aptitude (arguably the purest indicator of conceptual ability) and their verbal score.

Where an EAL learner has low scores for both verbal and non-verbal aptitude, this would suggest that of paramount importance for them are their learning needs rather than their language needs. However, a low verbal score alongside a significantly higher non-verbal score highlights for us their conceptual ability. It is likely that they would flourish academically in their own mother tongue, but will doubtless struggle learning in English until they have mastered the spoken and written aspects of the language.

This helps us weave a robust and personalised net through which, with our clear perception of a child's learning potential, they cannot fall unnoticed. It means the EAL





learner is now understood in terms of their ability, and not their competency in English. We can then put the most appropriate support in place to redress the balance. Verbal deficit is reducible, and, more than that, I believe it is our duty as a school to do so.

Attitudes to learning

The third point in the data triangle for me is a student's attitudes to learning. PISA research has highlighted the importance of attitudes in determining outcomes, and, for an EAL learner, these can be even more fragile.

Whilst we help children, proactively and strategically, to navigate their learning journey and improve their language skills, it is essential we understand how they feel. To this end, we now make annual use of *PASS (Pupil Attitudes to Self & School Survey)*, a sophisticated and robust tool which identifies a student's attitudes to learning under different factors.

Most interesting for us, in terms of the EAL learner, have been the sometimes dramatically low scores our students have achieved in 'perceived learning capability' and 'learner self regard'. In other words, some of these students have become convinced of their lack of ability, and this threatens to erode their self-worth.

As we strategically and expertly address the specific needs of our EAL students, I hope that we will see these aptitudinal scores increase as a result. It is at this point, I will be able to honour my pledge to parents that, at the International Community School, we aim to ensure every child becomes both happy and successful.

The Mona Lisa effect

I call it 'the Mona Lisa effect' – personalising learning so that every student believes their learning journey has been designed specifically for them. At the International Community School, we want to make sure it has.

TOP TIPS FOR SUPPORTING EAL STUDENTS

By **Nicola Lambros**, Deputy Head, King's College, Madrid

- 1** Promote literacy across the whole school. Ensure all teachers regard themselves as teachers of English Language and Literacy on an equal footing with their subject.
- 2** Insist that key words are displayed, shared and learnt by students in every lesson. Make this, and the inclusion of a literacy activity in every lesson, an expectation for lesson planning.
- 3** Provide staff with key information regarding each student's literacy abilities, such as their reading age, the extent of their vocabulary and their ability to comprehend texts. This enables staff to plan effectively and provide suitable reading materials to support their teaching. The *New Group Reading Test* is an excellent tool to support this.
- 4** Encourage staff to introduce new information in a very spatial manner, using diagrams, videos and infographics rather than just reading or teacher talk. This will enable EAL students to understand concepts before they learn the language to explain them. Use data from aptitude tests such as the *CAT4* as evidence for staff to understand the need to introduce new information in a spatial manner.
- 5** Provide time and support for staff to establish a Teacher Learning Community focused on literacy. Give time for staff to share good practice and discuss how language pedagogy promotes the development of literacy experts and the development of effective teaching strategies in school.
- 6** Encourage staff to teach literacy skills explicitly in lessons. Many students do not know how to read texts effectively using skimming and scanning, make notes or use literacy structures such as PEEL (Point Evidence Explain Link). The use of talk partners in lessons can also help; students cannot write what they cannot say!



Case Study

Achieving Excellence Together at the Jumeirah English Speaking School

Early identification of a pupil's strengths and weaknesses are a key focus at Jumeirah English Speaking School (JESS) in Dubai. GL Education's CAT4 and LASS help the school ensure every child achieves their potential in the classroom.



JESS is a high achieving primary school in Dubai with a renowned reputation and an extensive waiting list. There are currently 700 children on the register, between the ages of three and 11, and the majority are accomplished English speakers from Europe, Australia and New Zealand. There are also Emirati and Indian children, and others for whom English is an Additional Language.

The school follows a British curriculum, and focuses on developing an appetite for learning amongst their pupils. However, as with many international schools, the student population is very transient.

Emma Dibden is Head of Learning Support at JESS. She explains: "No matter how long a child is with us for, we take our responsibility to spot barriers to learning very seriously. Some have learning or language needs we know about on admission, but we don't want any child to slip through the net. To gain an insider view into a child's strengths and weaknesses, and enable us to respond early to need, we use assessments from GL Education."

Cognitive Ability Testing

As a starting point, JESS uses the *Cognitive Abilities Test: Fourth Edition (CAT4)*. Verbal, non-verbal, quantitative and spatial ability tasks are used to provide teachers with information on children's strengths, weaknesses and learning preferences.

Emma continues: "CAT4 helps us explore academic potential, and we use the data alongside other tests to check for a disparity between ability and achievement. Inclusion is a focus

for the UAE and an important part of how we operate at JESS. If we are not seeing appropriate progress for a child's ability, we need to either adapt the curriculum or delve further.

"We have high expectations for all our children, so it's important to root out any specific areas of difficulty for them. We analyse results carefully, discussing results in regular progress meetings to examine who is and isn't achieving – for example, is there a gender difference and do we need to respond?"

Digging deep

If attainment isn't aligned with CAT4 scores or there is a discrepancy of more than 20 points between the individual strands of CAT4, the school applies their 'graduated response' strategy.

"We have a well-established flow chart that we follow. It includes appropriate assessments, making sure targets are shared with parents and even marking 'confidential' on a child's folder to indicate confidential information is held by a counsellor if there are social or emotional issues."

“ Our robust assessment cycle acts as an international benchmark for our pupils. ”

Emma Dibden,
Head of Learning Support team at JESS

On a case-by-case basis, the school's graduated response calls on a battery of tests, including *Lucid Assessment System for Schools (LASS)*. *LASS* assesses visual and auditory-verbal memory, as well as reading and reasoning. It can measure discrepancies between actual and expected literary attainment as well as help teachers identify students with dyslexia.

"We find *LASS* extremely reliable and it aligns well with the other tests we carry out.

"It gives us a telescopic view – are the building blocks of reading in place? – and pinpoints specific areas of difficulty, such as phonological processing ability. It's also easy to print off the detailed *LASS* report and explore a child's profile, adding in layers from other assessments and teacher observation."

Transparency

The school keeps parents informed at all stages. "We need to work in partnership for children to be happy and successful. Any issues are discussed with parents as part of our process of evaluating the whole child and unlocking individual learning challenges.

"No one knows their child better, so we always seek permission from parents before carrying out further assessments and talk about what the issues could be.

"Our assessments explore what is going on, and then we can give advice, discuss any strategies or make recommendations for external therapy, such as educational psychologists."

“ Teachers used assessment to gain a detailed understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the students. The use of ongoing assessment within lessons was a strength of the school. ”

The Dubai School Inspection Bureau of KHDA report, November 2015
(Jumeirah English Speaking School was awarded 'Outstanding' overall)

A starting point

As part of the Knowledge and Human Development Agency (KHDA) requirements, the school inspection service in Dubai, schools must test ability.

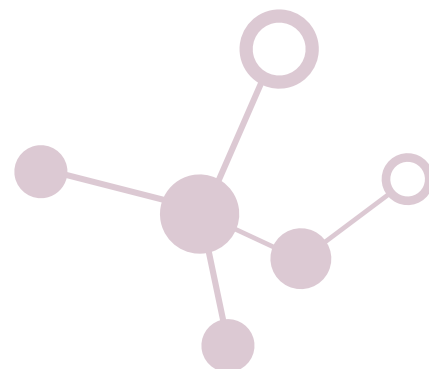
"Using external assessments alongside our internal ones absolutely helps with our KHDA inspection, but it's not just a mark on the page for us. It allows us to internationally benchmark our pupils, and personalise learning. It also enables us to create a dialogue across the school, which in turn helps us meet the children's needs.

"Our approach brings consistency across all year groups, and helps us spot trends and patterns. We can filter and identify those who aren't reaching age related expectations as well as those who are gifted. And not only can we explore these groups in detail, we can respond to them very early on to appropriately support and challenge all our children."



Benefits of using CAT4 and LASS at JESS

- Enables personalised learning and inclusion of all children, no matter their strengths or weaknesses
- Helps identify those who are having trouble reaching age related expectations as well as those who are gifted
- Helps spot if there is a discrepancy between ability and achievement
- Creates uniformity and consistency across all year groups in the school
- Acts as an international benchmark for pupils' attainment



USING DATA TO HELP PERSONALISE LEARNING

James Neill, GL Education's International Director, explains how the company's approach chimes with a growing global interest in the value and importance of formative assessment, providing teachers and senior leaders with the data and insights to gain a holistic view of each of their students.



GL Education has worked in partnership with schools for over 35 years to develop a range of easy-to-use tools that support better outcomes for students. Our tests provide teachers with a comprehensive understanding of a student's ability, attainment and attitude. Data-rich reports help teachers spot trends (at individual, group or school level), identify students who could be achieving more, and drill down into anomalies. They alert schools and teachers to a child who may need special support and allow early intervention strategies to be put in place.

Our assessments and surveys are smart, easy-to-use and efficient. They are built on the best academic research and have been extensively trialled to help teachers make quick and effective interventions.

One of the assessments mentioned in this report is the *Cognitive Abilities Test*® (CAT4), which provides a robust, standardised measure of cognitive reasoning ability. It measures the four main types of reasoning ability that are known to make a difference to learning and achievement: verbal, non-verbal, quantitative and spatial ability. The resulting data is then used to identify a student's strengths, areas for development and learning preferences, providing accurate and reliable information for teaching and learning. As it does not involve curriculum-based material and does not need to take into account previous achievements or first language, it is ideal for use with children with EAL.

Our *Pupil Attitudes to Self and School*® (PASS) survey is often used in conjunction with CAT4 to identify fragile learners or those who don't feel they have the toolkit to learn. Available in over 30 languages, PASS allows students to express their feelings and helps teachers to quickly understand the often hidden reasons for not achieving their potential. Once again, this information is very useful when supporting children with EAL.

As this report has demonstrated, many teachers are concerned that EAL students are at a disadvantage when it comes to identifying needs and potential. Only deeper insights into students' capability and learning problems as well as their current and comparative performance allow teachers to personalise learning according to children's specific needs and provide parents and carers with the information they need.

For further information please visit gl-education.com. To find out more, contact us on **+44 (0)20 8996 3369** or email us at international@gl-education.com.

