

Language Policy

English as an Additional Language (EAL/ESL) and Arabic as a Second Language (ASL)

Effective Academic Year: 2026–2027

OUR MISSION

American International School's mission is to promote happiness, innovation, independence and difference in all its students. We aim to foster in our children tolerance, an international outlook, and respect for other people and cultures, while providing an outstanding academic education that enables each student to make the most of their gifts.

Language is central to this mission. Proficiency in the language of instruction and in Arabic, together with respect for the multilingual identities our students bring with them, underpins access to the curriculum, a sense of belonging, and engagement with the culture and heritage of the United Arab Emirates.

Policy Owner	Senior Leadership Team, in consultation with the EAL/ESL Coordinator, Arabic Department, and Head of Data and Assessments
Applies To	All students enrolled at AIS, all teaching staff, the EAL/ESL team, the Arabic Department, Teaching and Learning Coaches (TLCs), and parents/guardians of students receiving additional language support
Review Cycle	Annually, ahead of the start of each academic year, or sooner following a material change to KHDA or Ministry of Education language requirements
Supersedes	AIS English Language Learners (ELL) Policy, Revised 2021–2022 (incorporated and extended within this policy)
Related Policies	AIS Assessment Policy; AIS Curriculum Design, Adaptation and Modification Policy; AIS Admissions Policy; AIS Inclusion Policy
Regulatory Alignment	UAE National Agenda; KHDA School Inspection Framework; Ministry of Education Arabic Language Curriculum Standards; UAE Federal Law 29 (2006); UAE Federal Law 2 (2015); Dubai Inclusive Education Framework (DIEF, 2017)

1. Introduction and Philosophy

At AIS, we believe that barriers to learning, including those related to language, should be addressed, accommodated, or removed in a caring and supportive environment. AIS is a multilingual community, and we recognise that the ability to communicate effectively in English, the language of instruction, and in Arabic, the official language of the United Arab Emirates, is essential to every student's academic success, cultural belonging, and sense of identity.

This policy sets out how AIS identifies, places, supports, monitors, and exits students who require additional support in English as an Additional Language (EAL), also referred to as English as a Second Language (ESL), and how AIS structures provision for Arabic as a Second Language (ASL) across the Arabic A and Arabic B pathways. We believe that Emirati and Arab students should be recognised and valued in line with the UAE National Agenda, and that all students,

regardless of linguistic background, should be supported to reach their full potential in both languages.

2. Purpose, Aims and Objectives

1. To set out a single, coherent policy covering both English language acquisition (EAL/ESL) and Arabic language acquisition (ASL) at AIS.
2. To establish clear, evidence-based procedures and routines for identification, placement, programme delivery, monitoring, and exit in both language strands.
3. To ensure an inclusive ethos is maintained across all phases of the school, so that language support is a bridge to the curriculum rather than a barrier to it.
4. To ensure compliance with KHDA, Ministry of Education, and UAE federal and Dubai-level regulations relating to language provision and the rights of all students, including students of determination and Emirati and Arab students.
5. To ensure that every teacher understands their role in supporting language acquisition, recognising that at AIS, every teacher is a language teacher.

3. Scope

This policy applies to all students from Kindergarten through Grade 12 at AIS. It covers two distinct but related strands of provision:

- English as an Additional Language (EAL/ESL): support for students who are not yet fully proficient in English, the language of instruction, regardless of nationality or first language.
- Arabic as a Second Language (ASL): provision for students following the Arabic B pathway as an additional or foreign language, alongside the parallel Arabic A pathway for native and heritage Arabic speakers, in line with KHDA and Ministry of Education requirements that all students study Arabic.

This policy does not replace the school's broader Inclusion Policy, which governs support for students of determination, including those who may also be EAL or ASL students. Where a student has both an identified special educational need and a language support need, the Inclusion Team and the Language Support Team (see Section 12) will coordinate planning jointly.

4. Definitions and Terminology

6. English as an Additional Language (EAL) / English as a Second Language (ESL) / English Language Learner (ELL): terms used interchangeably at AIS to describe students who are unable to communicate fluently or learn effectively in English, who often come from non-English-speaking homes and backgrounds, and who typically require specialised or modified instruction in both the English language and their academic courses.

7. Arabic as a Second Language (ASL): the additional or foreign language pathway in Arabic, generally referred to at AIS as Arabic B, intended for students who are not native or heritage speakers of Arabic.
8. Arabic A: the first-language Arabic pathway, intended for native and heritage Arabic speakers, including the great majority of Emirati and Arab students, taught at a level of depth and pace appropriate to first-language acquisition.
9. Arabic B: the additional-language Arabic pathway, intended for non-native Arabic speakers, taught at a level of depth and pace appropriate to foreign-language acquisition.
10. Mother Tongue: a student's home or first language, which may be English, Arabic, or another language. AIS values and encourages the maintenance of a student's mother tongue alongside the acquisition of English and Arabic.
11. Language Support Team: the cross-functional team described in Section 12 responsible for oversight of both the EAL/ESL and ASL strands of this policy.

5. Legislative and Regulatory Framework

This policy aims to ensure that AIS is compliant with the terms of:

- UAE Federal Law 29 (2006) concerning the Rights of People of Determination.
- UAE Federal Law 2 (2015) against Discrimination and Hatred.
- The Dubai Inclusive Education Framework (DIEF), published November 2017.
- Dubai Law No. 2 of 2014 concerning the Protection of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in the Emirate of Dubai.
- UAE Executive Council Resolution No. (2) of 2017 Regulating Private Schools in the Emirate of Dubai, including the provisions requiring equitable treatment of all students regardless of nationality, race, or social class, and the integration of students with disabilities.
- The UAE National Agenda, which sets expectations for the recognition and academic attainment of Emirati students, including in Arabic language and Islamic Education.
- Ministry of Education and KHDA curriculum requirements for the teaching of Arabic as a core subject for all students, differentiated between Arabic A and Arabic B pathways.

6. School-Wide Language Provision: Overview

AIS provides parallel, coordinated support across two language strands. Both strands are underpinned by the same core principles: early and accurate identification, tiered and differentiated support matched to need, regular progress monitoring against recognised benchmarks, transparent communication with families, and a structured pathway toward full participation in the mainstream curriculum without ongoing additional support, where appropriate.

Part A of this policy addresses English as an Additional Language (EAL/ESL). Part B addresses Arabic as a Second Language (ASL), including the relationship between the Arabic A and Arabic B pathways.

PART A: ENGLISH AS AN ADDITIONAL LANGUAGE (EAL / ESL)

7. Identification and Placement (EAL/ESL)

All new admissions, and any current student nominated by a homeroom or English teacher, may be referred for EAL/ESL screening. Once a referral is received, the student is assessed across the domains of listening, speaking, reading, and writing.

- Reading and language levels are assessed through the NWEA MAP screener test where prior data is unavailable.
- Speaking is assessed one-to-one with the EAL/ESL teacher or a test administrator appointed for the relevant grade level.
- Listening and writing are assessed in a small-group setting to determine the appropriate level of English proficiency.

A student is entered into the EAL/ESL programme where they score at or below the 20th percentile on MAP Reading and achieve a Verbal Stanine of 1 or 2 on CAT4. Placement decisions are recorded by the EAL/ESL Coordinator and shared with the relevant homeroom and subject teachers.

8. Programme Approach by Grade Band (EAL/ESL)

Grades K–5	Grades 6–7	Grades 8–10	Grades 11–12
Inclusion Approach Homeroom teacher takes primary responsibility for supporting English learners within the class.	Inclusion Approach Subject teachers provide differentiated support within the mainstream class, coordinated by the EAL/ESL Coordinator.	Case-by-Case Approach Support is determined by the individual learner's proficiency level and academic demands.	Case-by-Case Approach Support is determined by the learner's proficiency level and the conditions of admission. New EAL/ESL admissions to Grades 11–12 are supported on a case-by-case basis, as students are expected to have developed the necessary skills by this stage.

Within each grade band, students are supported according to a three-tier model:

- Tier 1: low support need, addressed through in-class differentiation.
- Tier 2: medium support need, addressed through in-class support supplemented by occasional pull-out sessions.

- Tier 3: high support need, addressed through regular pull-out sessions guided by an Individual Learning Plan (ILP), aligned to the California Common Core State Standards (CCSS) and complemented by the California English Language Development (ELD) Standards, with reference to WIDA English Language Proficiency descriptors where useful for cross-referencing growth.

Where a pull-out session is required, students may be withdrawn from arts, music, or physical education, provided this does not occur in the same subject on consecutive occasions. The frequency of pull-out sessions is individualised and adjusted in response to a student's progress. Where a student also receives inclusion support, the inclusion teacher and the EAL/ESL teacher coordinate planning to avoid an overload of support and to agree the most effective combined strategy.

9. Assessment and Monitoring (EAL/ESL)

The EAL/ESL programme uses a triangulated approach to assessment, with student learning at its centre. A starting benchmark is established for every learner at the beginning of the academic year using the MAP screener test, and MAP Growth is subsequently administered up to three times per academic year to monitor progress.

The EAL/ESL teacher monitors progress on an ongoing basis in cooperation with classroom and subject area teachers, through:

- Collection of progress data using benchmarked monitoring tools.
- Maintenance of observation checklists tied to CA ELD proficiency levels (Emerging, Expanding, Bridging) by classroom teachers.
- Bimonthly review meetings between the EAL/ESL Teacher, Teaching and Learning Coaches (TLCs), and classroom teachers.

The EAL/ESL Teacher maintains an updated list of all monitored students, made available to faculty, and informs parents in writing of a student's enrolment in EAL/ESL support at the start of the school year.

10. Exit Protocol (EAL/ESL)

Students attaining the grade-level norm RIT score, or the 70th percentile or higher on MAP Reading, are considered for exit from the EAL/ESL programme at the end of the academic year. Exit decisions are made by the EAL/ESL Teacher together with classroom and subject area teachers and the relevant TLCs, and are only effective at the end of an academic year across all phases.

On exit, documentation of the exit date is added to the student file in the form of a parent letter. All exited students are monitored for a further two academic years to confirm that progress is sustained, as measured through ongoing content assessments.

PART B: ARABIC AS A SECOND LANGUAGE (ASL)

11. Arabic A and Arabic B: Placement Criteria

In line with KHDA and Ministry of Education requirements, all students at AIS study Arabic. Placement onto the Arabic A or Arabic B pathway is determined at the point of admission and reviewed periodically thereafter.

- Arabic A is the default pathway for students of Arab nationality and for students from Arabic-speaking households, reflecting first-language acquisition of Arabic.
- Arabic B is the default pathway for students who are not native or heritage Arabic speakers, reflecting additional or foreign-language acquisition of Arabic.
- Where nationality or home-language information does not clearly indicate the appropriate pathway, for example, a heritage Arabic speaker without Arab nationality, or an Arab national with limited prior exposure to Arabic, the Arabic Department conducts a placement assessment to confirm the most appropriate pathway.

Placement decisions, and any subsequent change of pathway, are recorded by the Arabic Department and shared with the Head of Data and Assessments for inclusion in the student's academic record.

12. Programme Approach by Grade Band (Arabic)

Grades KG–Grade 5	Grades 6–8	Grades 9–10	Grades 11–12
Foundational Arabic Arabic A focuses on foundational literacy and oral fluency. Arabic B introduces communicative basics through songs, stories, and routine classroom language.	Developing Proficiency Arabic A develops reading, writing, and grammar in line with first-language expectations. Arabic B builds functional communication and introduces basic literacy skills.	Consolidating Proficiency Arabic A consolidates literary and academic Arabic. Arabic B consolidates conversational and functional literacy, with support differentiated by individual progress.	Exam and Pathway Preparation Arabic A and Arabic B continue in line with the requirements of the school's exit qualifications and KHDA expectations for Arabic attainment at senior phases.

Within both Arabic A and Arabic B, teachers differentiate instruction to reflect the range of prior exposure to Arabic among students on each pathway, particularly in Arabic B, where incoming proficiency can vary considerably depending on a student's prior schooling.

13. Assessment and Monitoring (Arabic)

Arabic proficiency is monitored through internal Arabic benchmark assessments administered at the beginning, and end of each academic year, alongside ongoing classroom-based assessment aligned to the Arabic curriculum standards adopted by the school. The Arabic Department, in coordination with the Head of Data and Assessments, reviews this data each reporting period to

identify students who may benefit from additional support within their pathway, or whose progress suggests that a change of pathway should be considered.

- Arabic A: progress is benchmarked against first-language literacy and oracy expectations for the student's grade level.
- Arabic B: progress is benchmarked against staged proficiency descriptors appropriate to additional-language acquisition, broadly comparable in structure to the Emerging, Expanding, and Bridging stages used in EAL/ESL monitoring.

14. Transition and Reclassification Between Arabic A and Arabic B

A student's Arabic pathway is not necessarily fixed for the duration of their enrolment at AIS. Where assessment data and teacher observation indicate that a Arabic B student has reached a level of proficiency consistent with the Arabic A pathway, or that an Arabic A student requires the structured support of the Arabic B pathway, the Arabic Department will recommend a change of pathway to the relevant Principal.

Any change of pathway is communicated to parents in writing, takes effect at the start of a term or academic year wherever possible, and is documented in the student's academic record.

15. Roles and Responsibilities: Language Support Team

AIS maintains a combined Language Support Team with oversight of both the EAL/ESL and ASL strands of this policy. The team includes representatives of:

- School Principal
- EAL Teacher
- Head of Arabic Department
- Head of English Department
- Heads of Inclusion
- Head of Data and Assessments
- EAL/ESL Support Teacher(s)
- English Teacher(s)
- Arabic Teacher(s)
- Parent Representatives

The EAL/ESL Teacher and Head of Arabic Department work closely with classroom and subject teachers to ensure that staff are appropriately trained and supported in testing, monitoring, and delivery within their respective strands. Class and subject teachers, as the staff members primarily responsible for the language of instruction in their classroom, are responsible for knowing which of their students are registered for EAL/ESL support and for which Arabic pathway

each of their students follows, and for communicating directly with parents regarding entry to or exit from support, including during parent conference meetings.

Department Chairs ensure that lesson planning across core subjects reflects the needs of EAL/ESL students and supports the differentiated delivery of Arabic A and Arabic B.

16. Professional Development

At AIS, every teacher is a language teacher, and all staff share responsibility for the language development of their students. To support teaching staff, the EAL/ESL Coordinator and Head of Arabic Department will:

- Offer workshops on language acquisition research, stages of language development, and acculturation, covering both English and Arabic contexts.
- Support classroom and subject teachers with strategies for differentiation within EAL/ESL, Arabic A, and Arabic B.
- Set student language goals collaboratively with classroom and subject teachers.
- Facilitate transdisciplinary collaboration in curriculum planning, including coordination between the EAL/ESL and Arabic teams where students require support across both languages.
- Source and curate materials suitable for in-class and pull-out support across both strands.

17. Communication with Parents and Guardians

Parents and guardians are informed in writing of their child's placement in the EAL/ESL programme, their child's Arabic pathway, and any subsequent change to either, at the point the decision is made and again at the start of each academic year where the placement continues. Homeroom, English, and Arabic teachers communicate directly with parents regarding ongoing progress and may do so during scheduled parent conference meetings.

18. Evaluating the Effectiveness of Language Provision

The EAL/ESL Teacher, Head of Arabic Department, and Head of Data and Assessments compare the academic performance of current and former EAL/ESL students, and of students on each Arabic pathway, against their peers each academic year, using reliable and consistent data sources. This analysis informs any adjustment to staffing, resourcing, or programme design within either strand, or is reported to the Senior Leadership Team annually.

19. Monitoring and Review of this Policy

This policy is reviewed annually by the Senior Leadership Team ahead of the start of each academic year, or sooner in the event of a material change to KHDA or Ministry of Education

requirements relating to English or Arabic language provision. Findings from the effectiveness evaluation described in Section 18 inform each review.