

# Multilingualism & English as an Additional Language (EAL) Policy

## 1. Policy Statement

At Peques Anglo-Spanish Nursery Schools, multilingualism is central to our ethos and practice. We recognise that learning more than one language from an early age supports children's cognitive development, communication skills, cultural identity, and confidence.

We provide a language-rich, inclusive environment where children are supported to develop strong foundations in English while valuing and celebrating their home languages and cultures.

This policy aligns with the **Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS)**, which recognises language development as a prime area of learning and emphasises inclusive practice for children with English as an Additional Language (EAL).

## 2. Multilingualism at Peques

There is a growing understanding among parents and educators that early exposure to more than one language is a significant advantage. Research and practice show that young children are particularly receptive to language learning and benefit most when this begins in the early years.

At Peques, children are immersed in a multilingual environment where language learning happens naturally through play, routines, relationships, and meaningful experiences.

### **Benefits of Multilingualism**

Children who are exposed to more than one language from an early age often:

- Develop early literacy skills more readily
- Show increased creativity and flexible thinking
- Become strong problem-solvers
- Achieve positive academic outcomes over time
- Develop a deeper understanding of their own culture and others
- Gain long-term social and career advantages

## 3. One Person, One Language (OPOL) Approach

Peques operates a **strict One Person, One Language (OPOL)** approach, as outlined by linguist **Colin Baker**.

- Spanish-speaking staff communicate exclusively in Spanish
- English-speaking staff communicate exclusively in English
- Mandarin-speaking staff communicate exclusively in Mandarin

This consistency allows children to associate each language clearly with a specific speaker, supporting strong language acquisition and comprehension.

## Exception to OPOL

The only exception to the OPOL approach applies **when it is in the best interests of the child** to ensure their needs, safety, or emotional wellbeing are met.

For example:

- If a child does not understand Spanish and an English-speaking practitioner is temporarily unavailable, staff will repeat key information in English to ensure understanding and reassurance.

This flexibility is used thoughtfully and always with the child's wellbeing as the priority.

## 4. English as an Additional Language (EAL)

At Peques, we recognise that children learning English as an additional language are **not delayed** and do **not have a special educational need** solely because they are learning more than one language.

A child is identified as having EAL when English is not the primary language spoken at home.

As a multilingual setting with families from a wide range of nationalities, we take great care to distinguish between:

- normal stages of second-language acquisition
- and potential developmental concerns (where applicable)

## 5. Supporting Children with EAL

Children with EAL are supported through inclusive, language-rich practice, including:

- Working in partnership with parents to gather key words and phrases from the child's home language to support emotional security and transition
- Encouraging participation in practical, meaningful activities where language is modelled naturally
- Providing small-group and one-to-one interactions to support communication
- Using visual timetables, pictures, and routines to build confidence and understanding
- Repeating language, using gestures, and emphasising key words
- Allowing children time to listen and absorb language without pressure to speak
- Respecting each child's pace and readiness to communicate verbally
- Valuing and celebrating each child's home language, culture, and religion

Practitioners understand that some children go through a **silent period** while learning a new language and that this is a normal part of language development.

## 6. Inclusive Practice

The strategies used to support children with EAL benefit **all children**, including English speakers. Language-rich environments, visual supports, repetition, and responsive communication enhance learning and development across the nursery.

## 7. Observation, Assessment, and SEND Considerations

- Children with EAL are observed holistically across all areas of learning
- Practitioners consider language development in the context of the child's home language
- Where concerns arise, staff work closely with parents and the SENCO
- No child is identified as having SEND solely due to multilingual language development

This approach ensures children are supported appropriately without misidentification or unnecessary intervention.

## 8. Partnership with Parents

We recognise parents as key partners in supporting language development.

- Parents are encouraged to continue using their home language
- Information is shared regularly about children's communication progress
- Parental insight is valued and respected

**This policy should be read in conjunction with:**

- Equality & Diversity Policy
- Social & Emotional Development Policy
- The Role of the Key Person Policy
- Tracking Child Development Policy
- Progress Check at Age Two
- Learning Journal Policy
- Special Educational Needs & Disabilities (SEND) Policy and Procedure
- Partnership with Parents Policy

**Version:** 1.0

**Effective date:** 02/03/2026

**Last reviewed:** 02/03/2026

**Review cycle:** Annually, or earlier where required due to legislative, regulatory, operational, or statutory changes.

**Approval route:** Head Office