

ISEND Early Years Service

Guidance for supporting children
learning English as an Additional
Language (EAL) in the Early Years
Foundation Stage



EAL children may join the Early Years Foundation Stage from a background of having recently moved from another country or alternatively they may have been born in the U.K but speak a language other than English at home.

ISEND Early Years Service supports children (aged 0-5 years) whose difficulties create a significant barrier to learning and /or inclusion.

ISEND Early Years Service also supports pre-school children and reception age children who have English as an Additional Language (EAL).

The benefits of our EAL support will contribute towards more:

- Settled, included, achieving EAL pupils
- Improved EAL parental involvement
- Access to experts to call on for advice and support on EAL issues
- Skilled staff who are better able to meet the needs of EAL pupil
- Successful transitions for EAL pupils

Stages of learning a new language for young children

- **Silent Period**

Many bilingual children go through a silent period when they first enter an unfamiliar setting. This can last for up to six months or longer. It is not a 'passive' stage. Children will be watching, actively listening, and exploring their environment, trying to understand new experiences and trying to develop new meanings. It is important that children should not feel pressurised to speak until they feel confident enough to do so.

- **Echoing**

Many children may begin to 'echo' single words and some short phrases used by adults and peers. All attempts at speech should be encouraged and praised. If you offer a biscuit and say 'would you like to take a biscuit?' the child may echo the question with 'biscuit' or 'take a biscuit.'

- **'Formulaic' language**

Formulaic language may come next. This consists of 'chunks' of meaningful social speech e.g. 'Mummy comes soon', 'My turn'. This can be supported by encouragement and reaffirming, 'Yes, Mummy will come back soon'.

- **Joining in with refrains**

Children may begin to join in with story refrains and repetitions in songs learnt by copying others. Support this by planning for these opportunities.

- **Using Questioning words**

For the purpose of making sense of their surroundings e.g. 'Me play?'

- **Independent phrases and longer sentences**

Children will then begin to generate their own 'telegraphic' sentences, using two or three word utterances. Function words are likely to be omitted, the main concern being the communication of meaning. Non-verbal gestures will often accompany speech. Holistic phrases (a development of 'chunking') will continue during this stage.

- **Longer sentences**

Children will begin to use extended phrases or simple sentences; these may contain errors for some time until children understand the use of different grammatical structures in English, which may be very different from their home language.

Cultural Diversity

- Often cultural diversity is expressed solely through class topics however it should be naturally seated within the ethos and practise of the whole school
- Libraries and classrooms should have dual language texts including books and labels; there are some really good multicultural resources available such as posters, persona dolls and play equipment
- If possible take the opportunity to visit a school with large numbers of EAL pupils
- Encourage the pupils in your school to share their first language; where possible provide opportunities for children who share a first language to meet during their school day
- Young children are aware of difference; circle time is a good time to talk about differences; children are not too young to talk about physical and cultural differences
- You can research different languages and cultures on the internet or contact the EAL team for more information
- Where pupils are not participating in for example school festivals and assemblies ensure that they are provided with appropriate curriculum activities. These should be linked to whole school or class projects.

Cultural Differences in Early Years

- Some children will avoid any physical contact for cultural reasons. For example, Muslim women and girls do not shake hands. In Nepal, the head is considered sacred and even small children should not be touched on the head
- Some children may not want to eat with other pupils because they are only used to eating with members of their own family.
- Some children may seem aggressive in the playground or may show other behavioural patterns. This is sometimes because their English is limited and their only form of communication with their peers is non-verbal.
- Some children may appear tired or uninterested due to environmental adjustments, pressure or limited English skills.
- Some children will not answer unless they know the answer - an incorrect answer or a guess may mean 'losing face'.

- Some children may nod their head to acknowledge you but this does not necessarily mean that they understand you.
- Some children will avoid eye contact with teachers - in some cultures this may be a mark of respect and does not indicate that they are not listening.
- Some children may feel recorded written work is the most important part of their work and may pay little attention to oral based activities.
- Some children may be uneasy with the more liberal approach to foundation stage activities in this country. Where they are used to a more formal teaching/ learning style, they need to learn how to work co-operatively and to understand the boundaries of behaviour expected in the setting.
- Some children from Asian families - may not want to have any contact with animals.
- Some children might be sent to school in a nappy because their parents/carers want to avoid difficulties.
- Some children may find it difficult to communicate with the school about toilet arrangements.
- Some children from different cultures may have particular dietary requirements.
- Some children will have normally been dressed by carers and will not have been encouraged to be independent.
- Some children might not have experienced messy play and may need encouragement to join in.

Useful Tips for working with EAL children

- Check pronunciation of children's names and make sure everyone in the setting can say them properly
- Choose a friend for the child so that he/she will begin to feel secure whilst in the presence of other children
- Encourage the child to watch other children before joining in. Try not to worry too much about spoken language. Some EAL children may initially choose not to talk when they are new to the setting. However, it is important that the staff continue to talk to them and ensure that they are engaged in activities that support their social interaction and language development
- Use gestures and body language to help with communication, but be careful of misinterpreting facial expressions, gestures, physical contact and personal space, which varies from culture to culture
- Respond positively to all attempts at speaking English; use modelling to correct mistakes ie repeat the sentence or the words correctly rather than tell the child they are wrong
- Repetition is important, not only in stories, songs and rhymes, but repeating and confirming children's own attempts at speech
- Learn some key words in the languages used by the children who attend your setting, eg hello, thank you, yes, no etc; The EAL team has some key words available in different languages or a template of suggested words for completion with parents can be found on the next page
- Provide dual languages books in the home corner and if possible for the child to take home; EAL parents might be willing to record stories from the dual languages book for the children to listen to on tape
- Use story sacks puppets and visual prompts to support children's understanding

Translations

ENGLISH		PRONUNCIATION
Hello		
Mum		
Dad		
Yes		
No		
Stop		
Have		
Haven't		
Book		
Listen		
Well done		
Thank you		
Sit down		
Friend		
Water		
Milk		
Drink		
Lunch		
Toilet		
Share		
Home		
Goodbye/bye		
Play		
Wash your hands		
Take home		
Bring back		
Leave it here		
Coat		

1			Black		
2			Brown		
3			Blue		
4			Pink		
5			Yellow		
6			White		
7			Green		
8			Orange		
9			Red		
10			Purple		

Involving Parents



All parents need to feel that their role in their child's learning and development is valued. It is important to respect and value every child's home background, culture and community. It is also important to give parents the opportunity to be involved in all aspects of your setting, for example helping out with trips.

- Welcome parents to your school
- Make sure that Home School liaison includes finding out about the pupil's culture, language, religion (see overleaf)
- Involve parents by asking for help in making dual language classroom signs and labels, and providing props for the role play area such as newspapers, calendars and cooking utensils and by inviting them to come into your setting to teach all the children a song or rhyme in their home language or read a story
- Emphasise to parents that if children have a strong foundation in their home language this will support their learning. Do not advocate the use of English only, either at school or at home.
- Provide translated information to parents in their home language if possible; advice from the EAL team can be provided
- Be aware of EAL families who do not attend school events such as parent's evenings and try to encourage their involvement. The EAL team may be able to help with this.

Useful Additional Questions to add to your home visit form

How do you pronounce your child's name?	
What languages are spoken in your home?	The child may be multilingual
What is your child's first language?	If there are several languages spoken it would be useful to know which language the child is most fluent in
Is the spoken language different from the written language?	Sylheti is a spoken language not a written one. It is the spoken language of the Sylhet region of Bangladesh
Does your child attend first language classes out of school?	
Check for directionality of reading and writing in the pupil's home language	
Is your child experiencing any difficulties with first/home language?	This would have a direct impact on the child's ability to learn second and subsequent languages. Ask the parent if their child understands what they are saying and have they got a reasonable vocabulary eg colours, animals etc
What level of English do the parents/carers have? (Remember to ask if they can read English)	Translated letters are available at www.primaryresources.co.uk/letters
Do parents encourage the use of first language in the home?	It cannot be overemphasised how important it is that children are encouraged to develop their first language both in the home and at school

Useful sites for resources and information

www.schoolslinks.co.uk

Free downloads of many dual language signs for your setting.

www.blacksheepress.co.uk

CD-ROM containing resources for speech and language available to buy; includes 200 coloured pictures and nursery rhymes

www.newburyparkschool.net/lotm/index.html

Website offers lots of free downloadable resource packs, including audio files in fifteen different languages

<https://literacytrust.org.uk/resources/understanding-bilingualism-early-years/>

Free downloadable information for parents in eight different languages.

www.mantralingua.com

Mantra publishes books in 42 languages as well as interactive CD-ROMs, audio-CDs, posters, toys, games and teaching resources. Books also include non-fiction books and dictionaries.

www.milet.com

Milet publish children's dual languages books in 20 languages.

www.primaryresources.co.uk/letters/

Standard letters to parents translated into different languages.

For more information contact:

ISEND Early Years Service
3rd Floor, St Marks House
14 Upperton Road
Eastbourne
East Sussex BN21 1EP
Tel: 01273 335270

ISEND Early Years Service
3rd floor Ocean House
London Road
St Leonards, TN37 6DH
Tel: 01273 335270

ISEND Early Years support service
County Hall,
Room C3F
St Annes crescent
Lewes BN7 1UE
Tel: 01273 335270

