English as an Additional Language

A Guide to Working with Children in Early Years Settings

www.irespect.net
01452 427261
This booklet aims to provide information and practical help for the Early Years practitioner when a child arrives with little or no English.

Whilst you may encounter some anxieties during the initial settling in period, working with bilingual / emerging bilingual children is a most rewarding experience which will enhance and enrich your setting.

The Race Equality and Diversity Service (READS) based at the Moat Centre, will always be ready to offer support and advice in conjunction with The Early Years Consultants Team.

Phone number: 01452 427224  Ask for Catherine Rushton

It is recommended that this booklet be read in conjunction with The LEA Publication Common Threads: A Multicultural Resource Book for Early Years Workers by Catherine Rushton and Gail Johnson.

The booklet is divided into the following sections:

1. Gathering information
2. Cultural differences to look out for
3. Creating a welcoming environment
4. Providing a language learning environment
   i) Receptive language and Communicating
   ii) Games for EAL Learners
   iii) Books for EAL Learners
5. Partnership with parents and carers
6. Frequently Asked Questions
7. Appendix
   i) The Early Stages of Learning English NALDIC
   ii) Bilingual Children: What the Research Tells Us (from Assessing the Needs of Bilingual Pupils by Deryn Hall)
   iii) Further Information
   iv) Example of planning for Role Play Area
   v) Glossary of Terms Used
1. Gathering Information

This could be achieved using the Registration Form:

- What is the pupil's correct name and how is it spelt / pronounced?
- Where exactly is the family from?
- What is the family's religion?
- Are there any special circumstances? eg Is the pupil an asylum seeker / adopted / from war zone?
- What language(s) are spoken in the home?
- Who is the primary carer?
- Does the family read / write in the home language?
- Is there a dress code or dietary requirements?
- What is the parent's / carer's knowledge of English?
- What is the child's knowledge of English?
- Does the pupil have older / younger siblings? Are they living at home / elsewhere?
- What previous experience does the child have of pre school in UK or elsewhere?
- Are there other family members / friends living nearby?
2. Cultural differences to look out for……

Some children will avoid eye contact with teachers - in some cultures this may have a meaning other than an acknowledgement of listening.

Some children will avoid any physical contact for cultural reasons.

Some children may not want to eat with other pupils because of the difference in eating arrangements.

Some children may smile even if being reprimanded, as this is a gesture of respect in some cultures.

Some children will nod their head to acknowledge you but it does not necessarily mean that they understand you.

Some children may appear tired or uninterested due to environmental adjustments, stress or limited English skills.

Some children may appear aggressive when playing or may show other behavioural patterns.

Some children may be unfamiliar with the toilet arrangements in the setting. eg A child might be sent in nappies to avoid these difficulties.

Children from different cultures may have particular dietary requirements.

Some cultures – particularly some Asian families – may not want to have any contact with animals. There may also be sensibilities about photos, dolls and other etc.

Some pupils may nod their head to acknowledge you but it does not necessarily mean that they understand you.

Some children will smile even if being reprimanded, as this is a gesture of respect in some cultures.

Some children may not want to eat with other pupils because of the difference in eating arrangements.

Some children will avoid any physical contact for cultural reasons.

Some children may appear tired or uninterested due to environmental adjustments, stress or limited English skills.

Some children may seem aggressive when playing or may show other behavioural patterns.

Some children may be unfamiliar with the toilet arrangements in the setting. eg A child might be sent in nappies to avoid these difficulties.

Some cultures – particularly some Asian families – may not want to have any contact with animals. There may also be sensibilities about photos, dolls and other etc.
3. Creating a welcoming environment

Have **Welcome Posters** and other visuals around the walls to **reflect different cultures**. Display children’s own **named photos** to give everyone a **sense of belonging**.

Have **examples of writing** eg **labels, notices** that the child may recognise from home to show that their **language is valued** and to help other children to learn to value other languages and scripts.

**Have some dual language books** for parents / carers and others to share. Share some **rhymes** in other languages. **Learn to count** in other languages.

**Establish a consistent set of routines** ie snack time, circle time and **provide cues** as to what happens when eg a frieze showing daily routine in pictorial form.

**Explain** to the children that some children speak other languages. **Encourage** them to **interact** with them. Help them to understand that **non response** is not social rejection but lack of comprehension.

**Ensure** that the EAL child’s **home life** is reflected in the setting eg **include familiar cooking equipment / food items** in the role play area.

*See appendix for example*
Essential language

Basic words and phrases to enable the newcomer to function day to day and to express immediate needs in the first few days and weeks:

Hello
Yes
No
Please may I have…….
Thank you
Goodbye
I need to go to the toilet
I like..
I don’t like
Where is…….
I don’t understand

With a ‘buddy’ the EAL learner can label different things in the classroom to help him/her remember the words

Start an alphabet word book – with pictures for younger pupils – and add to it as a new word is learnt

Play Circle games or Simon Says which allow participation with the minimum of speaking

Have a box of materials ready to dip into eg games, puzzles, magnetic letters, wordless books, bilingual story books + tapes *see resource page

Use Classroom assistants to take a small group to do an activity such as cooking, book making, embroidery, spelling or number games

Provide magazines and catalogues to cut out pictures to sort and categorise

Start an All about Me topic book. Take photos around school to illustrate places, activities, daily routine
4. Providing a Language Learning Environment

Support this through pictures, symbols and gestures wherever possible

Be prepared for children to spend long periods in solitary play at first

By watching others involved in an activity children can have access to good language and will be tuning in to the language around them

When planning sessions, make a note of how the activities can provide language learning opportunities for the children using EAL.

Children need the opportunity to start to interact with others through conversation. This can be in planned activities eg Circle Time or informal situations eg Snack time

Think carefully about using questions that will include the information needed in a response. eg Ask “Would you like a green one or a blue one? rather than “Which colour would you like?” Use gestures to reinforce

Provide opportunities to share books 1:1 with EAL children to allow them to encounter “book” language

Speak clearly but don’t shout. EAL learners need to hear English spoken as normally as possible – if sentences are over simplified or loudly stressed this may make understanding more difficult

“Talk while doing” to model appropriate language eg while playing a simple board game or using construction toys

Use gestures / visuals / props / puppets / other adults or children as models in order to help explain what you are talking about

Accept any speech without correcting. Model target sounds or words for children – encourage but do not require repetition of models

Use the home corner to reflect different cultural backgrounds and encourage talk about familiar activities eg cooking, eating

Use songs and rhymes to provide an opportunity to join in a few words and extend their language in a non threatening environment

Use the home corner to reflect different cultural backgrounds and encourage talk about familiar activities eg cooking, eating

By watching others involved in an activity children can have access to good language and will be tuning in to the language around them

When planning sessions, make a note of how the activities can provide language learning opportunities for the children using EAL.

Children need the opportunity to start to interact with others through conversation. This can be in planned activities eg Circle Time or informal situations eg Snack time

Think carefully about using questions that will include the information needed in a response. eg Ask “Would you like a green one or a blue one? rather than “Which colour would you like?” Use gestures to reinforce

Provide opportunities to share books 1:1 with EAL children to allow them to encounter “book” language

Speak clearly but don’t shout. EAL learners need to hear English spoken as normally as possible – if sentences are over simplified or loudly stressed this may make understanding more difficult

“Talk while doing” to model appropriate language eg while playing a simple board game or using construction toys

Use gestures / visuals / props / puppets / other adults or children as models in order to help explain what you are talking about

Accept any speech without correcting. Model target sounds or words for children – encourage but do not require repetition of models

Use the home corner to reflect different cultural backgrounds and encourage talk about familiar activities eg cooking, eating

Use songs and rhymes to provide an opportunity to join in a few words and extend their language in a non threatening environment
### 4i) Receptive Language and Communicating

The EAL Beginner will be watching / listening to the adults other children around him / her – it is really important to support talk with visuals / materials / actions / gestures wherever possible to help convey meaning.

Here are some examples of language areas that can be developed quite naturally during the course of everyday activities in the Early Years Setting.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Greet people, respond to greetings</th>
<th>Hello….How are you? Fine, thank you….OK</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Express agreement / disagreement</td>
<td>Yes….No….. I like / don’t like</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identify objects and people</td>
<td>What’s this? Who’s this? This is a….. It’s…… They’re……</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Answer and ask questions about physical characteristics and feelings</td>
<td>I’ve got black hair.. I’m cold / hungry / happy / sad ….</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Answer and ask questions about number</td>
<td>How many pencils?… I’ve got two sisters There are six boys</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Answer and ask questions about possession</td>
<td>I’ve got a ……. This is my bag.. Whose lunchbox is this?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Answer and ask questions about where things are</td>
<td>Where’s the book? (It’s) in / on / under / by / behind……. The chair is by the table</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Express simple actions</td>
<td>What are you doing? What is s/he doing? I’m……ing S/he’s…..ing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Basic Topic Areas

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ourselves</th>
<th>Personal details</th>
<th>Family</th>
<th>Feelings / Needs</th>
<th>Home</th>
<th>Clothes</th>
<th>Food</th>
<th>Parts of the Body</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Setting / School</td>
<td>The Environment</td>
<td>eg Hall. Playground, Furniture, Equipment People who work with us</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mathematical Development</td>
<td>Numbers</td>
<td>Shapes</td>
<td>Size</td>
<td>Money</td>
<td>Time</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Topics</td>
<td>Colours</td>
<td>Animals</td>
<td>Transport</td>
<td>In the Town / Country</td>
<td>Occupations</td>
<td>Shopping</td>
<td>Weather</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Games introduce new vocabulary, new concepts, use of number, social language.

Remember to include children in the group who will provide good language models

Many of these activities/games will be well known in the setting. Car Boot sales and attics are also worth raiding. This is by no means an exhaustive list and you will no doubt know others and have particular favourites, but it serves to illustrate how to find language learning opportunities among readily available resources.

**Games**

**Match – a – Balloon**

**Picture Lotto / Matching Pairs**

**Picture Snap**

**Sound Lotto**

**What Belongs Where? (Spectrum)**

**Animal / People Jigsaw Puzzles**

**Tummyache Game**

**Simon Says**

**Size Lotto**

**Teddy Bear Opposites (Orchard Toys)**

**The If….Game (Philip and Tacey)**

**Teddy Bears Colour Match Express (Orchard Toys)**

**The house that Jack Built**

**Picture Dominoes**

**Press & Peel**

**Magnetic Storyboard with story packs**

**Guess Who?**

**What's in the Bag?**

**The Shopping List Game**

**Any Dice and Board Games**

**Language / Vocabulary Focus**

Colours, dice, your / my turn, throw, board, put

Common nouns

Common nouns

Common verbs and nouns

Common nouns, positional language, Where…? Home / In the street

Parts of the body, clothes, animals

Food, like / dislike

Instructions, parts of the body

Common nouns, language of size

Front / back, push / pull, over /under etc

Common nouns, food, transport, animals

Colours

Colours, parts of house, shape

Common nouns

Various common scenes – school, home, farm, shop, seaside

Book language, common nouns, verbs

Physical descriptions, clothes

Any set of objects eg classroom equipment / animals / vehicles / play food

Common supermarket items

Directions, counting, taking turns
Choose books with very little text, but which are clearly supported by strong visual impact.

The best stories, rhymes are those with repetitive or predictable storylines / refrains.

Choose books that relate to children’s experience which provide positive images and value cultural diversity.

Wordless Picture Books are ideal for “reading” in any language. They can be used to introduce new words or explore culture specific references.

Many stories have audio taped versions to enable the pupil to see and hear the language simultaneously. Talking books are beginning to be produced for the computer, including some dual language texts. You can also make your own tapes / talking books with software such as Clicker4.

More and more books are being produced in dual language text. These are equally valuable for sharing with children who speak one language.

Home made books are easy and inexpensive to make and can be used to support the classroom curriculum in many ways. They can be both fiction and non fiction. They can provide an important link between home / school. Bilingual versions can be produced with help from home or other bilingual speakers.

Here are some books for the EAL Beginner, but you will be able to think of many more that will be equally suitable.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Spot books</th>
<th>Eric Hill</th>
<th>Mr Gumpy’s Outing</th>
<th>John Burningham</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Brown Bear, Brown Bear</td>
<td>Eric Carle</td>
<td>The Shopping Basket</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Very Hungry Caterpillar</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rosie’s Walk</td>
<td>Pat Hutchins</td>
<td>Dear Zoo</td>
<td>Rod Campbell</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Titch</td>
<td></td>
<td>How Do I Put It On</td>
<td>Shigeo Watanabe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>How Do I Eat It</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Peace at Last</td>
<td>Jill Murphy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Handa’s Surprise</td>
<td>Eileen Browne</td>
<td>The Snowman</td>
<td>Raymond Briggs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lima’s Red Hot Chilli</td>
<td>David Mills</td>
<td>A Dark, Dark Tale</td>
<td>Ruth Brown</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- 10 -www.irrespect.net
6. Frequently Asked Questions

Q. How do we convey an urgent message to parents where we are uncertain of their understanding?

A. If you feel that a phone message in English may not be understood, try to get a contact number of someone who will be able to translate – eg work contact, neighbour or community organisation. Otherwise, you may need to send someone to the child’s home, as face to face contact is the best way of confirming that information has been received.

Q. Who do we contact about transferring to school?

A. Check Parents / Carers know the admission procedure – you may consider contacting the school concerned to check that all is in place for the child to start at the school. If you feel that the child may need EAL support when he / she goes to school, contact the EMA Team at READS, Hucclecote Centre, who will liaise with you and the school. Phone number: 01452 427261.

Q. How do we find out about availability of interpretation?

A. Contact the Early Years Consultants Team
Phone number: 01452 427224 Ask for Catherine Rushton.

Q. Why won’t a child talk to me when I’ve heard them talking freely with other children?

A. Children may appear quickly to develop language for social communication ie for regularly encountered play situations. This may be largely based on echoing the language around them, until by trial and error, what they say achieves the desired effect. They will be beginning to understand some other talk directed at them, but may not yet be ready to produce a reply or “make conversation” themselves. Don’t give up talking to them; they will sooner or later begin to make sense of what you are saying, and may even surprise you by uttering a complete sentence after weeks or even months of silence! (see appendix The Early Stages of Learning English)
Q. Should I put a child on the SEN register because he / she has EAL?

A. EAL does not mean that a child has SEN. However, refer to The Code of Practice and QCA Curriculum Guidance for the Foundation Stage for information on procedure if you have concerns and contact The Early Years Consultants or Pre School Support Workers.

Q. What do I do if children refuse to play with or make unkind / hurtful remarks about the EAL child ie about their inability to “talk properly”, about their skin colour or any other perceived differences?

A. Such incidents should be dealt with immediately in order to show that such behaviour is not acceptable. Above all, do not pretend that the problem will go away. Such behaviour is bullying and its hurtful effects should be acknowledged and dealt with. The Gloucestershire LEA publication “Common Threads – A Multicultural Resource Book for Early Years Workers” has an important section on this and on formulating Early Years multicultural and anti racist policies and should be referred to in conjunction with this booklet.
7. Appendix

i) The Early Stages of Learning English

ii) Bilingual Children: What the Research Shows Us

iii) Further Information

iv) Example of Planning for Role Play Area

vi) Glossary of Terms Used
The Early Stages of Learning English
National Association for Language Development in the Curriculum (NALDIC)

This outline of young children’s learning of English as an additional language (EAL) has been prepared by NALDIC to inform judgements made by educators in assessment contexts. It draws on research findings. The process should be seen as cumulative and there will be variations in the rate of development according to environmental, personal and social factors.

Many bilingual children who are at an early stage in their learning of English go through a ‘silent period’ when they first enter an unfamiliar early years setting. During this time, children will be watching, actively listening, and exploring their environment to understand new experiences and to develop new meanings. They will be trying to relate previous knowledge to new contexts. It is important that children should not feel pressurised to speak until they feel confident enough to do so. However, it is essential that adults continue to talk to the children, to pick up their non-verbal responses, to support the child’s understanding of meaning, and to involve them in activities; these strategies will help children to internalise the language they hear and to develop a sense of patterns, meanings and a range of language functions in their new, unfamiliar environment.

During this time, children may begin to use non-verbal gestures as a response to a question or to indicate need. Understanding is in advance of spoken language.

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.

There will be a development of formulaic language (‘chunks’ of social speech) eg “Mummy come soon.” “My turn.” Children may begin to join in with story refrains and repetitions and songs.

‘Chunking’ will continue, but children will increasingly begin to use one word utterances (frequently nouns) which will perform a range of language functions (eg questioning, responding, naming).

Children will 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 (development of ‘chunking’) will continue during this stage.

Children will continue to use extended phrases or simple sentences which contain surface developmental errors in the use of plurals, tenses, personal pronouns, function words and articles. Again, the emphasis is on the communication of meaning.

Increasingly, children will develop more control in their use of functional language. However, surface errors in the use of tenses, word endings and plurals will continue for some time until children understand the use of different grammatical structures in the target language, which may be different from their home language.

From NALDIC Working Paper 4
Children take up to two years to develop ‘basic interpersonal communication skills’ (playground / street survival language) but it takes from five to seven years to acquire the full range of literacy skills (‘cognitive academic language proficiency’) needed to cope with literacy demands of GCSE.

A silent (receptive) period is natural in the learning of a second language and is not a sign of learning difficulties in the first / early stages.

There are developmental factors common to both native and second language acquisition. Pupils learn roughly the same, regardless of their first language background.

Teachers / schools should have basic information available about the language backgrounds of bilingual pupils.

There should be awareness by all that a focus on mother tongue is a valuable channel to support learning and not a hindrance. Teachers should not advocate the use of English only, either at school or at home.

Parents should be encouraged to share language and literacy in speaking and listening as well as in reading and writing. This can be as valuable in first / home language as in English.

Bilingualism can be educationally enriching and has a positive effect on intellectual performance.

Bilingualism should be valued as a special achievement

Where there are academic difficulties, teachers should first critically examine the teaching they are offering in terms of motivation and the language used.
Further Information

The READS website www.irespect.net is the recommended starting point for sourcing further information about working with EAL children. It covers a wide range of essential Race Equality and Inclusion issues in Gloucestershire and beyond. It provides links to Government sites, other EMA Services and publishers.

Publications that have been recommended include:

- Speaking & Listening in Multicultural Classrooms  
  V Edwards  
  (Reading University)
- Reading in Multicultural Classrooms
- Writing in Multicultural Classrooms
- Learning to Learn in a Second Language  
  P Gibbons (PETA)
- Educating Second Language Children  
  F Genesee, Editor (Cambridge)
- Assessing the Needs of Bilingual Pupils with Beginners in English  
  D Hall (Fulton)
- The Languages of the World  
  K Khatzner (Routledge)
- Refugee Children in the Classroom  
  J Rutter (Trentham)

Books with specific reference to Early Years

- Curriculum Guidance for the Foundation Stage  
  QCA
- Good Practice Guide – Working with Children who use EAL  
  Leicester EYDCCP
- Guidelines for Class Teachers Working with Beginners in English  
  Hounslow Language Service
- Common Threads – A Multicultural Resource Book for Early Years Workers  
  C Rushton, G Johnson  
  Glos LEA
### Glossary of Terms Used

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EAL</td>
<td>English as an Additional Language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EMA</td>
<td>Ethnic Minority Achievement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>READS</td>
<td>Race Equality and Diversity Service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bilingual</td>
<td>Someone who is able to function equally well in any two languages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emerging Bilingual</td>
<td>Someone at the early stages of becoming bilingual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monolingual</td>
<td>Someone who speaks one language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ESOL</td>
<td>English for Speakers of Other Languages (refers to adult learners)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EFL</td>
<td>English as a Foreign Language (refers to those learning English who are not resident in Britain – but who may be here temporarily as students)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E2L</td>
<td>English as a Second Language (forerunner of EAL)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Enjoying the Chinese Home in the Role Play Area

With thanks to the Children and Staff of
King’s Stanley Infants School
Above all- **BE FRIENDLY**-a smiling face and a welcoming gesture can be worth a thousand words! Offer a drink-Have alternatives to tea and coffee.

**Invest time getting to know parents and carers**-it may be difficult to build links if they have little or no English but it is important that they feel **vaued** and **reassured** about the well being of their children in what may be a very unfamiliar

Becoming **more familiar with the family** will help you a better understand potential cultural/religious/home circumstances that may need to be taken into account in planning an inclusive learning environment. The family’s Health Vistior may be a good source of information gathered over a period of time

It is important that everybody realises that **the development of the child’s first language is vital in learning English**-talking about things in the child’s home language with parents/carers will really help them to make sense of the English around them and build on the language they are beginning to acquire (see appendix **Bilingual Children, What the Research Tells Us**)

Where appropriate, **encourage parents and carers to join in sessions.** This will give them the opportunity to experience what happens and to be able to shar/talk about activities with their child in the first language. Remember, **parents/carers may be feeling isolated in the community** or have **little/very different experience of Early Years Education themselves**

**5. Partnership with Parents and Carers**

Parents/carers need to see how **supported play/activities** can provide **opportunities to model, rehearse and extend language**

Where appropriate, put patents/careres in touch with local providers of **ESOL classes** (English for Speakers of Other Languages) eg Local Colleges
Explain newsletters/ notes verbally if at all possible as this will enable you to be sure that the parents/ carers have understood the content and may help to avoid misunderstandings eg notices about special events, trips, requests for extra help/items needed for a particular activity.

Information for parents may be available in other languages – particularly the main community languages in Gloucstershire eg Gujarati, Bangla, Urdu, Cantonese; however, not all people who speak a language are literate in it, so it is useful if you can find another family member/friend who can act as interpreter if necessary. It is also possible to contact local community/language groups in the county.