

CHILDREN WITH ENGLISH AS AN ADDITIONAL LANGUAGE (EAL) IN NURSERY EDUCATION

The nursery child learning English as an additional language:

- **May be learning a new language**
- **May be learning through this new language**
- **May progress from a radically different starting point from monolingual children**

EAL pupils who have strong language skills in their first language will find it easier to develop comparable skills in English.

-O-O-O-O-O-O-O-

First steps:

- As pupils learn a great deal of language from their peers, place the pupil next to someone who is articulate and who will provide a good model of language.
- Don't panic if the pupil is reluctant to speak in class and allow him/her to watch and listen initially. Speaking in a new language is always very daunting, particularly for more self-conscious and timid pupils. Remember that just because they are silent does not mean that they are not learning.
- For the first few weeks, allow the pupil to make friends and become familiar with the nursery, its routine and environment as this will be very different to previous experiences. If the pupil feels at ease and settled, this creates a much better atmosphere and incentive for learning.
- Allow the pupil to use their home language whenever they wish. Continuing to develop the home language helps in their acquisition of English.

SUPPORTING PUPILS

Nurseries are naturally a good environment for children to develop their language skills. A supportive nursery has:

- **Routine** – where activities and associated language are repeated frequently.
- **Play** – opportunities to play alone, alongside peers and with peers, all of which allow opportunities for listening and talking.
- **Resources** – a variety of pictures, books, posters, toys and games which offer visual support for activities.

LISTENING:

- Repeat key words and encourage pupil to repeat after you.
- Use the pupil's name and make eye contact to focus on key information.
- Try and use the same language consistently.

USING STORIES

Sharing stories is an excellent way of developing language. They are great for:

- Enjoyment
- Sharing cultural values and traditions
- Giving opportunities to understand new concepts and ideas.

Try to give pupils opportunity to access stories in their home language. There are story tapes available in a variety of languages.

Stories may motivate children to:

- Acquire new vocabulary
- Listen to and use new language items
- Copy natural speech patterns using appropriate stress and intonation.

Supportive stories have:

- Strong, clear visuals
- A clear plot
- Predictable sequences
- Plenty of repetition

Supporting Understanding

- Set the scene before telling the story
- Tell the story, rather than reading it. It's easier to add, explain or extend.
- Use pictures, cut-outs, puppets or real materials to help understanding.
- If possible, use a dual language version or tape which can be shared at home.

USING GAMES

Games are also a good way of facilitating language learning. Games are:

- Fun
- Motivating
- Encourage co-operation
- Give experience of competition
- Create opportunities to use language
- Support new language
- Give opportunities to consolidate concepts such as colour, size, direction, opposites etc.

ICT

- Computers, digital cameras, videos and programmable toys all offer visual support and opportunities for listening and talking.
- Having a variety of software provides different contexts for learning.
- Resources such as talking books, and programmes such as clicker and power point give opportunities for communication with children and parents.
- The Internet can also be a useful resource, and children's sites such as Cbeebies often have good activities for listening and vocabulary extension.

PERSONA DOLLS

Persona dolls can be used to:

- Introduce cultural diversity
- Enable children to gain awareness and understanding of diversity
- Encourage children to value each other equally
- Help children feel secure enough to express their feelings

USEFUL INFORMATION TO GATHER AT PRE-ENTRY VISIT/ENROLMENT

- Spelling and pronunciation of child's name(s)
- Name used by child
- Length of stay in UK
- Language(s) spoken at home
- Language(s) used for reading at home
- Father's name for nursery communications
- Mother's name for nursery communications
- Can parents understand communications in English?
- Any religious or dietary requirements
- Previous nursery/playgroup experience
- Child's experience of English
- Any parental concerns

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

There are parallels in the ways in which pupils acquire a first and a second language. They first listen, then repeat and then start experimenting with words.

- Meet with parents regularly to communicate how the child is developing and try and involve them in the nursery if possible e.g. reading a story in their own language.
- Reinforce with parents the need to continue to develop language skills in the first language as these in turn will help pupils develop better skills in English.
- Ensure that all staff are familiar with the child's cultural and linguistic background.
- Try to create an environment that reflects the different backgrounds of all the children by using resources such as toys from different cultures, bilingual books, multilingual posters etc.
- Occasionally racist incidents occur. All staff should be clear about the policy on tackling such incidents.