

## **CHILDREN WITH ENGLISH AS AN ADDITIONAL LANGUAGE (EAL) IN PRIMARY EDUCATION**

**Research shows that a beginner in English will take up to two years to acquire social language and up to seven years for their academic language to develop. Research also shows that pupils learn English most effectively in mainstream classrooms with their peers, where they are exposed to a range of relevant and authentic contexts and materials for developing skills in English.**

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**Pupils who have strong literacy and language skills in their first language will find it easier to develop comparable skills in English.**

### **First steps**

- Inform the class of the arrival of new pupil and tell them where he/she comes from. When possible, display some pictures or key words that reflect the pupil's background, to make him/her feel welcome and also to raise awareness with the class.
- As pupils learn a great deal of language from their peers place the new pupil next to someone who is articulate and who will provide a good model of language.
- Encourage pupil and family to acquire a dual language dictionary to support with new vocabulary. Should a dual language dictionary be difficult to obtain use picture dictionaries instead.
- 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 school, 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.

## **SUPPORTING SKILLS**

### **Listening:**

- Repeat key words and encourage pupil to repeat after you.
- Write key words on the whiteboard for reinforcement.
- Try and use the same language consistently.
- Ask pupil to listen out for specific things, ie: “count how many times I said...”
- Use as many objects/pictures as possible to reinforce language.
- Develop listening skills in conjunction with reading by using taped books and listening centres.

### **Talking:**

- For infants, record relevant letter sounds and blends for pupil to repeat at home thus helping him/her become familiar with the teacher’s accent and also supporting parents who are not literate in English.
- Use modelling when asking questions providing appropriate structures and vocabulary for the answer. For example, talking about ice cream - instead of asking “What is your favourite flavour?” ask “Do you prefer/like vanilla or chocolate?”
- Encourage group/paired activities with sympathetic and articulate pupils whose good model can be repeated and copied.
- Encourage learning self-help phrases and survival language with parental help where possible. Also involve responsible peers and older pupils in this.
- Give lots of praise and positive feedback to help pupil feel confident in speaking English.
- Encourage pupil to use whole sentences and structures eg “Can I go to the toilet?” rather than single words.
- Expect pupil to answer yes or no questions rather than nodding.
- Where applicable, ask pupil to teach class some words in mother tongue to raise his/her self-esteem and confidence.
- Encourage pupil to talk about own language, culture and experiences, particularly festivals and celebrations. This often provides an incentive for pupils to talk.

### **Reading:**

- Place pupil in an appropriate reading group, again where they will be exposed to a good model of language.
- Where applicable, give relevant reading/topic/comprehension book to pupil in advance so that they may do some pre-reading activities at home and become familiar with key vocabulary.
- Use taped books where available to support comprehension.
- Recall and discuss previously done work to reinforce concepts and structures.
- Involve parents in discussion of the story/pictures to stimulate comprehension

and word attack skills particularly with younger readers. The discussion can be done in any language.

- Set up paired reading programme with older pupils in the school.

### **Writing:**

- Initially allow pupil to write in their first language. The learning process is still taking place but in a language other than English.
- Provide models to support writing with key vocabulary and structures.
- Encourage pupils to use a dual language dictionary (where available) and build up a word bank.
- Particularly with younger pupils use phonics to spell words rather than scribe for them as this will reinforce letters and spellings of common words.
- Expect pupils to participate in spelling tests.
- Use computers to encourage writing and develop word processing skills.
- Encourage pupil to copy relevant information as a handwriting practice exercise, particularly if they are used to writing in a different script and also to develop speed and accuracy.

### **Worksheets:**

Some suggestions for making work more accessible for bilingual pupils and enabling them to manipulate and interact with relevant text.

- Use visuals whenever possible to support text, this can be either pictures or charts.
- Check comprehension by asking true or false questions.
- Cut up sentences and ask pupils to put words in the correct order so as to reinforce language structures.
- Sequencing activities: ask pupils to rearrange pictures, paragraphs in a piece of writing or sentences within a paragraph.
- Fill in the gap activities with a choice of possible answers provided.
- Completing sentences.
- Matching the beginning and ending of sentences from text.
- Identifying key words (as directed by teacher) using dictionaries to look up meanings.

### **Homework:**

EAL pupils require the same intellectual challenges as their peers and should therefore be set homework, taking into consideration their different linguistic demands.

Here are some initial suggestions for homework:

- Listening to taped stories where available.
- Practising reading, discussion at home.
- Pre-reading information relating to environmental studies.

- Learning key vocabulary.
- Arithmetic and any maths which does not rely heavily on language.
- For younger pupils listening to teacher tapes of letter sounds and blends.
- Writing stories, taking notes and answering questions in the native language (where applicable)
- Language games e.g. matching key words, matching words/sounds to pictures.

### **Additional Information:**

**EAL pupils often have different cultural experiences and expectations and may therefore struggle in terms of comprehension with culturally embedded concepts and contexts.**

- Encourage parents to become as involved as possible in school activities.
- Meet with parents regularly to suggest strategies at home to help develop the child's language.
- Reinforce with parents the need to continue to develop language skills in the first language as these in turn will help the pupil develop better skills in English.
- Where there is no support for English at home encourage parents to discuss reading, pictures and prediction activities in the home language to stimulate comprehension.
- Ask parents to help with key words /script/numbers in the home language to use for displays and signs in the classroom. (Be aware that not all parents may be literate in their home language.)
- Celebrate the pupil's culture and festivals such as Diwali, Eid, Chinese New Year to raise bilingual pupil's self-esteem and awareness amongst other children, and again try and enlist support of parents in this.