

Living Together Learning Together



Introduction

For children whose home language is not English, providers must take reasonable steps to provide opportunities for children to develop and use their home language in play and learning, supporting their language development at home.

Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage, DfE 2012

This booklet, 'Living Together, Learning Together', has been put together by Wiltshire's Ethnic Minority Achievement Service (EMAS) in collaboration with the early years and childcare team. It follows on from the Early Year's Network meeting 'Celebrating Cultural Diversity' and attempts to fill in some of the knowledge gaps for practitioners who may have had little or no experience of having minority ethnic children in their settings. Whilst applicable to all minority ethnic children it is particularly aimed at those who have a 'home language' that is other than English. Often these children are described as having English as an Additional Language (EAL). A setting which embraces cultural diversity, regardless of whether minority ethnic children attend or not, is one that will give all children a broader, richer educational experience based on a respect for others.

EMAS works to support minority ethnic children in schools, by working in partnership with teachers and providing them with advice and resources. We also work with the children's families, aiming to improve home school links. The team consists of 1 full-time and 3 part-time teachers as well as a group of Bilingual Assistants, TAs fluent in English and at least one other language.

We are grateful for the input from Wiltshire Islamic Cultural Centre and from the West Wiltshire Primary Care Trust (now GWH Trust), Speech and Language Therapy Department.

Getting a good start

For some minority ethnic children, going to your setting will be a huge cultural change. They may never have been in an English-speaking environment before for any length of time. They may have very different ways of doing things at home, different codes of behaviour, different styles of clothing, food etc. Parents who were not born and educated in this country may have had a limited or very formal education; as a result they may not feel confident in a school/pre-school setting. There are several ways in which you can make this transition easier both for the child and his/ her parents.

Your setting:

- Make sure that your setting positively reflects diversity and is free from discrimination and stereotyping through your choice of visual material, books, tapes, artefacts and the way in which you use them. Include home languages through the use of dual language books and display materials.
- Create a welcoming environment by preparing your other children for the new arrival. Can they say the new child's name correctly? Are they prepared for the new child not speaking or speaking very little English? Do they understand that the new child can talk as much as they do but in another language?
- Inform all members of staff about the child and his/ her needs.

- Gesture, sign, facial expression and using visual support such as pictures and puppets - lots of it - will aid understanding.
- Try to use 'normal' language but speak clearly avoiding jargon or ambiguous language such as 'Hop on this chair.'
- Children learn a new language mainly from their peers rather than from having 'English' lessons 1-1 with an adult. But all children love sharing books with an adult!
- Use the child's prior knowledge and experience as a basis for new learning.
- You need to be aware that some children, for cultural reasons, may not have had much experience of sharing books or playing games.
- Have authentic representations of various racial groups, not 'black' versions of 'white' dolls.
- Ask for help from parents, or use a website such as Newbury Park School's Language of the Month to teach staff and children how to say hello in all learners' first languages.

First steps: getting to know one another

- Where possible, a home visit, when the child and parents can get to know you in familiar surroundings, is time well spent. This is a good time to deal with filling in forms.
- When registering a child make sure that you know which number refers to the month, 6.11.01 could mean 11th June 2001; which might mean that a child, mistakenly, starts school at the wrong time of year.
- Find out the 'ethnic group', language/languages spoken at home and the religion of the child and his/ her parents. For details on which ethnic groups are monitored in Wiltshire, please contact emas@wiltshire.gov.uk.
- Find out about their cultural and linguistic background e.g. in Islam, birthdays are not considered to be important so are often not celebrated. These children may not know when they were born. Chinese and Kurdish Turkish children may refer to themselves as being one year older than their birthday would suggest because either they are considered to be one year old when they are born or they are referring to, for example, being 3 as being in their fourth year.

Celebrating linguistic diversity

"Provide opportunities for children whose home language is other than English, to use that language... value non-verbal communications and those offered in home languages."

Development Matters in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), Early Education, 2012

- Welcome the parent to stay with their child in your setting and make them feel comfortable about using their home language whilst there.

- It is very important that the parents continue to use the child's first language at home and not feel that it would be better if they spoke English. Research shows that the more proficient you are in your first language the more easily you will acquire proficiency in another language.
- Encourage parents to talk to their children about what you are doing (even better, what you are going to do) in your setting using the child's home language so that their developing use of English and home languages support one another.
- If parents are persistently late it may be that culturally they have a more 'flexible' attitude towards time; therefore you need to deal with these situations sensitively.
- Parents who speak English do not necessarily read English. You can help by highlighting the most important parts of newsletters such as dates for TD days; parents' evenings etc. then go over these parts either yourself or enlist the help of a willing parent. Check whether they are eligible for free school meals where appropriate.
- Guard against making assumptions such as:
 - a) parents who are married will have the same name surname (see naming systems p7);
 - b) two children from the same country will speak the same language e.g. there are many regional languages in India;
 - c) all Indians are Hindu.

Speaking English? They may not for some time.

We call this the 'Silent Period'. It can last for six months or more, at which point you may be worried about language delay. In fact this is usually not the case.

The early stages of learning English follow a common pattern. The following is an outline of young children's learning of English as an additional language (EAL).

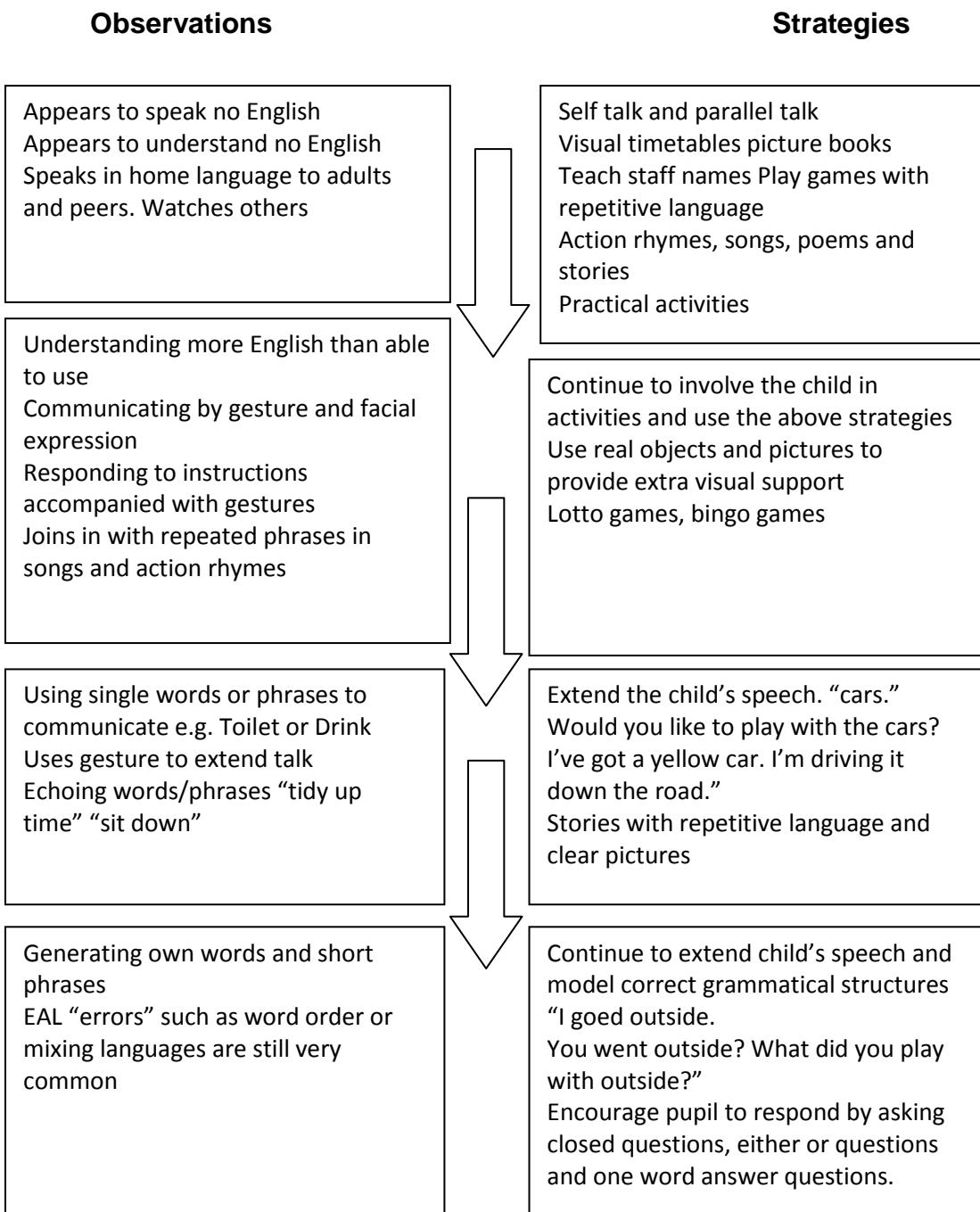
The child will be watching, actively listening, and exploring their environment to understand new experiences and to develop new meanings. It is important that children should not feel pressurised to speak until they feel confident enough to do so. However, it is essential that adults continue to talk 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 the patterns, meanings and range of language functions in their new, unfamiliar environment.

- Children may begin to use non-verbal gestures as a response to a question or to indicate a need. Understanding is in advance of spoken language.
- Many children may 'echo' single words and some short phrases used by adults and peers. All attempts at speech should be encouraged and praised.
- There will be development of 'formulaic' language ('chunks' of social speech) e.g. "Mummy come soon." "My turn now." Children may begin to join in with story refrains, 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 (e.g. questioning, responding, naming).
- Children will then begin to generate their own ‘*telegraphic*’ sentences, using two or three word utterances. Certain words are likely to be omitted; the main concern being the communication of meaning. Non-verbal gestures will often accompany speech.
- Children will then begin 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 the functional language. However “surface errors” in the use of different 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 very different from the home language.
- When a child makes an error, where appropriate reflect back, modelling the correct form e.g. ‘Very tall is she.’ ‘Oh, so she is very tall.’
- Where possible try to encourage EAL learners to sometimes play and work with the more articulate English users on activities that promote sharing, talk and other communication. Make sure learners get the chance to use and develop their first language with others in the setting if possible too.



Speaking and Listening with EAL learners



Source: *Supporting children learning English as an Additional Language in the Early Years Foundation Stage*, Cumbria County Council

If you do suspect language delay, check with the parents first:

- Is their child able to understand their home language and act appropriately e.g. follow instructions?
- Does their child talk at home in their home language? If so, is their speech similar to that of their siblings or other children at a similar age?

- Is their speech intelligible? Do they make all the appropriate sounds?
- Do they use verbal and non-verbal communication appropriately?

If there are concerns with any of the above you should contact your local speech and language therapist directly.

Ideally any speech and language assessment should include an assessment of ability in the child's first language. Unfortunately this is often difficult to arrange.

Racist Incidents and the Macpherson Report

A Racist incident is any incident which is perceived to be racist by the victim or any other person.

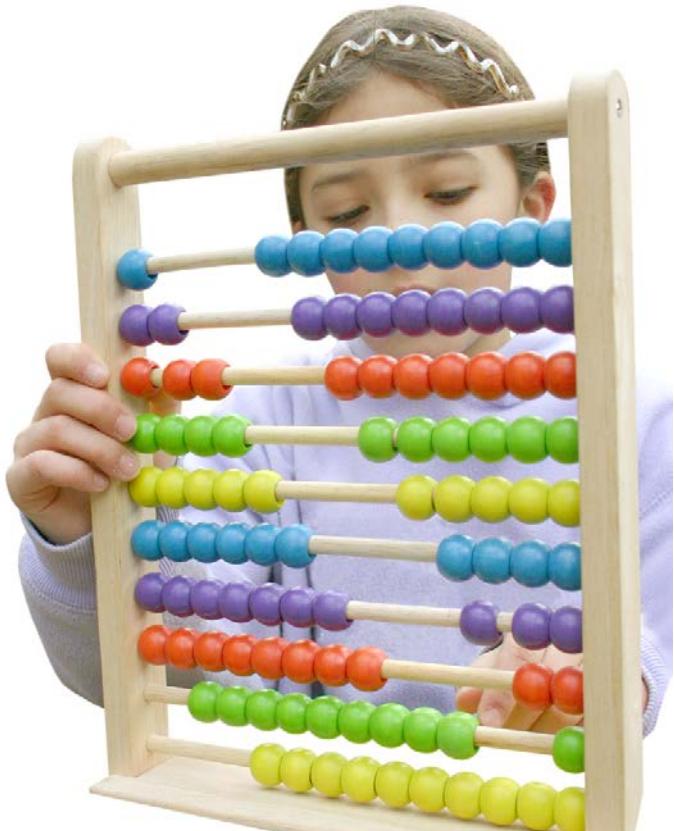
Macpherson Report

Even at this age they do occur!

Racial abuse is not necessarily the same thing as 'name' calling. A young child being called 'chocolate face' insults not only the child herself but also her entire family.

It helps if your setting has a clear policy for dealing with such eventualities. All schools have to maintain a racial incident book. You should have an easily understood Equal Opportunities/ Anti-racism policy, which promotes positive and inclusive practice for all children and shows clearly that your setting takes racism and other forms of discrimination seriously. You also need to make it clear to parents that you value diversity and that racial abuse will not be tolerated in your setting.

Children are aware of differences in skin colour and will ask questions which should always be answered in an honest and positive manner highlighting each individual's uniqueness and right to respect.



Naming Systems

Although many families are becoming 'Westernised' in adopting the father's name as a family name, the use of a 'family' name, especially in Asian families, is not the norm. Often a person's 'personal' name, the name by which they are called, has a title which comes either before or after this name. In the case of Sikh women this might be Kaur and for a Sikh man Singh (Kaur means princess and Singh lion). Generally Sikh names do not indicate the sex of the individual, so Manjit could be either a boy's or a girl's name. Gender is indicated by the use of Kaur or Singh. The family name, if used, comes after the title e.g. Manjit Singh Athwal, who may be formally known as either Mr. Singh or Mr. Athwal. It would be inappropriate to refer to a Sikh woman as Mrs. Singh.

Some Hindu names also include Kaur and Singh. Likewise with Muslim names, women often use the titles Begum, Bibi and Sultana. Men will usually have a religious name such as Mohammed, Ahmed, Ali or Hussein either before or after their personal name.

In Chinese and Japanese names, traditionally the family name is followed by the personal name (so Kurosawa Akira is from the Kurosawa family.) In Arabic names, the personal name is sometimes followed by the father' and grandfather's personal names e.g. Fateema Tahir (father's name) Abbas (grandfather's name). There are, of course, many adaptations to these forms according to country, religion etc.

In many cultures, children have a 'familiar' name by which they are known by their family and friends e.g. Suroyya may be known as Rupa at home. When in your setting the parents may request that you use their formal name with which, initially, they may be unfamiliar.

Festivals

Many festivals are based on the lunar year so change from year to year. The EMAS minority faiths calendar lists the dates of major festivals for the coming years. You can get a copy of this by emailing emas@wiltshire.gov.uk.

The following festivals are just a few of those listed:

Diwali (Hindu) celebrates the triumph of good over evil. The story of Rama and Sita is told, bonfires and small lamps (divas) are lit, sweets and presents are exchanged.

Diwali (Sikh) is similar to Hindu Diwali but Sikhs remember the story of Guru Hargobind and the 52 Hindu princes.

Eid ul Fitri (Muslim) marks the end of Ramadan. Children are given money and new clothes. Families get together, parties are held.

Yuan Tan (Chinese New Year) is when demons are driven out with firecrackers and cymbals. Houses are decorated with red and gold paper lanterns. Lucky money is given.

Wesak (Buddhist) celebrates the Buddha's birth. Houses are decorated with lanterns and garlands. Birds are set free symbolising Buddha's compassion.

Tanabata (Japanese Star Festival) is when children decorate bamboo branches with little bells and coloured paper on which they write their wishes for the future.

Caring for Muslim Preschool children

This brief guidance aims to highlight the religious needs of Muslim preschool children according to Islamic rules. Of course, individual parents' views may differ, and settings should always seek to engage Muslim families in discussion of their child's religious and cultural needs.

Islamic Religious festivals

Muslims have two annual religious festivals (Eid-ul-Fitr and Eid-ul-Adha), the dates of which change every year as they are dependent on the Islamic Lunar calendar, which is about ten days shorter than the fixed calendar and dates of religious festivals move forward by approximately ten days every year.

Eid-ul-Fitr this year (2013) will be on August 8th and Eid-ul-Adha will be on 15th October (subject to moon sighting).

These festivals are very important for Muslims and children will usually have the day off (if they fall in term time) to spend time with family. The dates will move forward by ten days every year so it is best to ask parents to let the school/ preschool know in advance.

Christian worship, Christmas and other religious festivals

If the preschool holds religious assemblies, hymns or prayers, be sure to make Muslim parents aware of this and ask their views on their children's participation. Try to make constructive offers for alternative activities the children can be involved in.

Muslims believe in all the Prophets in the Bible and Torah and believe in Jesus as a mighty Prophet of God but not the son of God. Learning *about* other religions and visiting churches/religious places is encouraged in Islam.

Muslims do not celebrate Christmas or Easter and some parents may not wish for their child to be involved in activities with explicit religious content. It's good practice to ask parents' guidance around Christmas and Easter related activities in the setting. This would also be true for activities around Hallowe'en.

Home life

Children are often taught to pray at home and may go to the mosque from an early age. By the age of five or six, some will begin to learn to read the Qur'an in Arabic, regardless of the spoken language at home, which could be Bengali, Tamil, Urdu, Malay, Turkish, Arabic or even English as Muslims come from all over the World, including Britain as there are many Muslim converts of British origin.

Dietary requirements

Muslims are only allowed to eat Halal slaughtered meat and are not allowed to eat pork. Therefore Muslim children eating at the setting will often opt for vegetarian meals if there is no Halal option.

Other activities

There are rules governing clothing but these do not generally apply to young children. Gambling, which would include things like school raffles and Tombola, is not permitted in Islam. However, sometimes parents may make an exception to this rule in order to support your setting.

It goes without saying that Muslim children should be treated like any other children, with the necessary respect, love and discipline.

Further information

This is not an exhaustive document and intended to provide simple guidelines on dealing with Muslim children according to mainstream Islamic beliefs. As stated earlier, the wishes of parents will vary depending on their attitude to their faith: some will be more lenient, while others will seem stricter. Therefore this document should be used as a guide unless parents instruct otherwise.

For clarification/questions on anything in this document and for further information on Islam and the Muslim Community in Wiltshire, please contact Wiltshire Islamic Cultural Centre.

We can also deliver assemblies and RE lessons on Islam as well as cultural diversity training for teachers and staff. Please contact us for more information.

Email: wiltshireicc@gmail.com

Website: <http://www.wiltshire-icc.org>

It is also highly recommended that every practitioner caring for Muslim Children watch the short clips on the following website: <http://www.islamicvoices.co.uk> produced by Wiltshire College and Wiltshire Council with help from Wiltshire Islamic Cultural Centre.

**Written by Wali Abdur Rahman, Secretary, Wiltshire Islamic Cultural Centre on
7th March 2013**

A song to share

*How do you do? How do you do?
I'm very glad to meet you,
Very glad to meet you,
How do you do?*

Try substituting the words in italics with some of the other greetings that are shown on the front cover.



Resources

Wiltshire and Swindon Learning Resources keep a selection of bilingual resources in stock. Commercially, bilingual books, talking pens etc. are available from:

www.uk.matralingua.com

www.milet.co.uk

www.little-linguist.co.uk

Dual language songs on CD are available from:

www.babyboomboom.com

The Newbury Park Language of the Month site is at:

www.newburypark.redbridge.sch.uk/langofmonth/

There are standard letter templates in multiple languages at:

www.primaryresources.co.uk/letters/index.htm

and tips for parents on developing language at home in multiple languages at:

www.literacytrust.org.uk/talk_to_your_baby/resources/418_q

Supporting Children Learning EAL is out-of-date as it refers to the previous EYFS framework, but the advice it contains remains excellent. You can still find it at:

www.naldic.org.uk/eal-teaching-and-learning/outline-guidance

The same site has a good Early Years section:

www.naldic.org.uk/eal-teaching-and-learning/outline-guidance/early-years

There are free, downloadable collaborative games at:

www.collaborativelearning.org/earlyyears.html

Finally, you can contact the Wiltshire Council Early Years Inclusion team
01225 757950

and the Ethnic Minority Achievement Service at

emas@wiltshire.gov.uk; 01225 718095

