

EAL Best Practice Case Studies

Examples of effective approaches for supporting children and young people with English as an additional language (EAL) and speech, language and communication needs (SLCN)

Kingswood Primary School, South East London



About our setting

Kingswood Primary is a four form entry school of nearly 900 pupils aged between 3 and 11 years. It is one of six mainstream primary schools within the Gipsy Hill Federation (GHF). Our local-authority funded school is based in the Borough of Lambeth, South East London.

The majority of our pupils come from minority ethnic communities and around 40% of the children speak EAL. In addition, around 14% of our pupils are classed as SEN (Special Educational Needs). As a National Support School in an area of significant deprivation, the local authority regularly draws on our expertise to support other schools in the area. We also successfully completed the Communication Commitment with The Communication Trust in 2016.

Screening on entry

When children with EAL enrol with our nursery, we promptly assess their level of English acquisition to establish their stage of English language development. In order to track the children's progress, this baseline assessment is reviewed twice a year during whole-school assessment windows. If a child enrolls at an older age (that is, outside the normal nursery or reception admissions), our office staff will establish which language(s) the child speaks during the induction process. This information is then communicated to the rest of the team.

We use the Department of Education's '5 stages of English Proficiency' assessment descriptors for all our pupils with EAL. This five-stage model of EAL acquisition goes from 'A' (new to English)

to 'E' (fluent). The assessments are carried out by class teachers and/or experienced EAL practitioners. We are mindful not to overly rely on age-appropriate measures for our EAL pupils. We instead aim to provide flexible and personalised development plans to meet the children's needs.

All stages of English acquisition are monitored by our EAL practitioners and recorded on the school database (RM Integris) and tracking system (Target Tracker). The data is then analysed in-line with other school assessment data to build a picture of each child's progress. All information is shared with the Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCO) and class teachers at termly pupil progress meetings. Where an additional need or concern is identified, the SENCO will discuss this with the Speech and Language Therapist (SLT).

Screening for SLCN

If there is a concern that a pupil with EAL has SLCN, where possible, we will conduct a 'Mother Tongue Assessment' facilitated by an academically-fluent speaker of the pupil's home language and a member of the Inclusion Team. If this reveals a possible SLCN, our SENCO will then refer the child to our in-house SLT and, if necessary, an Educational Psychologist. Should the SLT's assessment confirm that the child has SLCN, the pupil will enter a programme of therapy with a SEN practitioner, overseen by a SLT.

A programme of support: Chatterbugs

Nursery and Reception children who demonstrate poor school-readiness skills

regardless of their home language are put forward by their teachers to participate in the Chatterbugs programme which was developed by our independent, in-house SLT. The 12-week programme aims to develop children's attention and listening skills, turn-taking, and receptive and expressive language during the Early Years Foundation Stage. It is suitable for young children who require some targeted support with their school-readiness skills, speech and language or who are at the early stages of learning English.

Teachers complete a baseline measure for each participant using a simple tick sheet to rate the child's ability to demonstrate 15 communication skills. Skills are rated as 'rarely', 'sometimes' or 'frequently' demonstrated in the classroom. Over 12 weeks, intervention takes place: groups of four children attend daily, highly structured play-based sessions of 10 minutes. Our teaching assistants, who are trained by the programme's author, lead these groups and track each child's progress.

On completion of the programme, the teacher provides a review measure by completing the tick sheet, again rating the skills as seen in the classroom. The independent SLT analyses the child's results comparing baseline and review scores, and, with our SENCO, discusses the next steps. The programme is deemed a success when the child is able to frequently demonstrate skills that were rated 'rarely' or 'sometimes' at baseline.

Children with EAL who participate in the programme have achieved positive outcomes. However, should a child make less progress than expected, the results help to determine possible areas of difficulty and appropriate next steps.

Communication-friendly strategies

All GHF schools adhere to a shared EAL policy, which sets out communication-friendly strategies. These include acknowledging attempts to communicate and allowing extra thinking time. All staff receive training in applying the strategies to their teaching and displays and, for new starters, we have a video that demonstrates how each strategy can be used in the classroom.

As part of this work, all our staff and pupils learn the importance of signing alongside key signs every week. Each week the new signs are displayed around the school and our students and SEN practitioners demonstrate these in assembly.

Also, every half term, each class is provided with a 'Chatterbees' vocabulary pack that is linked to the current science topic. This contains visual supports, flash cards and games. These have been designed in partnership with the independent SLT, the SEN practitioners and teacher leaders.

Staff make adjustments for our primary school children with EAL, such as providing small reading groups for key stage 2 pupils (using Destination Reader) to give the children more opportunities to rehearse, discuss and explain what they are learning. We also provide dual language books, picture dictionaries and iPads. Should a child with EAL enrol at an older age, we 'buddy' them up with a peer who (ideally) speaks their first language. The buddy introduces the new child to school routines and key locations (such as toilets) to help the child feel settled, safe and welcome.



Our top tips

- **Develop first language:** Encourage parents to speak to their child in their home language. This builds a firm foundation for learning English.
- **Tailor provision:** Some older children with EAL may have never attended school in their home country. Get to know and understand each child individually to tailor support.
- **Positive interactions:** Children who are new to English may experience a short 'silent period'. Continue to communicate but avoid pressuring the child to repeat.