



Cumberland
Council



English as an Additional Language

A toolkit for developing good
practice in the EYFS

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1. Introduction

This toolkit contains a variety of resources you may find useful in helping you support Early Years children in your school/setting who have English as an Additional Language.

“English society is multilingual, with an estimated 360 languages spoken across the country.”

“Research tells us that maintaining at least 2 languages is an advantage for later academic achievement. It is desirable for children who are potentially bilingual and multilingual, to be supported in all the languages available to them.”

“It is better for young children to talk to their parents in the dominant home language, particularly if the parents are not fluent English speakers themselves.”

From **[English as an Additional Language \(EAL\) - Help for early years providers - GOV.UK \(education.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/english-as-an-additional-language-help-for-early-years-providers)**

Points to consider

- Speaking their home language will not delay a child’s development of English as an Additional Language. Research shows that continuing to use home languages will make the process of learning English faster and easier as well as having a positive effect on learners’ identity and self- esteem which increases their chances of successful learning.
- Young bilingual learners sometimes mix their language using words or phrases from both or all their languages in a single utterance which can be confusing for those of us with only one language. Try and find out as much as you can about a child’s language use and whether there are any concerns about speech and language development in the home language.
- Is children’s use of home language age appropriate and is their speech clear and easy to understand? Finding out about a child’s use and understanding of the home language can alert staff to any possible underlying problems with speech and language in general.



2. Children starting at your Early Years setting/school

Admissions forms - possible additional questions to consider

In addition to the questions asked on your generic admissions form, you may wish to consider collecting the following information, which may help you to better support the child and family:

- Child's country of birth.
- Mother's name and country of birth.
- Father's name and country of birth.
- Carer's name and relationship to the child, if the child does not live with parents.
- Date the family arrived in the UK.
- Religion.
- Are there any foods the child is not allowed to eat?
- Language/s spoken at home.
- If possible, how would you like information to be shared e.g. email, through a friend, by text etc.
- Has the child had any immunisations?
- Are there any concerns around the child's health, including hearing or eyesight?

Further information about the child's use of or exposure to different languages could be gathered using the Language maps below. It is also useful to know the degree to which parents are fluent in English, in order to support them to understand any information you may need to give them regarding the setting or their child.



Language Map A

	Child	Parent 1	Parent 2	Siblings	Other people e.g., grandparents
Language/s spoken.					
Languages written.					
Language/s used for computer/ emails/texts at home.					
Language/s used to watch tv.					

Key words

Key word	Does the child understand this word?	Does the child use this word?	Phonetic pronunciation	Meaning in English
e.g. prašau	Yes	Yes	Pr-uh-sh-ow	Please
				Yes
				No
				Toilet
				Coat
				Mum
				Dad

Language Map B

	Name of language	Understanding	Yes		No		Speaking	Yes		No	
Language/s spoken at home with parents/carers.		Can understand					Can use 1 or 2 words				
							Can use phrases				
							Can speak confidently using full sentences				
							Speech is clear and easy to understand				
Language/s spoken at home with extended family.							Can use 1 or 2 words				
							Can use phrases				
							Can speak confidently using full sentences				
							Speech is clear and easy to understand				
Language your child prefers.							Can use 1 or 2 words				
							Can use phrases				
							Can speak confidently using full sentences				
							Speech is clear and easy to understand				
Language/s your child uses outside the home.							Can use 1 or 2 words				
							Can use phrases				
							Can speak confidently using full sentences				
							Speech is clear and easy to understand				

Age child started speaking in home language/languages

Language Age child started speaking this language

Language Age child started speaking this language

Age your child started learning English

Settling children in to your Early Years Foundation Stage setting

Like all children, bilingual learners may find it difficult to settle in at first when they start Nursery or Reception class. Not understanding the language can be an added difficulty.

Behaviour	Possible reasons	What to do
Clinging/ crying.	Like all new children, the child may be frightened of being left in a new and unfamiliar environment. It can be doubly frightening if you don't understand the language as well as missing your parent or carer and being in a strange place.	Share photographs of the setting when you home visit. Provide clear signage and visual support. Learn a few phrases in the child's home language. Invite parents/carers to stay for part or all the session. Suggest a shorter session to begin with and build up the time over several sessions. Use your keyworker system so the child and parent get to know their name. This person will meet the child when they arrive every day and support them during the initial settling-in period.
Child is overly physical.	Children who cannot communicate in words may become physical in their interaction with other children.	Intervene calmly and model appropriate words for the child to learn such as "Can I join in?" "Can I play with that?" This interaction can be modelled in circle time.
Child understands but does not speak.	In the early stages of learning a language, children will understand the new language more than they can speak it.	Make sure you always use gestures, facial expressions and picture cues alongside verbal instructions. Provide non-verbal ways for children to make choices e.g. pointing, showing a picture to choose snack, or a favourite rhyme. Give a verbal choice of two so the child can say a single modelled word in response.
Child is silent and spends a lot of time watching others at a distance.	The child may not be confident taking part in group activities initially and may watch to see how to get an apron and paint a picture at the art table for example.	Allow the child to watch and observe the other children and gently encourage them to join in when they are confident to join in. Use self-talk and parallel talk.
Shouting.	Frustration when people do not understand. Unfamiliarity with expectations and norms of noise levels in the setting. Lack of visual support to communicate needs.	Praise efforts to communicate and encourage a more appropriate voice level by modelling "little" voices.
Inappropriate behaviour.	Initial unfamiliarity with behaviour expectations in the setting and lack of experience interacting with other children.	Use the setting's usual behaviour policy. It is important that children learning EAL are given the same clear boundaries as all other children in the setting. They will quickly learn the word No by the tone of your voice and facial expression especially when accompanied by gesture and other visual support such as a symbol. Enlist parental help to reinforce behaviour expectations using the home language.

3. Communication assessment tool

Like all children, bilingual learners may find it difficult to settle in at first when they start Nursery or Reception class. Not understanding the language can be an added difficulty.

Name Date of birth Home language

	Comments/observations	Date
Appears to understand no English.		
Speaks no English.		
Uses gesture/facial expression to communicate.		
Communicates in home language with staff/children/ those who share the child's home language.		
Watches other children closely. Makes eye contact with other children/staff (Be aware that in some cultures it is a sign of respect to adults not to give eye contact.)		
Joins in non-verbally with action rhymes.		
Imitates non-verbal actions of other children.		
Joins in play without speaking.		
Responds to other children with gestures.		
Responds to requests made by staff.		

	Comments/observations	Date
Responds with gesture to requests to join in.		
Requests help from staff/other children by gesture.		
Protests about the actions of other children.		
Follows verbal instructions supported with gestures.		
Offers toys/objects to staff/other children.		
Joins in with actions to songs and rhymes.		
Indicates likes/dislikes/makes choices.		
Whispers.		
Beginning to use single words/short phrases.		
Names objects using single words.		
Joins in stories with repeated refrains e.g. We're Going on a Bear Hunt.		
Joins in verbally with singing.		
Follows simple verbal instructions.		

	Comments/observations	Date
May recite numbers.		
Relies on props and visual support to understand stories and adult instruction.		
Uses gestures and limited talk in a clear context.		
Growing vocabulary of nouns. Beginning to add details of colour/size/number.		
Growing confidence interacting verbally with children in English.		
Understanding more English than he/she is able to use.		
Beginning to combine phrases e.g., Car, red one. Boy drinking.		
Beginning to use language to talk about what is happening or what might happen next.		
Beginning to listen to stories with increasing concentration. Can recall an event in a story.		
Using more complex sentences. EAL errors apparent.		
Listening with confidence and able to understand whole class interactions.		
Responds appropriately to extended adult instruction.		

	Comments/observations	Date
Asking appropriate questions- Why? What? Where? When? How?		
Range of oral language skills necessary to participate fully. Achieving at similar level to peers with similar ability. EAL errors less apparent.		



4. Visual Support for children learning English as an Additional Language

Visual support includes pictures, objects, gestures, and photographs.

- Visual timetables and daily routine charts. Refer to it regularly during the session so children know what is happening.
- Choice boards for activities, snacks, songs and rhymes
- Clearly labelled areas of the classroom/setting
- Step by step instructions for routines such as what to do on arrival, getting ready for P.E, going to the toilet, snack time.
- Visual calendars of upcoming events
- Pictures of classroom rules such as good sitting and good listening
- Communication fans/picture cards to back up adult instructions and so children can communicate their needs.
- Actions, signing and gestures.
- Feelings and emotions picture cards so children can explain how they or others are feeling.
- Photographs of staff and different areas in the setting.
- Gain the child's attention by saying their name and add gestures to reinforce your meaning e.g., miming drink time, put coat on etc.
- Use video clips and photos when reviewing learning at group review time.
- Use video clips and pictures to show parent's what their child has done in the session.

This extra "concrete" support is essential to provide children with reassurance and reduce anxiety when they join your setting. It will help them make sense of the new language they are hearing in a strange environment with unfamiliar routines. It will help them organise their thinking, remember and anticipate routines and it is particularly helpful if a parent or carer can explain the pictures in the child's home language. Photo albums or technology-based setting-home information systems with photographs are useful for home visits or for regular home-setting communication, so that the children can discuss their day with parents/carers.

Extra visual support helps children join in without speaking and make choices when they are in the early stages of learning English as an Additional Language. At this stage children will be understanding more than they can say and may be going through a silent phase where they are watching and taking in what is going on around them. Adding extra visual support will aid communication and interaction and reduce frustration and doesn't stop the children from speaking.

5. Typical stages of learning English in the EYFS setting

Don't forget that children will start to learn language in different ways.

Continued use of the home language/s.	Confident children may continue to speak in their home language and be very surprised when staff in the setting do not understand them.
Silent or non-verbal.	Children will be listening, watching and interacting non-verbally. They will be tuning into the language and watching the routines and expectations of the new setting.
Single words relating to their needs or chunks of language used in routine situations.	"Sit down", "carpet time." Single words "toilet".
More complex language.	Children generate their own language rather than using formulaic chunks of language.

Use the communication assessment tool above to track communication and the child's development of English.

Remember; children learn language by using it in context and language develops over several years. The Early Years Foundation Stage provides opportunities for hands on learning, where children can develop language in context.

Children may be silent for several months. Continue to involve them in all activities and use extra visual support to help them understand classroom routines and instructions. Be aware that it can be very tiring functioning in a new language and background noise can be distracting and make it harder to listen and understand.

Use the child's name to cue them in and seat them near the front, close to the adult leading group sessions. This allows the child to see the adult's face and pick up on gestures and facial expressions to help understanding.

Pair the child with 1 or 2 friendly outgoing children who are good language models.

Allow children plenty of time in circle time or turn taking games to listen to the language structures used by the other children before they are asked to respond or speak.

Use clear language and avoid idiom.

It takes up to two years to learn the social English needed for conversations and several years longer to develop the full academic understanding and use of English such as explaining reasoning.



6. Help! They don't speak English - Practical strategies to support children with EAL

Observations	Strategies
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appears to understand no English. • Speaks no English or uses home language. • Watches others. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visual timetables and communication cards. • Gesture. • Self-talk and parallel talk. • Small group activities such as Teddy talk or Talking Boxes to introduces areas of the classroom such as water play, art corner etc. • Action rhymes, songs and stories. • Dual language materials. • Practical activities. • Buddy the child with friendly children and those speaking the same language.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understanding more English than is able to use. • Communicating by gesture or facial expression. • Responding to instructions accompanied with gestures. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to involve the child in activities and use the above strategies. • Use real objects and pictures to provide extra visual support. • Lotto and bingo games • Colour, shape and number games • Board games
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using single words or phrases to communicate and express needs e.g. toilet, drink. • Uses gesture to extend talk. • Echoing words/phrases and formulaic talk such as “tidy up time.” “sit down.” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Story sacks, story boards and puppets • Extend the child’s speech by one or two words and model speech e.g. They say “Car”, you reply “A red car”. • Read stories with repetitive language and clear pictures.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Generating own words and short phrases • EAL “errors” such as pronunciation, word order or mixing languages are still very common. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to extend the child’s speech and model correct grammatical structures “I goed outside” “You went outside? What did you play with outside?” • Encourage the child to respond by asking closed questions requiring yes or no or a choice of two answers “Would you like an apple or a banana”.

7. Encouraging parental involvement and the importance of home languages

- When helping parents/carers settle their child to a new environment, remember to allow extra time for those parents who use English as an Additional Language.
- You may find that parents' or carers' understanding of language is better than their own spoken English. Don't let this put you off communicating with parents/carers. Photographs are a great way of sharing experiences and explaining routines.
- Tell parents/carers about the friendships that their children are making. Taking photographs of children playing together can reassure parents/carers that their children are settling in and making friends. (Follow your setting's guidelines about taking photographs of children)
- Encourage previous EAL parents to share experiences with new parents and translate information to parents or staff.
- Spend time finding out about the child's home background and experiences.
- Use home visits to share experiences so that you have a greater understanding of the families' background and cultural experiences.
- As well as talking to parents/carers as and when the occasion arises, it can be useful when first getting to know a family to allocate specific time to get to know them. Spend time talking to the parent/carer in a quieter environment so that they can share information with you.
- Don't forget that when they bring their child to your setting, this may be the first time that parents/carers have been in a school or EYFS setting since their own school days. If they grew up outside the UK, their experience may have been very different.
- Trips with parent helpers, Stay and Play sessions, Book Fairs and fundraising events can be a useful way to help parents/carers and children get to know staff in a less formal way.
- At parents' meetings, allow extra time for parents or carers who are new to English, as they may bring someone to help translate.
- Give parents information about joining the local library. There are many story sacks and dual language books available, some with CDs. Consider inviting parents to come into school to help you run a dual language/multi-lingual story or rhyme time. Source dual language books (see below). These can also be ordered from your local library or the school library service.
- Share information with parents/carers about the vital importance of using home language/s. The EAL section on the Local Offer on the Cumberland Council website contains translated information leaflets for parents on keeping home languages alive and sharing books and rhymes with their children.



8. EAL-friendly provision – suggestions for good practice

Communication and language development

	Yes	No
Do you know which language/s the child hears and uses as well as English?		
Have you asked how the child's home language is developing?		
Have you found out how to say hello and goodbye and other key words in the child's home language? (e.g., Mum, toilet, drink, home time)		
Have you discussed with parents the importance of continuing to use home language/s both at home and in the setting? (See use of home language information)		
Have you found out how the child's name is pronounced and does everyone in the setting know how it is pronounced and spelt? Check if they are used to a shortened name or are used to a different name than the one used in the setting.		
Have you asked parents to record songs, rhymes or stories in the home languages or come into the setting to read or sing rhymes?		
Do you use visual timetables, photographs, communication fans, objects and pictures to help the children understand, follow instructions, learn routine and know what will happen next?		
Do you use facial expressions, actions and gestures to help the children understand?		
Do you talk to the child even if s/he is silent or speaks in the home language?		
Do you accept and respond to children's attempts at communication either verbal or non-verbal and track non-verbal communication?		
Do you make sure children learning EAL are included in all speaking and listening and group activities?		
Do you allow children to show they have understood or to make choices in ways other than speaking e.g., pointing, completing a task, using pictures.		
Do you use self-talk and parallel talk?		
Do you "feedback" children's efforts at communication to gently correct any mistakes and encourage them to say a little more by modelling the language.		
Are there books, songs and rhymes reflecting different cultures?		
Are there books, stories, songs and rhymes in different languages?		

Personal, Social and Emotional Development

	Yes	No
Do you buddy newly arrived children with confident and outgoing English speakers and allow children to use their home language with any other children in the setting who share their home language?		
Have you checked with parents/carers if the child has a favourite toy, activity or comfort object which would help the child settle in and feel more relaxed?		
Do you have pictures or photographs of expected behaviours? E.g., good sitting, washing hands after going to the toilet, how to get changed for P.E. or put a coat on? This will reassure the children and reinforce what is expected.		
Do you have pictures or photographs so children can choose what activity they would like to do, which songs or rhymes they would like to choose in small group time, or what they would like for snack time? This will allow children to make choices before they know the word in English and are able to express themselves verbally?		
Do you have displays and resources reflecting the different languages spoken in your setting for example different alphabets, orientation (e.g. Arabic script going from left to right) or number systems? Do you recognise children using these in their mark making activities?		
Does your role play area reflect different cultures? As well as making some children feel more 'at home', it will expand the experiences of other children in your setting. Similarly, do you have multicultural figures in your small world area?		
Do you have quiet, comfortable, areas with cushions where children can relax away from the busy environment and language demands? It can be quite stressful and tiring concentrating and listening in a new language and sometimes children will need a bit of space. Story CDs/e-books, sound enabled dual language books or songs in different languages or books using photographs of the child and family could be used here as well.		



Physical Development

	Yes	No
Are there any cultural considerations regarding self-care? Be sensitive to different attitudes to independence with toileting, dressing, eating etc and share the expectations of the setting regarding these with parents and carers.		
Have you found out what foods the child is used to eating at home and are you sensitive to different ways of eating for example fingers or chopsticks?		
Have you found out if there are any foods the child can't eat- e.g., meat, pork, gelatine etc?		
Do you use physical play to model and develop language? Action songs and rhymes and P.E and outdoor play can be used to develop vocabulary, e.g., body parts, actions, run, sit, skip etc and positional vocabulary on, in, up down, behind, in front and concepts such as fast/slow.		



Expressive Art and Design

	Yes	No
Does your setting have songs and rhymes from different cultures and different languages?		
Does your art area have paints and crayons in different colours to reflect different skin tones to reflect diversity?		
Do you have dressing up clothes which reflect different cultures and the children's own experiences?		
Do you have music and instruments reflecting the cultural backgrounds of children in your setting?		
Do you try to explore dance or music from different cultures to reflect the children's backgrounds?		
Do you ask parents to talk about colours, textures etc. in their home language to support what children are learning in school?		
Do you ask parents to talk about music in their home language and use fast, slow, loud quiet etc. to support the children's experience in your EYFS setting?		



Literacy

	Yes	No
Do you have examples of writing in different languages so you can recognise emergent writing in Bengali for example?		
Do you know a bit about the languages children speak in your setting? Do they have a different script or alphabet? Does the writing go left to right, right to left or top to bottom?		
Do you encourage parents to join the library and borrow books and story sacks in the home language and English?		
Do you use ICT, e-books, CDs or invite parents and carers into the setting for dual language rhyme time or story sessions?		
Do you make 'talk about' books of photographs of the setting so children can talk about them in English and their home language. You can add English words and ask parents or carers to write the word in their home language. There are also talking photograph books/ I.T. tools where you can add recordings in home language and English.		
Do you retell stories in different ways, drama, puppets, story boards, story sacks and use extra visual support at story time to help children understand?		
Do you use food packets, magazines or newspapers and books in the setting which reflect the children's home languages? You could ask parents to collect some.		



9. Using stories and rhymes

Wherever possible choose books which:

- Have repetitive language.
- Have predictable patterns.
- Can be accompanied by props, puppets or can be acted out to aid understanding.
- Have supportive illustrations directly related to the text.
- Do not reinforce stereotypes.

Mantra Lingua has a good selection of e-books, sound enabled books and dual language books and publish Row, Row, Row Your Boat and Heads, Shoulders, Knees and Toes in various dual language editions.

Suggested books to model target vocabulary

Title	Vocabulary focus	Author	Publisher	Dual language
Dear Zoo	Names of animals. Fierce, grumpy etc. Irregular past tense verbs	Rod Campbell	MacMillan Children's Books	Mantra lingua
Elmer	Colours, animal names	David McKee	Anderson Press	
Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What Do You See?	Colours, names of animals	Bill Martin	Puffin	Mantra Lingua
The Very Hungry Caterpillar	Food, days of the week, irregular past tense	Eric Carle	Puffin	Mantra Lingua
Where's Spot?	Names of household objects, animals, positional vocabular	Eric Hill	Puffin	
Oh Dear!	Farms animals and where they live	Rod Campbell	MacMillan Children's Books	
The Three Billy Goats Gruff	Sizes, positional vocabulary	Traditional		Mantra Lingua

Title	Vocabulary focus	Author	Publisher	Dual language
Rosie's Walk	Positional Vocabulary	Pat Hutchins	Simon Schuster	
Walking Through the Jungle	Names of animals, verbs	Julie Lancome	Barefoot Books	
Goldilocks and the Three Bears	Opposites, Hot cold, big, small, counting to 3	Traditional		Mantra Lingua
Walking Through the Jungle	Names of animals	Debbie Harter	Mantra Lingua	Mantra Lingua
Farmer Duck	Names of animals	Martin Waddell Helen Oxenbury	Walker Books	Mantra Lingua
The Gigantic Turnip	Numbers Names of animals Names of vegetables	Alexei Tolstoy and Niamh Sharkey	Barefoot Books	Mantra Lingua
We're Going on a Bear Hunt	Positions	Michael Rosen	Walker Books	Mantra Publishing

Don't forget Cumbria library service or the school library service can provide dual language/other language books too.



10. Useful websites and sources of further information

EYFS SEND information on Cumberland County Council Local Offer <https://legacy.cumberland.gov.uk/childrensservices/childrenandfamilies/cfis/earlyyearsandchildcare/supportforearlyyearsandchildcareprovision.asp>

EAL information on Cumberland County Council Local Offer <https://fid.cumberland.gov.uk/kb5/cumberland/directory/advice.page?id=Mq3v-a2bPYI>

Gov.uk website information about English as an Additional Language in the Early Years Foundation Stage. <https://help-for-early-years-providers.education.gov.uk/get-help-to-improve-your-practice/english-as-an-additional-language-eal>

Mantralingua UK dual language books, PENpal talking pens, language packs e-books, recordable labels etc. <https://uk.mantralingua.com/>

BBC Resources are full of ideas for **rhymes and songs**, and the materials are suitable for sharing with families.

BBC Resource explaining **the benefit of speaking your home language** with your young child.

Mama Lisa's World songs, rhymes and international culture. <https://www.mamalisa.com/>

Refugee and Asylum Seeker Guidance **Early childhood education and care for refugee and asylum-seeker families in England - UNICEF UK**

100 Ideas for early Years Practitioners: Supporting EAL Learners. Marianne Sargent published Bloomsbury 2016

Meeting The Needs of Young Children with English as an Additional language: Research Informed Practice. Malini Mistry published David Fulton 2020

Reading With Your Child Information in a variety of home languages from the Book Trust <https://www.booktrust.org.uk/books-and-reading/tips-and-advice/reading-tips/>

Words for Life <https://wordsforlife.org.uk/>

How to play with your child, speak to your child in your home language and other useful advice on developing speech and language in the advice for parents section <https://wordsforlife.org.uk/parent-support/> in a variety of home languages.

Bilingual Quick Tips <https://literacytrust.org.uk/early-years/bilingual-quick-tips/>

Time Together. Support for multilingual families at home. <https://literacytrust.org.uk/resources/time-together-multilingual-families/>