

English as an additional language tool

Project group case study



The Early Years Foundation Stage 2014 requires practitioners to be able to demonstrate how children make progress in their learning and development, in order that children fulfil their potential.

1.7 '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.

Providers must also ensure that children have sufficient opportunities to learn and reach a good standard in English language in the EYFS: ensuring children are ready to benefit from the opportunities available to them when they begin Year 1.

When assessing communication, language and literacy skills, practitioners must assess children's skills in English. If a child does not have a strong grasp of English language, practitioners must explore the child's skills in the home language with parents and/or carers, to establish whether there is cause for concern about language delay'.

Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage, DfE, 2014

The Northamptonshire County Council (NCC) has created in collaboration with a group of early years settings across the county, an assessment tool specifically to support children with English as an additional language (EAL). There is no prescribed way to use the tool; the onus is on the setting to decide how they will implement to meet the needs of the child, family and setting.

The EAL tool consists of:

- EAL tool: Listening, Understanding and Speaking
- Good practice guidance
- EAL tool: Project group case study

The EAL tool records assessments based on children's home language and English. The first section 'Unique child: First/home language' is in line with the non-statutory guidelines in both Development Matters in the EYFS 2012, Early Years Outcomes 2013 and The Every Child A Talker Child Monitoring Tool. The second section 'The stages of language acquisition' supports practitioners to assess a child's progress in English regardless of their chronological age. Additional columns allow practitioners to record observations (Look, Listen and Note) and comments from parents and children.

Additional information (Good practice guidance) is provided to aid practitioners to reflect on their practice and provision, ensuring that all children's needs are fully met.

Settings stated that the tool supported strong parent partnerships and helped to raise parents' understanding and awareness of language acquisition. The tool also enabled settings to ensure a two way flow of communication between the setting and home including both the voices of parents and children.

From discussions within one setting, it became apparent that one family felt that their child's progress was hindered by limited use of the home language in the setting. On reflection, the setting already provided a range of languages and relevant labels. However, the setting was able to further develop and extend their practice which benefited all children in the setting. For example, the setting used the smart board to share Polish stories and to record parents telling stories in their home language.



Completing the EAL tool:

The tool has been trialled by the settings involved in the project. It has been used in a variety of ways to support practitioner's judgements of children's individual progress within both their home language and English. Settings focused on different target groups:

- All children with EAL, to gain a more accurate picture of their language development
- A focus group sharing the same home language, to reflect on current practice and support for this identified group
- To support early intervention for an identified child with EAL, to ensure the child's needs are met
- As part of induction/settling-in processes for children with EAL, to aid transitions from home to setting and to identify clear starting points
- Involving parents of children with EAL, in ongoing dialogue regarding children's language development
- For children with EAL moving school/setting, to provide practitioners with a more detailed picture of children's attainment and level of development in addition to the transition document

In an example of good practice, a key person shared the tool with parents as part of the induction process. Parents felt that their contributions were highly valued and an important part of the child's transition into the setting. The setting felt that their on entry assessments were accurate as they reflected a range of perspectives; from the home and setting.

The tool can be used to record either on-going formative assessments (for example, observations from home and setting and photographic/digital recording evidence) or to support summative assessments (for example, individual progress tracking documents) recording a child's achievements.

During the trial period, many settings expressed the need for space to record observations and comments from children and families. This was added to the tool following on from discussions. Some settings chose to highlight statements within the tool and were used in conjunction with the Individual tracking document as part of summative assessments.

In good provision, practitioners gain information in relation to children's learning and development on entry to the setting. Sharing the tool with parents/carers is crucial in gaining a holistic picture of children's language development and this two way flow of information sharing should continue throughout the child's time at the setting. One setting commented that attaching this tool to the transition document for a child with EAL ensured the reception class teacher gained a detailed picture of the child's language development.

Inclusive settings with a high number of bilingual children shared how the tool has further strengthened partnerships with parents/carers through the depth of information which was shared. For example, practitioners found the tool useful as they gained an accurate picture of the child's first/home language development which initially was not apparent.

Points for reflection:

- How do you ensure that there is a shared ethos of inclusive practice within the setting?
- Are all children's languages valued and promoted?
- How are children's and parent's voices heard and acted upon?
- Are there opportunities for ongoing dialogue between families and key people?
- How do you overcome any language barriers that may exist?

Good practice settings have built up strong relationships with parents who act as translators for other families. Bilingual practitioners and older siblings support families to understand and share information regarding their child.

References:

- DfE. (2014) Statutory Framework for the Early years Foundation Stage
- The National Subject Association for EAL www.naldic.org.uk Articles and useful resources around EYFS and supporting children with EAL
- The Every Child A Talker Child Monitoring Tool can be accessed from <http://www.foundationyears.org.uk/2011/10/every-child-a-talker-child-monitoring-tool/>

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