

Nishkam School Trust



Policy for Pupils with English as an Additional Language

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Policy for Pupils with English as an Additional Language

Introduction

The term EAL is used when referring to pupils whose main language at home is a language other than English. This policy sets out the Trust schools' aims, objectives and strategies with regard to meeting the needs and celebrating the skills of EAL pupils and helping them to achieve the highest possible standards.

Aims

- To give all pupils the opportunity to overcome any barrier to learning and assessment
- To welcome and value the cultural, linguistic and educational experiences that pupils with EAL bring to the school
- To assess the 'linguistic abilities' of pupil across the school population
- To implement school-wide strategies to ensure that EAL pupils are supported in accessing the full curriculum
- To help EAL pupils to become confident and fluent in speaking and listening, reading and writing in English in order to be able to fulfil their academic potential.
- To identify and make maximum use of opportunities for modelling fluent English and encouraging pupils to practise and extend their use of English
- To encourage and enable parental support in improving children's attainment

Objectives

- To be able to assess the skills and needs of pupils with EAL and to give appropriate provision throughout the School
- To equip teachers with the knowledge, skills and resources to be able to support and monitor pupils with EAL
- To monitor pupils' progress systematically and use the data in decisions about classroom management and curriculum planning
- To maintain pupils' self-esteem and confidence by acknowledging and giving status to their skills in their own languages
- To be able to assess the skills and needs of pupils with EAL and to give appropriate support to develop and sustain home languages where possible

Strategies

School/class ethos

- Classrooms need to be socially and intellectually inclusive, valuing cultural differences and fostering a range of individual identities
- Recognise the child's mother tongue; boost the child's self-esteem. Remember, he/she has the potential to become a bi-lingual adult
- Identify the pupil's strengths
- Acknowledge the time it takes to become fluent in an additional language, with a good command of the range of language needed for academic success. Support may be necessary beyond the time a child appears orally fluent especially in the use and application of correct grammar.

Assessment

- The pupil's competence in English in relation to the NC standards and expectations is assessed by the Inclusion Leader /SENCO within the child's first weeks in school, in Listening and Understanding, Speaking, Reading and Writing.

Teaching and Learning

Teachers will help pupils learning English as an additional language in a variety of ways:

- Show differentiated work for EAL pupils in planning
- Have high expectations
- Monitor progress carefully and ensure that EAL pupils are set appropriate and challenging targets
- Recognise that EAL pupils need more time to process answers
- Allow pupils to use their mother tongue to explore concepts
- Give newly arrived young children time to absorb English (there is a recognised 'silent period' when children understand more English than they use – this will pass if their self-confidence is maintained)
- Group children to ensure that EAL pupils hear good models of English
- Use collaborative learning techniques
- Ensure that vocabulary work covers the technical as well as the everyday meaning of key words
- Explain how speaking and writing in English are structured for different purposes across a range of subjects
- Provide a range of reading materials that highlight the different ways in which English is used
- Ensure that there are effective opportunities for talking, and that talking is used to support writing
- Encourage children to transfer their knowledge, skills and understanding of one language to another

Access and support

- All pupils will follow the full school curriculum. The school will provide texts and resources that suit the pupils' ages and levels of learning
- EAL pupils will be supported, where possible, through a Teaching Assistant in the classroom working with individuals or small groups to model language structures, allow opportunities for talking, read and scribe, to enable the pupil to complete tasks with understanding.
- Where necessary, for older children or for those who are behind expected levels for their age and time in school, withdrawal support will take place for a set period of time to address specific language or learning focus.

After School Clubs

Encourage pupils to read, write and develop skills in their home spoken languages where pupil numbers allow for such groups to be held

Methods

In classes, teachers can help pupils learning English as additional language by:

- Building on children's experiences of language at home, and in the wider community, so that their developing use of English and of other languages support each other
- Extensive use of visual aids and practical experiences to support the child's understanding of new words and phrases
- Providing a range of opportunities for children to engage in speaking and listening activities in English with peers and adults

- Providing bilingual support to extend vocabulary
- Providing a variety of writing in the children's home language as well as in English
- Providing opportunities for children to hear their home languages as well as English

Responsibilities

School Office

To obtain, collate information on new pupils with EAL:

- Language(s) spoken at home
- From the previous school, information on level of English studied/used
- Details of curriculum at previous school

Date entered the UK to support knowledge of previous statutory assessment and if required disapplication

Head teacher

To ensure that:

- All involved in teaching EAL learners liaise regularly
- Parents and staff are aware of the school's policy on pupils with EAL
- Relevant information on pupils with EAL reaches all staff
- Training in planning, teaching and assessing EAL learners is available to staff
- Challenging targets for pupils learning EAL are set and met
- The effectiveness of the teaching of pupils with EAL is monitored and data collection is managed

Inclusion Leader

- Oversee initial assessment of pupils' standard of English
- Give guidance and support in using the assessment to set targets and plan appropriate work
- Monitor standards of teaching and learning of pupils with EAL
- Report to the Head on the effectiveness of the above and the progress of pupils
- Monitor progress and identify learning difficulties that may be masked by EAL.
- Seek first language assessment if appropriate

Class/subject teacher

- Be knowledgeable about pupils' abilities and needs in English and other subjects
- Use this knowledge effectively in curriculum planning, classroom teaching, use of resources and pupil grouping

Monitoring, Evaluation and Review

The Governing Body will review this policy at least every two years and assess its implementation and effectiveness. The policy will be promoted and implemented throughout the school.

APPENDIX 1

Bilingual Children's Mother Tongue: Why Is It Important for Education?

(Jim Cummins - University of Toronto)

The challenge for educators and policy-makers is to shape the evolution of national identity in such a way that the rights of all citizens (including school children) are respected, and the cultural, linguistic, and economic resources of the nation are maximized. To squander the linguistic resources of the nation by discouraging children from developing their mother tongues is quite simply unintelligent from the point of view of national self-interest and also represents a violation of the rights of the child (see Skutnabb-Kangas, 2000, for a comprehensive review of international policies and practices relating to linguistic human rights).

How can schools provide an appropriate education for culturally and linguistically diverse children? A first step is to learn what the research says about the role of language, and specifically children's mother tongues, in their educational development.

What We Know About Mother Tongue Development

The research is very clear about the importance of bilingual children's mother tongue for their overall personal and educational development. More detail on the research findings summarized below can be found in Baker (2000), Cummins (2000), and Skutnabb-Kangas (2000).

Bilingualism has positive effects on children's linguistic and educational development. When children continue to develop their abilities in two or more languages throughout their primary school years, they gain a deeper understanding of language and how to use it effectively. They have more practice in processing language, especially when they develop literacy in both, and they are able to compare and contrast the ways in which their two languages organize reality. More than 150 research studies conducted during the past 35 years strongly support what Goethe, the German philosopher, once said: The person who knows only one language does not truly know that language. The research suggests that bilingual children may also develop more flexibility in their thinking as a result of processing information through two different languages.

The level of development of children's mother tongue is a strong predictor of their second language development. Children who come to school with a solid foundation in their mother tongue develop stronger literacy abilities in the school language. When parents and other caregivers (e.g. grandparents) are able to spend time with their children and tell stories or discuss issues with them in a way that develops their mother tongue vocabulary and concepts, children come to school well-prepared to learn the school language and succeed educationally. Children's knowledge and skills transfer across languages from the mother tongue they have learned in the home to the school language. From the point of view of children's development of concepts and thinking skills, the two languages are interdependent. Transfer across languages can be two-way: when the mother tongue is promoted in school (e.g. in a bilingual education program), the concepts, language, and literacy skills that children are learning in the majority language can transfer to the home language. In short, both languages nurture each other when the educational environment permits children access to both languages.

Mother tongue promotion in the school helps develop not only the mother tongue but also children's abilities in the majority school language. This finding is not surprising in view of the NST - Policy for Pupils with EAL

previous findings that (a) bilingualism confers linguistic advantages on children and (b) abilities in the two languages are significantly related or interdependent. Bilingual children perform better in school when the school effectively teaches the mother tongue and, where appropriate, develops literacy in that language. By contrast, when children are encouraged to reject their mother tongue and, consequently, its development stagnates, their personal and conceptual foundation for learning is undermined.

Spending instructional time through a minority language in the school does not hurt children's academic development in the majority school language. Some educators and parents are suspicious of bilingual education or mother tongue teaching programs because they worry that these programs take time away from the majority school language. For example, in a bilingual program where 50% of the time is spent teaching through children's home language and 50% through the majority school language, surely children's learning of the majority school language must suffer? One of the most strongly established findings of educational research, conducted in many countries around the world, is that well-implemented bilingual programs can promote literacy and subject matter knowledge in a minority language without any negative effects on children's development in the majority language. Within Europe, the Foyer program in Belgium which develops children's speaking and literacy abilities in three languages (their mother tongue, Dutch and French) in the primary school most clearly illustrates the benefits of bilingual and trilingual education (see Cummins, 2000, pp. 218-219).

We can understand how this happens from the research findings summarized above. When children are learning through a minority language (e.g. their home language), they are not only learning this language in a narrow sense. They are learning concepts and intellectual skills that are equally relevant to their ability to function in the majority language. Pupils who know how to tell the time in their mother tongue understand the concept of telling time. In order to tell time in the second language (e.g. the majority language), they do not need to re-learn the concept of telling time; they simply need to acquire new labels or "surface structures" for an intellectual skill they have already learned. Similarly, at more advanced stages, there is transfer across languages in academic and literacy skills such as knowing how to distinguish the main idea from the supporting details of a written passage or story, identifying cause and effect, distinguishing fact from opinion, and mapping out the sequence of events in a story or historical account.

Children's mother tongues are fragile and easily lost in the early years of school. Many people marvel at how quickly bilingual children seem to "pick up" conversational skills in the majority language in the early years at school (although it takes much longer for them to catch up to native speakers in academic language skills). However, educators are often much less aware about how quickly children can lose their ability to use their mother tongues, even in the home context. The extent and rapidity of language loss will vary according to the concentration of families from a particular linguistic group in the school and neighborhood. Where the mother tongue is used extensively in the community outside the school, then language loss among young children will be less. However, where language communities are not concentrated or "ghettoized" in particular neighborhoods, children can lose their ability to communicate in their mother tongue within 2-3 years of starting school. They may retain receptive (understanding) skills in the language but they will use the majority language in speaking with their peers and siblings and in responding to their parents. By the time children become adolescents, the linguistic gap between parents and children has become an emotional chasm. Pupils frequently become alienated from the cultures of both home and school with predictable results.

To reduce the extent of language loss, parents should establish a strong home language policy and provide ample opportunities for children to expand the functions for which they use the mother tongue (e.g. reading and writing) and the contexts in which they can use it (e.g. community mother tongue day care or play groups, visits to the country of origin, etc.).

Teachers can also help children retain and develop their mother tongues by communicating to them strong affirmative messages about the value of knowing additional languages and the fact that bilingualism is an important linguistic and intellectual accomplishment. For example, they can initiate classroom projects focused on (a) developing children's language awareness (e.g. surveying and celebrating the multilingualism of students in the class) and (b) the sharing of languages in the class (e.g. every day a child brings one significant word from the home language into class and the entire class, including the teacher, learns and discusses this word).

To reject a child's language in the school is to reject the child. When the message, implicit or explicit, communicated to children in the school is "Leave your language and culture at the schoolhouse door", children also leave a central part of who they are-their identities-at the schoolhouse door. When they feel this rejection, they are much less likely to participate actively and confidently in classroom instruction. It is not enough for teachers to passively accept children's linguistic and cultural diversity in the school. They must be proactive and take the initiative to affirm children's linguistic identity by having posters in the various languages of the community around the school, encouraging children to write in their mother tongues in addition to the majority school language (e.g. write and publish pupil-authored bilingual books), and generally create an instructional climate where the linguistic and cultural experience of the whole child is actively accepted and validated.

Shaping a Dynamic Identity for the Future

When educators within a school develop language policies and organize their curriculum and instruction in such a way that the linguistic and cultural capital of children and communities is strongly affirmed in all the interactions of the school, then the school is rejecting the negative attitudes and ignorance about diversity that exist in the wider society. In challenging coercive relations of power, the school is holding up to bilingual children a positive and affirming mirror of who they are and who they can become within this society. Multilingual children have an enormous contribution to make to their societies, and to the international global community, if only we as educators put into practice what we believe is true for all children:

Children's cultural and linguistic experience in the home is the foundation of their future learning and we must build on that foundation rather than undermine it;

- every child has the right to have their talents recognized and promoted within the school.

In short, the cultural, linguistic and intellectual capital of our societies will increase dramatically when we stop seeing culturally and linguistically diverse children as "a problem to be solved" and instead open our eyes to the linguistic, cultural, and intellectual resources they bring from their homes to our schools and societies.

References

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