



CASE STUDY REPORT

Guidance for practitioners supporting children/families where English is an Additional Language

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This study was originally published in 2009 as part of the 'What Works Well' initiative, part of the National Strategies for Education in England.

Abstract

Background: The purpose of the study was to provide training for practitioners in PVI settings to ensure their practice is fully inclusive for children/families with EAL, and to support pre-school children learning EAL to make progress equitable with their peer group.

Aims: The main aim is to provide training to practitioners in PVI settings to ensure their practice is fully inclusive for children/families with EAL, and to support pre-school children learning EAL to make progress equitable with their peers.

Methods: Participants included support staff, National Strategies consultants, teachers, and practitioners from private, voluntary and independent settings. Training included first-hand language experience, reflection, practical strategies, case studies, and a support pack. Partnership between Early Years Service and Ethnic Minority Achievement Team provided support.

Findings: The main findings are that whole-setting training to develop practitioner awareness has been the key in improving the learning experiences of children learning EAL, practitioners now understand what a fully inclusive enabling environment is, and there is increased awareness of the impact of their own behaviours and attitudes on the experiences of children and their families.

Implications: The findings suggest that providing training to practitioners in PVI settings to ensure their practice is fully inclusive for children/families with EAL can have a positive impact on the learning experiences of these children. This includes increased independence, participation, and parental involvement.

This abstract was generated by Camtree using a large language model (LLM) and added to the original report in 2023.

Keywords: Nursery education; Communication, language and literacy; Creative development; Knowledge and understanding of the world; Personal, social and emotional development; Physical development; Problem solving, reasoning and numeracy

Introduction

What were your reasons for doing this type of development work?

To provide training for practitioners within private, voluntary and independent (PVI) settings to ensure their practice is fully inclusive, particularly for children/families where English is an additional language (EAL).

To support pre-school children learning EAL to make progress equitable with their peer group.

Who might find this case study useful?

- Support staff
- National Strategies consultant
- Teacher

Description

What specific curriculum area, subject or aspect did you intend to have impact on?

- Communication, language and literacy
- Creative development
- Knowledge and understanding of the world
- Personal, social and emotional development
- Physical development
- Problem solving, reasoning and numeracy

How did you intend to impact on pupil learning?

- by ensuring all aspects of the enabling environment are fully inclusive
- by specific focus on the needs and learning experiences of children learning EAL
- by ensuring effective two-way communication between practitioners and parents/carers to support children's learning.

What were your success criteria?

- Children learning EAL are fully supported to access all learning experiences offered in the setting which will have an impact on the progress they make across all areas of learning.
- Practitioners feel enabled to support children/carers learning EAL.
- Continued use of strategies to support the needs of children/carers with EAL.
- Pre-school children learning EAL to make progress equitable with their peer group.

What information or data did you use to measure progress towards your success criteria?

- Observation outcomes

Describe the CPD approaches you used

Training included:

- a first hand experience of learning in a language other than English to increase empathy with children and families for whom English is an additional language
- an opportunity for practitioners to reflect on this experience and explore how to incorporate strategies which they found supportive as learners into their practice
- further exploration of practical strategies supported by the bilingual community officers.

- an opportunity to consider case studies as a whole staff providing practical strategies to meet the needs of the children/carers in the case studies
- through discussion, development of a common understanding that attitude and human resources are more important than physical resources.

A support pack containing training materials used, further documentation and signposts to further support is left with the setting.

What CPD materials, research or expertise have you drawn on?

Existing Portsmouth LA guidance

Who provided you with support?

- Local authority staff

How were you supported?

Partnership between the Early Years Service and the Ethnic Minority Achievement team.

Impact

What has been the overall impact on pupil learning?

Evaluations and feedback from the settings indicate that:

- Children learning EAL respond more positively to additional visual and aural cues thus ensuring higher levels of independence and participation.
- Parents feel more welcome because of the environmental changes; this had a positive impact on their children's learning because of increased parental participation and confidence.

Thoughts you think are relevant to overall impact on learning

- Whole-setting training to develop practitioner awareness has been the key in improving the learning experiences of children learning EAL.
- Practitioners now understand what a fully inclusive enabling environment is – and what their role is in developing and maintaining this.
- A deeper understanding of parental partnership and the need to make additional provision for some parents has ensured greater participation which has impacted positively on children's learning.

Quotes you think are relevant to overall impact on learning

"Will help us to review our adult/child inter-action, our resources and what it feels like for a child learning EAL to come to our nursery and feel happy, secure and valued."

"We know what we have to do now to help children settle."

"Even though we don't share a language we know there are lots of things we can do."

"The training raises awareness of how isolated a child and parents can feel in a setting where no-one speaks their language."

"It helped us realise what we are doing right in meeting needs."

Quantitative evidence of impact on pupil learning

- Periodic teacher assessment

Qualitative evidence of impact on pupil learning

- Observation outcomes

Describe the evidence of impact on pupil learning

Due to the nature of our project being in PVI settings, data on long-term pupil progress is difficult to gain.

The qualitative evidence is drawn from feedback following visits to the settings and evaluations.

Quotes from the settings show how pupil learning has changed:

- We now recognise the achievements for the 2 children learning EAL in areas other than the spoken word.
- We can see that (name) is more settled and can take himself to the quiet area without us wanting to keep him engaged with an adult all the time.
- A Bilingual Assistant said, The practitioners ask me more questions and understand about working in partnership to move (name) on in his learning.

What has been the impact on teaching?

Practitioners developed skills to support children learning EAL and their families/carers.

Increased practitioners' awareness of the impact of their own behaviours and attitudes strongly influences the experiences of children and their families within settings.

Planning includes specific strategies to support bilingual children (where appropriate).

Quotes you think are relevant to the impact on teaching

"The EAL training was very clear and easy to follow. It was user-friendly and gave us much to think about, that now as practitioners we use at work."

"Training has made us re-look at our setting and the way we meet individuals' needs not just children learning EAL."

"It's so obvious when you have time to think about it as a team and share ideas – we all feel better about our practice and are now trying to communicate things to (name)'s parent in better ways which is helping (name)."

"It taught us not to be complacent."

Evidence of impact on teaching

- Teacher perceptions

Describe the evidence of impact on teaching

- Planning reflects need for extra visual cues, and understanding of appropriate differentiation according to child's cognitive and linguistic development.
- Groups now include good models of language.
- Increased use of hands on /practical learning experiences offered across all 6 areas of learning both inside and outside and opportunities for repetition/familiar stories, rhymes.
- Observations now celebrate when home language is used and English is attempted either through

child-led or adult-led learning. Feeling more confident, less concerned about parents' meetings and sharing progress – can use gestures and pictures with parents too!

What has been the impact on school organisation and leadership?

Raised in everyone's awareness the practical things we can do to ensure inclusion for children learning EAL takes place consistently... not an add on!

Everyone is aware of and can access the support pack which includes the 'inclusion audit of need for settings'to undertake themselves, practical strategies, signposts to relevant websites, some appropriate signs and labels in different languages.

Evidence of impact on school organisation and leadership

Induction for new staff includes reference to good practice expectations in respect of children/carers learning EAL.

Summary

What is the crucial thing that made the difference?

The bespoke element of the training within setting's own team:

- The professional discussion with question and answer sessions was much better than previously held city-wide generic training for any practitioners from any setting.
- Concrete, realistic suggestions based on the actual setting and not just theory e.g. no point discussing free flow outside play when the setting doesn't have an outside area. Much better to support setting to explore other physical learning experiences where the children learning EAL can get success alongside their peers.
- Non-judgemental training sessions led by the bilingual community officers.
- Starting where the practitioners were e.g. in settings with 100% white British monolingual children/parents the bilingual community officers took time to discuss and answer questions about why the setting and practitioners are having the visit and training.

Also there was quite a 'buzz' around the city about the visits and training – whenever practitioners from PVI settings attended other training they would ask each other if they had received their 'EAL visit and training', and those who had, always commented favourably on the language experience.

What key resources would people who want to learn from your experience need access to?

Partnership between the Early Years Service and the Ethnic Minority Achievement Team.

What CPD session and resources were particularly useful?

Bilingual community officers who work collaboratively with the Early Years Service e.g. regular reviews of the process to ensure needs are being met alongside monitoring and evaluations to ensure consistency in delivery across the city.

If another individual or school was attempting to replicate this work, where would they start and what would the essential elements be?

- Identify the specific needs within pre-school settings in your area.
- Create an 'audit of need' based on the above, linked to known good practice.
- Be flexible about timings of visits and training (at the settings convenience).

- Ensure the relationship between the setting and the bilingual community officer is a partnership based on trust and not judgemental... be realistic about what can be achieved with limited resources, budget, space etc.
- Ensure you prioritise the key messages, rather than focussing on every little detail.
- Ensure you offer further support e.g. we left a support pack including key messages, leaflets about appropriate strategies, useful websites and signposting e.g. referral pathway and process in respect of bilingual support for a child within the setting.

What further developments are you planning to do (or would you like to see others do)?

As the feedback from practitioners gave us a strong message that this training must be directed at leadership level to be a success, it is intended that through the quality assurance Early Years Advisory Teacher's visits, a follow up discussion will take place when settings have undertaken their own audit or completed actions from the projects' Visit Record.

Supplementary Materials

This report is accompanied in the library by the following supplementary material:

- EAL Inclusion - Audit of need for settings
- Outline of one-hour training course
- Evaluations from Settings

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About 'What Works Well'

This case study was originally published as part of the 'What Works Well' section of the National Strategies for Education in England. The National Strategies were professional programmes aiming for improvements in the quality of learning and teaching in schools in England. 'What Works Well' involved teaching practitioners from all phases and areas of education sharing accounts of real developments which had improved learning and teaching, and made a difference to pupil progress. 'What Works Well' case studies were designed to support practice transfer and include sufficient detail and resources to enable others to implement the effective practice described. They were reviewed by experts prior to publication as 'User Generated Content' (UGC) under a licence which encouraged reuse and derivative works, but which precluded commercial use.

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