

Aiming high: Meeting the needs of newly arrived learners of English as an additional language

These materials aim to support schools that may be working with newly arrived isolated learners of English as an additional language in settings that may have little or no access to expert ethnic minority achievement (EMA) support. The materials aim to provide some practical ideas, examples of supportive practice and a few (but by no means an exhaustive list of) links to useful websites. For further detailed information see the QCA website 'Pathways to learning for new arrivals' at www.qca.org.uk ([link opens in new window](#))

Providing a welcoming environment

Parents and carers should be given information about:

- the English school system
- the school's expectations of pupils
- the school day
- the homework system
- uniform or dress requirements
- benefits such as free school meals or uniform grants.

Parents/carers will find a tour around the school supportive and interesting, especially as the school setting might be very different from their own experience. Discuss how parents/carers can work in partnership to support the pupil's learning. Showing a video or display of typical school activities can be helpful. Some LAs have prepared video and other materials designed to introduce newly arrived children and their parents/carers to the key features of primary school settings in the UK.

Translation and interpretation for a pre-admission discussion with parents or carers may be provided by the LA or it may be possible to find another person from the community to help with this. Some LAs maintain a register of adults and older students who are available to provide support with translation in community languages. Welcome booklets and leaflets for parents, translated into relevant languages, can be prepared with the help of local ethnic minority achievement (EMA) translation and interpretation services or from an online resource (see below).

Obtaining information about new arrivals. An initial interview with parents/carers to discuss the school way of life and the pupil's background paves the way for a good relationship between home and school. For some minority ethnic parents/carers this meeting may be their first experience of an English school and it is therefore helpful to make the discussion as clear and thorough as possible while bearing in mind the sensitive nature of some of the discussion points. Reassure parents/carers that information they tell the school will be treated as confidential (an issue of particular concern and importance for refugee and asylum-seeking families).

Factual information should include:

- country of birth
- educational background
- any breaks in education
- languages spoken and level of literacy
- subjects studied in previous school(s) (if applicable)

- attitude to school, progress made, attendance etc.
- parents' languages
- siblings
- health and diet.

The interview may also involve discussion of other factors which may affect the child such as:

- separation from relatives
- war or the political situation in their home country
- financial difficulties, which may have implications for school uniform and PE kit
- temporary nature of accommodation
- religious or cultural identity and its implications
- teaching and learning styles and the environment to which the pupil is accustomed, which may be very different
- being new to a white or multicultural environment.

All members of the teaching and support staff should be given information about newly arrived pupils. This may take the form of a summary of information from the interview, to be shared through staff meetings, briefings, handouts or staff noticeboards.

The relevant class should be informed that they will be receiving a new arrival so that they are prepared to be welcoming on the first day. This could include having learned greetings in the language of the new pupil.

The new pupil should be given helpful and age-appropriate induction information, such as a local map, plan of the school, names of their teachers and a timetable. This material needs to be supported with visual information and translation where possible so it is accessible to learners and parents/carers who speak little or no English. Identifying a 'buddy' for the newly-arrived pupil will prove extremely supportive. The buddy needs to be a confident pupil (ideally, but not necessarily, sharing the newcomer's language) who can act as a friend during the first days and weeks. The buddy needs to be briefed to support the new arrival in managing potentially stressful situations such as using the toilets, lunch time, playtime, PE and any lessons that take place outside the main classroom area and may involve different adults.

Placing a new arrival in an appropriate class/group/set

Below are points to consider.

- Children who are learning English as an additional language will learn more quickly alongside fluent users of English who can provide good language and learning role-models. The pupil may already have acquired the relevant skills and concepts of a subject, but initially may lack the language to express these in English.
- If possible, place the pupil in a class or group which includes a pupil who speaks the same language.
- A child who arrives in school with little or no previous experience of schooling needs careful consideration. It may seem appropriate initially to place them in the year below their chronological age or in a lower group or set. However, there can be disadvantages to such a strategy and the implications need to be considered carefully. Research shows that maintaining an age-appropriate curriculum and securing high cognitive challenge are critical to progress for learners of English as an additional language.
- Learning English as an additional language should not be considered to be a 'special need' and bilingual learners should not be automatically identified for special needs support – this is likely to be inappropriate to their needs. Assessment of special educational needs is complex and should not be undertaken too soon after the child arrives in school.
- During independent and group-working sessions, ensure that the child is included in groups that can provide good role models in terms of language and learning in order to create the best fit for his/her language and learning needs.
- Test scores will not accurately reflect the potential of a pupil who is in the early stages of learning English as an additional language and should not therefore be used as the main criterion for placing the pupil in a teaching group.

Assessment of pupils' English language competence is necessary in order to decide what support the pupil needs in order to be able to engage with the National Curriculum.

Assessments should be carried out in a situation that is familiar to the learner. Teachers should use their professional judgement regarding the assessment procedure and should ensure that the assessment does not cause distress or discomfort to the learner.

Wherever possible, assessment of cognitive and academic language development should be carried out by a trained adult who shares the pupil's first language as this will enhance the quality of the assessment information obtained to support planning for next steps. Where this is not possible, it is preferable to delay assessments through the medium of English until the child is settled. Oral assessments in and through English should be carried out once the child has begun to communicate confidently in English. Some newly arrived pupils may have literacy skills in English which can be assessed earlier.

See *A language in common: Assessing English as an additional language*, QCA 2000 (QCA/00/584).

Assessment of bilingual pupils in their first language. An assessment of the pupil's proficiency in first language may be helpful in ascertaining the pupil's cognitive development and academic achievements. It is important that those carrying out such assessments have received appropriate training and have a clear understanding of the nature of conceptual and linguistic development. Ideally, assessors should share the same dialect as well as the same first language of the pupil.

Resource list: providing a welcoming environment

- *Aiming High: Guidance on supporting the education of asylum seeking and refugee children* (DCSF 0287-2004) provides a summary of good practice for LAs in developing local policies and procedures to facilitate access to, and support within, local schools.
- Detailed guidance on good induction procedures is also available through the [Beginners in English as an additional language \(link opens in new window\)](#) website, produced in association with Slough Education Action Zone to help schools, mainstream teachers and specialist staff locate and develop resources for pupils at early stages of learning EAL.

Supporting children learning EAL

Guidance for teachers working in collaboration with EAL teachers and bilingual teaching assistants

Class and EAL support teachers need to plan collaboratively in order to agree their specific roles in scaffolding teaching and providing targeted support to learners of EAL. Such support will often include pre-teaching to enable pupils to access the lesson, as well as support during the lesson and follow-up consolidation.

Models of collaboration include:

- **team teaching** - both teachers work together during whole-class teaching to support modelling, demonstration and strategies for engaging all pupils in dialogue and discussion;
- **observation** - either teacher acts as an observer in the whole-class context with an agreed focus while the other teacher maintains an interactive role, encouraging, explaining or reinforcing. The observation focus might also be on assessing the impact of particular teaching strategies by observing the pupils' responses;
- **working with target groups** - the support teacher, teaching assistant and/or class teacher focuses support on a specific group of pupils during the main part of the lesson or in order to provide preparatory teaching to support children in better accessing a lesson;
- **one-to-one support** - the EAL/class teacher or teaching assistant may, on occasions when specific difficulties and misconceptions arise, need to provide individual support either before or during the main lesson;
- **resource provision and development** - collecting, suggesting, modifying or designing specific resources to support the learning or curriculum access needs of bilingual pupils;
- **monitoring** progress of bilingual learners.

Resource list: Guidance for teachers working in collaboration with EAL teachers and bilingual teaching assistants

- [Effective working practices \(link opens in new window\)](#) is a web resource produced by the National Association for Language Development in the Curriculum (NALDIC) which gives further details on the specific roles of the EAL teacher and the class/subject teacher in a collaborative context and the different models of collaboration they may consider in relation to pupil needs and teaching contexts.

Guidance for teachers in settings with little or no access to expert support

Strategies to help the beginner in the classroom

The following suggestions for teachers draw on guidelines developed by Manchester City Council's Ethnic Minority Achievement Service and elaborate on the guidance to be found in the booklet *Aiming High: Understanding the educational needs of minority ethnic pupils in mainly white schools* (DfES0416/2004).

- Make sure the pupil knows your name. Introduce yourself and write it down for him/her.
- Demonstrate the meaning of instructions such as sit down, stand up, come here.
- Do not worry if the beginner says very little at first. Plenty of listening time is important when starting to learn a new language. There should be emphasis on communication rather than correction until the pupil is more confident in English.
- Involve the pupil in routine tasks such as giving out books and equipment.
- Wherever possible, include links within the curriculum to the culture and language of newly arrived pupils.
- Give the pupil opportunities to listen to the sounds and patterns of English, for example through audio tapes.
- Identify the key vocabulary and language structures of the text/activity.
- Although the pupil cannot be expected to understand the content of all the lessons, do try to give him/her a meaningful task that is related to the lesson.
- Integrate the pupil into the class activity as far as possible, while differentiating at his/her level. If they are to maintain confidence, pupils need to feel they can complete a task, such as copying words or sentences under pictures; matching pictures to names, words or sentences; filling in missing words; sequencing; text marking; labelling; matching sentence halves; filling in tables and grids; giving yes/no, true/false responses.
- Many of the above tasks could be used to develop listening skills and to focus the pupil's attention on key information during the teacher led parts of the lesson.
- Pupils not familiar with the alphabet will need help with handwriting and correct use of capital and lower case letters.
- Model or demonstrate the use of key vocabulary and language structures.
- Involve the pupil in using language from an early point of the lesson onwards.
- Provide opportunities for the pupil to repeat and produce the language in context, for example through well-planned pair or group work.
- The pupil will need as much of your time as possible to explain the tasks. If you are not available, encourage peers to assist.
- Encourage the use of bilingual and/or picture dictionaries.
- Encourage the use of home language for content learning, discussion and the development of new concepts. Support for the first language will enhance, not hinder, the acquisition of English. Whenever possible, pair the child with a proficient speaker of their home language.
- Exploit previously used language and link to pupils' experience.
- Pupils who are literate in their first language tend to make faster progress than pupils who are not. They should be encouraged to use these literacy skills to support their learning.
- The pupil could develop his/her own personal word lists.
- Provide visual support such as artefacts, pictures, videos, computer programmes and so on, to help comprehension.
- Using writing frames, word banks and sentence banks provides scaffolding to support learner independence and to model the language to be learned and practised (see samples for ideas).
- Use graphic organisers such as pie charts, graphs, pictograms, tables and grids to present curriculum content with reduced language input.
- Give feedback in a constructive way so that the pupil can use his/her errors as a learning tool.
- Allow the pupil time to summarise and reflect on what he/she has learned.
- Wherever possible, encourage parents/carers to support homework tasks.

Note: Newly arrived pupils will of course differ in terms of their previous educational experience and their previous experience of learning English as an additional language. By no means all will be beginners in terms of English language development.

Resource list: Strategies to help the beginner in the classroom

- [EMA Online \(link opens in new window\)](#) Choose 'EAL & Bilingual Resources' for a large, very useful and searchable bank of teaching resources. These are available online.

- [The Collaborative Learning Project \(link opens in new window\)](#) is developing guidance documents to support teachers working with isolated learners.
- NALDIC are currently organising an Isolated Learner Special Interest Group and forming a working group to develop a NALDIC working paper. For further information see the ['eal-bilingual' online discussion forum \(link opens in new window\)](#).

Assessment of EAL learners' progress

The QCA 'steps' should be to record the English language competence of early stage learners of English. These include two pre-level 1 National Curriculum English stages (Step 1 and Step 2) and two level 1 stages (Threshold and Secure). See *A language in common: Assessing English as an additional language* (QCA, 2000).

Resource list: Assessment of EAL learners' progress

- *A language in common: Assessing English as an additional language* (QCA/00/584). This document sets out steps used in assessment of English as an additional language, linked to English National Curriculum levels. It provides guidance and exemplifications.

Establishing and maintaining an inclusive and welcoming ethos and curriculum across the whole school

If pupils of minority ethnic backgrounds are to make optimal progress, the overall ethos and curriculum of a school should be inclusive and welcoming. Whether or not there is a high incidence of pupils from minority ethnic groups in a school, valuing diversity and challenging racism is relevant to every pupil, and they should all be prepared for life in a pluralist society. The Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 states that every school should have a race equality policy which should cover staff, pupils, parents/carers and the wider community.

See *Aiming High: Guidance on supporting the education of asylum seeking and refugee children* (DCSF 0287-2004) for help in explaining the value of an inclusive ethos and curriculum to all pupils.

Resource list: Establishing and maintaining an inclusive and welcoming ethos and curriculum across the whole school

- The [Respect for all \(link opens in new window\)](#) resource provided by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority is a resource bank of examples of ways in which each subject in the National Curriculum, at every key stage, can have a multicultural dimension.
- The [iRespect \(link opens in new window\)](#) website, created by Gloucestershire County Council's Centre for Intercultural Resources and Language Education, provides information and resources for students, educators and the wider community on the themes of positive tolerance, active citizenship and cultural diversity. It includes detailed lesson plans for teachers, with details of which sections of the National Curriculum they relate to.
- NASUWT have produced a model race equality policy for schools. Examples of the principles it sets out include: the creation of a learning environment (within and outside the school) in which pupils feel valued and where all can contribute fully; organisation, delivery and review of the curriculum; and development of curriculum resources that are reflective of ethnic and cultural diversity.
- Ofsted has produced guidance to help school governors and staff to identify what it means to be an inclusive school, *Evaluating educational inclusion: Guidance for inspectors and schools* (HMI 235).

Establishing and maintaining strong links with parents and carers and communities

The schools that are most successful in working with asylum-seeking and refugee pupils are those which foster a high level of parental participation. These schools have established a welcoming ethos that:

- makes all parents feel that they are welcome and have a positive role to play in the life of the school;

- shows parents that they can always make their feelings and opinions known to staff, and that these will be dealt with respectfully and seriously;
- demonstrates that parents' and carers' linguistic, cultural and religious backgrounds are valued and respected;
- shows that the school is part of the community it serves.

Such schools usually have good links with other agencies, including community groups. The following are some suggestions for activities which may help to welcome parents and develop links.

- Make sure that essential information is translated and bilingual teaching assistants or interpreters are used for school admission interviews, assessments, Special Educational Needs (SEN) review meetings and parents' evenings.
- Work with other schools and/or the LA to prepare welcome booklets which explain the education system and the school. Model school letters can be prepared and translated and used for occasions such as invitations to parents'/carers' evenings.
- Organise social events such as a coffee morning for parents/carers who are new to the locality.
- Invite parents/carers to help in the school's activities – many have skills that can usefully be employed in school.
- Recruit staff such as educational welfare officers and teachers with a home/school liaison brief from refugee communities. Such bilingual staff could be shared with neighbouring LAs that have only a few asylum-seeking or refugee pupils.

Resource list: Establishing and maintaining strong links with parents and carers and communities

- [Teachernet \(link opens in new window\)](#) states that a successful home–school relationship can be a key element in making a school stronger and more effective. In particular, it can make a real difference to groups of underachieving pupils and their families. Choose 'Whole-school issues', then 'Family and community', then 'Working with parents' for a gateway to resources for working with parents.

Further resources for teachers

- *Aiming High: Guidance on supporting the education of asylum seeking and refugee children* (DCSF 0287-2004) – a booklet to support teachers in their work with asylum-seeking and refugee children, with information ranging from the role of LAs through to advice on supporting individual communities.
- *Aiming High: Understanding the educational needs of minority ethnic pupils in mainly white schools* (DCSF 0416-2004) – guidance that addresses multicultural issues and the difficulties of isolation which can present minority ethnic pupils with additional barriers to their achievement.
- [Multiverse \(link opens in new window\)](#) – a website providing teacher educators, student teachers and trainees with a wealth of resources that focus on enhancing the educational achievement of pupils from diverse backgrounds.
- *Home from Home* – a resource pack available from Salusbury WORLD, an innovative refugee project run in conjunction with Save the Children. It includes sections on:
 - welcoming refugee children and their families to the school community
 - preparing for new arrivals in the classroom
 - helping refugee children become effective learners
 - creating opportunities for parents to get involved.
- *Relearning to learn* (National Union of Teachers, 2002) – a booklet, offering advice to teachers new to teaching children from refugee and asylum-seeking families, that is based on six guiding principles.
 - Individual classroom teachers should not have to cope alone.
 - A 'can do' approach works best.
 - View refugee children as having to relearn how to learn.
 - Refugee children are not responsible for their situation.
 - The host children are central to the 'solution'.
 - Teachers new to teaching refugee children may need specific professional development and/or additional resources in their classroom.
- [EMA online \(link opens in new window\)](#) – a resource base for teachers, developed by Birmingham, Leeds and Manchester LAs with funding from the DCSF. The 'EAL and Bilingual Resources' section links to a broad range of resources including multilingual stories, lesson plans and guidance.

