

The image shows two women in conversation. On the left, a woman with long brown hair is seen in profile, wearing a light-colored cardigan over a pink top. On the right, a woman with dark hair is smiling and looking towards the first woman. She is wearing a light pink top under a dark purple cardigan and is holding a spiral-bound notebook with a pen. The background is a colorful, out-of-focus display of many small, multi-colored flags or confetti.

# **70+ EAL conversations**

***Q & A training resource for teachers and support staff working with pupils learning English as an additional language and those with a Gypsy, Roma and Traveller heritage across all school phases.***

***Includes free access to additional online content.***

## Card content key

- Management
- Bilingualism
- SEND
- Assessment and progress
- Teaching and learning
- Parents and community
- Intercultural
- Gypsy, Roma and Traveller



## Online content

These cards come with free access to additional online content. Here you will find references and links relevant to every card. You will also find new cards when they become available. Your login details are below:

Website URL:

Login name:

Password:



Hampshire  
Services

EMTAS

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## Management

How would you deal with the general attitude amongst staff that EAL learners should not be in the mainstream classroom if they can't even speak and understand basic English?

# A

The right for children to experience a broad and balanced curriculum is supported by Article 29 of The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC).

Teachers have to take responsibility for all pupils, whatever their stage of learning EAL.

A few points to bear in mind:

- research shows that it takes between 5 and 10 years for pupils to catch up with their monolingual peers. This will be accelerated by allowing pupils to access the mainstream classroom because pupils benefit from being exposed to the target language in context
- pupils will be able to access the content of the curriculum when careful planning takes into account the language demands of the curriculum
- not only is it difficult to decide from which subjects or times of the day to withdraw learners but when this happens they will miss important work that they will need to catch up with at a later date.

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## Bilingualism

The parent of a newly arrived EAL learner says that they have made a family decision to only speak English at home.

What would be your response to them?

**A**

It is a parent's right to make this kind of decision. However, there is a huge amount of research that shows the benefits of maintaining first language and parents and the local community have a clear role in supporting this notion.

Maintaining first language:

- supports acquisition of English and other languages
- builds self-confidence for both the learner and the parent
- nurtures identity and enables pupils to stay in touch with their cultural background and friends/family in country of origin
- facilitates wider learning at home because parents will be more confident to help their children in a stronger first language.

When schools celebrate the multiliteracies of their pupils as part of the school's ethos this sends a clear message to parents about the value of continuing to learn first language at home.

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## Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND)



A new EAL child in an attached nursery has not spoken in the first month of joining. The staff have suggested he be referred to the local authority for a Speech and Language Assessment.

What additional information might help to support this course of action?

**A**

A Speech and Language Assessment would not be appropriate unless the nursery is also certain that the child has difficulties in his first language. This could be ascertained from the parents. A silent period is a normal developmental stage for many children learning EAL and does not indicate a SEND unless it persists for longer than around 6 months. A therapist will find it hard to undertake an assessment if the child is not talking. Bear in mind that a silent period is not a passive stage, the child will be taking in everything that is going on around them including the new language.

The nursery should instead:

- continue talking to the child even when they do not respond
- use first language if possible
- accept non-verbal responses and praise all efforts to communicate orally
- use technology to capture and playback oral responses
- encourage peer interaction with those who can provide a good model of English as well as those who share their first language.



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## Assessment and Progress

There is a recognition at your school that a specialised assessment framework is needed to track the progress of EAL learners in their acquisition of English across the curriculum.

What are the core principles of assessment for EAL learners?

# A

Any assessment framework for learning EAL should:

- be primarily formative, but draw upon summative information where appropriate
- utilise baseline information as a natural starting point for initial practice and provision
- acknowledge that a variety of factors will influence progression rates e.g. age of the pupil, previous educational background, literacy in first language, motivation to learn and the degree to which the family can support learning at home
- take account of progression within speaking, listening, reading and writing and recognise that a learner's performance is likely to vary across disciplines
- capture informal and formal use of language within different contexts
- credit learners' achievements in use of language across the curriculum and recognise that they may be relatively more successful in some subjects than others
- be meaningful to the learner and provide indicators for self-improvement
- inform practitioners of the next steps in learning for each pupil so that they can target teaching strategies more successfully.

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## Teaching and Learning

A new arrival has recently come into your Year 1 class with no warning and has limited English. You feel he is not accessing the curriculum and is getting bored.

What should you do?

**A**

Discuss your concerns about this child with the member of staff who oversees EAL work. Find out about the child's background, previous school experience and proficiency in first language – parents will be able to provide all this information.

Some useful strategies:

- encourage parents to talk about the content of the curriculum in first language in advance of lessons
- consider teaching strategies such as pre-teaching, use of visuals and accepting non-verbal responses
- provide pupils with a mini-whiteboard to output non-verbal communication
- oral development is a natural starting point. Whilst respecting the silent period, encourage children to contribute orally, perhaps initially in their first language, then in English
- use recording devices such as *Talking Tins/Photo Albums* and *TalkingPENS* to record and playback oral contributions
- help the child make friends and settle by choosing supportive peers. Consider implementing *The Young Interpreter Scheme*® (developed by Hampshire EMTAS).

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## Parents and community

One community within your Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) school population is proving hard to engage.

How can the school reach out more effectively to this particular group of parents?

# A

Here are a few suggestions:

- research the reasons for this lack of engagement; speak directly with parents, conduct surveys, research on the internet and find out if local schools or other areas across the country have experienced similar difficulties and found ways to overcome them
- make the school environment more welcoming to this particular community – sourcing dual language signs and using interpreters for communication may help
- invite parents to family learning workshops – think carefully about timing and consider offering free transport and crèche facilities
- encourage parents to support in the classroom and perhaps share their linguistic and cultural heritage in a lesson or within an assembly
- try and buddy parents with others who are engaging effectively – be aware that sharing the same language will not automatically mean that parents will get on as there can be many cultural differences
- try to actively recruit a senior leader within the community onto the school governing body
- persevere – don't give up if one strategy does not work.

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## Intercultural aspects

Parents who you know have a Bangladeshi heritage have recorded their ethnicity as white British (WBRI).

What should you do about this?

**A**

It is important not to jump to conclusions and to ascertain the reason why the parents have recorded their identity as white British. It could be for a variety of reasons, including the parents' desire to 'blend in' to the community. Things to try:

- speak to parents about why they have done this. It may be a simple mistake or there may be a misunderstanding about the purpose of recording this information that needs to be unpicked with the parents
- encourage parents to share their first language and culture in class and assemblies and thereby positively recognise difference.

Ultimately the final decision lies with the family in how they define their ethnicity.



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## Gypsy, Roma and Traveller (GRT)

There are Gypsy, Roma and Traveller (GRT) pupils in my school and I would like to know more about their individual cultures.

Where do I begin?

# A

There are many different types of pupils from a GRT background including Gypsy, Roma, Irish Traveller, Bargees and Showmen.

Some useful ideas:

- you might like to begin by chatting with the family when they enrol, or at the earliest opportunity, and if they have not made it clear ask which culture they come from; this is a familiar question to most parents and shows an understanding and consideration which will be appreciated
- there is some good information on the Internet such as *The National Association of Teachers of Travellers + Other Professionals* (NATT)
- you could also subscribe to *Travellers' Times* which is a magazine for all GRT communities, and their website offers lots of current national information
- it is worth checking with your local authority to see if there is an Ethnic Minority Service which can advise and support you.