

Little Oaks Day Nursery

Procedures for Supporting Children Speaking English as an Additional Language

How nursery staff can support a child with English as an additional language.

Many children in the UK do not speak English in their home and many speak more than one home language. Sometimes when a child starts nursery, it is their first experience of the English language. A child's home language is extremely important to them. It is their tool for communicating with their family and friends and staff must always recognise and respect that. Every child is unique and has a different situation to the next child. Care must be taken not to make assumptions about a child or their family just because it is known which country they come from.

It is staff's responsibility to ensure that these children and their families are made welcome and are given the necessary support to help them to settle and enjoy the nursery experience with Little Oaks Day Nursery and to be able to function in the local community and outside world.

During the child's first two weeks at nursery:

- Staff will get to know the child's parents/carers and find out what is their level of understanding of the English language.
- They will then identify whether the family need to be put in touch with anyone who can provide help and support. The local partnership may have an Ethnic Minority Achievement Team or identify if there is any support available for the family.
- Staff will identify how they are going to communicate with the parents. It could be by means of conversation with either or both of the parents, a friend, relative or translator. Staff will also consider if a daily diary would support the family, who could then go home and take their time reading what their child has done throughout the day.
- Staff will find out what interests the child and make sure that they incorporate the child's interests into the daily planning.

Once staff have established a means of communicating they will:

- Learn how to spell the child's name correctly.
- Learn how to pronounce his/her name correctly – this is extremely important as the child's name forms a large part of their identity.
- Ask the parent about what languages are used with the child at home, by whom and when.
- Ask the parent if the child has a comforter and what the name is for this.
- Find out about and show an interest in the child's home life, their culture and religion. Staff need to be very careful not to make assumptions. Within any culture or religion there can be a variety of traditions, values and ethics.

- Ask parents for tapes of them reading their child's favourite story and for a copy of the books if possible.
- Ask parents if they can make a tape of popular songs or nursery rhymes to soothe the child, including their version of 'Happy Birthday' if they have a song.
- Ask the parents how the child communicates when they are feeling ill or are in pain.
- Ask the parents to teach staff typical phrases for enabling their child to settle and be taken care of at the nursery. Beyond all the usual phrases for greeting and saying when a child needs the toilet, phrases that give positive praise and encouragement such as "That's really good", "well done", "good girl/boy" should be requested. There are benefits to requesting this on tape for the staff to learn from.
- When using the above learned phrases, staff will repeat what has been said in English so that the child is able to make the connection.
- Ask parents for help learning to count in the child's language – again this could be taped.

What staff can do to help every day?

Babies

A baby is at the very beginning of their language journey. Once the baby becomes familiar with the new, caring people in the nursery, they will usually learn and develop new language in the same way that other babies learn their first language. It is amazing how quickly a baby begins to recognise and understand a second language. Staff will:

- Treat them as they would any other baby, with lots of eye contact, smiles and attention.
- Talk to them in English, clearly as they would with any baby but, if they appear distressed, will not bombard them with English – take it slowly.
- Comfort them when they cry exactly as they would any baby.
- Play tapes of their lullabies or songs mixed with the tapes usually used, especially at times when the baby might get stressed.
- Give them their comforter when necessary as agreed with the parents.

One-year-olds upwards

As children become a little older, they have slightly different needs but will still quickly begin to recognise and understand a new language. Nursery age is ideal for children to learn to speak a new language without a foreign accent. Staff will:

- Always smile, be friendly and welcoming.
- Have a positive attitude towards the family and child.
- As with any other child, give lots of praise and encouragement.
- Never make assumptions based on a child's nationality or religion – they will ask the family anything they need to know. Staff recognise that the parents are the best resources for supporting their child.

- Always speak clearly and concisely. Try to use the same phrases for the routine of the day, for example; “It’s tidy up time, children” or “We need to wash our hands now.” Use body language wherever possible to help the children understand.
- Have photographs of different parts of the routine and use these with the child as well as speaking to him/her.
- Have a photographic or illustrated timetable which the child can refer to and make sure that it is displayed at child height.
- Provide a copy of both of the above for the parents with English written on to help them understand their child’s day if necessary.
- Be careful not to bombard the child with the English language as they may switch off, recognising the child’s possible response to having someone constantly talking to them in a language they do not understand.
- Realise that children recognise and understand a language long before they can speak it.
- Never force a child to talk to speak to you in English, as they may not be able to find the words. Children will talk when they are ready and if staff try to force the issue, they may well delay the process.
- Recognise that a child may talk gradually or may surprise everyone and suddenly talk quite fluently in English, but always be aware they may not have come across all of the words being used.
- Be patient at all times, putting themselves in the child’s position and recognising they are in a world where they struggle to communicate and make their needs known.
- Make sure that gestures, expressions and tone of voice reflect what staff are trying to communicate.
- Share the children’s books, music and special times with the rest of the group.
- Count in English and then in the language of any other children in the nursery, allowing all the other children to quickly pick this up.
- If birthdays are celebrated, sing a birthday song, learning the family’s version of the song and sing this whenever you might sing Happy Birthday as well as singing the English version.
- When offering children food at meal times, using the correct English words, but also show the child the food as they may not know what it is. For example, when asking if they would like custard or gravy, they need to see what gravy or custard is as these are very English foods.
- Be aware of the child at story or circle time and ensure that they are included and comfortable. This is often the time when children look and feel a little lost as there is a great wealth of English around them and they can find it very confusing and frustrating. When other children contribute, try to have only one person talking at a time.
- If two or more children share the same home language, encourage them to communicate in their own language as well as English.

Staff will ensure that they remember not only can they be a significant factor in this child’s happiness, well-being, learning and development by taking heed of the above and showing the

child that he/she is valued in our nursery, but that the child can bring with them a wealth of different experiences, ideas and perspectives on life; which can enable us to become more understanding, knowledgeable and open-minded practitioners.