Excellence and Enjoyment: learning and teaching for bilingual children in the primary years

Unit 3
Creating an inclusive learning culture
Acknowledgements


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Excellence and Enjoyment: learning and teaching for bilingual children in the primary years

Unit 3
Creating an inclusive learning culture
Defining terms

**EAL** stands for English as an additional language and recognises the fact that many children learning English in schools in this country already know more than one other language and are adding English to that repertoire.

**Bilingual** is used to refer to those children who have access to more than one language at home and at school. It does not necessarily imply full fluency in both or all of their languages.

**Advanced learner of EAL** is a term used by Ofsted to describe children who have had considerable exposure to English and are no longer in the early stages of English language acquisition. These are children who, often born in this country, appear to be fluent in ordinary everyday conversational contexts, but require continued support in order to develop the cognitive and academic language necessary for educational success.

**Minority ethnic group** is used in this publication for all those groups other than the white British majority. Although children from these groups may well form the majority in some school contexts, they are still members of groups in a minority nationally and will continue to be referred to as children from minority ethnic groups. Most children learning EAL are from minority ethnic groups. School Census data shows that only a very small percentage of EAL learners are white.

Acknowledgements

A Class Divided © Jane Elliot 1984. Used with permission

Preface

This publication aims to support schools and settings in promoting the progress and achievement of all learners.

It is underpinned by the three principles of the National Curriculum inclusion statement:

• Setting suitable learning challenges
• Responding to pupils’ diverse learning needs
• Overcoming potential barriers to learning and assessment for individuals and groups of pupils.

The Primary National Strategy model of three circles of inclusion illustrates these three principles in practice, and has been used to ensure that this publication will support the learning of children with diverse needs.

Teachers will need to further adapt the materials for individual children. Some examples of how teachers who have used the materials have done this for their classes have been provided. These are examples only – the particular choice of appropriate learning objectives, teaching styles and access strategies lies with the informed professionalism of the teacher, working with teaching assistants, other professionals, parents/carers and the child.
General introduction

This is Unit 3 of a set of materials: Excellence and Enjoyment: learning and teaching for bilingual children in the primary years.

The materials consist of the following:

**Introductory guide: supporting school improvement**

Unit 1: Planning and assessment for language and learning

Unit 2: Creating the learning culture: making it work in the classroom

Unit 3: Creating an inclusive learning culture

Unit 4: Speaking, listening, learning: working with children learning English as an additional language

**Professional development modules** (PDMs) linked to the units and designed to support school-based CPD

Three fliers: First language for learning, ICT for EAL and Information for school governors

A ‘route map’ providing an overview of and some guidance for using these materials

- A CD-ROM containing a variety of additional materials which are referred to throughout the pack

- A DVD providing some exemplification, particularly of the material related to speaking and listening

- An apple symbol is used to highlight practical strategies for teachers.

Although the content has been organised in this way there is a great deal of overlap between the different units. For example, building on previous experience is explored in this unit but it is also addressed in Unit 2 Creating the learning culture: making it work in the classroom. There is also overlap between the different sections of this unit because aspects interrelate. Valuing and building on children’s knowledge of other languages, for example, contributes to the school ethos and is part of a culturally inclusive curriculum.
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Introduction

The education system must provide the right conditions for learning to support equality of opportunity for all children. This unit looks in detail at the ways in which schools can create conditions which support the achievement of children learning EAL.

It builds on:

• the Introductory Guide to these materials which explores the role of leadership in developing school improvement strategies that promote an agenda of equality and raise the attainment of bilingual children;

• the conceptual framework about how learning develops which has been set out in Excellence and Enjoyment: learning and teaching in the primary years.

Learning:
- is affected by individual differences;
- depends on affective dimensions such as self-esteem and motivation;
- builds on previous experience;
- is socially mediated;
- is influenced by the social, cultural and political context in which it occurs;

• the distinctive pedagogy for EAL which has been influenced particularly by the social constructivist theories and those which highlight the importance of socio-cultural and emotional factors (see Unit 1).

This visual image, adapted from the work of Virginia Collier (Thomas and Collier 1997), describes the main interrelated factors that define the learning situation for children learning EAL as they operate within the classroom or setting.

At the heart of the process is the child learning EAL with his or her first language, previous experience of learning, aptitude, learning style and so on.
In common with all learners, those learning EAL will be affected by attitudes to them, their ethnicity, culture, religion and language(s) within the school, in their neighbourhood and in the wider world. Their social and cultural experiences will impact on their language acquisition as well as their cognitive and academic development.

Anxiety levels need to be low and internal motivation and confidence high for optimal additional language development (Skutnabb-Kangas 1981). For these conditions to apply, children need to feel accepted – they need a ‘sense of belonging’.

Attention to the conditions for learning is crucial in enabling children learning EAL to move beyond a functional level to acquire the breadth and depth of language needed across the whole curriculum and in ensuring that they achieve what they are capable of.

The strategies suggested in this unit are underpinned by three important and interrelated propositions about conditions for learning which apply to all children.

Ensuring these conditions for children learning EAL and learning through EAL requires particular attention and specific additional action on the part of schools.

There is a statutory framework for this action which includes:

- the National Curriculum 2000 inclusion statement;
- schools’ duty to promote race equality under the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000.
The National Curriculum (2000) is prefaced by a statutory statement referring to the effective inclusion of all children. This statement is rooted in three key principles:

**Setting suitable learning challenges**
For EAL learners, this means ensuring that cognitive challenge is kept appropriately high. Children can be supported to achieve ambitious learning objectives through the provision of contextual and linguistic scaffolding.

**Responding to pupils’ diverse learning needs**
Children learning English as an additional language come from a variety of ethnic, cultural, linguistic and religious backgrounds, have a range of different experiences of learning English and are at different stages of EAL acquisition. Schools need to use a range of teaching styles and strategies to meet diversity of needs.

**Overcoming potential barriers to learning**
Schools need to ensure that they tackle structural barriers such as racism and perceived barriers such as EAL, and provide access to the curriculum.

The Primary National Strategy has exemplified this statement in an operational model shown in the preface to these materials.

The Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 requires schools to:
- tackle racial discrimination;
- promote equality of opportunity;
- actively promote good relations between members of different ethnic groups.

Schools also have a number of specific duties which they must meet. These include the duty to prepare and implement a policy for race equality and the duty to regularly review this and all their other policies, including curriculum schemes of work, to assess their impact on race equality. Schools are expected to identify and remove any barriers which may affect the achievement of particular groups of learners or prevent them from being involved in any of the school’s activities.
Key messages

The school ethos plays a key role in determining the extent to which children feel safe, settled, valued and secure and whether they have ‘a sense of belonging’.

School ethos includes the school’s vision and values, the way the school tackles racism and bullying, the quality of relationships, and the messages communicated through the physical environment.

Research clearly shows that bilingual children will make greater progress if they know their knowledge of their first language is valued and the school respects their cultural and religious traditions. The following research exemplifies this:

Jim Cummins (1988) summarised international research into educational provision for bilingual children and identified as a key factor in achievement, the extent to which schools incorporated the languages and cultures of children from minority communities into the curriculum.

Virginia Collier reported very similar findings from her long-term in-depth study of schooling in America (Thomas and Collier 1997).

Maud Blair and Jill Bourne (1998) in their research into the characteristics of successful schools in this country emphasised the importance of a culturally inclusive curriculum.

Building on previous experience is facilitated when starting points and contexts are familiar or when teachers or other specialists are able to support children to make connections with what is familiar. When starting points and contexts are far removed from children’s experience and when children feel their teachers know little or nothing about them, or have little or no interest, children are less likely to engage with learning.

Developing partnerships with parents, carers and minority communities is important too if we are to ensure that children from minority ethnic groups are not made to feel as though school and home represent two separate and different cultures which have to be kept firmly apart. Teachers have much to learn from parents, carers and families about children’s previous experiences, interests, enthusiasms and achievements beyond the school.
A sense of belonging is promoted when:

- children’s ethnic, linguistic, cultural, religious and social backgrounds are included and reflected positively across the curriculum;
- there are staff in school from the child’s own background;
- teachers model values and behaviour which promote equality and justice;
- the racism that is endemic in society is acknowledged; racist behaviour is recognised when it occurs, the damage it can do is appreciated and appropriate action is taken to prevent it;
- parents, carers and families from minority communities are acknowledged as key partners and empowered to play a role in their children’s education.
Section 1 Ethos

A school teaches in three ways: by what it teaches, by how it teaches and by the kind of place it is.

**Personalised learning**

Although curriculum choices, contexts and resources, and learning and teaching approaches are crucial for achievement, it is the school ethos which plays the central role in the way children experience their schooling.

Creating an ethos within which children from minority ethnic groups feel safe and secure depends on the implementation of school policies on behaviour, bullying and racism, and the quality of relationships within the school.

Racist incidents must be recognised, taken seriously and responded to effectively. This should include name calling, so-called ‘victimless’ incidents such as racist graffiti, and incidents that happen beyond the confines of the school. All staff must be seen to be fair and consistent in their treatment of pupils.

The ethos of the school also plays a part in the extent to which the child feels valued and accepted and ultimately achieves to the standard of which he or she is capable. Schools communicate an inclusive ethos in a range of ways including by their admission arrangements, their staffing profile, the environment, the way they welcome families from diverse backgrounds, the way they communicate and the extent to which they listen to and consult with children, parents, carers and communities.

However, it is largely through relationships and the physical environment that children experience the ethos of their school.
Relationships are part of ethos and they are the aspect of school life that springs to mind most readily when people look back on their school days – people remember their teachers more than they recall particular lessons.

This can be put to the test quite simply by asking a group of adults to recall a particular incident from their school days. Most people will remember something connected to a relationship. Often people remember unfair treatment by a member of the school staff or by another pupil and the way it made them feel.

Poplin and Weeres in Voices from the Inside (1992), an in-depth study of students’ experiences in multilingual schools in North America, concluded that relationships were the single most important factor affecting students’ achievement in school.

Relationships lie at the heart of learning. When good relationships were established with teachers, students could overcome other potential barriers to achievement.

Students thought relationships were good when learning and teaching approaches allowed them to express and share their own experiences. These approaches had the effect of affirming or validating their identities and made them feel good about themselves.

Relationships had a negative impact on achievement when students did not feel adequately respected, cared for, affirmed or understood.

Teachers in the study reported that they did not always understand students who came from a different cultural background.
Although most teachers and practitioners try to use positive language when they interact with children in order to make them feel good about themselves and build confidence, some evidence suggests teachers are likely to interact more with children from a background similar to their own and tend to interact less with children from backgrounds they know little about.

When children from minority ethnic backgrounds are learning English as an additional language they often take longer to respond to oral questioning than their peers. This can also act as a disincentive and may result in teachers interacting far less with children learning English as an additional language than they do with other children.

**A class divided**

Jane Elliott’s famous study, conducted in her own classroom in the mid-1960s and recorded in the film The Eye of the Storm, clearly shows the negative impact of overt discrimination on children’s self-esteem. She deliberately set out to give negative messages to children in her class in order to teach them how it would feel to suffer discrimination. She told her class that blue-eyed children were better than brown-eyed children and reinforced the message by giving the preferred group privileges. She created a negative stereotype by characterising the behaviour of the brown-eyed children as typically ‘slow’, badly behaved and so on. The brown-eyed children’s achievement was affected immediately and the children themselves knew that the reason was because they no longer felt good about themselves.

Negative messages are more often unintentional but research shows that even unintentional negative messages result in children feeling rejected or invisible and impact on children’s learning.

When teachers overlook children time after time, children’s motivation will be affected. They may become withdrawn. This may, in turn, lead to a lowering of their teachers’ expectations of them, which could become a self-fulfilling prophecy.

**Note:** For practical suggestions see the ‘Relationships’ theme in Excellence and Enjoyment: social and emotional aspects of learning (SEAL) (DfES 1361-2005 G).
Identity

During the course of an individual’s life, he or she develops a unique sense of identity which is made up of a combination of different identities and loyalties including gender, age, culture, religion, nationality, ethnic origin, language, position in the family, roles, interests, enthusiasms, talents and skills and socio-economic factors.

Shamim’s identity is made up currently of the following components: her identity as a young girl; a Muslim; a pupil in Year 6 of the local Church of England primary school; her Pakistani heritage; her roles as a daughter, a younger sister to three brothers, an ice skater, a member of the school netball team, an avid reader, a good cook and so on. She is part of a working-class Lancashire family; her father is a prominent trade unionist who works in a local factory.

A typical week may include a pre-wedding ceremony where, laughing and joking in Punjabi with other girls and women, her hands and feet are decorated with elaborate henna patterns and she learns to play the dholi (a drum traditionally played at weddings by women). On another day she plays netball for the school with her mainly English team mates. On Friday evening she recites verses from the Qu’ran and says prayers with her mother. On Saturday she helps her sister-in-law make chapattis and pizza before going ice skating with a group of Asian friends. Because this group of girls includes Gujarati speakers they speak English together. She spends most of Sunday reading a novel from the library.

These multiple ‘identities’ and loyalties do not always have equal status; they may be at variance with each other on occasions and aspects which take precedence will also change over time.

The more children’s personal identity is affirmed in school and their confidence raised, the more they will actively and enthusiastically participate in their learning. When children see that their teachers are interested in them, ready to listen and keen to learn more about them this has the effect of making children feel their experience is valued.
A YouGov survey commissioned for Islam Awareness Week 2002 by the Islamic Society of Britain found that 73% of people surveyed said they knew little or nothing about Britain’s Muslim community. The two largest Muslim communities in the UK (Pakistani and Bangladeshi groups) are underachieving in schools. It is therefore particularly important that teachers know something about the Islamic way of life in order to meet their needs appropriately. This will include finding opportunities to reflect Islam positively across the curriculum and being able to recognise and challenge ‘Islamophobia’.


**Identity: social and emotional aspects of learning**

The Primary National Strategy SEAL materials Excellence and Enjoyment: social and emotional aspects of learning contain a specific theme focused on personal identity - ‘Good to be me’.

In addition, Appendix 7 of the Guidance booklet accompanying the materials focuses on cultural differences in the experience and expression of emotions.
Establishing a collaborative ethos in the classroom

We know from Poplin and Weeres’ (1992) research that collaborative approaches to learning and teaching which allowed students to express and share their own experience had the effect of affirming or validating their identities and boosted their self-esteem.

Children are more likely to be willing to share their home experiences when they know their teachers respect them, value their home culture and their first language, and want to understand the complexities of their lives.

It is important to guard against giving children the impression that the cultural norms, values and beliefs of the teacher are the only ones that have any place in school. Encouraging active and collaborative
learning promotes equality by helping children to see that what they know, think and feel has value too.

Children should be explicitly taught the skills they need to become efficient, active and collaborative learners. Collaborative approaches to learning and teaching promote equality of opportunity and support the achievement of EAL learners when:

- groupings facilitate the use of first language as well as English;
- there is an atmosphere where ideas will not be dismissed;
- everyone’s knowledge is seen as equally valuable;
- meanings are generated by adults and children working together;
- the classroom becomes a true collaborative learning community.

Teachers’ efforts to reflect the complexity of children’s actual cultural experiences in the curriculum are unlikely to be successful unless children are provided with opportunities to work in this way.

When teachers give children from different backgrounds the opportunity to tell them about their experiences the results can be quite surprising. This boy’s drawing illustrates things he did during the summer holidays which his teacher could never have predicted.
A confident sense of personal identity has an important impact on affective aspects of learning such as self-awareness, motivation and the ability to empathise.

Empathy is the ability to step outside your own goals, habits and beliefs, and put yourself in other people’s shoes...

... When it comes to learning to learn, empathy has an important role to play. In history, drama and literature, understanding a complex situation demands an empathetic appreciation of the positions of different participants. In science, the ability to think what it might be like to be a hermit crab, or even (as Einstein famously did) to imagine what the world would look like if you were riding on a ray of light, enriches the learning experience and offers new insights into information.

Excellence and Enjoyment: learning and teaching in the primary years, Creating a learning culture: conditions for learning, Section 1

For this and more about empathy and other social and emotional aspects of learning see Excellence and Enjoyment: learning and teaching in the primary years and Excellence and Enjoyment: social and emotional aspects of learning (SEAL)

In order to learn about diversity children need to first understand that:

• different groups of people do things in different ways;
• although people are different they are also similar in important ways as well;
• the way different groups of people do things is always changing – cultures are dynamic;
• this variety applies to points of view and opinions as well as experiences and behaviour.

Children who have developed a confident sense of personal identity are more likely to be able to:

• empathise with and respect the points of view and opinions as well as the experiences and behaviour of people with different cultural and religious traditions;
• reflect critically on diverse cultural norms;
• be open to change and development themselves.
When teachers succeed in establishing a collaborative ethos in classrooms where children’s diverse identities are affirmed, these classrooms can become places where everyone feels a strong sense of belonging regardless of their ethnic, cultural, linguistic or religious background.

Children will feel safe, settled, valued and secure when teachers and practitioners:

- recognise the central role of relationships in learning and teaching;
- understand and empathise with the social and political factors that impact on children’s lives;
- know something about children’s languages and their cultural and religious traditions;
- have high expectations;
- build confidence and self-esteem;
- are consistent and fair;
- model and promote values, attitudes and behaviour supportive of equality;
- value diversity and bilingualism;
- encourage children to learn actively and collaboratively;
- are prepared to listen to children and learn from them on occasions;
- recognise parents, carers and families as key partners;
- incorporate children’s own interests and experiences into day-to-day teaching.

Note: The Primary National Strategy SEAL materials Excellence and Enjoyment: social and emotional aspects of learning contain a range of supportive materials, including the themes: ‘Changes’, ‘Good to be me’ and ‘Getting on and falling out’.
The physical environment plays an important role in how valued children from diverse backgrounds feel in school. Children are more likely to feel valued and develop a sense of belonging when their ethnic, cultural, religious and linguistic background is reflected positively in the displays in their classroom and around the school. Schools which serve a very diverse and transient population may not be able to provide this for all children at all times; however, creating an environment which clearly shows that diversity is valued is more inclusive of all children than a Eurocentric environment, and it is important to remember that unless this is consciously attended to the default setting will tend to be white, Eurocentric and middle class. This applies to the curriculum and the resources as well. Powerful messages are communicated to children through the environment. The message communicated by such an environment is that the children who really ‘belong’ are the white children who share a language, culture and religion with the white teachers who form the majority in most schools in this country.

In order to counter this impression care should be taken to ensure that:

- positive images of minority ethnic people populate visual displays;
- people from diverse cultural and religious backgrounds are represented in non-tokenistic and non-stereotypical ways;
- the work of children from diverse backgrounds including children learning EAL is on display.

Special occasions including religious festivals should be acknowledged and celebrated in school including through displays. Advice should be sought from a practising member of the faith in order to ensure that displays of this nature are appropriate and sensitive.

People who live within a culture do not always realise that even things they take for granted and think of as culturally neutral, such as the colours used to back display boards, create borders and mount pictures, may seem very Eurocentric to other people with different cultural traditions.

Staff from minority ethnic backgrounds may be able to suggest fabric, colours and colour combinations, patterns and designs which will give the displays a flavour familiar to learners from their communities.
Children’s diverse linguistic backgrounds should be reflected in the school environment. Including examples of writing in different scripts will send a message to children and communities that their communities’ languages are recognised and valued by the school.

Schools should ask themselves questions about the messages that are conveyed by the school entrance and the school brochure for parents, carers and local communities. Do they make the inclusive ethos of the school clear?

Do displays reflect the ethnic, cultural and religious diversity of the school?

Are links with local communities explicitly mentioned?

Do community groups use the school?

Are notices translated into the main community languages?

Resources should:
• provide positive images and role models;
• reflect and value children’s linguistic and cultural heritage, religion and lifestyles;
• challenge bias, prejudice, racism and stereotyping.

There should be a rich range of material in reading areas, role-play areas and graphic areas which includes dual-language and community language books, newspapers and magazines.

Classroom organisation should provide a comfortable and flexible environment to minimise unnecessary anxiety and promote independence.
Valuing and building on children’s knowledge of other languages

Research has established that when children feel they have added a new language to one that continues to have value in their lives, bilingualism confers intellectual advantages. It also shows conclusively that bilingual children benefit from continued opportunities to develop their first language alongside English. Providing opportunities for children to use their first language for learning supports access to the curriculum and the development of additional languages (see Unit 1 pages 11–12 for a more detailed rationale, and Unit 2, especially pages 14–17 for advice on bilingual strategies).

Children also need to feel proud of their bilingual skills and their linguistic heritage.

In order to achieve this and to provide the necessary conditions for children to feel comfortable using their first language for learning in the school context, children’s other languages should be reflected and celebrated. Some opportunities to value other languages through the environment are described in other units. Further opportunities to celebrate and build on children’s bilingualism are described here.
Finding out about children’s other languages

In order to value linguistic diversity and build on bilingual children’s knowledge of languages, schools must first find out as much as they can about children’s other languages.

Although the School Census asks about children’s first language and whether or not they are learning EAL, schools may not get to know about the bilingual skills of children unless their parents and carers think they are going to need support to develop English.

Pakistan has four regional languages which do not have an accepted written form. Urdu is the official language for administration purposes and education across the whole country. Literate adults read and write in Urdu. Urdu is a language that many Pakistani and Indian heritage British Muslim children learn in madrasahs and community schools. It is therefore not uncommon for parents and carers to record Urdu as the family’s language when in fact the child’s first language is a regional language. Most Pakistani heritage families in this country speak Punjabi or a variety of Punjabi such as Mirpuri.

The Punjabi language has a very different status for Sikh families. They read and write Punjabi using a script called the Gurmukhi script. However, Pakistani Muslim speakers of Punjabi are unlikely to be able to read this script.

Gujarati, spoken as a first language by the majority of Indian heritage families in this country, has a written form but it cannot be assumed that speakers of this or any other community language have necessarily had the opportunity to develop literacy skills in that language, particularly in the case of parents and carers born in this country.

Parents and carers may assume the school will not recognise the name of their language, particularly if it is a regional language without a recognised written form, as in the examples in the case studies overleaf. The more the school engages in a dialogue about community languages, the more it will be able to build up an accurate picture of children’s linguistic skills and build an inclusive culture to support achievement and progress.
An accurate picture of the languages spoken in the school supports the recruitment and deployment of staff with appropriate language skills and the purchase of resources such as dual-language books, audiotapes and so on.

**Examples from the experience of schools**

A special questionnaire was sent to parents and carers of children in Year 2, together with a letter which told them the school was very proud of the fact that many of the children could speak other languages as well as English; the school wanted to find out as much as they could about their children’s other language skills.

Parents and carers were asked to indicate on a form which language(s) their child could speak fluently, speak a little, read and/or write, including information about any languages used for religious purposes. The letter was translated into the main community languages of children in the school and a completed exemplar form was enclosed.

The survey resulted in a much more detailed picture of the full language repertoires of the children. It showed that children who this school had hitherto thought of as monolingual speakers of English as a first language also spoke fluent Gujarati. Other children who the school had recorded as speaking Urdu as a first language turned out to speak Punjabi fluently and know ‘just a little’ Urdu.

A girl who had been making relatively slow progress and who seemed withdrawn turned out to speak Baluchi, one of the four regional languages of Pakistan but a language none of the other Pakistani heritage children in the class could speak or understand. The child’s mother had said they spoke ‘Pakistani language’. The school had assumed the child’s family came originally from the Punjab like all the other Pakistani heritage children in the class and that this language would be Punjabi.
When a child arrived at a school from the Democratic Republic of Congo the headteacher hoped staff would be able to communicate with him in French. Later she found out that although French is the official language very few people speak it. The parents gave Lingala as the boy's language, but subsequent conversations with the family revealed that this was another language officially recognised for business purposes and so on but spoken mostly as an additional language. In fact the boy's first language was one of the Democratic Republic of Congo’s 700 local languages and dialects, a language the family considered to be of such low status that they had not even mentioned it.

‘We have admitted Pakistani heritage children from Denmark and Norway this year. Children from one of these families spoke Punjabi as their first language but their early schooling was in Danish and they had some literacy skills in that language. The child from Norway speaks Norwegian as her first language and knows a little Urdu learned in a religious school in Norway. Last year a child arrived from Holland. He had learned to read and write in Dutch although his first language was Somali. Another child in our school of Somali heritage spent many years in a refugee camp in Kenya before coming to the UK and speaks Swahili as a first language. Some of our Pakistani heritage families speak English as their first language. We never take anything for granted!’
Investigating attitudes towards the use of other languages in school

Some bilingual children may think their home language has no role in school; they may feel embarrassed or uncomfortable about using it. Researching children’s attitudes to using their home languages in school is a good way to get these feelings out in the open so they can be discussed.

Strategies to do this can include interviewing a group of children:

• Do children feel comfortable using their first language in school?
• Do children think they can use their first language to learn?
• What do children think teachers’ attitudes to their first language are?

Note: Bilingual staff may obtain a different response to this question.

A group of schools in Lancashire used a language attitude questionnaire to survey attitudes to the use of the first language. It included questions about which languages were spoken, who they were spoken with, where they were mostly spoken and the purposes they were used for. Children were asked which language they felt was their strongest language. They were also asked how they felt about using their first language in school as a tool for learning, whether they considered it important to know another language and how that knowledge could benefit them. They also had to say what importance they attached to being able to speak in their first language.

Note: The language attitude survey used can be found on the accompanying CD-ROM.
Pupils from multilingual primary schools debated the issue of first language use in school in front of an audience in Haringey Civic Centre. Children from different schools and from a variety of cultural and linguistic backgrounds, including speakers of Creole languages, used a range of media to present their arguments.

Each group came up with a range of advantages, and comments made by those who opposed it were deftly countered by children who clearly felt strongly about the role their first language played in their sense of personal identity.

Two of the groups used role-play to portray teachers who opposed the use of languages other than English in their classrooms. One child said that when his first language wasn’t accepted it felt like the school didn’t want him.

Another group used role-play to show how a personal experience during a holiday abroad helped to change a teacher’s views. She couldn’t speak a word in the language of the country she was visiting but expected everyone to speak English. Initial frustration and anger gave way to a dawning realisation of the central role her first language played in her life. This prompted a rethink about what she ‘put her pupils through’.

See Unit 4, page 51, for an exemplar whole-class speaking and listening teaching sequence where children present a spoken argument about the benefits of being bilingual.

**Celebrating children’s bilingualism**

School or classroom displays can celebrate children’s language skills by:

- listing the names of the children who speak each language;
- showing places in the world where this language is mostly spoken;
- including a few facts about each language;
- including the same sentence written in the scripts of the various community languages with a romanised transliteration to allow comparisons to be made.
Dual-language books

Including some dual-language books in the library and in classroom reading areas sends out the message that children’s bilingualism is something the school values and wishes to celebrate. This is true even when children have not had the opportunity to develop literacy skills in their first language.

Positive messages about linguistic diversity in the environment will, however, be completely undermined if children and their families pick up contrary messages from staff in schools. Comments such as ‘We have a much better intake this year – more of the children are coming to school speaking English’ clearly contradict the idea that bilingualism is valued in the school.

It is a mistake to think that future success depends on which language is spoken in the home. It is the quality and quantity of language a child develops before they start school which is important, not which language they develop. Children who do not establish their heritage language in the home before they start school and become immersed in English are unlikely to establish it later.

Dual-language books are particularly valuable where parents and carers are literate in their community language. They are then able to read the story or to retell it in the child’s first language if this is a regional language or dialect without an accepted written form, e.g. a story written in Urdu could be told in Punjabi; a story in Bengali could be told in Sylheti.

Some community languages, e.g. Turkish, Portuguese and Swahili, use roman script. Where scripts are different, they must be presented equally professionally and given equal prominence on the page. They should include quality texts written and illustrated by speakers of the community language as well as the dual-language versions of well-known favourites which are now readily available. They should be appropriately challenging and interesting. Topics should include fiction featuring British children from minority groups as main characters. Avoid books where children from minority ethnic groups are portrayed as unusual or exotic.

Urdu, Farsi and Arabic books open and read from right to left, although dual-language textbooks usually follow English conventions. Most Muslim children will be introduced to this convention when they start attending religious education classes in the madrasah at their local mosque, if not before. Draw attention to examples of books which follow different conventions as part of teaching children about front and back covers of books and the orientation of print on the page.

Books written in community languages, newspapers, calendars and so on should be included in reading areas and children who can read them should be praised and encouraged to do so.
Building on children’s knowledge about language

In the Primary Framework (2006) the literacy strands ‘use knowledge of syntax, context, word origin and structure to establish meaning’ and ‘creating and shaping texts’ incorporate objectives which provide many opportunities to build on bilingual children’s knowledge of other language systems, for example as follows.

- children identify everyday words which have been borrowed from other languages. Bilingual children could provide examples of recent ‘borrowings’ from their languages. They could also identify words borrowed from English by their languages.
- children collect and explain the meaning and origins of proverbs. Bilingual children can collect examples from their first languages and compare them with similar English examples.
- children practise and extend vocabulary through inventing word games such as puns, riddles and crosswords. Bilingual children can learn about the multiple meanings of common English words through riddles such as What has a mouth but no face? What is the similarity between a clock, a coin, and a person?

What do you call a man with one hair? Iqbal
(Ik or eyk means one and bal means hair).

What did the green peas say? Nothing, they just muttered.
(mutter means green peas)

What did the lonely banana say? I’m a kela.
(Kela means banana and akela means alone)
Another enjoyable way to build on bilingual children’s knowledge of languages is to collect examples of jokes which rely on double meanings but can only be understood by people from bilingual communities. These jokes play on words common to Urdu, Punjabi and Gujarati.

Collecting and explaining jokes such as these provides a motivating context for talking about language and supports children to learn new vocabulary in English.

In the word structure and spelling strand in the renewed framework for teaching literacy, children learn to use knowledge of word structure to extend vocabulary. Bilingual children could share examples of ‘code switching’ and borrowing.

Words which have entered the English language from the other languages spoken by local communities could be collected and displayed. Examples from South Asian languages could include: loot, bungalow, shampoo, bangle, yoga, chapati, pyjamas, jungle, curry, chutney, dinghy, veranda, dungarees. Examples from other languages include lottery (Dutch), paper (Egyptian), athlete, democracy (Greek), breeze (Portuguese) and yoghurt (Turkish).

Words which have entered South Asian and other community languages from English could also be collected. These words will include a great deal of technical vocabulary as well as everyday words such as bus, doctor, plate.

Sometimes ‘borrowed’ words are used a little differently in the new language. Bilingual communities in this country will use more words borrowed from English than do speakers of the language overseas.

In the sentence structure and punctuation strand, children learn to write accurate sentences, varied for meaning and effect and using knowledge of grammar. This is a useful opportunity to incorporate the process of ‘code switching’ from one language to another as vocabulary from one language is modified in order to match the grammar of another. For example: pyjama has to become pyjamas as pyjamas, trousers and so on are plural in English. Plurals are not formed by adding ‘s’ in South Asian languages so samosa, the plural of samosa, has to change to samosas to fit in with English conventions. The converse also happens: the English pants becomes pant to fit the conventions of South Asian languages.

Collecting these examples to create displays will help all children to learn that living languages are changing all the time and being influenced by a whole range of factors. New words are being accepted while others die out.
Teachers and practitioners in the role of language learners

When teachers attempt to learn a few words and learn about the first language of their pupils, children will inevitably engage in talk about language. In order to do this they will need to learn metalanguage such as word, phrase, sound, pronounce.

Developing metalanguage is particularly useful for children learning EAL as it facilitates reflection on language learning. It is valuable for children to see their teacher in the role of a learner, taking risks and making mistakes. It also conveys a powerful message about the value of their first language if the teacher thinks it is worth learning. It helps children to develop confidence in using their first language in school.

Write numbers in different languages including all those spoken by the children and make comparisons. Encourage children to notice similarities between languages which are part of the Indo-European language family, which includes English, German, French and Spanish and also Urdu, Punjabi, Bengali, Gujarati and Hindi.
The Cox Report (1989), whose recommendations informed the development of the English National Curriculum for primary schools, had this to say about the presence of large numbers of bilingual learners in schools in this country:

‘[They] should be seen as an enormous resource which ought to become more not less important to the British economy in the next few years [when] language demands will almost certainly be greater than in the past ...

This will affect English teaching since it will exist in a still richer linguistic and cultural context. All of this is likely to have implications for children’s knowledge about language.

The evidence shows that [bilingual] children will make greater progress in English if they know their knowledge of their mother tongue is valued, if it is recognised that their experience of language is likely to be greater than that of their monolingual peers and indeed, if their knowledge and experience can be put to good use in the classroom to the benefit of all pupils to provide examples of the structure and syntax of different languages, to provide a focus for discussion about language forms and for contrast and comparison with the structure of the English language. We endorse the view of the Kingman Committee: “It should be the duty of all teachers to instil in their pupils a civilised respect for other languages and an understanding of the relations between other languages and English. It should be made clear to English-speaking pupils that classmates whose first language is Bengali or Cantonese, or any other of the scores of languages spoken by the school population ... have languages quite as systematic and rule governed as their own.”

The report went on to say that it hoped bilingual children ‘... would leave school having acquired as far as possible a firmly based but flexible and developing, linguistic and cultural identity.’

The Cox Report (DES 1989)
This theme is taken up again by Ofsted (2005) in its evaluation of progress in ten Pathfinder LEAs, Implementing language entitlement at primary school.

The report recommends that primary schools should: ‘Use bilingual pupils’ knowledge and experience effectively to support their own and other pupils’ learning.’

Ofsted considers it good practice to encourage all children to make comparisons between languages. It was noticed that bilingual children made particularly good progress in lessons where their languages were being used and they were able to take a leading role. Higher-attaining pupils responded well to opportunities to adapt language in a creative way or investigate language patterns.

Some children reported positively on personal advantages when they had been learning the heritage language and culture of friends in the school through the National Languages Strategy.

A minority of schools celebrated language diversity well, clearly benefiting bilingual and monolingual learners. Very few schools, however, had considered how to build effectively on bilingual pupils’ language experience.

Ofsted, 2005
One of the important ways in which teachers teach is by supporting children to relate new learning to something they already know. Teachers find it easier to do this when they know something about children’s previous experiences. Prior educational experiences are often easier to find out about than other previous experiences beyond the confines of the school. In the case of children learning EAL it is important for teachers to know something about the child’s previous language learning experience but they also need to know something about the social experiences children are likely to have had during the course of their everyday family life.

The importance of giving children the opportunity to make connections with their previous experience was explored in Unit 2 pages 9–13.

It is good practice to try to learn as much as possible about the home background of individual children: their family; first language, cultural and religious traditions, history, and the social, economic and political factors that impact on their lives (see page 14 in this unit).
When bilingual staff, and staff who share a culture with children, are involved in designing opportunities for learning they may be able to suggest:

- culturally familiar starting points;
- contexts for activities which EAL learners are likely to find particularly motivating or relevant;
- ways in which new learning can build on children’s existing language skills (first language as well as English);
- insights into the way a community language has continued to develop within the context of a different language/culture.

Most teachers suggest analogies or provide examples as a way of supporting children to relate new learning to something they already know.

In science, when investigating the manner in which some everyday materials alter when heated, the teacher may demonstrate the process occurring by making toast and provide chapattis as a further example likely to be very familiar to Pakistani and Indian heritage children in the class.

However, staff in school cannot always know what is familiar or likely to be within the experience of every child. They may provide examples or analogies based on assumptions about previous experience which turn out to be wrong. They may make references which are far too general or that appear tokenistic or stereotypical. One way to avoid this is to give children the opportunity to come up with examples and analogies of their own. Working collaboratively with a partner or in a small group facilitates this, particularly when children who share a first language and culture work together. Collaborative talk accelerates the process children need to go through to discover what they already know and make the necessary connections for new learning to take place.
Culturally familiar contexts for learning

Access to the curriculum at an appropriately challenging level can be facilitated for children learning EAL by making learning contexts as supportive as possible. Unit 2 of these materials describes a whole range of ways in which children learning EAL can be supported to access the curriculum by making learning contexts more supportive.

Strategies include activating prior knowledge, using bilingual strategies, scaffolding learning in a range of ways including providing opportunities for children to work collaboratively with their peers, and making contexts for learning culturally familiar.

Most people have experienced the difficulty of following the storyline in a novel when the cultural context is outside their experience: the characters’ names are unfamiliar and difficult to pronounce, locations and activities alien and hard to visualise.

In classrooms culturally unfamiliar contexts can be a barrier to learning. Contexts can be made more supportive for children learning EAL by including familiar things and familiar experiences at the design stage.

Things to consider may include:

- names;
  - Unfamiliar names can pose a particular challenge. Include familiar names whenever possible;

- locations;
  - Are the kinds of housing that children live in reflected in activities, e.g. high-rise flats and terraced houses?
  - Are there references to the places where different communities worship, e.g. Gurudwaras, temples and mosques as well as churches? Mosques play a very important role in the life of Muslim communities and references to mosques should not be restricted to RE. Are opportunities found to include references to them in appropriate contexts? For example, clockfaces displayed in the mosque to show the five daily prayer times could provide a context for mathematics;
• leisure activities;
  - Recreational activities will vary across cultures. For some children the concept of a day at the seaside will be completely outside their experience. A meal in a country pub may be part of a pleasant day out for some children whereas for other children the idea of someone drinking alcohol will conjure up an image of frightening or prohibited behaviour. For many children learning EAL a trip to the airport to meet visitors arriving from overseas will be a familiar experience;
  - Some children will have first-hand experience of countries overseas but it is important not to assume that all children from minority ethnic groups will be familiar with their family's country of origin or heritage country. Some children will enjoy being the ‘expert’ on another country they know well. Some may feel uncomfortable, sometimes due to recent painful memories, e.g. refugee children;
  - Social mixing between the sexes is discouraged in some cultures. Note: Attitudes to keeping pets varies across cultures. For many children keeping a dog in the house will seem strange and the idea of being licked by a dog abhorrent. Dogs, as well as pigs, are considered unclean by Muslims;

• special occasions;
  - Find out which festivals are celebrated by different children in the school and how, so they can be celebrated authentically in learning contexts across the curriculum;

• food, cooking utensils, etc;
  - Mangoes and limes will be as familiar as strawberries or plums to some children; bitter gourds, okra and spinach may be more familiar than brussels sprouts or broccoli;
  - Spices used in children’s homes can be used in school to learn about taste and smell in science and technology lessons;
  - Dietary restrictions must be understood and respected. If for example children were making jelly in order to learn about dissolving in science or technology lessons, Muslim and Jewish children should not be expected to taste the jelly unless it has been made with a product that does not contain animal gelatine. This is because Muslim and Jewish families usually only eat products from animals which have been slaughtered according
to the religious requirements of their faith (of course, vegetarian or vegan children should not be expected to taste a product containing animal gelatine);

- The tava (a flat circular griddle used for making chapattis) or a wok may be more familiar than a frying pan. Knives and forks are not used in all cultures.

Reflecting elements of shared popular children’s culture in classroom activities can provide motivating and supportive contexts for children’s learning. Teachers and practitioners can find out what is relevant from children’s television and best-selling books and by listening to the children themselves. Current music, games, toys, TV characters and so on can provide highly motivating and supportive contexts.

Schools need to consider the choice of topics and opportunities for experiential learning, the way these are resourced, and the way activities are designed.

It is useful to review unit plans and contexts for investigations and problem solving across the curriculum, including contexts for word problems in mathematics, to look at resources for creative activities and to maximise opportunities across the curriculum to positively reflect and build on children’s social, cultural and religious experiences.
The curriculum, the resources and the contexts for learning all play a vital role in the extent to which bilingual children and children from minority ethnic, cultural and religious backgrounds feel included and accepted in school.

It is important to ensure that children from diverse backgrounds have opportunities to see images of children like themselves and families like their families reflected in the curriculum. This is particularly important for children from minority backgrounds, not to correct a perceived poor self-image, but because all children need to feel valued in order to promote a sense of belonging. Without explicitly attending to this, the default position of the curriculum, as with the physical environment, will be Eurocentric; very little is culturally neutral.

Underachievement is a likely outcome of the omission of anything relevant to children’s own background and culture. Children will feel invisible, undervalued or ignored.

Equally, a tokenistic approach may make individual pupils feel conspicuous – ‘exotica’ tacked onto a Eurocentric norm. Sterotypical images of particular groups perpetuate racist attitudes and could limit the aspirations of children from those groups. Omission together with tokenism and stereotyping are all pernicious forms of bias.

Reflecting the everyday realities of people from diverse backgrounds across the curriculum in more than a tokenistic or stereotypical way involves recognising the impact of power relations, both past and present. The curriculum must take account of the racism that pervades society. Children will meet this in their neighbourhood and perhaps in school as well. It continues to influence events in the wider world.

All children learn best when they feel good about themselves (as evidenced by Jane Elliott’s study described on page 13). Ethnicity, language, culture and religion are all key elements in identity. To ignore any element may result in the person feeling devalued. Reflecting these elements of children’s culture and identity across the curriculum will promote a sense of belonging and support the achievement of children learning EAL.
There are plenty of opportunities within the programmes of study across the curriculum to value children’s diverse identities, experiences and traditions, and to provide experiences which will interest and engage children from minority ethnic groups. Taking full advantage of these opportunities may involve revisiting schemes of work.

Meeting their statutory duty under the amended Race Relations Act requires schools to regularly review curriculum policies to assess their impact on race equality.

• Is the curriculum delivered in a way that is appropriate to the needs of all children?
• Does the curriculum draw on areas of interest to children from all ethnic groups?
• Does it draw on the cultural backgrounds and experiences of all children?

The Act also requires schools to select curriculum content which promotes race equality.

• Does the choice of content actively contribute to children’s understanding of equality and diversity?
• Does the curriculum help equip children to identify and challenge bias, prejudice, racism and stereotyping?

This is not something schools need to do all at once. Data analysis may identify one particular curriculum area where all children learning EAL or children learning EAL from a particular ethnic group, or just the girls or the boys from one ethnic group, are underachieving. Data analysis of this kind will help school leadership teams to prioritise. EAL coordinators, and other specialists such as bilingual teaching assistants, should be involved.
One possible starting place for schools could be the choice of texts which are used during the literacy hour. Children will benefit from the opportunity to study quality texts by writers from different ethnic, cultural and religious groups including their own communities, and texts which feature characters and reflect the experiences of their communities.

The range of fiction in a multilingual, multi-ethnic school should include:

- everyday stories featuring British-born characters from various ethnic, cultural and religious backgrounds;
- stories set in children’s heritage countries;
- traditional stories from their cultures;
- biographies of people from diverse backgrounds who have made outstanding contributions of various kinds;
- dual-language books;
- poetry and drama from a range of cultures;
- stories which explore or provide a stimulus to explore discrimination, racism, feelings of isolation, justice and equality, change, loss, friendships across cultures, living within two cultures, etc.

Look out for non-fiction texts which:

- explore global development issues past and present, political, social and economic, including migration and displacement, etc.;
- teach about bias, stereotyping, racism, sectarianism, discrimination, human rights;
- emphasise the contributions and achievements of people from diverse ethnic backgrounds.

Fiction and non-fiction should highlight the similarities and differences within and between different ethnic and cultural groups. Children also need to be explicitly taught how to critically approach texts used across the whole curriculum. They need to learn that language is never neutral or impartial.
In geography children learn about similarities and differences in the relationship between human beings and their physical environment. There should be an emphasis on the links between countries and their interdependence. Mutual influences include words which have entered English from other languages and vice versa as well as food, music, sport and leisure activities and so on.

Stereotypical and negative images of countries in the developing world should be avoided but this should not mean ignoring global inequality and poverty. It is not enough just to describe conditions in developing countries; children need to understand how countries are changing and the way global issues such as the legacy of colonialism continue to affect the development process.

Migration and settlement and the displacement of populations due to war, famine and so on should be highlighted as recurring themes across the world and the cultural diversity of modern societies should be stressed. Most children will be able to investigate migration or movement within their own families over two or three generations. Minority ethnic pupils may well have first-hand experience to contribute to, for example, Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 geography 6b, the study of a contrasting locality (Key Stage 1) and a locality in a country that is less economically developed (Key Stage 2), and in Key Stages 1 and 2 topics, for example Transport, Journeys or Homes.

In history children study different accounts of the same events. They learn that the past is represented in different ways according to differing perspectives including national, cultural, socio-economic, and those of men or women. Children learn that Britain has developed over
centuries and is developing still. The history of this country is related to events in other countries. Children should learn about the history of ethnic and cultural diversity in this country, and about struggles for human rights and racial equality. The role of black and minority ethnic groups and individuals in resistance and campaigns for justice should be emphasised.

In Key Stage 2 children are expected to investigate the way in which an aspect of their locality has changed over a long period of time or the way in which their locality was affected by an important national or local event or the work of a notable individual.

Children from minority ethnic backgrounds will benefit particularly from a focus on the population change in their locality and the reasons for settlement in the area of people from different cultures, including their own. This will support children’s sense of belonging.

There are further opportunities within the history programme of study to investigate immigration to this country when studying the impact of social changes since the Second World War (Britain since 1930). Children should be taught about the contributions of significant individuals from minority ethnic groups.

As well as needing opportunities to use and apply mathematics in culturally familiar contexts, children learning EAL benefit from explicit recognition of:

- the contributions of diverse cultures to the development of mathematics over the centuries, e.g. the origins of number;
- the use of mathematics in all cultures;
- different methods of calculating and counting.

Mathematics can also teach about diversity, equality and justice. Facts and figures about local, national and global issues, e.g. average incomes, access to healthcare, literacy levels, access to clean water, rainfall in different countries and how this has changed over time are contexts which could be used for mathematical investigations.
Geography, history, PSHE and citizenship and RE all provide opportunities to utilise and build on the first-hand knowledge and experience that children from minority ethnic backgrounds often have of other countries, lifestyles and religions.

**Studying a locality in the developing world**

Where there are children and families with first-hand experience of a country in the developing world, a locality in that country should be the focus for comparative study.

LA Ethnic Minority Achievement Services and local Development Education Centres will be able to advise schools about how to resource their studies. Both the BBC and Channel 4 have in the past produced useful educational videos and associated publications about developing countries, including Pakistan. Material no longer in print may still be available on loan from local libraries or LA multicultural centres. Other sources of materials include the Internet, embassies, travel agencies and tourism bureaux.
Families who visit the locality could be asked to take photographs, compile diaries, obtain maps, collect brochures and bring back artefacts to supplement these materials. Disposable or cheap cameras could be supplied and families given a clear steer about the kind of photographs which would be useful, for example:

- transport;
- shops including stalls and markets;
- food (production including agriculture and husbandry, cooking, eating);
- leisure (visits to places of interest, games and sports, cinema, etc.);
- buildings including homes across the socio-economic spectrum, and inside and outside spaces;
- landscape;
- everyday life (schools, people at work, etc.);
- famous places;
- religious life (weddings, celebrations, places of worship, places of pilgrimage, etc.).
If parents and carers are asked to make a note of where the photographs were taken they will be more useful as resources to support work in geography.

Children should photograph similar things in their own locality in order to make comparisons.

Children’s photographs and accounts of their visits could be made into books including multimedia and/or dual-language talking books to provide valuable and personalised curriculum resources.

The following principles should underpin a comparative study of a locality in the developing world if it is to value and affirm children’s cultural identities.

- Images and text in resources should be up to date.
- Similarities as well as differences should be highlighted.
- Connections and mutual influence should be emphasised.
- The lives of wealthy people should be portrayed but poverty and inequality also acknowledged.
- The reasons for inequality should be explored – global development issues: social, political, historical and economic.
- Diversity within the locality should be recognised.
- Traditional and alternative technologies should be valued.
- The first-hand experience of children and their families should be utilised as a valuable resource and all opportunities taken to refer to the variety of lifestyles in the UK – for example, water buffalo are farmed in the southwest of England, children from UK rural communities are familiar with farming and tourism.
- Stereotypical portrayal should be avoided.

Development Education Centres support teachers and others to learn more about global issues such as fair trade, conflict resolution and sustainable development in order to bring a global dimension to their practice across the curriculum.

www.dea.org.uk/dec

We drank milk from the buffalo

My uncle is a farmer. I saw food growing in the fields
Local history study

If it is to support the achievement of children from minority ethnic backgrounds, a local history study should:

• focus on population change;
• stress the way in which the locality has changed and developed over the years and is changing still;
• discuss reasons for migration and celebrate diversity;
• identify achievements and contributions of people from minority groups;
• emphasise that migration and settlement and displacement of people are recurring themes in human history;
• acknowledge racism and prejudice and include struggles for justice and equality;
• stress connections between the school’s immediate locality and the wider world;
• teach children that everyone has their own personal history and that all their memories and experiences are part of the history of the time in which they live.

Primary sources which provide information about local residents include census details about individual households, local newspaper reports, trade directories and school log books. Names provide evidence of how local populations may have changed over the years. Parish records may provide evidence of an earlier minority ethnic presence in the locality. Other primary sources include the memories of local people, Ordnance Survey maps and old photographs.

Mathematics can help children to represent the development of the locality over time. Population growth can be shown on a graph. Key events on a time line will show the pace of development and how events interrelate.
During a walk around the locality to look for evidence of the impact of population change one class noted the following:

- **Gurudwara**
- A mosque
- Signs in Urdu, Gujarati and Punjabi
- A halal butcher
- A ‘Take Away’ selling curry, kebabs and samosas
- A newsagent selling the Daily Jang newspaper, ‘Asian Image’ free newspaper, and Eid cards and incense sticks, advertising for yoga classes
- People from various ethnic backgrounds
- Dual-heritage families
- Indian music on car radios (bhangra)
- Indian film posters in shop windows
Summary

An inclusive curriculum supports achievement and promotes a sense of ‘belonging’ for children learning EAL. It is characterised by:

- choices made from programmes of study that are culturally inclusive and sensitive to the ethnic, cultural, religious and linguistic backgrounds of all learners;
- attention to human rights as well as global developments affected by political, social, historical and economic factors;
- schemes of work, texts used in English as well as subjects across the curriculum and contexts for mathematics which take account of children’s ethnic, cultural and religious heritage, prior experiences, interests and linguistic needs and abilities;
- opportunities to explore similarities and differences within and across different ethnic groups;
- a critical approach to texts so that children understand that language is never neutral or impartial;
- quality texts written by members of different ethnic and cultural groups;
- contexts which affirm children’s personal and cultural identities;
- opportunities across the curriculum to emphasise the contributions and achievements of people from diverse ethnic, cultural and social backgrounds;
- opportunities across the curriculum to teach children to recognise and resist bias, racism and stereotyping.

The following are some useful publications and websites:

Curriculum guidelines for cultural diversity and race equality, Hertfordshire County Council (www.thegrid.org.uk/learning/mecss/policies/curriculum)

Excellence and Enjoyment: learning and teaching in the primary years, DfES 0623-2003 G

Excellence and Enjoyment: learning and teaching in the primary years, professional development materials, DfES 0518-2004 G

Excellence and Enjoyment: social and emotional aspects of learning, DfES 0110-2005 G; The importance of emotions in the classroom, DfES 0640-2004

EAL induction training for school support staff: www.dfes.gov.uk

‘Inclusion’ website: http://inclusion.ngfl.gov.uk/

‘Respect for all’ website: www.qca.org.uk/301.html
Section 4 Partnerships with parents, carers, families and communities

‘Parents are a child’s first and most enduring educators. A successful partnership needs a two-way flow of information, knowledge and expertise’ (Curriculum guidance for the Foundation Stage, QCA 2000)

Research from the DfES on the impact of parental involvement shows that parental interest and involvement contributes significantly to children’s achievement and outweighs family background, social class and level of parental education.

Research into the education of bilingual children has consistently identified the importance of partnerships with parents and communities. Cummins (1996) cites the ‘extent to which minority communities feel empowered to participate in their children’s education as a key factor schools must address if young bilingual learners are to reach their full potential’.

Note: The term ‘parents’ is used here to include carers and members of the extended family.
Learning within the school

Parents from minority ethnic groups often feel they have little to contribute because their school experiences were different or because they do not have English as their first language. If their linguistic, cultural and religious traditions are not acknowledged and respected explicitly, they may feel discouraged from playing an active role in their children’s learning at school.

Developing partnerships with bilingual families and communities has to be a process of learning to listen, share information and concerns, consult, negotiate and trust each other. The way in which a school responds to diversity will determine to a large degree how far partnerships with bilingual families and communities become a reality.
Developing effective partnerships

- Parents are their child’s first educators and remain their key educators throughout their school career.

- Most parents want to be involved in their children’s education. In a recent study 72% of parents said they wanted more involvement (DfES Research report 332).

- Parental involvement in a child’s schooling for a child between the ages of 7 and 16 is a more powerful force than family background, size of family and level of parental education.

- Families and communities have a vital role in developing a confident sense of identity and self-esteem which is crucial for educational success.

- Parents understand their own children best.

- It is important to listen to parents about their concerns and to recognise children’s achievements beyond school work. Although the focus in this unit is on developing partnerships with parents, carers, families and communities of minority ethnic heritage, this work should contribute to other ongoing work to develop partnerships with all families and communities.

In order to develop effective partnerships with parents from minority linguistic and cultural communities, schools need to:

- develop a shared understanding across the school of potential barriers to effective partnerships with minority ethnic families and communities as well as strategies to address the barriers;

- ensure that parents and the wider community understand that their children’s languages are valued and that the first language has an important and continuing role in learning at school;

- share children’s progress and achievements, their targets and strategies for achieving them;

- ensure that parents know how to support their children’s learning at home.
Ensuring a welcome for all

- Create a friendly, welcoming atmosphere for families in the whole school environment and ensure that they feel safe and valued.
- Make information about the structure and organisation of the school, roles, rules, routines, expectations, behaviour and so on easily available and accessible, e.g. use photographs, dual-language captions, CD-ROMs.
- Devise and implement strategies to address potential barriers to effective partnerships in children’s learning. Potential barriers may include language, culture, ethnicity and religion; experiences in the wider society; perceived negative attitudes of staff or other parents; and their own very different or negative school experiences.
- Reassure parents that limited or no English language, limited or no literacy skills in English or in their first language, or lack of formal education do not mean they cannot play a useful and key role in their child’s education.
- Address fears some parents may have about coming into school and meeting teachers.
- Recognise and celebrate the communities’ cultural and religious events.
Developing two-way communication

- Listen to and consult with parents.
- Gather information about their views.
- Recognise that concerns are normal and respond quickly, sympathetically and effectively.
- Establish a culture of informal contacts, at the beginning and end of the day, in first language, using bilingual staff where possible; and in English, by phone and by informal notes.
- Share good news about children’s achievements.
- Collect information about parents’ languages and literacies sensitively and professionally.
- Provide interpreting and translation as appropriate, having first found out about families’ preferred language of written communication.
- Inform parents of key dates and times in the school calendar and provide guidance for extended leave which takes account of this.
- Anticipate and respond proactively to concerns about transition.
Developing the learning partnership

- Facilitate understanding and knowledge of the school’s teaching and learning approaches, and the curriculum in the school.
- Share research findings relevant to the education of bilingual children. Emphasise the important and continuing role of children’s first language in their learning and the value of talk at home.
- Discuss differences in practices and purposes between home and school, acknowledging the strengths of both.
- Share information about the school’s overall performance against schools nationally and against similar schools, including value added by the school.
- Share information about the attainment and achievement of their child compared to national norms.
- Share information about children’s targets and strategies to achieve them.
- Develop a role for parents in assessing their child’s progress, using trained bilingual practitioners as intermediaries or transcribers if necessary.
- Offer guidance and support to enable families and carers to facilitate children’s learning at home, including ‘workshops’ in literacy, mathematics and the wider curriculum.
- Find out about and celebrate achievements beyond the school, e.g. community language schools, supplementary schools, madrasahs, to contribute to richer pupil profiles and the identification of transferable skills.
- Work together to develop distance learning materials for extended visits overseas, which are linked to and contribute to the curriculum, e.g. a study of a locality in the developing world.

Schools which were successful in developing parental support for reading focused on specific initiatives that involved parents actively in reading with their children. The ineffective schools were also keen to involve parents but encouraged their general involvement rather than specific engagement in reading.

Reading for purpose and pleasure: an evaluation of the teaching and reading in primary schools, Ofsted (2004)
Better Reading Partners, developed by Bradford LEA in 1996, is an initiative originally designed to involve parents which has been positively evaluated by NFER (1998) and others. It is designed to be delivered to children as an intervention over a ten-week period and is based on Reading Recovery. ‘Partners’ are trained to support children to read new and familiar texts using a range of cueing systems. Partners learn to introduce books to children. They also learn to keep running records and use them to analyse children’s reading strengths and areas for development. For more information visit Education Bradford’s website at www.educationbradford.co.uk.

A school in Blackburn where 70% of children speak English as an additional language has been training parents to be Better Reading Partners for some years:

‘When children have been supported by Better Reading Partners they develop a much more positive attitude towards reading. Their reading ages go up on average 6–8 months, and in some cases much more.’

‘The parents we train don’t always want to support children in school but they all really appreciate the training because they learn how to support their children at home. Some of the parents we’ve trained didn’t read English very fluently themselves. They feel more confident when they know they can introduce new books to the children using their stronger language. We encourage this. We also have a good supply of dual-language books with parallel texts and books where the text is extremely well supported by pictures. Parents often tell us their own reading in English has developed a lot as a result of the programme. Often parents who have done the Better Reading training end up applying for teaching assistant jobs in school and some have gone on to train as teachers. The reception class staff say that children from families where parents have undertaken Better Reading training in the past seem to know more about reading when they arrive in school. Maybe it’s because their parents have talked to them more about books.’
Learning beyond the school

Partnerships with the wider community: getting started

‘As well as working closely with parents, primary schools must be closely linked to their local community’
Excellence and Enjoyment: A strategy for primary schools, 2003

Schools can:

• develop links with community language classes, supplementary schools, madrasahs and so on;

• establish community language classes which involve a range of learners (parents, children and school staff) learning together;

• ask parents to suggest people within the community with particular skills and expertise who may be able to support school activities and curriculum;

• develop learning links with local businesses, community organisations and faith groups;

• visit local shops to gather resources and artefacts to support the curriculum;

• make school facilities available for community groups.

Many schools have found that one of the additional benefits of developing partnerships with local minority ethnic communities has been to encourage more representative school governance.
Supplementary and religious education

Many minority ethnic communities make provision for supplementary education for their children. The purposes vary but may include:

- extra tuition to support school work;
- coaching for entrance to selective or independent schools;
- support for homework;
- teaching the first language and culture;
- religious education.

Some supplementary education is provided in schools which operate every evening for a couple of hours after school, some on Saturdays or Saturday mornings. Some supplementary education is provided by tutors, often from the child’s own community. In many cases the learning and teaching style is very different from the style the child encounters in the mainstream school. For example, most Muslim children attend classes in their local mosque where the primary purpose is to provide religious education although they may receive extra tuition to support school work as well. The age at which most Muslim children start to attend the local mosque school or madrasah varies but is usually at about five years of age. Most continue to attend until they are 14. Religious education usually begins before this at home however, when mothers teach their children to do things in a particular way, e.g. to always say ‘bismillah’ before embarking on a task (‘I begin in the name of God’), to remember God in the way they greet people and so on.

In the madrasah children learn the Arabic alphabet so they can recite and remember verses from the Qu’ran. At this stage there is no emphasis on understanding. At a later stage children study the Hadith. These are the sayings and the way of life of the Prophet Mohammed. Although originally written in Arabic, translation will be available in the language or languages of the local community. These sayings are also often read at home where they guide the way Muslims lead their daily lives. Examples of Hadith include: Seek knowledge even though you have to go to [as far as] China; Education/knowledge is incumbent upon both males and females.

Madrasahs in this country often teach Urdu as well and in some cases other community languages such as Bengali. The pedagogic style is typically different from that which children meet in school because of the emphasis on rote learning. Syllabuses, learning and teaching approaches and behaviour management strategies vary.
widely from one madrasah to another depending on the level of available resources and the educational experiences of the teachers. In addition to religious and community language education, some madrasahs also offer children support with homework. Teachers are unpaid volunteers for the most part, and although many are very traditional in their approach others, often younger teachers, employ a range of strategies and are keen to learn more.

It is good practice for schools to develop links and establish a dialogue with teachers in community language classes, supplementary schools and madrasahs, or popular local tutors, in order to:

- learn about their children in a different context;
- learn more about the local community;
- share perspectives on the children as learners;
- build on educational experiences including transferable skills;
- understand potentially conflicting demands which may be placed on children;
- learn about families’ aspirations for their children;
- celebrate and recognise children’s achievements beyond the school;
- learn from each other.

For more information about supplementary schools, visit www.supplementaryschools.org.uk.
Extended visits

Strategies to ensure continuity of learning when children make extended visits during term time to heritage countries

- Provide learning and teaching curriculum materials on a CD-ROM.
- Provide parents with appropriate website addresses to support their children’s learning across the curriculum, e.g. the DfES website for parents (www.parentcentre.gov.uk).
- Establish e-mail links with the child and the family.
- Devise strategies to exploit the educational opportunities of the visit.

Ensure that parents are aware of:
- the educational potential of the visit;
- the impact of a lengthy absence on the continuity and progression of their child’s schooling.

Exploiting the educational potential of the visit

Things to do before the child goes

- Locate the destination and plot the journey on a map.
- Activate children’s prior knowledge of the destination by using a KWL grid (see Unit 2, page 12).
- Research journey times including time zones.
- Investigate the climate: What temperatures can the child expect? Will it rain? What impact will this have on packing?
- Ask parents to choose from a selection of distance learning materials. Ideally these materials should be linked to the curriculum and relevant to the child’s experience, e.g. materials to support the study of the locality. Providing translated versions of some of this material enables the extended family in the overseas location to participate (see pages 44–45 in this unit).
- Provide a cheap or disposable camera.
- Share objectives clearly with children and their family.
During the trip ask the child to:

- take photographs to use as curriculum resources (see page 45 in this unit);
- keep a diary;
- communicate with school by e-mail or by post;
- make collections of tickets, receipts, brochures, fliers and so on;
- use the distance learning material;
- involve the whole family.

On the child’s return make sure he or she has opportunities to:

- talk about the experience;
- make links between the experience and the curriculum;
- act as the ‘expert’ to support the completion of the KWL grid – What have we learned?;
- support the teacher to identify and discuss misconceptions recorded on the KWL grid.

Parents may be able to help the school to establish ongoing e-mail links with a school in the overseas locality.
Useful materials and websites for parents


Help your children to learn. Leaflets for parents by parents (ref: HYCL, e.g. A guide to supporting reading for parents of primary school children HYCL/7), available at www.parentscentre.gov.uk

Taking an active interest in your child’s learning, DfES 1023-2004 (Year 2), DfES 1024-2004 (Year 6)

www.parentsonline.gov.uk

Basic Skills Agency materials: www.basic-skills.co.uk

Partnerships with parents

Parental involvement in multi-ethnic schools:
www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/parentalinvolvement/pics/pics_multietnic_menu/


Helping parents help their children, DfES 0126-2004

Involving parents, raising achievement, booklet (ref. PICE/IPRA); training pack and video (ref. PICE/IPRA/TP), available at www.teachernet.gov.uk

Sure Start: For Everyone: Inclusion Pilot Projects Summary Report (2004) (ref. IPPSUMMARY), available from dfes@prolog.uk.com


References and resources


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Excellence and Enjoyment: social and emotional aspects of learning (DfES 0110-2005 G)

English for ages 5–16 (The Cox Report) DES 1989

Ofsted (2005) Implementing language entitlement at primary school: an evaluation of progress in 10 Pathfinder LEAs, Ofsted