



**Supporting Children
with English as an
Additional Language**

**Top Tips from
Speech and Language Therapy**

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Introduction:

- EAL stands for English as an Additional Language.
- EAL children hear and use a language at home that is not English.
- EAL children may have been learning English alongside their other languages, or they may have only started to learn English since joining nursery/school.

Supporting EAL children:

- Initially, EAL children may use their home language in school for a brief period.
- A 'silent period' is a normal part of learning a language - they will be trying to take in as much of this new language around them as possible before having a go themselves.
- **Don't put pressure on them to talk** but involve them in games and fun activities where they can rely on cues from peers.
- **Use language in context** so that they can match what they are looking at with an English word that you say.
- Use **visual cues** as much as possible to support understanding e.g. natural gesture, photos, visual timetables etc.
- **Teach vocabulary clearly and visually**, talking around the words using things like a word web approach. Give lots of opportunities to hear and use a new word.



When they start saying a few words:

- Give **extra time** for the child to process what you have said and have a go at responding.
- **Praise and respond** to any attempts to have a go.
- Provide lots of opportunities to use **repetitive language**.
- When they say a few words, **extend it** naturally so they can hear how they can do this.

What advice do I give to parents?

- The best thing parents can do is to provide their child with a **good language model**.
- There is sometimes a false belief that hearing multiple languages can confuse a child. Reassure parents that there is **no evidence to support this idea**.
- Children can pick up English well at school when they have good language skills in their home language.
- Advise parents to **use the language they feel most comfortable with**.
- Home languages are also a big part of our identity and culture – we want to **encourage** and **celebrate** the use of all languages.
- It may be helpful for parents to find a community group for their child to join. These groups may be in their home language or English, but could support communication and social development.



Is it EAL or something more?

EAL should not be confused with Speech, Language & Communication Needs (SLCN)

- Speaking more than one language does not cause communication disorders.
- However, a child who speaks multiple languages may have a communication disorder, which will impact their development across all languages.
- For this reason, it is important to find out about the child's home language and whether there are any concerns.
- The best place to start is to **talk to the child's parents/carers**.

Use the flowchart on the following page to help support your decision-making.

Is it EAL or something more?

Talk to parents and establish whether they have concerns about their child's home language. You can use the parental questionnaire from this pack to support with this.

Does the child have a strong home language?

Yes

With EAL support in school, is the child picking up English easily?

Yes

Continue to monitor progress.

It usually takes around 2 years to develop good conversational language skills in a second language.

No

Explore reasons why this could be:

Talk to parents about the concerns you have – what are their thoughts on this?

Is the child anxious or shy about talking?

Are there any other concerns about the child's progress and development?

No

Seek advice from your link therapist at a liaison or drop-in.

Put **targeted support** into place. Set **specific targets** and **monitor progress** towards them. Your link therapist will be able to advise on suitable targets and resources.

Implement this advice for at least one term and keep a record of the outcome. This can be used to support a referral to Speech and Language Therapy if needed.

Following targeted support, are there significant ongoing concerns with the child's language development in both languages?

Yes

The child may benefit from a referral for an assessment with a Speech and Language Therapist.

No

Continue to provide support in school, following advice from your link therapist. Monitor progress.

**Children with English as an Additional Language
Parental Questionnaire**

This questionnaire has been put together as a guide to help schools gather information about a child's home language development. **Remember** – parents may need support from a family member, friend or interpreter in order to answer these questions. If parents have significant concerns about their child's development in their home language, please discuss with your link therapist. This questionnaire can also be used to support a referral for assessment if needed.

Name:		DOB:		School:	
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What languages does your child hear and use at home?

Was your child late to talk?

Most children will be using first words by 18 months and joining 2 words together by 30 months.

Do you have any concerns about your child's language? (both understanding and using language)

Can your child form full-sentences in your home language?

Is your child able to tell you about their day?

How long has your child been learning English? (e.g. Did they attend an English-speaking nursery?)

Does anyone in your family have difficulties with their language or communication?

Do you have any other concerns or questions about your child's development?

Useful Links and Resources:

The Literacy Trust Website

For advice on understanding the language and literacy needs of EAL learners – [click here](#)

The ICAN Website

For useful information and advice for professionals supporting children with English as an additional language – [click here](#)

The Hanen Centre Website

Bilingualism in Young Children - Separating Fact from Fiction – [click here](#)

The Bell Foundation

<https://www.bell-foundation.org.uk/>

The Bell Foundation aims to improve policy, practice and systems to enable children, adults and communities in the UK that speak English as an Additional Language (EAL) to overcome disadvantage through language education.

Advice and Support

For further advice and support from a Speech & Language Therapist, please contact us via our Telephone Advice Line 07825 016 335 (Wednesdays 9am-12pm) or by email sirona.slt@nhs.net

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