

EAL case study: Encouraging schools to participate

This case study contains guidance for local authority advisors, foundation stage profile moderators and all practitioners working with reception-age and year 1 children who are learning English as an additional language.

It aims to give further support to practitioners who are assessing the attainment of these children for the foundation stage profile.

Background information

Özlem joined a private provider nursery attached to a school as a rising four¹, for approximately eight weeks before joining the school. Özlem arrived from Turkey and was keen to speak to everyone. She did this in Turkish.

The nursery nurse smiled a lot at Özlem and escorted her around the learning areas, demonstrating how to use them. Özlem played with the children in the nursery and responded in Turkish at what her key worker described as the 'appropriate speaking time'.

Özlem quickly made friends with Ayesha (who spoke English and Urdu but not Turkish) and began to use odd words in English using Turkish sentence structure. When Özlem entered reception she was beginning to use simple English sentences and would slot in some Turkish words.

Curriculum context: Assessing children's learning

Özlem had been introduced to phonics in English through the Playing with Sounds programme, and this practice was continued in her reception class. Özlem was presented with many learning opportunities to develop her phonological awareness. However, her class teacher felt the assessments made did not accurately display her development in this area. Özlem could write from memory her own name and that of three of her classmates. She could write 'mum', 'dad', 'dog' and 'cat', and use a pencil to form most of the letters in the alphabet, some in upper case and others in lower case. The class teacher felt that she had very little evidence that Özlem had any awareness of rhyme or linking sounds to letters until she asked Özlem to help her and made the following observations.

Observations: What the child said and did

Özlem helped her teacher to carry some items for a display linked to Eid. Özlem picked up the prayer mat and said, 'My dad's got one... the uhm... uhm pattern's not same. It's a prayer mat. It yours? This is a prayer hat I put the hat on the mat'. At

this point, Özlem giggled and said, 'That's funny... a rhyme. They're same last'. Özlem walked over to the puppet box in the book corner, picked up Mog, the cat puppet, and said, 'This a cat'.

Özlem put the prayer hat on the cat and then placed them on the mat and giggled, saying, 'The cat has hat on... on the mat'. Özlem walked over to the book corner and brought a book *The cat in the hat* by Dr Suess. Özlem giggled again and said, 'This is same'.

Özlem asked her teacher if she could do something for the display. Her teacher said yes. Özlem got some paper and cut it into four strips and wrote: 'cat', 'mat' and 'hat', segmenting and writing, checking her 't' was the right way round. Özlem put the strips on the objects. She then wrote 'The hat on The cat on The mat', whilst checking the title on the book for the spelling of 'the'.

Afterwards, when talking to colleagues, the nursery nurse and class teacher articulated some key practices linked to working with children who are learning English as an additional language.

Children develop when:

- the setting's ethos encourages the use of the child's home language
- practitioners use positive body language, for example smiling
- practitioners demonstrate what to do as well as say it
- practitioners present opportunities for the child to develop relationships with role-model peers
- practitioners use resources that are familiar to the child
- the setting considers the cultural background of their children
- practitioners are patient and allow time for children who are learning English to show what they know.

Further information about the foundation stage profile is available from:

National Assessment Agency
29 Bolton Street
London W1J 8BT
Tel: 08700 60 60 40
www.naa.org.uk/tests

¹ A child who is not yet four but will be before the school year finishes.