**English as an Additional Language (EAL) Policy & Procedure**

**Introduction/Background**

The term EAL (English as an Additional Language) is used to describe children whose main language is other than English.

Children who are learning English as an Additional language have skills and knowledge similar to those of monolingual English-speaking children. Their ability to participate in the full framework of the EYFS may well be in advance of their communication skills in English.

Whilst being clear that having English as an additional Language is not the same as being SEN, nor is it a disability, it is recognised that children will need extra support and at times different types of support to their peers.

Children attending our setting may be monolingual in English or another heritage language, or multilingual and able to understand and speak a number of languages.

It is important to identify the child’s first language at the pre-admission stage, which is why we ask the question ‘FIRST LANGUAGE’ on our application form. To establish whether the parents/carers are able to converse in English, or whether they may need alternative support to understand the routines and learning environment that their child will experience.

**Statement of Intent**

At Stepping Stones we undertake to include all children and welcome those who are not able to speak or understand English. Our strategy to support these children and their families will be implemented by all members of the staff.

To speak another language other than English or to be multi lingual will be celebrated and not seen as a deficit or disadvantage for the individual children and their family. It is the responsibility of staff to be flexible and creative to ensure that effective communication takes place.

**Aims**

* To ensure we fully meet the needs of any child who has English as an Additional Language.
* To provide newly arrived children with a safe and welcoming environment.
* To ensure we meet the requirements of The Race Relations Act 1976, and the Equality Act 2010.
* To welcome and value the cultural, linguistic skills and experiences that children with EAL bring to the setting.
* To help EAL children become confident and fluent in speaking and understanding English in order for them to reach their full academic potential.
* To encourage, foster and nurture parental/carer involvement and support in improving children’s achievements.
* To ensure that children see their languages, culture and identity reflected and valued in the setting wherever possible and relevant.
* To ensure we gather accurate information about the child’s background/languages spoken and cultural needs.

**Key Principles**

* Language develops best when used in purposeful and meaningful contexts within the setting.
* All languages, dialects, accents and cultures should be equally valued.
* There is a definite distinction between EAL and SEN
* Effective role modelling of language from adults in the setting is essential.

**Creating a positive environment**

Children from different cultures may find our setting environment quite strange: it is important that we include pictures with which the children can identify. These may be of landscapes, houses, families, or children playing.

We need to include labels and captions in alternative languages but these are only relevant if we draw the attention of the children to them.

Bilingual books may be available, and when possible a parent/Diversity Voice member/DALanguages member will be asked to co-tell a bilingual story with the children, or record a simple story for the children to listen to whilst looking at the book with an adult. Staff who can speak an alternative language will be encouraged to use it with the children in a variety of situations. Children encouraged to use their home languages whilst playing as much as possible.

The role-play area will reflect diversity and the adults are responsible for ensuring that the children respect and understand the function of the resources on offer.

**Language rich environment**

Communication involves speaking, listening and understanding: it affects the social as well as the learning outcomes for children. A language rich environment will be provided for all children, and any strategies which we use to support EAL children will also benefit all the children, including those with special needs.

**Links to EYFS**

The EYFS supports children’s learning and development by:

* Building on children’s experiences of language at home and in the wider community, so that their developing uses of English and other languages support one another.
* Providing opportunities for children to engage in speaking and listening activities in their home language with peers and adults.
* Providing a range of opportunities for children to engage in speaking and listening activities in English with peers and adults.
* Providing a range of visual resources in their home language (where appropriate).
* Providing Bi-lingual support to extend vocabulary where possible.
* Being aware of and responding to particular needs of children who are learning English as an additional language.
* Practitioners are aware of cultural differences in attitudes and expectations. Continue to share and explain practice with parent/carers, ensuring a two way communication, using interpreter support where necessary.
* Using collaborative learning techniques – encourages children to work together in pairs and small groups to discuss their work and possibly produce a joint piece of work.

**We will do this by:**

* Effective use of Key person system to ensure children feel secure, settled and valued.
* Implementing a Home Visiting Strategy if required.
* Use additional resources and services to support us including: using and promoting Early Years STC as an alternative and non-verbal means of communicating, accessing support from EAL Advisors, Training, Welcome to Somerset material, accessing support from Diversity Voice or DALanguages.
* Ensuring effective Partnerships with Parent/carers.
* Ensuring children have full access to the EYFS and providing additional support if necessary.
* Having a dedicated/named ENCO.
* Linking with ENCO.
* It is beneficial to allow EAL children to work together when possible so that they can discuss their work in their mother tongue.

**Staff must find ways of encouraging children to keep talking, even if they are unable to do so in English**

* We will keep language simple and literal initially so that the child has the best opportunity to understand
* We will give instructions to the child individually and with eye contact, getting down to the child’s level, as generalised instructions are hard to follow, using STC strategies as needed.
* We will give plenty of time for the child to respond – it takes time to translate!
* We will learn key words in the child’s first language so they can tell us important things like needing the toilet, being thirsty, wanting to play with a toy. We will use non-verbal clues when working with the child
* We will choose stories which are simple, have clear pictures, repetitive, but interesting (Farmer Duck for example)
* We will encourage the child to teach the other children the name of objects in their own language
* We will borrow music/story CDs from the family to play to the whole group to enjoy
* We will model correct sentences for the child when they have tried to communicate.

**Alternative ways of communicating**

Up to 80% of everyday communication is non-verbal and it is vital that this knowledge is used by all staff to facilitate communication.

**Therefore all staff will engage with the EAL children using non-verbal communication alongside the verbal:** This will involve the use of sign language, symbols, visual timetables, drama, and drawing as well as props for stories.

**Different stages experienced by EAL children**

We will respect the different phases that EAL children may go through:

* Clinging/crying phase – like all new children the child may be frightened of being left in a new environment: parent/carers will be welcome to stay initially, or leave the child for shorter periods. The child will have a named key person (as all children do) who will be able to facilitate and comfort the child during the initial settling in period.
* Watching/silent phase – the child may not want to take part in group activities initially and should be allowed to watch and observe the other children until they are confident to join in.
* Noisy phase: some EAL children will go through a phase of shouting in order to make themselves understood: we encourage them to speak quietly but will acknowledge and praise their efforts to communicate.
* Physical phase: children who cannot communicate in words may become physical in their interaction with other children. We will intervene calmly and model appropriate words for the child to learn such as “I want to play with the...”, “please can I play too”, “can I do that”.
* Understanding/not speaking phase: we will recognise that children understand a new language much faster than they can speak it, and will therefore always use verbal instructions or comments alongside non-verbal ones.

**Setting Boundaries**

All children quickly recognise the word or symbol for “no” and we must all ensure that the children with EAL are given the same clear boundaries as other children in the setting.

If children consistently fail to understand these, their key worker will approach the parent/carer and ask them to explain them to the child.

**Working with Parents/Carers**

Parent/carers from other countries may have no personal experience of pre-school/early years education as we know it. It is important that sufficient time is given to them to become familiar with the key principles of our system, and the routines the children experience.

We ask for crucial details before a child starts at the school: country of origin, religion, language and key cultural needs of the child, along with any dietary restrictions, these are all be shared with the staff team, to prevent misunderstandings.

Any letters sent home will be explained verbally to the parent/carer.

Parent/carers are encouraged to contribute to the learning of the children by visiting, sharing significant events/festivals and doing activities such as cooking with the children.

**Assessment**

No assumptions should be made of the child’s ability and learning capability based solely on their ability to speak English.

Observations by staff members of what a child ‘can do’ will be part of a crucial learning record.

Where concerns are exposed through the regular assessment of the child, it will be the responsibility of the key person to discuss the child’s first language competency with the parent/carers. If this is not age appropriate, the key person should inform the setting Senco with a view to referring to the Area Senco or Speech & Language Therapist for further assessment.

When the progress of the child in their home language appears appropriate, they should discuss the needs of the child and whether they need to be encouraged to take up more learning opportunities which are not language dependent.

Children learning EAL need to be assessed in relation to the Early Years Foundation Stage Curriculum standards and expectations as early as possible. Learning an additional language is a long-term process. While social fluency may be acquired within two years, it may take EAL pupils from 5-7 years to gain the skills and understanding to participate fully in an educational system, in-line with mother tongue speakers of English.

**Resources**

Whenever resources are being ordered they should be relevant for all the children including the EAL children: all orders will be discussed by the staff team including the Enco and if inappropriate alternatives will be sought.

**Responsibilities**

All staff will be familiar with this protocol and be involved in seeing that it is carried out. The supervisor/manager will be responsible for sharing this protocol with all new or relief staff. The key person will be responsible for liaising with the parent/carers, and monitoring the progress of the individual child.

Updated and implemented Autumn Term 2023 – reviewed regularly and the procedure monitored and evaluated