

Effective working practices

If student teachers work alongside EAL specialists during their placements, they will need to demonstrate an understanding of effective collaborative practices.

Collaborative working

The class or subject teacher and the specialist need to agree on a collaborative approach to pupils with EAL. The support continuum ranges from partnership teaching to withdrawal of pupils for individual support.

Schools with significant numbers of bilingual pupils are more likely to have specialist EAL teachers deployed over longer periods of time. Partnership teaching in these contexts may be easier to deliver than in schools with very few bilingual pupils, where a peripatetic language teacher may provide support for a very limited period. On the other hand, experienced peripatetic EAL teachers may consider that the most effective way of enabling teachers to work with isolated bilingual pupils is through working in partnership with class teachers to model inclusive strategies which can be continued in their absence.

EAL teachers may vary their role within one school, according to the teaching and learning context. Collaboration between the teachers is necessary for planning, delivery and feedback. The models of support may include

- team teaching, both teachers engage in a dialogue with each other and with pupils from the front of the class
- role reversal, the class teacher works with a group of bilingual pupils and the language support teacher works with the rest of the class
- observation, either teacher acts as an observer in the whole class context with an agreed focus. The other teacher maintains an interactive role, encouraging, explaining or reinforcing. The observation focus might also be on assessing particular teaching strategies by observing the pupils' responses
- working with target groups, the language support teacher will focus support on a specific group of pupils
- one to one support, the EAL teacher may occasionally when specific difficulties and misconceptions arise, need to provide individual support
- effective withdrawal for specific curriculum purposes of individuals or groups of pupils for finely-tuned, time-limited withdrawal support
- resource provision and development, the language support teacher may collect, suggest, modify or design resources to meet the needs of bilingual pupils
- monitoring progress of bilingual learners
- advice on the implications of general assessment measures for bilingual learners and provision of more detailed diagnostic linguistic analysis where required
- planning support to be delivered by teaching assistants and monitoring its impact

Class or subject teachers and specialist EAL teachers need to agree which model of collaboration delivers the optimum support to the pupils within a particular learning context. In the primary context staff may agree to focus future support on a particular year group to address a need identified by the data analysis. In the secondary context subject departments may bid for EAL teachers to work in partnership with subject teachers to raise attainment of a particular group of pupils.

Alternately in schools where there are several EAL staff, members of the EAL team may work closely with a small number of key staff over a period of time. An example of good practice cited in *Unlocking Potential: Raising Ethnic Minority Achievement at KS3* (DfES, 2002) refers to EAL teachers in a school acting as part of a teaching and learning focus group which regularly reviews leading practice and disseminates this practice to other members of staff.

The importance of planning

Effective planning is a vital component of quality support. EAL staff need access to and involvement in planning. Planning is necessary for supporting individual pupils and for collaborative teaching. In such collaborations, the role of the class/subject teacher is to share information about:

- curriculum content, knowledge, understanding and skills
- learning objectives
- teaching activities
- teaching resources
- tasks to be completed by pupils
- pupil targets
- assessment opportunities

The role of the specialist EAL teacher is to:

- share opportunities to draw on pupils' prior experience and first language
- contribute to the targets of pupils with EAL
- analyse language demands of the lesson
- identify and plan for language learning opportunities within the lesson
- share and agree teaching strategies that will address pupils' needs including collaborative work between pupils
- provide or develop visual materials and prompts to support pupils' learning
- provide or develop differentiated resources to ensure pupils' access to the curriculum and development of EAL
- enable pupils with EAL to transfer skills from one topic/subject to another.

The role of both teachers is to:

- define their roles in collaboration or support
- agree flexible groupings of pupils for different purposes
- agree behaviour management strategies
- agree assessment/marking responsibilities and practice
- monitor, evaluate and review the teaching collaboration/support

How does OfSTED define good practice?

OfSTED (2001) suggested the following key questions to identify good practice in models of teaching and support for bilingual learners:

- Is the specialist support available managed well? Is this deployment monitored by senior managers to ensure quality of provision?
- Does the support take account of those at an early stage of learning English as well as those who are more advanced, but still need support with developing literacy skills across the curriculum?
- Does the headteacher timetable staff so that joint planning is possible?
- Has the work for bilingual pupils been planned by liaison between the language support staff and the class/mainstream subject teacher?
- What is the extent of joint planning and how have the skills of both teachers been used effectively?
- Is there a focus on both language and subject content?
- What does the class teacher do differently by having an additional adult in the room?
- How has the teacher's practice changed through working with an EAL specialist?
- What contribution does the EAL specialist make to the improvement of standards?
- How effective is the collaboration?
- Are these features of good practice evident in withdrawal classes?
- Is any withdrawal support time-limited and are the outcomes reviewed regularly?
- Does all withdrawal work follow the National Curriculum?
- Are the differences between pupils who need to learn English and those who have learning difficulties clear and understood by all staff?
- Are experienced EAL staff enabled to play a strategic role in school by producing resources, offering advice and training across the curriculum?

The additional and valuable expertise of bilingual staff who share the languages and culture of the pupils is also recognised. Their role is seen to include work with small groups or individuals under the direction of a teacher and includes providing help to enable new pupils to settle in and understand what is going on around them.

More recent OfSTED publications (2004a, 2004b) have stressed the management role of EAL specialist teachers and consultants.

References

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