

Making provision for pupils at an early stage of learning English as an additional language

Do	Don't
ensure all trainees and new teachers know about effective teaching for pupils who are at an early stage of learning English	leave this to trainees' and new teachers' intuition or chance
ensure trainees know how to plan a range of rich activities to promote the use of language and relate it to literacy teaching	let trainees or new teachers assume pupils who have special educational needs and those who are at an early stage of learning English need the same type of additional support or intervention
assess the experience of new teachers during induction and adjust input accordingly	
ensure all new teachers know where to find additional information about how to meet the needs of pupils who are at an early stage of learning English	

One new teacher was working in a school where 94% of the pupils were at an early stage of learning English as an additional language. The input from her initial training focused on supporting these pupils by ensuring she used explicit, short instructions, visual cues and resources alongside modelling the activities. She was able to put these strategies into practice in her placement schools as all had high proportions of pupils at an early stage of learning English.

She was able to refine these approaches working with highly skilled practitioners in her current school. She was working in Year 3 as a new teacher and had developed talking partners to reinforce language development. She had used a 'buddy' system for new pupils, matching them with another pupil with the same first language. As a result, pupils had made very evident progress since October in terms of sentence length, order, expression and vocabulary.

Another new teacher had responded extremely well to support and feedback from the school during induction. She had transformed her planning for pupils at an early stage of learning English as an additional language from a low level to good during her first two terms of teaching. She had addressed the issue of guided support and integration for these learners. In the first term of her induction, the new teacher segregated the pupils at an early stage of learning English from the start of the lesson to work with an interpreter (who did not speak the same language as the pupils) while she worked with the rest of the class. Her planning did not consider the needs of this group from the outset and the activities given

to this group were not sufficiently rich experiences for developing language or literacy. When asking questions of the pupils, she often reverted to closed or rhetorical questions, or questions such as 'Did you understand that?', which rarely gave enough insight to their understanding.

In response to feedback the new teacher changed her practice considerably and by the second visit during her induction her practice was good. All pupils were included in all parts of the lesson including the introduction. She was using carefully planned talk partners so that the pupils at an early stage of learning English worked with other pupils during teacher-led sessions. Lesson-planning fully integrated planning for these pupils and lessons offered a rich variety of learning activities that promoted language development and literacy skills. For example, activities included reading text with picture cues, speaking and listening and labelling using picture cues, and then matching the label to the picture on the same theme ('fables') as the rest of the class. The role of support staff was explicit in planning and additional adults were fully engaged during the session, including during the whole-class session. The new teacher regularly checked the progress of the pupils at an early stage of learning English throughout the lesson if she was not working with them directly. In her weekly planning she established a good balance of input from herself as well as from support staff. She regularly took them for a guided group session while support staff worked with other groups.

Another new teacher had fewer children at an early stage of learning English as an additional language but was struggling with approaches and tended to group these pupils with pupils who had special educational needs. The limited focus in her initial training on stages of language development and the teaching of pupils at an early stage of learning English as an additional language had not prepared her well to identify pupils' needs. It was a similar case with the limited input for teaching disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs. She was unaware that it was inappropriate to assume that the strategies to support these two groups of learners were likely to be the same. She was actively seeking guidance, but the school's expertise was limited and external professionals had not been involved. In these circumstances the teacher was relying on intuition rather than accepted good practice.

How could this be improved?

- More input during initial training.
- Guidance on where to find information about effective practice when teaching language and literacy with pupils who are at an early stage of learning English.
- Working with another school with greater expertise in this area.