

Supporting Pupils and Families who have English as an Additional Language at Robert Ogden School (ROS)

June 23

A number of our pupils and their families who attend Robert Ogden School (ROS) have English as an Additional Language (EAL). The number of pupils and families with EAL continues to grow and the number of home languages is becoming increasingly diverse. Additionally, a number of our pupils, regardless of ability, have a special interest in other languages. These are both welcomed and valued at ROS as it opens pupils, staff and families to new cultural and linguistic experiences and provides opportunities to explore our British Values.

Our Key Principles:

1. All pupils are entitled to equal access to the curriculum
2. Forming and maintaining strong links with parents is fundamental to our pupils learning and development
3. Learning and using more than one language is an asset and opens up a learning opportunity for our pupils and staff
4. Promoting development in a pupil's home language will have a positive impact on their development in other languages

Potential difficulties when working with EAL and Autism Spectrum Conditions (ASC)

1. Distinguishing English language difficulties that are consistent with typical EAL development from those that represent disordered communication development associated with ASC. Whether or not they have EAL, all pupils at ROS experience some form of communication impairment, consistent with their diagnosis of autism. Accurate assessment of a pupil's receptive and expressive language skills must take into account EAL status and good practice guidelines.
2. Supporting pupils with complex communication needs and EAL to understand the language of the classroom and express their wants, needs, feelings and opinions. Pupils who have EAL may have English language difficulties associated with their Autism that impact on their ability to understand instructions, information or conversation and to express themselves clearly to English speaking adults and peers. Many of the methods used to develop communication skills across the whole school will support those pupils with EAL.
3. Families of pupils with additional needs may have come across outdated advice regarding stopping use of the home language and being monolingual. This is contrary to the increasing body of evidence. All staff at ROS must reassure families that current research and guidance says families should provide the best language model by speaking the language in which they are most fluent, should this be the families wish.
4. Establishing strong links with families in spite of a language barriers. A pupil on the autism spectrum is best supported when families and school work together. ROS is constantly striving to maintain, develop and strengthen our links with families. When working with families with EAL, existing language barriers must be addressed in order to optimise the pupil's progress.

Assessment

The admissions procedure identifies where English may be an additional language for pupils. A communication assessment is carried out either formally or informally, depending on the child's needs and ability to participate in assessment in order to identify their receptive and expressive communication skills. This is followed by collaborative goal setting, and intervention considerations can include coaching parents, family members, teachers, and peers to implement language facilitation strategies. This process must be personalised to each pupil and their family.

Supporting pupils on a daily basis at Robert Ogden School

There are many 'good autism practice' strategies that underpin our values and approaches within ROS which are also good strategies for supporting EAL pupils:

- *Use sign/visuals/objects:* At ROS a large emphasis is placed on using a range of appropriate visual supports to enhance a pupil's understanding and learning as part of a Total Communication Approach. Visual systems are in place throughout the school using both symbols and photos which do not rely on a pupil's understanding of a specific language. All staff are further trained on the importance of using and developing visuals through their induction training and further refresher workshops.
- *InPrint3:* InPrint3 is the symbol package which we use to create personalised receptive and expressive language communication systems. The new release (September 2016) has the additional ability to include translations so that English and additional languages can be added to symbols. This ensures that a pupil who is a PECS user can hear both languages between school and home, yet have a symbol that represents a consistent item.
- *Modelling social conventions:* Throughout all aspects of life at ROS, social skills are focused on as part of a pupil's daily experience. Staff are aware of ways to capitalise on naturalistic events to make social learning ongoing and meaningful for all pupils. Teachers also pro-actively implement social learning opportunities in their lesson plans.
- *Differentiate lessons to each pupil's language capability:* Due to the wide range of cognitive and communicative needs of our pupils, teachers at ROS are actively encouraged to differentiate a lesson for all pupils in their class. As autism practitioners, teachers are specifically skilled at using a range of multisensory learning to enable a pupil to access a lesson through other means than verbal language which is not only good autism practice but provides effective support for pupils who are learning English as an additional language.
- *Teaching in context:* Ensure that vocabulary is taught in context, therefore the meanings are clear, including non-literal language such as metaphors and idioms
- *Promote self-esteem and confidence:* Pupils with a good wellbeing and who have a positive view of themselves are more engaged in learning overall, but this also gives them the confidence to use English as an additional language
- *Processing time:* Extra processing time (alongside visual supports where required) allows the verbal language which the pupil hears to be processed before they can respond either verbally or in writing
- *Appropriate Pronunciation:* Young people and their parents' names will be pronounced correctly, with English variants and diminutives only used if stated by family

How we support our EAL families and pupils

Personalised Support

Each pupil and family will have their own preference for how they and their child are supported with EAL. We aim to work collaboratively with the family and pupil to achieve this, to promote their language development in their additional languages as well as their English.

Data Gathering

Upon receiving prospective pupil's paperwork and admission paperwork, the home and additional language is usually disclosed. This enables the school to support families and the pupil by the best means possible.

Respecting and Embracing Diversity

ROS places huge value on a pupil developing as an individual according to their religious, cultural and personal beliefs and aims to work with pupils and their families to support this. Pupils can develop understanding or awareness of their own and other pupils' linguistic and social cultures through a range of events including:

Culturally diverse assemblies/plays

Trips to culturally related places in the community (e.g.: local temples, synagogues, mosques etc.)

Working closely with parents of pupils to understand their perception of autism in their culture

Displaying work done by pupils in theme weeks so learning about different languages and social cultures is constantly showcased in the School

Ensuring resources used in classes and residential settings reflect a range of ethnicities and cultures

The aims of these events are to promote the valued differences and increase confidence and self-esteem of the pupils who may be more familiar with these countries, cultures and religions whilst introducing those who may be less familiar to these differences. This also supports 'Theory of Mind', where pupils can learn that different people live different experiences.

Recruitment

The school employs staff irrespective of their home language and staff are not required to disclose their home language. All staff are interviewed prior to employment at which point it is ascertained whether their proficiency in English is suitable for the post.

Interpretation and translation services

When required we contact translation services available in the locality to support. This is used for paper-based documents e.g. reports, as well as interpreters required to be present at meetings, such as Annual Reviews, via the phone or present in person. This cost will be covered by the school.

Other Relevant Policies:

Promoting British Values Statement

Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Development Policy