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Provision for new arrivals learning English as an additional language: Cheetham Church of England Community School

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Brief description

The school provides a welcoming environment for parents and children who are new to the UK so that they settle well. Pupils make rapid progress in learning English as an additional language through opportunities for speaking, including in their home language, and a well-trained school community.

Overview – the school's message

'Many of our children arrive at school with complicated and interrupted histories in education. To meet their needs we have to first understand their starting points and then find a suitable approach to their personal, linguistic and academic development. The first step for us is to know the learner. We have developed rigorous systems to find out all we can about them at the earliest opportunity. The next step is to identify an approach to learning based on that knowledge. The learning process is built on experience and scaffolded by talk. This allows the new arrival to engage with learning at the earliest opportunity and to experience success.'



Advice for others? Build a wide range of expertise at all levels and look for evidence of learning in all situations.

Karen Carter, Headteacher

The good practice in detail

New arrivals of all ages join the school every week from a range of backgrounds and experience of education, and with knowledge of English ranging from nil to advanced. In this situation traditional class teaching is replaced by a personal induction programme based on background knowledge about each pupil and a tailored curriculum building on their previous experience and their starting points. The school's most recent [inspection report](#) says, 'Support for pupils who speak a home language other than English is a key strength of the school's work and the linguistic skills of the staff ensure that the needs of all pupils are fully met.'

Induction of new arrivals

A pre-admission interview is carried out in the language spoken in the child's home; the staff speak a wide range of languages but if necessary, an interpreter is provided to find out as much as possible about the child. When they start school, children are placed with a trained 'buddy' who, wherever possible, speaks the same language as the new arrival. Checklists are provided for buddies at each Key Stage; [Foundation](#) and [Key Stage 2](#). The new arrivals receive a booklet containing key vocabulary, a bilingual dictionary and they can borrow dual language or picture books which reflect their own experiences to take home. Parents and carers receive a welcome pack which is translated. The children are assessed after an initial two-week period, according to English language steps linked to the National Curriculum. On the basis of this assessment, children are set individual language targets which are reviewed regularly. Pupils are also assessed for proficiency in their home language.

Teaching and learning



The aim in the [model for learning](#) is: 'To develop creative learners who can use language to express themselves with confidence and purpose.' The focus throughout is on talk through direct experience and play across all aspects of the curriculum. 'Talk for writing', 'talk for mathematics' and 'talking partners' are based on the belief that when pupils become confident speakers of English, their writing and mathematical skills will develop at a faster rate. 'We learn new things every day', says one girl.

All lessons have a focus on language structures and key vocabulary, to encourage and extend speaking and writing skills. The rich language curriculum is built on modelling and repetition.

Bilingualism

Children new to English are immersed in experiences that encourage them to talk and share their thinking using their home language. 'I can play in Arabic, Urdu, and Pashto,' said one happy child. This approach is linked to the school's [EAL policy](#) which states: 'Pupils are encouraged to share language with their peers and enjoy learning new words in a different language to help with their learning.'



The language spoken at home is encouraged so that

the message is clear that school is a continuation of experiences at home. Arabic is taught as the school's modern foreign language. Although pupils come from a wide range of backgrounds, the large majority are Muslim and many will have some familiarity with the language through studying the Koran. Mandarin is also offered to extend pupils' experience and understanding of another culture and language. In the nursery, Arabic-speaking children are told a story in Arabic every day. Pupils are able to transfer the skills they acquire through Arabic such as tenses, sentence structure to learning English. As one boy said, 'I can ask the teacher for help in Arabic.'

Staff training

The school invests in EAL training for all staff. Adults who work with children in the school are trained so that they can meet the social, emotional and linguistic needs of the children. The training covers the assessment of new arrivals at an early stage of learning English and also of advanced bilingual pupils to ensure they are fulfilling their potential. Teaching assistants are trained to use their bilingual skills to speak to children so that children hear good role models of spoken language. Monolingual English speaking staff have seen the benefits of learning some of the language spoken by children and parents.

Parental engagement

Parents and carers are involved through a babies and toddlers group, and classes in English language, childcare and ICT, leading to National Vocational Qualifications. Information and workshops are provided for parents and carers to support their children in learning through play, phonics, guided reading and mathematics. Parents and carers are invited to observe



lessons and there are regular open house coffee mornings for them. When children first start school, parents and carers are allowed to stay for up to six weeks. Subsequently they get feedback every two to three weeks about how their children are doing. 'It's like a second home for my child,' said one very satisfied mum.

The message is clear that if parents and carers are not fluent in English it is more beneficial for them to speak to their children at home in their first language, so that children hear rich models of language and can develop linguistic skills that are transferable to learning English. 'We are free to speak to our children in our home language,' said a dad who works in the school. To encourage more fathers to participate in their children's learning, a session, 'Come dine with dad' was organised for fathers to cook with their children. This high level of parental engagement is confirmed by pupils, one of whom said: 'Parents can come into school. They teach, help in the nursery, serve dinner, and work as governors; they are everywhere!'

The school's background



Cheetham Church of England Community School is a primary school of above average size in Manchester for children aged 3 to 11. Almost all of the pupils have been identified as speakers of English as an additional language and a high

proportion are at an early stage of English language acquisition.

Are you thinking of putting these ideas into practice; or already doing something similar that could help other providers; or just interested? We'd welcome your views and ideas. Get in touch [here](#).

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