

## **GUIDE FOR CLASSROOM ASSISTANTS – NEW ARRIVAL AND BEGINNER IN ENGLISH**

- Living and working in more than one language is an advantage and should be regarded as an enviable skill. Bilingual learners often perform better in SQA exams than their monolingual friends and are therefore not generally slow learners. The new arrival, once confident, should be encouraged to share some greetings and expressions in his home language. Everyone can benefit from this!
- Every chance should be taken to try to encourage talk and at times it may be possible to join a group as an interested observer or participator. Activities such as Art, Sand and Water and Cleaning and Tidying present opportunities to initiate and support children's speech. There may also be a chance to extend the range of vocabulary. A board game or jigsaw will also offer a chance for conversation.
- By blending in and responding to what is going on any communication offered by the bilingual child can be recorded. This will be especially significant if the child has not spoken before. It may not be appropriate to highlight the occurrence at the time, especially if the child would be embarrassed. However, it helps to let the teacher know about these markers of progress.
- In order to engage a new arrival it is useful to use his name consistently. This prompts him to realise that he should be involved in either listening or speaking.
- Try to ask open ended questions in order to encourage a child to speak. If you also use phrases or sentences rather than single words this will help initiate discussion e.g. "Shall we put it in this box or in this bag?" You will then help stimulate verbal interaction in order to improve competence with English.
- Within context, it is possible to expand vocabulary by using number, shape, colour and texture e.g. "Balloons?" "Yes, there are five, big, red, shiny balloons!"
- A silent period for pupils is perfectly normal and this can, at times, be quite lengthy. If you just keep talking, not expecting a response, you should notice that the pupil is taking everything in, even though he may not yet be willing to reply.
- Books which possess visual support for meaning and those with rhyme and repetition are most helpful for bilingual learners. When helping a child to make a selection try to make sure that the story is not too long as this can be discouraging.
- Highland has significant cultural diversity and therefore care should be taken not to make unfavourable comment when faced with alternative eating, dressing or toilet habits.
- When aiming to encourage or reassure it is worth remembering how effective a smile can be!