

HINTS FOR THE NURSERY – NEW ARRIVAL AND BEGINNER IN ENGLISH



- Bilingualism is good for you! The use of first language should be supported wherever possible. Children should be encouraged to speak with those who share the same home language as its development will aid proficiency with English and there may not be a suitable model for English at home.
- Staff and pupils should try to learn some new greetings or key phrases in order to show that the child's knowledge is valued.
- Welcome notices in heritage languages at the school entrance will educate pupils and visitors. This will also help all parents to feel involved.
- The first language will have an influence and mistakes in spoken English should be accepted. It is helpful to respond by using the correct form, modelling by rephrasing rather than focussing on errors.
- Speak to the bilingual child in a natural way, using vocabulary suitable for his stage. Gestures, actions and directed gazes all help to engage the child. If he does not respond, then continue to talk and make sure he realises that eye contact and nods are an acceptable answer. A silent period is perfectly normal, its length determined by each individual child.
- It can often be very useful to include other children and use them as the focus for discussion. Photographs of their activities and events help provide a relevance for conversation.
- A regular story time can promote the learning of English. It is best to keep the stories short and use visual and auditory clues. These could include pictures, photographs, objects or puppets. It is also helpful to present opportunities to respond with repeated words and phrases.

- Activities and routines can be used to encourage child-to-child interaction. In Nursery the most valuable are those which reinforce language practice through play. The bilingual child will certainly benefit from inclusion within small groups of children who provide a good model of English.
- Sand and water play promote language use in a non-threatening way.
- Integration is most successful if the child's name is used consistently and he is included in social responsibilities, such as handing out drinks or preparing snacks.
- Action games at the end of the session can help reinforce vocabulary. "Simon Says," "Heads, Shoulders, Knees and Toes" and "Heads Down, Thumbs up" employ parts of the body.
- Pictures, books or photographs of life in the pupil's heritage country introduced into the nursery will help educate all. Any multicultural resource helps promote tolerance and citizenship. Demonstration and engagement will show that you value diversity and respect the culture of any new arrival. Any discussions, which arise, can help reduce the likelihood of racist comments or incidents.

