TeachingEAL

Four priorities for the development of the EAL workforce in schools – supporting evidence

An independent report commissioned by the Training and Development Agency for Schools

Introduction

The Training and Development Agency has commissioned the Institute of Education, working with the Learning and Skills Network, to advise them on the development of a national school workforce strategy for EAL. This strategy sets out a vision for the next five years in which every EAL learner is supported in achieving their full potential, and every member of the teaching workforce is appropriately equipped to enable them to contribute in making this vision a reality.

The strategy is far-reaching, affecting all members of the teaching workforce across all key stages; those who have a classroom role (teaching and supporting learning), including EAL specialists and mainstream staff, as well as school leaders. It will have a significant impact on teacher training providers, quality assurance agencies and all those who support schools. Chief among these are Local Authorities, who already play a key role in EAL provision and will play a vital role in supporting the strategy and ensuring that it has maximum impact.

TDA has identified that there is a need for policy and practice to change. The population of EAL learners in England has increased consistently in recent years and with it demand for different types of EAL provision linked to new patterns of immigration. According to NALDIC figures from the 2008 school census indicate that EAL pupil numbers rose by approximately 25% between 2004 and 2008 to stand at 824,380, while the number of specialists EAL/EMA teachers has increased by just 8% during the same period. These figures demonstrate the mismatch in the system between demand and the available specialist workforce. This discrepancy results in additional pressures for the teaching workforce at all levels and undermines the principles of inclusion and equality of opportunity for EAL learners.

In order to provide an evidence base for the development of this strategy extensive research was carried out by the project team in the period of

November 2008 to April 2009. It had four strands and used a range of methods and approaches:

- **A research review** mapping the national and international relevant research since 2000;
- **Case studies** of EAL provision in schools collected in a variety of settings;
- Interviews with a group of experts in education and a written consultation with a group of EAL specialists;
- **A National Online Survey** of the workforce.

From the evidence collected during the research phase four key priorities were identified for the strategy:

1. **Equip the non-specialist workforce to help EAL learners achieve their full potential**

2. **Identify EAL specialist roles and equip EAL specialists to enable EAL learners to achieve their full potential**

3. **Enable the best possible use to be made of EAL specialists and embed collaborative working practices so that all EAL learners have access to specialist support**

4. **Ensure that EAL provision is monitored and evaluated effectively, and that it promotes raised achievement**

In this document you will find the empirical research evidence that we have collected across all four strands that underpins each of the four key priorities. The research review and case studies are now available as separate documents at
www.teachingEAL.org.uk

Key Priority One

Equip the non-specialist workforce to help EAL learners achieve their full potential

Introduction

The most consistent message from the research data collected was the need for specialist staff; their knowledge was seen as vital for EAL provision and everybody consulted confirmed that they were in short supply. Recent figures from NALDIC show that over the last four years there was an increase of just 8% in numbers of EAL/EMA specialist teachers nationally, well short of the 25% increase in EAL pupil numbers in the same period. However, the training of the non-specialist workforce has been placed as Priority One, simply because it involves a larger proportion of the current and future workforce, trainers and providers not because it is any more or less urgent than Priority Two: the training of specialists. Both of these priorities are seen as inseparable for the success of this strategy. In other words, effective EAL provision can only happen if both, mainstream and specialist teaching workforce are equipped with knowledge and skills to deliver their respective parts.

Similar views were reflected in the survey:

> *'This is a very important area that will become increasingly important in the future. EAL training needs to be part of everyone's training (not just the specialists).'*

In the case studies and the interviews there was a consensus that mainstream teachers need more EAL-focused training and advice. One element of this training need that emerged from the research was:

> *'…training mainstream teachers to work in partnership with EAL teachers and to collaborate with EAL teaching assistants.'*
> Survey respondent

In the case studies there was very little evidence of team teaching and even in cases where TAs received good training, they were not able to implement the ideas and strategies they gained because of the lack of a partnership culture of joint planning, teaching and assessment.

Many of the teachers consulted were not confident about their ability to use differentiation for EAL pupils and could not see the link between the strategies they did use and EAL achievement. A further concern was raised in regards to identifying giftedness either in language learning or in other fields, which is perceived as not fully operational at all levels. Mainstream teachers need to be more aware of the gifted and talented potential of bilingual learners.

Initial Teacher Training and Education

Any changes to the knowledge and skills base of mainstream teachers need to start from initial training. There is a lot of evidence, in NQTs surveys and school reports, that EAL training is currently a weakness. The most recent TDA NQT survey shows that In 2008 only 27% of trainees felt their training in EAL was good and 7% that it was very good. These are the lowest ratings given by trainees to any part of their course.

> *"EAL was included as an option. However, in today's climate I feel it should have been a separate course for all to attend rather than a few."*

All of the interviewees agreed that EAL should feature as a compulsory module in all core Initial Teacher Training (ITT) provision in order to guarantee significant input for all future mainstream teachers. To meet the Standards for Qualified Teacher Status trainees need to have an understanding of the distinctiveness of the task faced by learners of English as an additional language and the pedagogy that supports learners in the mainstream classroom. In the standards these are most clearly expressed in Q19:

> *Know how to make effective personalised provision for those they teach, including those for whom English is an additional language or who have special educational needs or disabilities, and how to take practical account of diversity and promote equality and inclusion in their teaching.*

However, NALDIC note in their audit of EAL training and development provision (TDA:2009) that the content of much LA and private provider training could be considered 'entry level' suggesting that it should form part of every teachers' ITT if they are judged to have met Q19 rather than needing to be offered as CPD.

It was also felt to be important that prominent EAL training in ITTE sends a clear message to trainees that EAL is the responsibility of all teachers whatever their subject-specific training.

- 'All teachers should be able to apply basic techniques when it comes to EAL learners. Most staff don't understand what the basic issues of bilingualism and as a result their teaching practice is not effective when it comes to EAL learners.'

One school leaders who participated in the survey provided a similar response:

> *'ITT providers MUST train teachers (especially primary and secondary English specialists) about students with EAL - a session or two or a 'training day' over an entire ITT training programme is not enough.'*

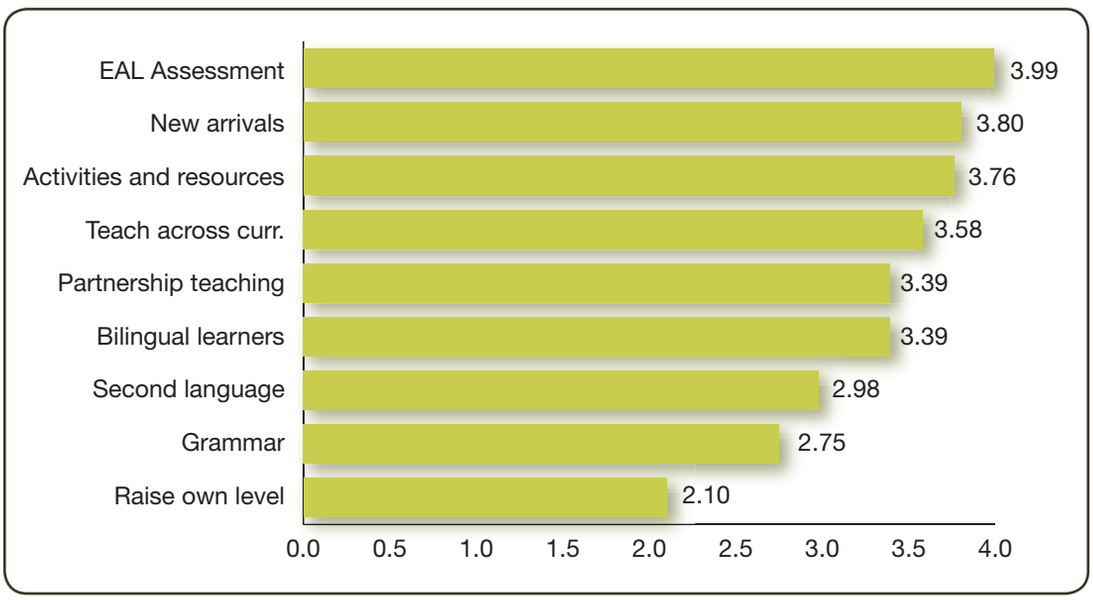
The review of research since 2000 confirmed the above, suggesting that a knowledge base for teachers that includes cultural, linguistic and cognitive dimensions (Christensen and Stanat 2007, Dresser 2007, Flynn 2007, Karabenick and Noda 2004, Leung and Creese 2008) was essential for mainstream teachers and the nonspecialist workforce, including:

- language proficiency (Paneque and Barbetta 2006)
- an understanding that many of the language strategies used for EAL teaching are good for English as a mother tongue learners too (Facella et al. 2005, Yoon 2007)
- training in the distinctions between EAL and EAL with special needs, (Layton et al. 2002)

On-going training

Of course, changes to ITT, while important, are only one part of the picture. There is also a real need to provide training and support for those already in the workforce. In the case studies there was a consensus that current mainstream teachers need more EAL-focused training and advice. The survey suggests that participation in training and perception of the effectiveness of that training lead to greater confidence amongst teachers in their ability to plan and deliver EAL lessons. This in turn affects their opinion of the overall effectiveness of their school in dealing with EAL.

We asked the participants in the survey to rate their training needs on a scale of one to five with five being the greatest need. This gave the following



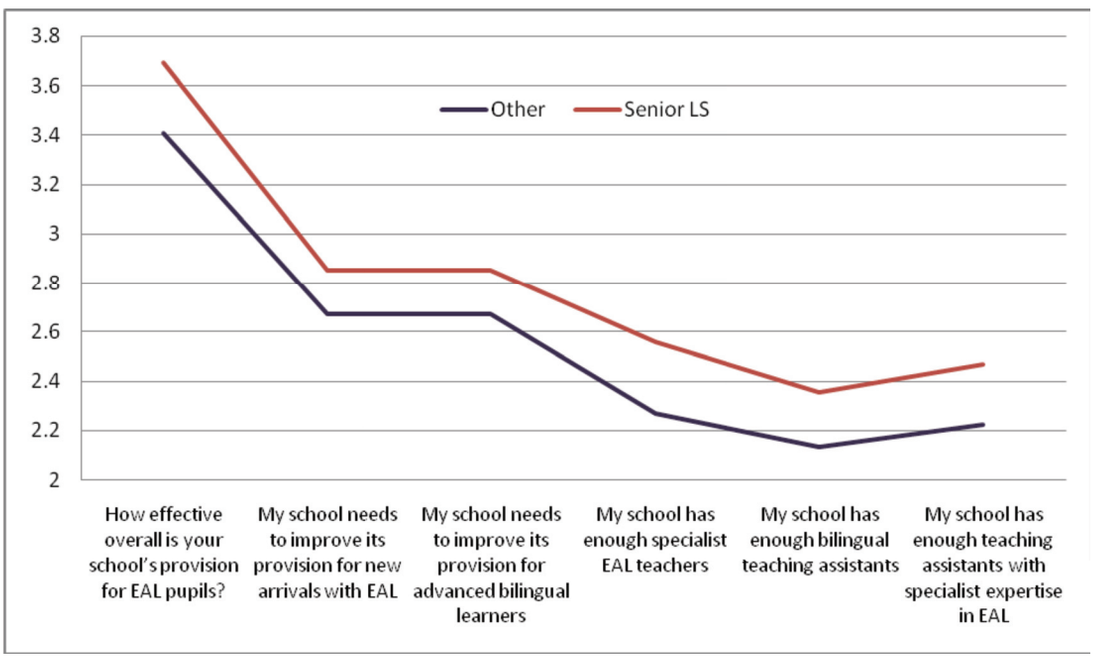
picture of training needs with assessment of EAL pupils seen by all groups of respondents as their most pressing need.

However, there was a mixed picture on EAL training available to the workforce. The NALDIC audit for TDA (needs ref) found that the situation was patchy and inconsistent with a high level of variation between the training available to staff in different local authorities (LAs) and regions.

Amongst the case study schools there was a distinct preference for training that was locally relevant. One school had sent members of staff on a range of courses run by the LA but had not found any courses specific and relevant to local EAL needs so had started to investigate possibilities for school-based training sessions. Indeed, there were a number of examples of this type of training. One head teacher explained that it was her policy to send one key member of staff on any relevant course and then to get them to adapt the content of the course to meet the needs, priorities and profile of the school and then to deliver more relevant training days or staff or department meetings. In another school the Lead Teacher for EMA was working with class teachers on how to identify the needs of EAL pupils and work with their TAs on supporting these.

School leaders

Many of the issues highlighted above were seen as being linked to a lack of relevant professional knowledge among school leaders. The survey showed that senior leadership had a consistently more positive view about the effectiveness of their EAL provision than the rest of the workforce.



The interviewees emphasised the need to raise awareness, particularly, among school leaders and managers on how improved EAL provision can contribute to educational achievement across the curriculum and several suggested that EAL should be an important element of the National Professional Qualification for Headship (NPQH).

Support staff

Survey respondents pointed to a need for both accredited and non-accredited national training for support staff. It was suggested that this should range from occasional training on awareness of EAL issues and general principles of supporting pupils with EAL to equipping TAs with the detailed knowledge of all aspects of EAL to allow them to contribute fully to EAL pupils' language development.

> *"To ensure all teaching assistants are fully aware of the issues facing children with EAL and have some form of specialised training to aid the development of these pupils. To make sure that all staff involve them and plan effectively for these pupils and give opportunities for them to develop speaking and listening skills to improve language acquisition. To also support their parents and carers in developing their language skills to."*
>
> Survey respondent

Key Priority Two

Identify EAL specialist roles and equip EAL specialists to enable EAL learners to achieve their full potential

There was a perception among interviewees that across the country there are fewer and fewer EAL specialists with a pressing need to train a new cohort.

The case study schools show a consistent picture of a lack of specialised staff to work with children with EAL. In one, a medium-sized secondary school, 95% of the school's learners were from minority ethnic backgrounds and yet the school has no dedicated EAL staff. The learners with EAL were mainly supported by TAs, some of whom were bilingual. The majority of them have little if any training.

The survey revealed a significant positive correlation between respondents saying that their school's provision for EAL is not effective and that they do not have enough specialist staff. Where respondents thought that their school had enough specialists they also rated it more effective and vice versa.

As we mentioned in the introduction to Key priority one, there are limits to the number of specialists that the system can train and employ thus the need for training for mainstream teachers. However, the lack of specialists causes a number of related problems to do with lack of specialist expertise. There are good EAL materials available through the National Strategies. However, these materials and others like them, require specialist knowledge and mainstream teachers need EAL specialists to mediate these for them. Without access to such knowledge it is also difficult for schools to mentor, support or train staff in working with learners with EAL. Depending on the numbers of EAL learners such expertise can be located in the school, across a cluster of schools or in the Local authority.

Career paths

The interviewees suggested that there should be new routes created

for specialists. For experts at LA level there should be qualifications for consultants; for practicing teachers there should be routes to become advanced EAL teachers and for TAs the opportunity to/ gain HLTA status as an EAL specialist. At the moment EAL is not seen as a good career move, because there are no clear progression routes. A clear career path for EAL professionals is emphasized in written responses data as essential in developing EAL expertise.

The lack of a structured EAL career path was evident from the research. Those with responsibility for EAL in a school could be called head or coordinator of EAL or EMA, they may be a specialist teacher but are more likely to be a TA. In one school the EAL Coordinator was a TA who had had no formal training in EAL work and had no relevant qualifications. This is problematic in terms of a lack of specialist knowledge but also in the effect it has on the status of EAL within the school.

> *'As with a number of other schools, EAL support work is entirely carried out by TAs. Using an HLTA to coordinate this work is possibly unusual. Although it is a good professional development opportunity for TAs, it does restrict the role and responsibilities of the EAL Coordinator; it poses problems in terms of line management and in terms of equality of status in liaising with and training mainstream staff. In this instance it leads to an outsourcing of EAL coordination; the SENCO manages the individual support programmes of targeted students and the English department carries out English fluency assessments and this work does not necessarily get channelled back directly to the EAL Coordinator. The structural arrangements also make it less easy for all the other related initiatives – curriculum, parent links – to be seen and developed in a coherent fashion.'*

Roles and responsibilities

The case studies and the survey together show a range of job titles and a lack of consistency/clarity over the responsibilities of each. This is compounded by the management of EAL provision also being an ill defined role that is often carried out, either formally or informally, by a TA.

It was clear that those in charge of EAL in schools often lack relevant and appropriate knowledge and qualifications. Sometimes they are given the responsibility for EAL but they have no experience in that area. The title of EAL teacher was rarely heard even in schools with very high numbers of children with EAL.

EAL provision was also found within SEN, EMA, learning support or inclusion teams rather than EAL and was often managed by the head of that service within the school. Accordingly, the line management of the EAL coordinator or head of EAL was taken by a range of staff at different levels of the school management structure, from SENCOs to head teachers. This contributes to a lack of visibility and status of EAL within the school, and also causes problems for the smooth functioning of EAL provision to children.

The participants in the interviews agreed that the area of roles, responsibilities and management of EAL is not systematized; the following picture emerged: SEN/Inclusion managers in charge of EAL, has been a frequent model for some time, while members of school leadership teams are increasingly involved in the management of EAL. In primary schools Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) managers are often in this role. This is frequently the case in areas where the population is settled, since the EYFS will be where the demand will be the greatest. In the few primary schools where there are EAL teachers/specialists, they tend to be quite influential and often manage school policy, provision and training. Due to a decrease in the number of specialist teachers and funding issues, management of policy and practice is increasingly given to HLTAs and to TAs. Sometimes, but this is less common, a mainstream teacher who is interested, will be in charge of EAL. These teachers are quite often bilingual themselves. The EAL co-ordinator role seems to only exist where there is a significant level of grant funding and more frequently in secondary schools.

The landscape is changing all the time and what is clear is that there are fewer teachers and more TAs. This was seen as a consequence of the rise in EMAG funded TAs over time and the shortage of EAL specialists.

Status
The interviewees recognised EAL specialists as those who are a point of reference in schools. EAL specialists need to influence change in culture and school practice. TAs generally do not have the status to do that.

Inclusion
Not having enough specialist staff was perceived by one interviewed expert as undermining the principles of mainstreaming and inclusion:

> *'Provision trickles down into schools to be a pale imitation of what is imagined by policy makers. Providing in-class support once a week to a new arrival is a prime example of mainstreaming EAL when the number of staff is insufficient to make that model efficient.'*

This view was echoed by a number of other interviewees who talked about lack of staff to implement relevant National Strategy initiatives and cascade materials and models of good practice. Materials and strategies without a sufficient number of specialists to implement them were judged as insufficient for delivering needed practice transformation.

Catering for different needs

In the case studies there were examples of processes and materials in place to deal with new arrivals. While these were inconsistent, largely focused on process and varied greatly across the schools there was a sense of schools addressing the issue. Some schools had developed specific induction packs for newly arrived pupils and at others those new to the school receive induction into the way the education system works. Some of the materials for these are translated and some interpreting was offered.

However once a new arrival was considered to be beyond the early stages of English fluency they often appear to no longer get support. One school runs a study skills option class led by the EAL HOD, which provides a mixture of coursework support and focused language learning but there was little evidence of explicit provision made for advanced stage EAL learners. This would appear to be because of a lack of specialist staff.

The research review has shown that all bilingual students needs to be recognized for the value they bring to the classroom, and that the importance of developing academic registers specific to academic success for EAL pupils must be recognized (Kotler et al. 2001). Furthermore, bilingualism needs to be encouraged from an early age (Kenner 2004), where possible, and the fact that bilingual pupils are better at some aspects of English than others needs to be recognized and built upon (Cameron and Besser 2004, Robertson 2006, Wiese 2004).

Key Priority Three

Enable the best possible use to be made of EAL specialists and embed collaborative working practices so that all EAL learners have access to specialist support

School structure

Key to enabling growing numbers of specialists and increasingly well-trained and aware mainstream teachers to have a real impact on the achievement of learners with EAL is the organizational structure of the school. Many of those consulted felt that too often, even where there was access to expertise and willingness to support learners with EAL, the organization of the school was detrimental to effective change.

The following observation was made in one of the written consultation responses:

> *'During the schools visits last summer it was evident that there was recognition of the need for schools and staff at all levels to know more about how they might address the needs of EAL learners and provide appropriate provision. However it was also evident that in face of many demands on school priorities the needs of EAL learners were not always being effectively addressed. This needs to be seen within the restructuring of the county wide service which has resulted in a reduction of specialist EAL teaching input to schools and an emphasis on schools taking greater responsibility for their EAL and minority ethnic learners.'*

One survey respondent emphasised the need for consistency and recognisable processes and procedures to be put in place within all EAL departments. Channels should be created for EAL staff to influence school policy to meet the needs of their learners with EAL."

SEN and EAL

Separating EAL from SEN emerged from the data of all four research strands as the most important priority in terms of school structures, moving away from a deficit model of bilingual learners and ensuring appropriate EAL provision focused on language acquisition and bilingual development. All

participants in the interviews and written response consultation emphasised the urgency of separating EAL from SEN.

As can be seen in the case studies, often EAL is understood to be part of the work of the SEN team and is often managed by the SENCO. There seems to be a lack of clarity in distinctions between EAL and SEN with the consequence that there is often no clearly-identified criteria for identifying the language needs of pupils.

As one interviewee succinctly put it:

> *'Some teachers think EAL learners start from zero in English. They need to forget or cannot use what they know in other languages. They treat beginners in English as an empty vessel or even worse as learners with SEN needs, who need everything simplified and slowed down. There is research which provides evidence that using other languages and subject knowledge gained in other languages has many advantages and needs to be a starting point for acquiring skill and knowledge in English. Teachers need to be aware of this.'*

The structural association with SEN was emphasised in a number of case study schools. In one there were about 30 TAs deployed in SEN roles, including EAL, with which there was perceived to be some overlap. In another all newly arrived pupils who were not regarded as completely fluent in English were placed automatically on the SEN register.
And in a third, pupils identified for support were given an individualized education plan, which is intended to build on the curriculum that a child with learning difficulties or disabilities is following.

Withdrawal, mainstreaming and inclusion
Views expressed about withdrawal practices were mixed. Survey respondents were asked to indicate the balance between in-class support and withdrawal from class. Only 33% said that there was more in-class support than withdrawal.

Observations made in case studies were varied but also suggested that withdrawal of children with EAL was common despite moves to promote inclusion. In one school it was noted that:

> *'…there is an awareness amongst the Coordinators that EAL pupils are best served in the mainstream classroom and in inclusive environments in order to give them good models of English. However the practice*

is to place them in groups together with pupils with a range of special educational needs where they work with TAs. Sometimes these groups work outside the mainstream classroom and pupils very new to EAL may work one-to-one with TAs on basic vocabulary outside the classroom. The reasons cited for this discrepancy are the practicalities of organising TA support and the lack of training in - and therefore understanding of - EAL strategies amongst mainstream staff.'

Some school leaders who participated in the survey suggested that a limited amount of structured and targeted withdrawal can help new arrivals settle in better:

'Having a policy of a mixture of withdrawal and assessment and progression for students. Having one teacher within each school who is responsible for new intakes.'

Other survey respondents however recognised the value of developing skills for withdrawal work which can then also be applied while providing in-class support:

'…to develop support staff to work with students on a one to one or small group basis outside the classroom but to apply knowledge to assist all students in the classroom.'

Collaborative planning and partnership teaching was identified by several interviewees and several headteachers, who participated in the survey, as 'the ideal model' for classroom practice. One school leader who participated in the survey said that we should:

'…ensure there is support for teachers in class, withdrawal is not the answer as they (pupils) spend most of the time with their class teacher. We should have more dedicated EAL teachers, who are integrated into class teaching teams to work in partnership with them.'

Valuing linguistic potential

In terms of pedagogical approaches one interviewee stated that:

'the essence of good practice would be plurilingual approaches which develop learners' plurilingual competence holistically and do not create divisions or conflicts between the learning of different languages.'

These approaches would apply to all subjects in terms of drawing on

learners' competence in other languages, and/or encouraging the transfer of concepts between languages to deepen understanding.'

Two interviewees highlighted that planning for EAL learners needs to start from their most relevant prior knowledge, like for all other learners. In the case of EAL learners this most relevant prior knowledge is of their home languages and also their subject knowledge in their home languages.

The case studies provided evidence that use of first languages is integrated in teaching and learning in some schools. One case study school recognises the part the first language plays in EAL development and in learning and encourages pupils to use their first languages in exploring concepts. In the introductory pages on its website and in its prospectus signal this and include positive statements about the value and importance of pupils' bilingualism.

In other schools the use of a wide range of languages was noted in the vibrant and diverse displays around the school, topics within the school curriculum and the clubs and events on offer in the Learning Resources Centre.

The research review suggested that bridging of the divide between schools and the community (Conteh et al. 2007, Guo and Mohan 2008, Karabenick and Noda 2004) was important so that:

a. there is a move away from a deficit model of EAL (Conteh et al. 2007, Parke et al. 2002) towards high expectations (Olson and Land 2007);
b. the full range of linguistic and cultural competence is taken into account in designing literacy interventions in classrooms (Wallace 2005); and
c. there is recognition that national policy needs to be interpreted locally (Creese 2003, Leung and Creese 2008)

Peer support in the first language was also recorded in the case studies. In one school pupils were encouraged and invited to use their first language as a way into mainstream activities. The school operated a 'buddy' system and where possible the buddy shared the first language of the new arrival. Older pupils were invited to produce some of their written work in their first language and where possible the school would find other speakers of pupils' first languages to do some work with them in the classroom.

Support for schools

The case studies provided mixed evidence on the strengths of links between

LA EAL teams and schools. In some cases this was seen as working well with LA advisors delivering EAL training and school staff attending LA EMA forums and network meetings. In other schools this was not the case and there had been very little contact.

There was also little evidence of communication and co-operation among clusters of schools although one Deputy Head was exploring the possibilities of developing regular and formal contacts with schools in the area that have similar ethnic profiles.

Survey participants also expressed interest in sharing resources and networks:

> *'Develop a Programme of Study to enable progression - at times there is a limited amount of resources available;*
>
> *'Hold meetings with EAL teachers to discuss issues - often EAL teachers are on their own in their own schools'*
>
> *'Develop cluster groups/discussion forums for sharing ideas, resources and good practice and to offer a support system.'*

Further suggestions were made by a school leader in the survey:

> *'Develop a register of good practice and guidelines for meeting needs. A recognised list of suppliers of published materials and a regional list of bilingual interpreters would also be useful. More dual language resources - naming and vocabulary type would also be good.*

Key Priority Four

Ensure that EAL provision is monitored and evaluated effectively, and that it promotes raised achievement

All interviewees agreed that senior leadership teams need to ensure a whole school approach to EAL in schools policies, classroom practice, school ethos EAL can only have a high status at the school level if it permeates from the school leadership. Evidence collected in the research phase supported the view that this can best be achieved through prominent inclusion of EAL in the processes of self evaluation and inspection.

Self evaluation

Inclusion of EAL in school self evaluation forms (SEF) would trigger reflection on what the school does to support learning and should go beyond the collection of achievement data.

> *'If I go to a school which is proud of their EAL provision, first of all they will tell me all about their data, then they will tell me all about their careful tracking and show me pages of names with stage numbers next to them and possibly some statistics which show how pupils have moved within these, but if I say to them OK, so you have a learner of English in the school, what do you actually do to support them to learn? The talk often dries up and certainly becomes a lot less specific, they might say buddies, inclusion and then refer to some kind of specialist provision or support but often quite vaguely in this. This feeling that we have spent too long on 'managing' learning isn't necessarily popular but I do feel we need to get away from it and start thinking more about learning and teaching.'*

Inspection

Focusing on EAL within the inspection of schools, where appropriate, will be of great importance. Not only will this be central to monitoring progress towards meeting the aspirations of the strategy, it will also provide evidence of good practice and, as with the SEF, encourage schools to reflect on their EAL provision.

Inspection of the EAL element of ITT will also be important. The move to more emphasis on generic aspects of training in the revised OFSTED inspection framework for ITT may mean that ITT providers are not inspected or probed on their work on EAL, despite the fact that NQTs survey have been showing the lowest rate of satisfaction with that aspect of their training.

Assessment

Another consistently expressed view was that there is a need for an EAL curriculum and language specific assessment tools. With such a curriculum it would be possible to measure pupils' linguistic progress, giving an agreed national measure of EAL progress.

One of the strong findings of the research review was that assessment frameworks for EAL development and achievement are needed (Rea-Dickins 2001), with:

a. distinctions between summative and formative assessment clearly made (Leung and Rea-Dickins 2007);
b. more sensitivity to context (Teasdale and Leung 2000, Walters 2007);
c. awareness of the potential for learning of assessment models and encounters (Rea-Dickins 2006);
d. distinctions between language learning needs, special educational needs and curriculum content needs made (Rea-Dickins 2001); and
e. lessons learnt from successful models in the USA and Australia (Scott and Erduran 2004).

Throughout the research, it is clear that assessment needs to be used for diagnosis and to support learning.

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