



National Day Nurseries Association

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# Factsheet

A photograph of a woman with dark hair tied back, wearing a red vest over a white shirt, kneeling on a wooden floor and smiling at a young girl. The girl, with dark hair in a braid, is wearing a grey long-sleeved shirt and purple patterned pants, and is gesturing with her hands. In the background, there is a wooden shelf filled with various toys, including teddy bears, stuffed animals, and colorful blocks. The wall is decorated with colorful paper cutouts of animals and shapes. A purple circular graphic is overlaid on the right side of the image.

## Getting Ready for School: COVID-19: Supporting children and families with English as an Additional Language (EAL)

# Getting Ready for School:

## COVID-19: Supporting children and families with English as an Additional Language (EAL)

This factsheet has been developed to help nurseries support parents and children with English as an Additional Language (EAL) during the lockdown period. It provides tips and activities to promote children's language at home and activities to support the transition to full time school.

### Introduction

During the lockdown period children will have been playing and learning at home. Some children will be hearing and using their individual home languages, and some families may speak more than one language together. All these provide a rich foundation for children's language development.

As a nursery, in the term prior to starting school, you would normally be preparing children for the transition. Amongst other things, you would be introducing key vocabulary in English and home language to give children confidence throughout the school day.

During lockdown some children may not have had daily exposure to the English language. The following activities have been provided as a general guide for you to pass on to families to support the exposure and use of English whilst children are away from nursery. As a nursery, you will know your families best and be able to adapt ideas and suggestions based on individual family circumstances.

### How these activities will support children

Language-rich activities will help prepare children for starting school and enable them to feel more secure. Children may already be able to communicate confidently with peers using the same language. Learning some English words will enable them to interact with other children and join in with the routines of the school day.

### Activities and experiences to support development of English language

- Listen to lots of music, rhymes and songs. Nursery rhymes and action rhymes can really support children's language development
- Send families a link, or a video, of practitioners from nursery singing a rhyme a week. Send the children's favourite rhymes to begin with

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- Encourage families to listen to and share books and stories. There are lots available online (further links provided at the end of the factsheet)
- Send videos of staff reading books. You could send links to stories on YouTube
- Share links to dual language stories on the internet. Libraries are providing live stories and rhymes online
- Make up books or stories with pictures and key words. Use familiar photos from the nursery setting along with key words and post, or email, them to parents. Encourage them to share these with their children
- Share ideas for simple games, for example picture lotto, I spy – you could do this by colour rather than sound and in the child's first language if preferred. Share website links to online games too (further links provided at the end of the factsheet)
- Arrange some live video sessions where you could tell a story or sing a song one-to-one with the child. You could use WhatsApp, Zoom or Facebook video call.

## Activities to support the transition to school

Starting at a new school can be a nerve-wracking experience for both parents and children, at any time. This can be even harder for children who are not able to communicate in English. At nursery children may have learnt to understand lots of English and may have started to use these words in their play and interactions. However, during the coronavirus pandemic and lock down restrictions, some children will have had limited exposure to English. This may leave them and their parents and carers, feeling a little anxious about starting school in September. You could try some of the following:

- Keep in touch with families during the lockdown and share activity ideas like the ones above. These will all help the development of the English language
- Provide parents and carers with key words about school translated into English. These could include coat peg, book bag, register, assembly, school hall, PE, playground, carpet time
- These are just some of the key words that may be new to them. Share a visual display of daily routines at school for example, snack time, hand washing, playtime, group time. You could contact your local school to ask them what their routine will be
- Contact the school the children are going to and request photos or video of the teacher, the classroom and the building. Send these to families to look at together. There are further ideas in the starting school parent factsheet at <https://bit.ly/2XuhlWW>

## Summary

Remember to reassure parents that it is very important that they continue to speak, play and read to children in their home language too, as this will support their child's learning and development.

*'Children are natural linguists. With your support children learning EAL will have the best foundation for becoming truly bilingual, with all the intellectual and social benefits this confers.'* Supporting children learning English as an additional language, DSCF 2007, p18.

## Further support and links

- BBC Bitesize for videos, games and activities <https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize>
- BBC, 'What's it like learning English' (2020), last accessed online 30.4.20 at: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/newsround/51648423>
- BBC, 'Are students learning English being supported enough?' (2020), last accessed online 30.4.20 at: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/newsround/51574898>
- Books and information <https://www.booktrust.org.uk/>
- Cbeebies for a selection of stories and games <https://www.bbc.co.uk/cbeebies/stories>
- Hungry Little Minds <https://hungrylittleminds.campaign.gov.uk/>
- Oxford Owl for home, free eBook library for children age 3-11 <https://www.oxfordowl.co.uk/>
- Free online stories <https://www.lovereadings4kids.co.uk/>
- NDNA Separation Anxiety and Transition Factsheets for nurseries and parents at [www.ndna.org.uk/factsheets](http://www.ndna.org.uk/factsheets)

**Disclaimer - Legislation and policy guidance change regularly. It is the responsibility of the nursery to review the latest COVID-19 guidance from the Government when using this information.**

**The information is relevant as of 11 May 2020. Should changes in legislation or policy guidance emerge after this date, this factsheet may not fully reflect these. It is advised that you continue to review the latest COVID-19 guidance from the Government. This factsheet should be used in conjunction with all government guidelines which can be found at [www.gov.uk/coronavirus](http://www.gov.uk/coronavirus)**

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# Factsheet

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We are the voice of the 21,000-strong nursery sector, an integral part of the lives of more than a million young children and their families. We provide information, training and advice to support nurseries and the 250,000 people who work in them to deliver world-class early learning and childcare.

See the full range of NDNA factsheets at [www.ndna.org.uk/factsheets](http://www.ndna.org.uk/factsheets)

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