

Using EAL Technology – Our Professional Development

Setting: Gaskells Nursery

Project Leader: Karen McWilliam

We currently have 26 children attending who are learning English as an additional language. On roll we currently have 116 children whose home language is English, 3 children who speak Lithuanian, 4 who speak Gujarati, 2 children who speak Urdu, 4 who speak Punjabi, 2 children who speak Mandarin, 2 children who speak Hungarian, 2 children who speak Dutch, 3 children who speak Polish and 4 children who speak French. We offer children flexible and set sessions during the week to cater for each family's childcare needs. For example, we offer 8am-1pm, 1pm-6pm, full day sessions and a flexible hourly rate for parents who wish to choose their own sessions. We gather a wealth of information from parents upon admission in to nursery. For example, personal details, such as address and telephone, their medical, health and dietary requirements. In addition, we find out about the children's likes, dislikes, their routines at home and information about their prior skills.



Gaskells Nursery has been slowly evolving over the seven years since the current owners, Alicia and Rob, have taken over. Priorities have always been to provide high quality childcare in an excellent learning environment. The whole nursery has been totally refurbished to high standard. Our current priorities

include finishing the inside, such as the sensory room and two year old room extension and continuing to improve the outdoors. Over the last few years more and more families are applying to our nursery from wider cultural groups. This means that we have children and families that speak lots of different languages, some we have not heard of. As a result, we have become a lot more reliant on our parents and other family members to translate for us and Google translate along with other apps. Sometimes this is problematic and we have really struggled on occasion, such as when there are no family members that speak English and when there are no other parents that can support us and the new family.



To help us do this we tried the penpals and the apps on the iPads. The penpal, although we didn't use them with parents we found these very beneficial to use with the children. The novelty of the pens, we found, had a positive impact on children's listening and attention skills. For example, children who were learning English as an additional language engaged when we used the pen to translate a story in their home language. In addition, we used the dictionary to translate many keywords to aid communication with children. The staff would copy words the words or phrases and repeat them back to the children in the child's home language, therefore, enhancing the staff's professional development. Another

big advantage of the pens was the how significantly they supported children who were not meeting their expected milestones in communication and language, but were not EAL. We started to use the pens in our language groups and again the novelty of the pens encouraged the children to listen to and repeat key words. The staff reported the children made good improvement in speaking and loved the activities in which the pens were used. Therefore, we started to use the pens not only to support the EAL children but the children who were identified as not meeting their milestones in CL. Assessments have shown that along with other activities, the pens have had a good impact on children's expressive language development.



The children love the iPads and there has been improvement in children's attention and listening and speaking skills. However, this has been due to the small group activities, such as the games and photos we took during the sessions of the children on the iPads. These were the focus of a lot of conversations. The Apps did not contribute to this with the children. This is because the Apps that translate rely on the correct pronunciation and our children were not at that stage. Therefore, the Apps failed to recognise what the children were saying. However, they are useful when speaking to parents. We still view the iPads as an important contributor to the progress children have made, just not in the way that we originally thought they would help. Due to their success we are going to purchase our own iPads and continue to use these with the children.



At the start of the project child A was 37 months and assessed using the EYO as emerging in to 16-26 months in CL. At the end of the project child A aged 42 months is assessed in CL as emerging in to 22-36 months. At the start of the project child A did not speak any English now the child can point to and name in excess of 50 objects. She also sings along to, and joins in with the actions, to some familiar songs and rhymes. There has also been a significant improvement in her PSED.

