

Promoting best-practice for EAL and GRT children in Early Years settings and their families

EMTAS recognises that Early Years professionals strive to ensure that they have the knowledge and skills to provide an inclusive setting for all children. However we know that it can be challenging to achieve this and to work with families who have English as an additional language (EAL) or who are from Traveller heritages (GRT).

In order to help settings develop and embed best practice in relation to their EAL and GRT children and families, EMTAS has created this checklist. Settings can use it to help them reflect on current practice and to identify strategies that will promote full inclusivity.

More information about how EMTAS can support Early Years settings can be found on our website and includes training for Early Years settings, available through [Services for Young Children](#) (SfYC).



Best Practice in Early Years settings

Key (note that children of Eastern European Roma heritage may have both **EAL** and **GRT** needs)

General **Blue**
 EAL specific **Green**
 Traveller (GRT) specific **Red**

Name of Setting		
Reviewed by (name(s) of staff)		
Date		
Checklist for review of current practice		
In your setting, how do you...	Ideas/suggestions re what this might look like in your setting (not exhaustive)	Comments (what you do/would like to start doing in your setting – may include things listed in 'Ideas/suggestions' column)
Create a learning environment that is welcoming and inclusive. By doing this children and families feel safe, secure and valued with greater a sense of belonging.	<p>Display photographs, posters and other resources to reflect cultural and linguistic diversity eg</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Images from families from different cultural backgrounds <input type="checkbox"/> Map of the world <input type="checkbox"/> Display key words/ greetings in different languages <input type="checkbox"/> writing in different languages <input type="checkbox"/> dual language and other resources for role play area reflecting children's cultures and languages <input type="checkbox"/> Travellers Times, books and other resources eg caravan, carts and horses etc (barges, fairgrounds, circuses) 	

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<p>When they first start, find out about each child and their family background, by doing this you will be better able to meet their needs. Make sure you advise parents to continue to use their home language. Free leaflets can be found on the EMTAS website here.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Ask if each child has attended any previous setting. If they have, how well did they integrate, were there any concerns <input type="checkbox"/> Learn to pronounce names correctly <input type="checkbox"/> Find out about each child's interests <input type="checkbox"/> Find out how each child likes to be comforted (there may be cultural sensitivities around the use of physical contact) <input type="checkbox"/> Find out the best way of communicating with parents (Ask parents for their preference eg written, verbal, e-mail, phone, face-to-face) <input type="checkbox"/> For parents who have little English, there is a useful online tool that can be used to gather important background information (note that this does not cover all possible languages) <input type="checkbox"/> Use a 'Language Identification chart' to find out the correct language(s) used in the child's home. <input type="checkbox"/> Note which languages are spoken and with whom <input type="checkbox"/> Find out which language is the strongest or preferred for a) the child and b) the parents <input type="checkbox"/> Find out if there are any variations in dialect 	
<p>Make sure you know about cultural sensitivities. This is important because it will give you a better understanding of each child's</p>	<p>Find out about any cultural/religious needs relating to diet, self care and independence such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Wearing certain jewellery/clothing <input type="checkbox"/> Reluctance to play or talk with opposite gender 	

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<p>cultural needs.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Refusing to sit on the carpet <input type="checkbox"/> Refusing to take part in certain activities for example stories with pigs, Christmas etc <input type="checkbox"/> Unwilling to play with certain toys for example boys not engaging in role play/home corner <input type="checkbox"/> Develop your understanding of parental expectations that may be different in some ways <input type="checkbox"/> Remember that children's different educational experiences may affect their behaviour within your setting <input type="checkbox"/> Allowed only Halal/Kosher food or avoiding beef/pork products (this may include gelatine which is found in many sweets) <input type="checkbox"/> Not giving eye contact <input type="checkbox"/> Differences in body language for example using reverse body language to say 'yes' or 'no' <input type="checkbox"/> Using home language words or phrases to express basic needs for example going to the toilet 	
<p>Ensure all staff share knowledge and understanding of the EAL and GRT children within your setting. This will help you achieve a consistent approach.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Share background information with the whole team <input type="checkbox"/> Avoid assumptions and generalisations <input type="checkbox"/> Keep a record of information in child's file <input type="checkbox"/> Keep up to date with best practice by attending training sessions and accessing information online for example early years section on EMTAS website 	

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<p>More generally, raise cultural awareness and create an inclusive environment. This helps prepare all children for life in a diverse society.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Add to the role play area cookery utensils and clothing from different cultures and newspapers/magazines and food packaging in different languages. You may be able to source these things from your families and from local shops <input type="checkbox"/> Use Persona Dolls to help children understand and respect each other's values and cultures <input type="checkbox"/> Celebrate different festivals <input type="checkbox"/> Include story sacks, props and puppets reflecting different cultures in your learning environment. You can borrow multilingual and multicultural resources from EMTAS and Hampshire Library Service 	
<p>Where relevant to your setting, encourage the use of first language. This helps raise the self-esteem of children who speak other languages at home, promotes access to the range of activities provided and demonstrates that you value linguistic diversity.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Try to encourage children who speak the same language to play together <input type="checkbox"/> Learn to say greetings and numbers in the children's languages (can be done by children and adults alike) <input type="checkbox"/> Use keywords in the children's home languages when introducing new concepts for example 'less', 'more', 'little', 'big'. Parents can be a good source you can draw on to do this <input type="checkbox"/> Invite parents/EMTAS staff to do a dual language story-telling session, record songs and rhymes in other languages <input type="checkbox"/> Acknowledge and praise children for using words and phrases in their home languages 	

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Sing action songs in English and other languages. YouTube and websites such as Mama Lisa can help you do this 	
<p>Provide visual support to help all children understand the routines of your setting. This helps reduce anxiety and promote a sense of feeling safe and secure.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Use visual prompts when giving instructions and to support children when they are choosing activities – and accept non-verbal responses eg pointing <input type="checkbox"/> Use communication fans to help children communicate their basic needs 	
<p>Promote parental engagement. This has a positive impact on children’s learning and helps parents know how best to support their children at home.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Where needed, take extra steps to engage with parents <input type="checkbox"/> Personalise your approach <input type="checkbox"/> Where relevant, introduce the child’s key person to the parents <input type="checkbox"/> Show parents you are genuinely interested in engaging with them <input type="checkbox"/> Take time to explain expectations, using simple language where necessary <input type="checkbox"/> Involve parents when delivering cultural activities – be careful to avoid tokenism <input type="checkbox"/> If possible, allow parents to spend time in the setting so they can have first hand experience of how their children are learning <input type="checkbox"/> Use interpreters and translated materials as appropriate <input type="checkbox"/> Invite parents to support a dual language story-telling session 	

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> share pictures, stories or videos of horse fairs, fairgrounds, circuses, barge stories (Rosie & Jim) 	
<p>Use EAL/GRT best-practice strategies to support children's learning. This will help ensure children enjoy the best early years experience possible.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Encourage each child to engage with activities <input type="checkbox"/> Accept non-verbal responses <input type="checkbox"/> Use visuals, gestures, modelling and intonation to support communication and engagement <input type="checkbox"/> Use simple language to give clear, concise instructions <input type="checkbox"/> As with other children, regularly observe and record progress in learning –including a child's use of non-verbal gestures, or examples of a child switching from one language to another <input type="checkbox"/> Model the target language <input type="checkbox"/> Use recasting to support children to develop their English <input type="checkbox"/> Place the child with more able children who can be strong role models in terms of English language and behaviour <input type="checkbox"/> Accept responses in the child's home language 	