

## Closing the Gap Project on the Progress in Writing for EAL Pupils

### Background to the "Closing the Gap" project

- Within my current Year 3 class of 24 pupils, I have 4 children who have English as an additional language (EAL).
- Our Ofsted report has not reported any concerns regarding pupils with EAL as they are a minority within the demographic. However, for my class, EAL is the largest minority group so I felt this group was pertinent to study.
- When deciding a focus for this project, I considered their personal barriers having English as a second language and also areas identified for improvement in a prior Ofsted report (2014). This then led me to investigate the progress made in writing by the pupils with EAL throughout the year.

### Relevant research

- Ofsted, (2014). \*\*\*\*\* *Junior School: school report*. Available at: [https://files.api.beta.ofsted.gov.uk/114910\\_2.PDF](https://files.api.beta.ofsted.gov.uk/114910_2.PDF)
- Department for Education and Skills, (2007). *Excellence and enjoyment: learning and teaching for bilingual children in the primary years*. Available at: [https://www.naldic.org.uk/Resources/NA LDIC/Teaching%20and%20Learning/pri\\_gd\\_session\\_writ\\_eal.pdf](https://www.naldic.org.uk/Resources/NA LDIC/Teaching%20and%20Learning/pri_gd_session_writ_eal.pdf)

### Key project activities

- To support my understanding of my EAL writers, I met with a governor whose speciality lies within English. We discussed potential barriers for these children individually, strategies to overcome them and further support I could offer. This developed my confidence in identifying the challenges for EAL pupils (use of tense, punctuation, plurals 'are' and 'is', spelling).
- I was directed to a National Strategies (2007) document which suggests activities to support bilingual learners and I implemented some of these during assembly time to support their understanding of grammar.
- In order to support two of the children, a phonics intervention was introduced. Here, they worked in a small group on targeted graphemes and applying these in their spellings.
- Through my marking of my EAL writer's work, I ensured I highlighted grammatical mistakes and consistent spelling mistakes as next steps.
- During English lessons, I ensured I spent at least 5 minutes with each of these children to check their understanding is secure and this use of English is accurate.
- To support their writing and use of language, I adopted a mixed ability seating plan so that my EAL learners are sitting next to good English models. This benefits all of the EAL learners when they are editing because they can work with their partner to edit their own work and then they can read a good model from their partner.

### Impact of "Closing the Gap" project

- As a result of my awareness of barriers and the provision of extra support, all four pupils have made expected progress in writing. Two of the four pupils are working at age-related but the other two are still working below expectations.
- One out of the two pupils receiving phonics interventions has made good progress with her spelling and can accurately use correct graphemes to represent letter sounds within words. She has now passed her Phonics Screening test. The other pupil's spelling can be quite sporadic so we are continuing to assess to see if there are any literary difficulties. To support this child further, I have also given him a word mat containing high frequency words.
- When looking at the overall progress made in reading, writing and maths combined, 75% have made expected or more than expected progress. In particular, for reading, two of the four pupils have made accelerated progress which should ultimately positively influence their writing abilities in the near future.
- This project has taught me lots regarding my own teaching practice; I feel more confident using data and recognising the challenges faced by EAL learners. I will also continue to use a more mixed ability seating plan to support all learners with their writing, especially during editing lessons.

