

FOCUS ON

A Multilingual Approach



Creating a multilingual approach at Kensington Primary School has opened doors to a world where diversity flourishes and bridges are built through celebrating first languages.

When embarking on this journey three years ago we reflected on how children's first languages were being used. What spaces have been created for pupils' languages in teaching and learning and the wider school setting. What does current research say around multilingualism in education and what messages we are sending home to parents and families about the value of their languages.



We found that by taking an asset based approach to languages we were unlocking the potential of our pupils. Using 'EAL' may be seen as a disadvantage, where 'Multilingual' recognises the linguistic strength of our pupils and their families.

A multilingual approach provides schools with an asset based approach to languages, allowing you to unleash the power of your multilingual learners- educationally, socially and culturally.

Being part of a Trust that welcomes change and promotes innovation has certainly helped with championing this. As part of our commitment to changing mindsets and educating schools on ways to deliver this we have partnered with academics, bridging the gap between research and practice and training schools on best practice in multilingualism.

"You cannot make a child speak a language, but you can set the stage for them to want to speak it"
(Kendall King & Alison Mackey, "The Bilingual Edge")

Not only does a multilingual approach support children's learning, confidence, identity, mental health and so much more, it also builds on Newham's traditions of being a culturally and linguistically inclusive borough for all.

Steps to a multilingual approach:

- All languages are celebrated and promoted as a whole school approach.
- The linguistic landscape of a school reflects the languages spoken by the community.
- Teachers draw upon their classes' linguistic repertoire to promote first languages and tap into prior knowledge.
- Children use their first language to access learning while they are acquiring English.
- Training provided for teachers on the best practice and the latest research on multilingualism.
- Parents and carers are supporting their child's learning with their home language.

"Children who come to school with a solid foundation in their mother tongue develop stronger literacy abilities in the school language. Children's knowledge and skills transfer across languages from the mother tongue they have learned in the home to the school language"

(Bilingual children's mother tongue : Why is it important for education?- 17 Jim Cummins)

