**INTERVIEW**

**Attendees**

Interviewer NF

LSA M

Headteacher M HT M

LSA M I'm LSA M, I'm an LSA and I have EAL responsibilities in the afternoons.

NF OK great, thanks LSA M.

HT M And I'm HT M, I'm headteacher.

NF Lovely OK, thanks very much. Before we start is there anything you want to know, clarify about any aspect of the interview or are you happy to just soldier on with the questions. I’d better go and get on with it. Thanks very much that’s great. OK, so just tell me, just to get a kind of overview of how it is at School M, can you talk to me about the languages you’ve got, numbers of, a very broad brush it doesn’t have to be detailed data.

HT M Yeah, so I did a count up for something yesterday in fact, and we've now got a 111 EAL children, which works out at 33% of our school are English as an additional language and that was based on the last census and we've probably got a few more since then.

LSA M I think we had about three new EAL pupils arrive yesterday on a roll.

NF And is that quite common, is that quite a kind of rolling intake?

LSA M Definitely.

HT M I’d say we are nearly full as a school now and all the new ones that we've taken have been EAL children.

NF OK, and a range of languages?

HT M Yes, massive range. So we've got, our highest after English is Nepali which is 51 children. And then Romanian is the next one which is 19 children. And then 26 different languages other than English.

NF Gosh, that’s amazing OK. So, the Nepali speaking children are because of you being Town Name so they're Gurkha families as it were.

HT M Yes.

NF Yes OK, lovely, it’s great to have the chance to interview you.

HT M I think to be fair I don’t think they're all Gurkha families, I think there's such a community in Town Name now, that I think that it’s a sensible place to come. If you're going to come to England from Nepal, because there's all the shops, there's such a community here. There's a temple and yeah, it’s lovely. I mean we had a Victoria Day parade on Saturday, and I think the Nepali community made the biggest, were the biggest groups in the parade.

NF Wonderful, that’s sounds wonderful. So, a very multilingual school then if you're over 30% by the sound of things. So, that’s interesting to know which way is multilingualism and EAL kind of figure in your school development planning at the moment? Is there any particular focus or is it kind of there all the time or how does it work?

HT M We have three targets in our school improvement plan for this year. One was attainment, one was wellbeing, and one was parental engagement. And although we didn’t specifically put EAL in any of those, we are very aware of all our different groups, and we have high levels of deprivation as well. So, we are very aware of all of our groups in our strategic plan. But one of the things, the biggest projects that we've done this year is speech, language, and communication project. Which has incorporated a lot of visuals. And I think that would have had a big impact on our EAL. And LSA M was doing that anyway for our EAL children. But now it’s just commonplace across the whole school. So actually, I think for those children it’s more common to see it in the classroom, and also it doesn’t feel like they’ll stand out with it. Because all of our tray labels, we have got pictures, so everything is now dual, it’s pictures and language that’s what we've got.

NF So there's kind of an oracy rich curriculum as it were that’s there to benefit both the children with EAL and other children who need that anyway, as it were. Yeah, that’s great because the work that I've been doing as you’ve probably read from the brief about the project. It’s about whole class approaches rather than homing in on EAL learners, and just happens to work better for them, yes it sounds like you're already there. Just going onto question three you were saying, so LSA M you obviously have a key role in supporting the multilingual pupils, can you talk to me more about that?

LSA M Yes, it’s sort of developed over the years I've been here from, it used to be straightforward referrals, when they came and now there's more. We have so many children, with such a range of languages as HT M said. That also it’s not just a referral it’s supporting them the whole time they're in school. We also do the young interpreter scheme and the heritage honours scheme through EMTAS. And recently, I can't remember which month, we were awarded the silver excellence award. So that’s been quite time consuming, gathering evidence, and then obviously the moderation with our evidence. We initially went for bronze and then when the EMTAS staff came in, they said we weren’t a bronze school, and awarded us silver.

NF That’s wonderful, that’s really well done, that’s great news.

LSA M The next goal is obviously to go for the gold but then the jump from silver is quite a lot more evidence required.

NF There is, isn’t there? We were looking, I was looking with the EMTAS team just recently at the excellence awards. Because we think that whatever materials we produce may sit alongside the excellence awards and help schools with that evidence base particularly in the teaching and learning bit. But I did think wow this is big isn’t it, because it’s across every facet of leadership and management planning, assessment, teaching. It’s a whole lot isn’t it, yeah.

LSA M That was quite time consuming gathering the evidence to meet all the individual statements within the wheel. There's a lot that I knew we did as a school, but you’ve still got to gain that evidence that it’s in place, and we do it day in, day out.

NF Because you’ve got so many children, I guess it’s your normal, isn’t it? So, it’s being asked to make something explicit I think can be quite hard can't it. For schools and for teachers when it’s just become assimilated into this, as you say, this is your everyday. Oh great, so is working with multilingual pupils is kind of a regular part of professional development meetings or is it something that’s supported in kind of a more ongoing way?

HT M We did have a year ago, we had EMTAS into query and they did some work around that it was sentence starters, that was oracy wasn’t it? So, we did that. In staff meetings we do training every staff meeting. And it’s the same thing as about our school improvement plan, it’s around the group. So, if we're doing literacy training, or writing training, or handwriting training, or any of those things, we'll pull it apart by our groups rather than just generally doing it. So, when we're doing the speech and language work, we're always relating that to, if this is an EAL child, what would that look like? But one of the things we've just been talking about is we've created a new role around our LSA induction. And we've got an LSA who’s now overseeing the induction of LSAs, and we've got a checklist of what they have to do. And one of those now that we've put it is that they’ll need to work with LSA M around EAL, and the things that need to do. For example, I didn’t come from a multicultural school, I've been a head before, but not at a multicultural school, and I hadn’t heard of the trios, and it makes perfect sense and it’s absolutely brilliant. But we can't assume that everyone knows about that when they arrive. So, I think everyone’s induction have been at teacher, LSA, office, we went LSA M to be doing some work with that on the EAL aspect of it.

LSA M We have an inset day at the end of the month, and one of the sections of just LSAs, apart from the teaching staff, I'm going to be talking about my role and what we can do and what services are available from EMTAS.

NF OK, great I just need to, I just had to change my audio, I'm just going to turn my audio up.

It sounds like there's just a lot going on all the time because as we said it’s kind of your normal. The next question is around successes and challenges. So, there's a lot going on that’s successful, we've already talked about. You might want to say more about that, but did you want to talk about also what the challenges are for you?

LSA M I think in the past and it is getting better, but what can be improved, is parental engagement. Depending on where, what countries and their background quite often its, teachers are professionals, and you don’t interact. It’s obviously very different here, we want the opposite, we want our parents to come to everything, we want them to see what’s going on in school, and it’s breaking down that previous culture where they're not going into schools, or they don’t interact with staff. I think we are getting a lot better our parents are very keen, but I don’t things like during Covid helped, where nobody could come into school.

NF It’s been very difficult to kind of row back from that hasn’t it? To kind of form new habits. Are there things that you put on for parents or is that kind of hard.

LSA M That’s just for EAL parents?

NF Yes, are there specific things that are put on for parents who perhaps need to learn English or anything like that?

LSA M There's family learning available. Which try and circulate information in the local library, one of the EMTAS staff does family learning. And I've been to the family learning to see what happens and some of family’s parents were at the family learning, which was great to see.

NF That’s great, it is great that we have EMTAS isn’t it. Obviously now I'm at Reading University and Reading is incredibly diverse but there is no EMTAS, there is no equivalent of EMTAS at all, for those schools. Which is kind of extraordinary but it’s great there's so much support. Moving into question five, I kind of, I've accessed interest support, obviously you have. So, in which way you talked about them coming to talk to you about sentence starters and we've talked about the family learning. Are there any other ways in which they support what you do?

LSA M We are very lucky; we have a great relationship with EMTAS staff. We utilise them for so many different things, it’s not just support for new arrivals. We've used them for SEN, when we're not sure what they can do in their first language. If we're not sure if it’s EAL that’s holding them back or whether there is a SEN concern. I went to the EAL EMTAS conference in Winchester. We use them so much, or borrow resources, dual language books, coping pens….

HT M To translate the parents if we need something like that. For SATS we had translators for our children in the maths test. Yes, an amazing resource.

LSA M I think we use most of the services that EMTAS provide.

NF Right, that’s amazing. So, in other words there is nothing that you would use with them that you don’t continue, you just are drawing on them all the time. That’s great to hear they’ll be very glad for that feedback.

And the next question I think we've kind of touched on, I was asking if your school is currently engaged in RSC education in anyway? And the reason that question is in there is because the materials that I've used with what was called the talk rich teaching project are very oracy orientated, very much about talk basically. And I think you’ve already said in previous stances, that you are doing lots of talk rich stuff, is there anything that you’ve got. Are you for example, active with Voice 21 or anything like that?

LSA M No.

HT M No, I think because we chose to go in with this speech, language and communication project this year which was a very big project. So, I'm very mindful of not taking on too many things and overloading everyone and when you take something on you do it properly. And we felt that would hit so many of our groups by doing the speech and language, communication project and there was funding for it, from two tranches. So, we went down that route instead. I think there is more we can do on oracy, and I think what I would like to do next is to revisit that sentence starter and the work that the EMTAS did, around giving children some phrases, phrases used in the playground. We had interestingly, one of year sixes who arrived speaking no English, is quite a big lad, and there's been quite a lot of physical stuff going on. And what we're trying to get the year sixes to understand is this is not him actually wanting to be physical with you, this is him just getting frustrated because he does not how to join in, and he doesn’t have the language. And actually, if we taught him there, can I play football, that’s a foul, or if we taught him some phrases, so that he could have used the language because that’s what he wanted to do was play football. I think we might have alleviated some of the things that happened. I think we can do some stuff like that around the oracy, we've some training on, but people have left since then, it would be good to revisit that.

LSA M Sometimes people, for instance, this boy in year 6, where he's come from, he's used to being, if you’ve got an issue, you sort it out yourself. And if that’s being physical, that’s what he is used to, and not everybody knows that.

NF No, so it’s about knowing the children and where they're coming from and responding in a culturally specific way as it were, yes. It is always hard isn’t it, it’s really hard. OK, so lots going on potentially with oracy which is interesting.

So, just to kind of get to the last question and to let you know more about the project really. We are working it out as we go along, it’s very much kind of action research together. But we're thinking very much in terms of designing an online toolkit for schools. And the idea would be that it would be a set of units around kind of oracy type activities. We're not quite sure of what the content would be at the moment, but we're getting there, and we'll get there by November when we're piloting them. And we're interested to know what schools would want to see in something. Try to imagine an online toolkit for you that’s essentially meant to be kind of school driven rather than EMTAS driven. And we're wondering can you, is it possible to talk about what the content of that might be that would persuade you to use it, basically? If it’s possible to answer that.

LSA M I think something possibly for LSAs that’s easy for them to access. So, perhaps be able to sort of find out more, be able to get more resources quickly. As great as EMTAS are it’s the time, sometimes you need things quickly.

NF Yes, I mean it’s kind of more an approach than a kind of, so it’s kind of a decision for teachers and LSAs to say less than the children to say more, at its most bold if you like. But it’s interesting you are saying LSA M about LSAs, when we were chatting just the other day in a meeting together, we were thinking we perhaps need three levels of materials. For senior managers, for teachers, and for LSAs sort of people accessing it at different levels for different reasons, so it’s really interesting to have your feedback on that one. And another thing that another school I spoke with was worried about was that it might demand that there's lots of extra time and lots of extra staff meetings, that’s not the idea. The idea is that the school would be able to use it in a way that they could adapt with their own kind of school improvement plan. And plans for how they wanted to drive things forward.

HT M I think some of the things that would be good was some key strategies that are quick wins. I think we're lucky we're a school that has, when you have a new arrival, we're not taken off guard, we've got the things to do, LSA M is there as a point of contact. She's got contact with EMTAS, but actually if you were a school where that was your first EAL child arriving, actually these are your key strategies, quick wins, contact EMTAS, get your initial assessment done. So, almost a little timeline of what to do as a child arrives, I think that would be really useful. And then what to do in the longer term, so once you’ve done those quick things what are the next things you need to do. The visuals in the classroom, the addressing misconceptions that assuming that a child knows what a word means and things like that.

NF Yes, absolutely contextual knowledge.

HT M I think one of the areas is also reading. I think for some children, so I am working with one of our Ukrainian lads and he is not moving forward with his reading. And actually, something like that maybe some of the stresses, some things to think about, what schemes do really work, are there SEND schemes that work with certain languages, I mean that would be a fascinating one to look at. And common things with languages, for example, we have great conversations, and he will say “Why have you got an S, on the end of the word, we don’t have that, we just say it would be two ball and it would never be two balls because we wouldn’t do that to get a plural”. So, if there's anything common to languages as well that might be quite helpful. Those are a few things I just thought of on a brainstormer with the children that I work with, and I don’t know why it is. We've got another Ukrainian girl who’s just flown, she can read, she can write, she can speak fluently, and she arrived after him but has taken off and he hasn’t. It’s like what is the stumbling bit for him.

NF Is there something else that we could be using? Yes. I mean EMTAS actually have a large number of resources on their Moodle, we were looking at them the other day and realising just how many there are. And I wondered how far schools use those as a kind of resource at the moment?

LSA M I've used them because you needed access to Moodle for the excellence award and other things. One of our Governors is an EAL linked Governor, so he's done some of the training so had access to the Moodle.

NF I guess, if we created something new it would need to be something, it was very clear what its purpose is in a way, instead of something separate. Your feedback is really helpful the idea of kind of specific units around when children arrived, I think is something we're already thinking that way. A unit on reading, literacy, no reading and then writing maybe might be useful as well. OK, that’s all I wanted to ask, and I'm super grateful for your time, is there anything we haven’t covered that you wanted to ask me about?

LSA M No, just interested what happens next, really?

NF OK, with this time I'm just doing the interviews and then we'll spend time analysing what schools are saying and asking for and what we think we can offer. Then early in the autumn term we'll be putting those materials together and then inviting schools who want to take part in the pilot. And the pilot we think will be something like November to February just trialling the materials. It could be that there might be a mix of things, some schools might say I’d like to pilot it with visits from EMTAS, we might be able to manage that as well. So, at the moment that’s what it’s looking like a kind of pilot period of trialling materials fairly systematically. We would by then be able to say we’d like you to trial, I don’t know, certain units or whatever, or commit to a certain amount. And then see how schools felt, we're leaving it open for the moment cos, I'm going to be interviewing about 20 schools. We've said six but we can take to be honest, as many schools as want to be involved. How are you feeling? Because you’ve got your other project on as well with the speech and language communication.

HT M That actually comes to an end this summer, we will continue doing it all but in terms of their training, and the visits that people are doing to us, that finishes at the summer. So, it is good timing really.

NF It’s good timing for you then, OK lovely. Well, I'll just assume that I keep in touch with everybody and then there will come a point in which I'll say do you want to commit, and this is what it would involve. And then people then if it’s gonna work for you. But it sounds like good timing for you and also that you would be a lovely ground in which to trial the materials because you're already so advanced. Ideally, we will just spread our schools, some that for whom it’s very new and others like you, who are super experienced at doing it, your feedback would be invaluable.

HT M But we still think there's loads more we can do; we never sit there and think we've got it nailed. We sit there and go, on actually are we over reliant on iPads to translate and there's lots of things we analyse and look at. So, we're very open to looking at what else is out there.

NF Wonderful, thank you, that’s wonderful to hear. Thank you so much for your time, sorry for being late I'm glad it all worked out, I'm really grateful thanks very much.

HT M Thank you bye.

LSA M Thank you bye.