



## **English – the Key to Integration in London**

**Project Lead:** Emma Brech

**Project Title:** Mothers Together in School

**Subject:** N/A

**Key Stage:** N/A

**Grant Awarded:** £100,233.71

### **Introductory paragraph**

The project addressed mothers' lack of English skills and confidence that affected their communication with schools regarding their children's education. Through weekly ESOL sessions and additional support offered by Renaisi Bilingual Parent Support Advisers (BPSAs) mothers were empowered to approach school staff and encouraged to support their children's education at home by reading to them and helping them with homework.

### **Key points**

- Women improved their level of spoken and written English
- Women have increased levels of confidence and self-esteem
- Women are communicating more with their children's teachers and other school staff
- Women are more involved with school activities
- School performance of the children whose mothers attended the project has improved, including better attendance rates and increased interest in learning
- Some of the women are making plans on how to continue their own education

### **Impact on mothers' English**

The ESOL course run as part of the project at Childeric Primary School has proved particularly popular and attracted over 25 women. The positive impact of the project can be observed from Arafa's story (Arafa's real name has been changed to protect confidentiality). Arafa, who was one of the first women to join the project at Childeric School, never got the chance to go to school as a child in her native Afghanistan. Because of this she never had the opportunity to learn how to read and write in her own language. Despite having lived in London for the past 10 years she had never enrolled on an ESOL course before Renaisi started running the Mothers Together in School project at her daughter's primary school. When she first joined the project she could only speak a few words of English and could not read or write in English at all. The supportive community created by the mothers on the course and the additional support offered by our Bilingual Parent Support Advisers encouraged Arafa to attend classes every week. She also encouraged her sister in law to join the ESOL course, wanting her to benefit from the Renaisi project in the same way she had. They became two of our most regular attendees. Despite being in her forties Arafa showed an eagerness to learn. She never gave up even though her English level was lower than that of other women on the course and was very diligent with her homework. She was proud of the progress she was making and asked the BPSA to show her homework notebook to the Project Coordinator. Arafa made immense progress during the 5 months of the project and can now hold basic conversations in English. She has

learned the alphabet and is a proud owner of a library card of the local library in Deptford. She has made new friends on the course and has also grown in confidence. During a class outing to the local market she had no problem talking to the stall keepers and was very assertive when asking about their produce and its prices. This is what she had to say about the project, written in her own hand: "I enjoyed talking English with the other mums. I learnt to talk English. The classes helped with my depression. I was happy in class."

### **Impact on mothers' involvement with the school**

Our link teacher at Childeric School, Valarie Williams, has reported a marked increase in the mothers' involvement with the school:

"I believe that the project has been a great success within our school. The mothers that have enrolled seem to have bonded and appear enthusiastic every Friday morning when going to class. They are much more confident in asking for help and assistance from the staff at school.

We are having our International Evening next month and most of the mothers on the project have already expressed an interest in helping with the organisation of the event. The school usually struggles to get parents to help organise events so to have them excited and keen to help is really amazing. I know it is because they feel more confident having met other mothers in the same situation."

### **Impact on pupils**

According to the feedback we collected from teachers via pupil performance assessment forms most of the children whose mothers attended the project have increased their attendance rates and complete their homework more regularly. Arafa's daughter's teacher, for example, told us that the girl is now "more positive about learning". At Kender Primary School, one of our other project locations, a teacher was considering referring one of her pupils for a special educational needs assessment, however, the boy appeared transformed within a few months of his mother attending the Renaisi project.

### **Project delivery**

The project has been delivered in 3 primary schools in Westminster and 5 primary schools in Lewisham, with one of them running a double class, equalling 9 ESOL courses across the whole project. 125 women attended the ESOL courses with an additional 29 women benefitting from project workshops and 1:1 advice sessions with BPSAs. Most of the women expressed an interest in continuing the project next year and several of the schools said they would be keen to welcome us back.

"This project has been very popular with our parents and we have had a number of enquiries from people asking if there is going to be another project next term. We hope that this project will be able to continue for the benefit of our parents"

Valarie Williams, Community Worker and Pastoral Support Manager at Childeric Primary School

### **Further details**

A group photo of the mothers from Childeric Primary School is attached. More photos from the project's different locations can be found on Flickr:

<https://www.flickr.com/search/?text=ESOLmums%20GG>

<https://www.flickr.com/search/?text=ESOLmums%20CD>

<https://www.flickr.com/search/?text=ESOLmums%20DP>