

Being multilingual

A guide for parents



Benefits

What do you mean by multilingualism?	We use the term multilingual for people who use more than one language in their daily lives. It does not mean they have equal skills in both languages. We use the term 'home language' in this guide to describe languages used at home, with family and in the community and value these as assets. However you may also hear terms like being bilingual, speaking heritage languages or first languages.
Are there any other benefits for multilingual children?	Children are much better at learning other languages if they can use their first language well. Multilingual young people have better job opportunities as many jobs and employers need people who can speak, read and write other languages.
Why does my child need to keep speaking our home language?	Knowing their home language well is important for your child's learning. It helps them develop stronger skills in reading, language learning, attention and thinking in both the home language and in English. It also supports their wellbeing, self-esteem and identity, linking them to their cultural and family heritage.

Concerns

Will maintaining their home language affect my child's attainment in school?	It will help them. Learning and using more than one language can improve creative thinking, problem-solving and expression. That's why our school encourages your child to use their home language to support their learning in class.
But I am worried that my child is below the expected level at school	Even if they are 'behind' to start with, as your child continues to use their home language for learning, research shows they will catch up and even be ahead of others by the time they do GCSEs. It takes two to three years to develop social English, and then another five to eight years to develop academic English. Teachers track progress in English acquisition and plan their lessons to ensure your child is learning English through their mainstream education.
My child has problems in our home language so I am not sure how to help them	Please tell your child's teacher or form tutor if you think they have difficulties in your home language. This can support the teacher to assess their learning needs, in partnership with you, and decide what further support will help. If you have any school reports, class work or assessments from previous schools in the UK or in other countries, please share these with the teacher. They do not need to be in English.

How to support your child

Should I speak with my child in English at home?	<p>It is important that you speak to them, read, write and learn with your child in their home language, even if you are very confident in English, and encourage your child to speak in other languages with relatives or in the community. You should talk with your child about what they are learning in school.</p> <p>Your child will learn English best from someone who speaks English as their first language or is fluent in English. However even if you are fluent, maintaining home languages is really important.</p>
My child always replies in English. What should I do?	<p>It's quite normal for children to switch between languages as a key part of their learning - just keep talking to them in your home language.</p>
How can I help my child's reading in English?	<p>Listen to them read in English (it does not matter if you do not understand it all) and discuss it in your home language. Use audio books and read bilingual books with them and take them to your local library regularly.</p>
But the script for our home language is very different from the English script	<p>It's important to teach your child to read and write the home language script - this will help with their learning in English, including with learning phonics. If they find your home language difficult, make sure they also hear stories being read to them in your home language. You could take them to a supplementary school at the weekend to support their home language learning.</p>
Should I just focus on school learning?	<p>No. You can also encourage multilingual learning by watching TV programmes in your home language or in English together with subtitles on. You can play games in your home language, tell them stories, sing and discuss the world around you.</p>
How can I help support my child's learning at school as well?	<p>Please tell your child's teacher or form tutor if you think they have difficulties in your home language. This can support the teacher to assess their learning needs, in partnership with you, and decide what further support will help. If you have any school reports, class work or assessments from previous schools in the UK or in other countries, please share these with the teacher. They do not need to be in English.</p> <p>It's really important for our school that you come and share your languages, culture and knowledge - this enriches, informs the school's curriculum, and can help new parents and all pupils' development as global citizens. Please come in and talk with us about how you can help.</p>

Resources for parents

- Watch these helpful videos for parents: [PEaCH bilingual upbringing - facts and myths](#)
- [Being Bilingual is a Super Power](#) - videos in different languages about multilingualism
- [Schools With Roots](#) resources has useful support in different languages for parents about early years, literacy and starting school
- [Book trust guide](#) for parents of 0 to 4 year olds in lots of languages

Dual language resources

- [DK bilingual visual dictionaries](#)
- <http://uk.mantralingua.com>
- www.milet.com
- www.madeleinelindley.com/dual-language
- [International Children's Digital Library: ICDL](#)
- www.mamalisa.com - traditional children's songs in lots of different languages

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