

A child with a strong foundation in their Mother Tongue will learn English to a higher level. To this end, the best way you can support your child in learning English is to help them to continue to develop their mother tongue.

The First Few days

It is important that the child feels successful and confident in the first few days. The more information we have about the child, the more able we are as a school, to help them feel successful.

It is also important that you prepare your child for the first few days. Let them know that it is OK that their level of English is what it is. If they have very little English, tell them that they can look at what the other children are doing and that will guide them as to what they need to do. They also need to know that making mistakes is a part of learning and that they should try to communicate even if non-verbally. It is also OK for them to say that they don't know something or to just listen initially.

Being available to listen to your child when he/she returns home from school is very important. Be aware that spending a whole day immersed in a new language can be very exhausting. Children respond to this in different ways and some may even be angry with their parents for putting them into this situation. Be patient with them and let them know that you understand how difficult it is. Don't try to teach them English unless they specifically ask you to. The child should have the rights to choose what language they use at home.

After the first few days

Once the child feels confident about coming to school and has learnt the routines, we can begin to work on developing their English. If you feel confident about supporting them in this, make an appointment to see your child's EAL specialist or the Head of EAL and we will guide you on how best to support your child. All children are different and we are best able to advise you on an individual basis.

Children are free to use the language of their choice during break and lunch times if it does not exclude other students. However, we strongly advise you to encourage your child to try to play in English as this is the easiest way to develop Basic Interpersonal Communicative Skills – social English.

After the first few weeks

Reading is one of the main channels by which children improve their individual levels of English. We strongly encourage you to read to your younger child, listen to your developing child and monitor the understanding of your older child's reading. The EAL department run Seminars on how to help your child at various levels so please a look out for these dates in the calendar.

We are strong advocates for the Mother Tongue and another way for you to support your child in learning English is to discuss what they are learning in your home language. The older children may not be interested in sharing this with you but the younger Secondary children and Primary school children will be keen to share

their learning with you if you show an interest when they are ready to talk about their learning. In this way, you will be able to support them in growing their Mother Tongue whilst consolidating their learning at school.

Supporting your child through their journey in learning English

Given the right environment and support an EAL child will learn social English within the first 3 to 6 months. However it can take from 3 to 5 years for a child to learn the academic English proficiency they require in order to learn successfully through English. Try not to place the burden of 'coming off EAL' on the child. It is very important that they feel successful in their learning and your encouragement and appreciation will help them get further, faster in their language learning journey. If you are worried about your child being on the programme for too long, please contact Jean Kingham, Head of EAL at Jean.Kingham@thebritishschool.pl.