

Welcoming Refugee and Asylum Seeker New Arrivals to your Class: a quick guide for teachers

GETTING READY

- Familiarise yourself with the **learner's recent history and experiences, first language / other languages** they speak and background. Usually, this information will have been gathered at the enrolment meeting and shared with all relevant staff before the learner starts.
- Consider if the learner is new to **schooling** or has experienced several schools – what could you do to support this?
- What is the **learner's preferred name**? How is it pronounced? How is it spelled?
- Consider **where the learner will sit** and in which **groups** they will work, with good role models for language and behaviour.
- Plan to place the learner with a **friendly peer** and organise helpful 'class buddies'. If there is another learner in the school who speaks the same first language, enlist their help as appropriate.
- Discuss the new learner's arrival with the class and practise pronouncing their name correctly.
- Class learns to say 'welcome', 'hello' and some other useful phrases in the appropriate language. <https://www.digitaldialects.com/>
- Display written examples of the learner's first language around the school; display a map of the country of origin, photos and basic information in the classroom.



**IDEAS FOR ACTIVITIES TO
HELP PREPARE YOUR CLASS –
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COMMUNICATION WITH PARENTS - CARERS

- Agree a system for regular communication with parents-carers. Make contact after a short settling-in period to share and ask how things are going.
- Encourage parents-carers to continue using home language with pupils at home.
- Ensure that parents-carers who need language support (because they may not be confident reading English) get all relevant information in a format they can access.

FIRST FEW DAYS AND WEEKS – focus on Health and Wellbeing

- **Orientation** Classteacher/Guidance/PSL (buddies can help)
 - Show the student around the school and make sure he/she knows his/her way around the building (toilets, library, classrooms, canteen etc.);
 - Explain how to read the timetable and where each class is;
 - Make sure the student knows key staff members and their roles (Head Teacher, DHT, Pupil Support Teacher etc.)
- Give **short, achievable tasks** which the learner can do at their own pace. Increase expectations and task difficulty progressively.
- **Explain instructions** clearly and calmly. **Use visuals** wherever possible to support understanding.
- **Show** how to use classroom equipment (rulers, books, folders etc.) as the student may have not used these before and feel embarrassed and overwhelmed.
- **Praise** achievement with warmth and encouragement in order to improve confidence.
- Provide a **visual/ annotated timetable** for the pupil with list of equipment needed e.g. PE kit, swimming kit



- Make sure other pupils see that you **respect and value the learner's home/first language skills** and developing bilingual competence. Encourage the pupils to share their knowledge about their first language – script, basic phrases and greetings, who they talk to in which languages etc.
- Be aware that the new learner **may express their insecurity within the new environment** in a variety of ways.
- **Allow for time out**, reading a book or simply relaxing, after achieving a task. Concentration span might be very short and the learner might feel overwhelmed. Increase working time progressively.
- **Discuss behaviour expectations**, clearly explaining with simple words what is the expected behaviour at school and in the classroom (i.e. hand up before speaking, do not talk while the teacher is talking, sit properly at the desk etc.). Sometimes students who have had little schooling simply don't know how to behave in a classroom and do not mean to be rude. They just need to be shown what's expected.

SELECTED GUIDANCE AND RESOURCES FOR EAL LEARNERS – page 4

TRAUMA-INFORMED PRACTICE

Key principles: safety – trustworthiness – choice – collaboration - empowerment

- Do not talk about the refugee/asylum seeker experience in the classroom or with the learner, unless they decide to open up.
- If the learner opens up about traumatic experiences and shares them in the classroom, acknowledge the information and change topic, promising to talk about it later in a separate place.
- Sometimes children and young people who have experienced traumatic events have little perception of the fact that certain topics (e.g. parents dying in war, living in extreme conditions) are not the norm for other students and could therefore shock the rest of the class. When discussing the experience with the learner in a separate time/place, you may want to ask for the presence of Guidance/Pupil Support Leader, Support for Learning Teacher, or school counsellor.



SOME POSSIBLE FACTORS AFFECTING REFUGEE / ASYLUM SEEKER NEW ARRIVALS

- Feelings of insecurity or trauma due to prior experiences.
- Isolation and lack of friends.
- Separation from one or both parents.
- Little or no previous schooling due to lack of opportunities or instability in the home country.
- Different style or emphasis of education.
- Pupils may feel misunderstood and unvalued if they cannot see any of their culture or language in the classroom/school.
- Experiencing racism in or out of school.
- Unwillingness to eat with other pupils, because they are not used to eating with anyone but members of their own family.
- Not answering unless they know the answer. An incorrect answer or guess may mean 'losing face'.
- Being very quiet and co-operative in the classroom. This does not mean they understand or that they do not need help from the teacher.
- Feeling that written work is the most important part of their work and pay little attention to oral work or related learning activities.

PROFESSIONAL LEARNING – page 5

IDEAS FOR ACTIVITIES TO HELP PREPARE YOUR CLASS

1. Exploring notions of sanctuary, security and safety

- What makes a place safe? Where do you feel safe?
- What does home mean to me?
- Draw picture of home town/village
- Draw/use cut out pictures of things/people/sounds/smells that they value most.
- Discussion how feel if had to move/what need



2. Moving

- Use maps to indicate where the children have lived – discussion on who has moved the furthest/stayed longest/reasons why
- Make list of reasons why in pairs then make class list then sort into reasons why move because they want to/forced to do so.
- What would you leave/take with you?

3. Refugee children stories

- What made them leave home/living in safe place now? / differences with your life/similarities?

4. Refugees stories in RE

- Flight of Mary/Joseph to Egypt
- Story of Rama and Sita in Ramayana
- Journey of Moses

5. Refugees in History

- Spanish Civil War 1937
- Kindertransport

6. Famous refugees

[Refugee Week - famous refugees](#)

[Google search - images of famous refugees](#)

[Refugee Week 2015 - History of Contributions](#)

7. How does it feel to be new?

- Use experiences of starting school as prompt for discussion for role play/ art work/ written work. For very young children use Paddington's story or other relevant stories
- Design Welcome Charter

8. Ways we are the same/different

- Festivals/food
- All about me
- Celebrate what each pupil brings to the class

Selected Resources for learning about refugees, asylum seekers and migration

[British Red Cross teaching resources: Refugees and migration](#) / [Explore teaching resources at the British Red Cross](#)

[UNHCR - Teaching about Refugees](#) This page contains a collection of UNHCR teaching materials on refugees, asylum and migration for primary and secondary education, as well as some guidance for teachers working with refugee children in the classroom.

[Schools of Sanctuary: Learn about asylum seekers and refugees and improve your school's welcome - Oxfam](#)

[Policy & Practice](#) This resource for 11-16 year olds enables learners to think about why refugees leave their homes, what challenges they face, how welcoming the UK is to those seeking asylum and our fundamental human rights.

SELECTED GUIDANCE AND RESOURCES FOR TEACHING EAL LEARNERS



[Learning in 2+ Languages | Learning resources | National Improvement Hub \(education.gov.scot\)](#)

Learning in 2+ Languages aims to help practitioners working with bilingual learners by identifying good practice in supporting young people whose first language is not English to access the curriculum through English as an Additional Language (EAL). This resource provides clear, practical advice for education practitioners on how best to support bilingual learners and reflecting Scotland's cultural and linguistic diversity.

[Great Ideas - The Bell Foundation \(bell-foundation.org.uk\)](#)

The majority of these approaches can be used with everyone in the class, but they are particularly important for EAL learners because they provide a rich context, additional support, opportunities for collaborative learning and exploratory talk, and all the important features of good practice in meeting the educational needs of EAL learners.

[Teaching EAL Learners in Maths - The Bell Foundation \(bell-foundation.org.uk\)](#)

EAL learners who are New to English and have had a good previous education often find it easier to demonstrate their ability in maths than other subjects. A lot of maths notation may be familiar and some mathematical topics are very visual. However, there is still a lot of English (language) required to access maths lessons... This page explains some of the challenges and how you can support.

<http://www.amathsdictionaryforkids.com/>

An animated, interactive online math dictionary for pupils which explains over 600 common mathematical terms and math words in simple language with a link to rainforest-themed maths exercises

[Emaths - English as an Additional Language \(EAL\)](#) Maths key word glossaries in a wide variety of languages

[Teaching EAL Learners in Science - The Bell Foundation \(bell-foundation.org.uk\)](#)

[Collaborative Learning Project Homepage](#) Curriculum-related Collaborative learning activities: structured and semi-structured activities to encourage talk. Extensive range of collaborative learning activities from KS1-KS4. Free to download.

FIRST LANGUAGE / DUAL LANGUAGE RESOURCES

[Language Mats for the Classroom | Languages Connect](#)

Language mats to help students learn the everyday language of the classroom – available in multiple languages

['Hello' resources | Teaching Resources \(tes.com\)](#)

[Online language learning games | Digital Dialects](#) The Digital Dialects website features free to use interactive games for learning languages. Language sections are updated regularly and new sections are under development.

<https://worldstories.org.uk/> World Stories is a growing collection of stories from around the world. The collection includes retold traditional tales and new short stories.

First language and dual language books are available from:

[Mantra Lingua UK | Dual language books and bilingual books and resources for bilingual children and parents and for the multi-lingual classroom.](#)

[Children's Foreign Language Books & Primary MFL Resources - Little Linguist \(little-linguist.co.uk\)](#)

CEC ASL Service – EAL Team – Welcoming Refugees and Asylum Seekers to your Class: a quick guide for teachers (April 2022)

CAREER-LONG PROFESSIONAL LEARNING / TRAINING

MyLearning Hub e-learning and follow-up webinar:

[Working with Refugee and Asylum Seeker children and families](#)

Refugee Kids film (14 minutes)

Powerful insights from 9 refugee children and young people from Afghanistan, Somalia, Turkey (Kurdish), Zanzibar and Angola speaking about their experiences before and after arrival in the UK. Intro. Leaving Home; Coming to Britain; Finding a School; First Days; Learning English; Fitting In; School and Beyond. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2N3ndNyuU2k>



Refugee Education UK and City of Sanctuary webinar on supporting Afghan Pupils

Although aimed at schools welcoming Afghan refugees, much of this webinar is also relevant to refugees from other countries. A couple of points are specific to the England context, otherwise all very relevant.

[Supporting Afghan Students in School](#)

Blogpost: [From Kabul to a school in Basingstoke](#)

This blogpost highlights good practice in supporting refugees and asylum seekers.

Immigrant Students at School: Easing the Journey towards Integration

[Immigrant Students at School: Easing the Journey towards Integration | en | OECD](#)

Our Migration Story: This website presents the - often untold - stories of the generations of migrants who came to and shaped the British Isles. [Home / Our Migration Story](#)