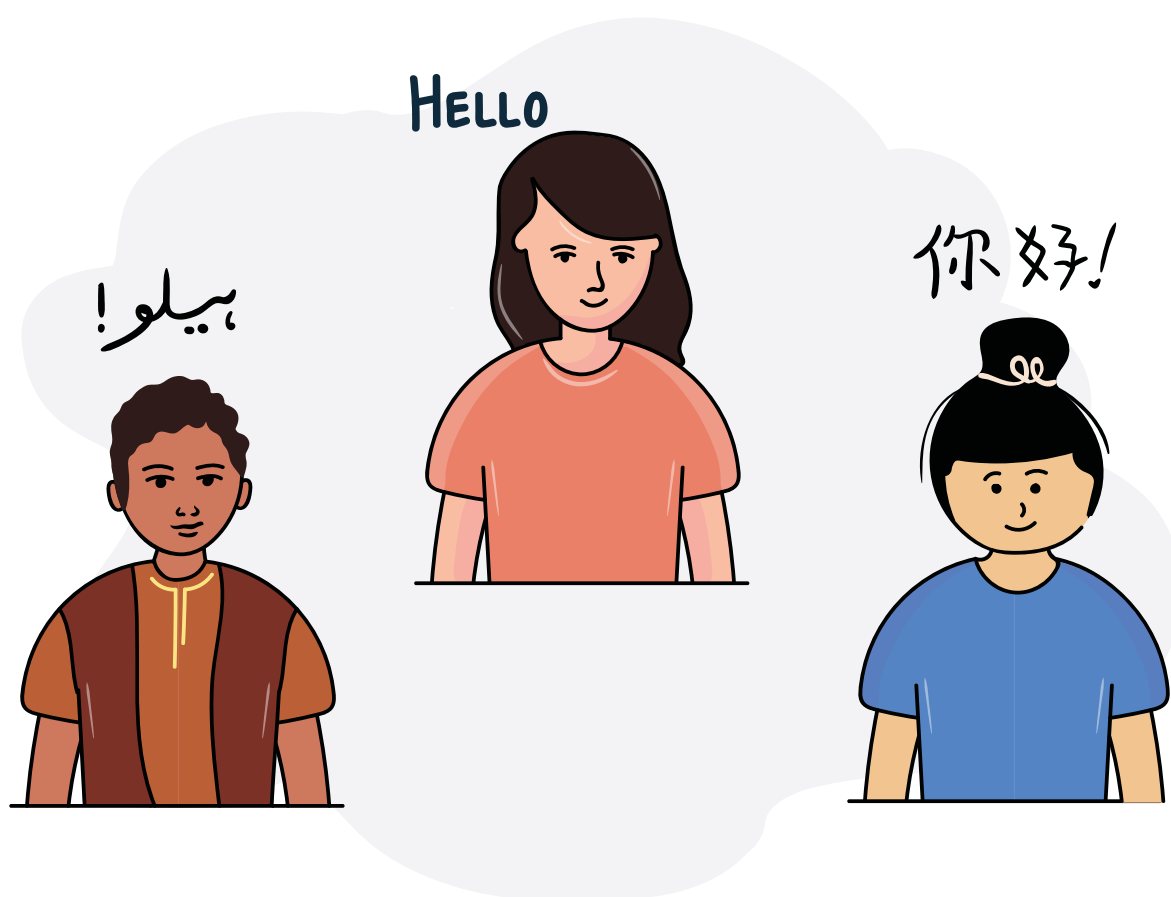


# Guiding learners using EAL through the school transition process

July 2023



## Copyright

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced in any form (including photocopying or storing it in any medium by electronic means and whether or not transiently or incidentally to some other use of this publication) without the written permission of the copyright owner. Applications for the copyright owner's written permission to reproduce any part of this publication should be addressed to the publisher.

Copyright © The Bell Educational Trust Limited (operating as The Bell Foundation)

The Bell Educational Trust Limited is a charitable company limited by guarantee number 1048465, established on 5 April 1972, and a charity registered with the Charity Commission number 311585

The Bell Foundation  
Red Cross Lane  
Cambridge  
CB2 0QU  
[www.bell-foundation.org.uk](http://www.bell-foundation.org.uk)

## Introduction

The Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) identifies three major challenges faced by learners transferring from primary to secondary school:

1. Adapting to the academic challenges arising from a break in curriculum continuity;
2. Adapting to new school routines and expectations;
3. Developing healthy peer networks.

These apply to all learners. However, if we widen the lens to look also at the communities which schools serve, and the families within them, we can see that school is not the only transition being faced by learners. As well as preparing to change schools in September, learners may be experiencing milestone family events such as bereavement, birth, divorce, or moving house. This is to name but some of the transitions of life which are outside of the school's control.

Those learners who use English as an Additional Language (EAL) are immune to none of the transitions detailed above and may also face additional challenges.

The aim of this guidance is to support both primary and secondary schools in developing processes that will enable a smooth transition. This in turn will lead to improved learning environments, well-being, and academic outcomes for multilingual learners. This guidance is not intended to be prescriptive or universal. Each school is unique, with its own set of opportunities and challenges. Therefore, not all of the suggestions in this guidance will be applicable to every school.

The Bell Foundation would like to thank Laura Tarantini-Amor, EAL and SEND Consultant at the Harris Federation and Sarah Stanbrook, Inclusion Manager at Waulud Primary School for their input in developing this guidance document.

In this guide you will find information including:

<b>1. Learners who use EAL: a heterogenous group</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>2. What can primary schools do?</b>	<b>5</b>
2.1 Choosing a school and applying	5
2.2 Initial meetings and information collection	6
2.3 Preparing learners for the transition	7
• As a school	7
• In class	7
<b>3. What can primary and secondary schools do together?</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>4. What can secondary schools do?</b>	<b>9</b>
4.1 Open evenings	9
4.2 Pre-transition	9
4.3 Transition days and events	10
4.4 September: welcoming new multilingual learners	11
<b>5. Transition to Key Stage 5: what can secondary schools do?</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>6. Case studies</b>	<b>14</b>
6.1 Primary case study	14
6.2 KS3 mid-year arrival who is disadvantaged and receives free school meals	16
6.3 KS4 learner with special educational needs	17
6.4 KS4 learner	19
<b>7. References</b>	<b>20</b>

## 1. Learners who use EAL: a heterogenous group

Since learners using EAL are a heterogeneous group, it is important to zoom in on some of the subgroups.

Learners who have arrived more recently to the UK have already experienced and are likely to be still processing the major transition of migration. Research has highlighted how newly arrived learners, as well as navigating a new school system and environment, are simultaneously dealing with the loss of previous friendships and pressure to adjust to new languages, cultures, and neighbourhoods (Anderson et al., 2016). It is worth bearing in mind, too, that most children have little or no say in the family's decision to migrate and this can lead to feelings of helplessness or resentment. Learners at the earlier stages of English language proficiency are also likely to be feeling anxious and vulnerable.

Zooming in further, refugees and those seeking asylum must contend with all the above, but on top of forced displacement and uncertainty around their future status in the land to which they have come seeking protection. This constitutes what Anderson et al. refer to as “intersectionality of vulnerability.” A minority of learners using EAL, including some refugees, may never have been to school before arriving in Key Stage 2 (KS2), and may have arrived with limited or no experience of reading and writing in any language. These learners are still acclimatising to the routines and text-based world of school, and now face yet more changes.

Parents and carers are crucial in supporting children through transition, but some may not be familiar with the UK education system and be anxious themselves. The main aims of schools and teachers then, for pupils and parents/carers alike, must be to build a sense of familiarity with and understanding of the new school in order to assuage anxiety, and also to foster a sense of excitement and expectation at the new opportunities and possibilities ahead as the child's educational progress continues.

## 2. What can primary schools do?

Primary schools can make the most of the relationships they have established to help ensure a smooth transition to the new school.

### 2.1 Choosing a school and applying

*“We’ve had some applications recently from parents who’ve been allocated a school, their child’s gone to that school and six months down the line they’re being told, oh, actually there’s a Catholic school just down the road, why didn’t you apply for that? They didn’t realise that we’re a Catholic.... I think they would have been offered a place had they applied at the time, but they didn’t.”*

(Secondary school, East of England, cited in Manzoni and Rolfe, 2018, p.24)

Ensure that parents and carers understand the procedure for applying for a secondary school place, and the choices available to them locally. As well as including the dates of open evenings and links to local authority websites in newsletters, consider producing some translated materials, or holding a parents' evening with interpreters to explain the process.

These could be professional interpreters or suitably skilled staff members. Families new to the system may not appreciate the importance of completing the form in full or know the criteria for admission to different secondary schools such as priority given to siblings, looked after children, catchment areas, and Church school criteria.

## 2.2 Initial meetings and information collection (before the usual transition days)

The Year 6 (Y6) team of teachers, support staff and any EAL specialist staff should develop an ongoing, collegiate relationship with the Year 7 (Y7) teams of the main secondary schools into which their school feeds. This might be easier to facilitate in some multi-academy trusts (MATs) or in areas where there is one main secondary school but is arguably even more important for isolated learners or small groups transitioning from a primary school to a secondary school which it does not usually feed. For this vital communication process to happen, the senior leadership team (SLT) of both schools need to allow time for EAL specialists from KS2 and Key Stage 3 (KS3) staff to meet in person if possible, and share the following information:

- The proficiency in English of learners (using an EAL assessment framework such as that developed by The Bell Foundation);
- Length of time in school and in the UK;
- Home languages, literacies, and preferred language(s) of communication with parents/carers;
- Previous educational experiences - this is particularly relevant for refugees/those seeking asylum;
- Strengths and talents the learners may have;
- Curriculum areas they find challenging;
- Any known special educational needs and disabilities (SEND);
- Extra-curricular activities and sports clubs attended at primary school and what might be on offer at secondary school;
- Any relevant communication or links with external agencies, organisations, or support networks;
- The nature of the language support that learners currently receive and how this might continue.

## 2.3 Preparing learners for the transition

This section looks at how primary schools can prepare children for the transition as a whole school, and in class.

- **As a school:**

- Invite secondary ambassadors to visit primary feeder schools and talk to pupils intending to transfer to their school. If the secondary school has Young Interpreters ([bit.ly/young-interpreters](https://bit.ly/young-interpreters)) or similar, these would be ideal.
- Invite students from the previous Y6 to return for a Q&A and talk about their new school(s). Include speakers of home languages shared by the primary cohort where possible. If both primary and secondary schools teach refugee or asylum-seeking learners, invite representatives of this group (e.g., Ukrainian or Afghan learners) at the secondary school to talk to the primary children.
- Consider setting up a collaborative document such as a Padlet wall where Y6 pupils can ask questions (in their language of choice) to selected KS3 students.
- Stress the positive aspects of secondary school such as more independence, bigger and better facilities, and sporting opportunities, to counteract any anxieties.
- Communicate the transition process clearly to parents and carers, including explaining the purpose and importance of transition days and events, including summer schools. These may be unfamiliar to parents/carers from some countries, so it is important to stress the benefits in terms of social inclusion and familiarisation.

- **In class:**

- Talk about the new school day and generic differences between primaries and secondaries.
- Give learners practice in reading a timetable and talk about what different subjects might entail.
- Teach some polysemous words which may occur in the secondary curriculum. Examples highlighted in recent research include words such as *solution*, *cell*, and *concentration*, all of which carry distinct meanings in different curriculum areas (Deigan et al., 2022).
- Practise listening skills such as listening for gist, for detail, and how to ask for clarification. Learners are expected to listen more at secondary school, according to University of Leeds research (Diegan et al., 2020).
- Introduce or revisit metacognitive strategies which help learners develop a sense of control over their own learning and progress. Bear in mind that this might be new territory for learners from countries with more teacher-centred pedagogies. For learners at the earlier stages of acquiring English, this should include strategies to harness their prior learning (through the home language in many cases) such as use of bilingual dictionaries (<https://www.bell-foundation.org.uk/bilingual-dictionaries>) or glossaries and translanguaging (<https://www.bell-foundation.org.uk/translanguaging>) approaches to self-study. It should also feature strategies to clarify the meanings of unfamiliar words and to monitor their own progress in acquiring English alongside their curriculum studies.

### 3. What can primary and secondary schools do together?

*“The more developed, fluid and comfortable the adults are between the organisations, the more this will naturally reflect in the children.”*

(Daniel Sobel writing in SecEd, 2019)

★ **Communication is key.** First and foremost, primary and secondary colleagues need to collaborate. It is useful to hold meetings between relevant staff from the two schools, for example KS2 and KS3 pastoral leads, EAL specialists and support staff in order to share pupil profiles, information on proficiency in English, aptitudes and preferences, and the best ways of initiating and sustaining dialogue with families. This will enable the positive relationships already established with learners and their families to continue, and also save secondary schools from unnecessarily “re-inventing the wheel.”

★ **Ensure continuity.** Primary schools should make sure that where learners have input from external agencies, these agencies are informed of their secondary destinations. Secondary schools should have the relevant information and take steps to welcome and accommodate the external agencies.

★ **Prepare learners for linguistic challenges and changes.** KS2 and KS3 teaching staff working together can explore possible jumps which may occur in terms of vocabulary and structure, and expectations regarding academic language. Research from the Universities of Leeds and Lancaster has explored the linguistic challenges faced by all pupils at transition from KS2 to KS3 (Deignan et al., 2023). Vocabulary demands increase sharply as the curriculum divides into separate disciplines taught by different, specialist teachers. The research highlights the change of tone from the narrative to the abstract, the use of more complex grammatical structures, and the shift in patterns of interaction, with secondary school learners spending longer listening to teacher input. If these areas are deemed to be challenging for all learners, the difficulties will be exacerbated for those who are newer to English. Therefore, it would be helpful for KS2 teachers to introduce some terms in advance, whilst KS3 teachers can be sure to explain or amplify their language so that everyone understands.

In the EEF blog (<https://bit.ly/eeef-transition>) from 2020, Kirsten Mould suggests gifting Y6 pupils a reading book with activities, a maths activity booklet with examples of mathematical language and a diary with sentence starters. These would then be followed up in secondary school. These suggestions, originally designed to facilitate a post-lockdown transition, would benefit learners using EAL but might need adapting for those who are at the earlier stages of English language acquisition. Perhaps EAL specialist staff from the primary and secondary schools could be involved in developing these and following through in September.

★ **Put primary and secondary pupils in touch.** Working together, schools can arrange meetings for new learners who use EAL in Y6 and buddies/language ambassadors/Young Interpreters from their designated secondary school. Perhaps the secondary pupils can visit the primary schools to make this connection before checking in with them again on transition days and in September.



It is also very helpful for EAL specialists from primary schools to introduce multilingual learners to the EAL support/specialist staff at the new school. Learners who also receive specialist SEND support can also be introduced to relevant support staff.

★ **Consider coffee mornings and/or after school meetings** for parents/carers in which staff from the primary school introduce the staff from the secondary school. Key information about the new school can be shared and questions answered (via interpreters if necessary). It might help to invite families individually, rather than by a mass email, in order to build relationships and foster a sense of belonging. If there are parent ambassadors from the secondary school, including those who share home languages, invite them too, or put them in touch.

## 4. What can secondary schools do?

Secondary schools can build on the positive relationships fostered with the family by primary schools and provide a welcoming environment in Y7. Later, they can work with post-16 providers to ensure a successful transition at Key Stage 4 (KS4).

### 4.1 Open evenings/school visits

At open evenings and other events designed for prospective learners and their families, consider what can be put in place to make learners using EAL feel welcome. This starts with the promotional material for the open days/visits themselves, which needs to be accessible to families who are at the earlier stages of acquiring English. At the events themselves, consider:

- Translated material;
- Use of interpreters in key languages spoken by students;
- Members of staff representative of the local linguistic communities;
- Young Interpreters/peer mentors to talk to the children in their home languages, where possible;
- Evidence of the use of community languages in signage and displays around the school;
- The inclusion of community languages in the curriculum, for example at GCSE;
- Signposting complementary schools which use the facilities.

### 4.2 Pre-transition

Many schools invite parents/carers of pupils who have been offered a place at their school to a meeting with a member of staff. It is important that this is the foundation for a friendly relationship with the school, and that barriers of culture and language are broken down as far as possible. Therefore, consider using interpreters, or as a minimum training relevant staff on grading language, speaking clearly, and using visuals to aid understanding.

Some parents/carers, especially those seeking asylum, might be anxious about the costs of transport, food, equipment, and uniform so this is a good opportunity to assuage fears and signpost help available, including help completing the necessary forms.

School and exam systems in other countries are different, so providing clear information about the UK education system will avoid potential confusion. There is some translated guidance available from The Bell Foundation (<https://www.bell-foundation.org.uk/parental-involvement/>). Some common differences that might be useful to highlight are:

- Chronological progression; many countries make learners repeat a school year if they are not deemed to have made enough progress;
- The concept of tutor groups and tutor periods, which may be unfamiliar;
- Moving around the school between lessons (in some countries it is the teachers who move, rather than the learners);
- Ground rules for participation and behaviour in lessons (e.g., in some countries children are expected to always raise their hands before speaking, and stand up after being nominated by the teacher);
- Homework (parents/carers might expect none, or a lot more) and homework diaries;
- Not taking textbooks out of school; in most other countries they do;
- Certain subjects such as PSHE or textiles, might not be studied;
- Activity weeks and school trips;
- Non-uniform days for charity;
- Expectations around home/school collaboration (attendance at parents' evenings, signing homework diaries, supplying up-to-date emergency contacts);
- Expectations around mobile phone use, photo and video consent, and GDPR.

### 4.3 Transition days and events

Most schools and local authorities run transition days, in which all students “move up” to their new classes for the day, including Y6 pupils attending their designated secondary school. Learners benefit from a chance to experience their new school and classes, get a sense of the physical space, and a feeling for the rhythm of the new school day.

The very concept of transition days and other induction events including summer schools might be unfamiliar to parents/carers and learners coming from different countries, so it is important that the process and the reasons behind it are communicated clearly. Trained staff should follow up on invitations where there has been no reply, to stress the advantages of making friends, meeting teachers, and reducing anxiety around starting Y7.

EAL specialists and support staff, where possible, should accompany students on transition days to the new school. They may be able to introduce the learners to the EAL staff at the new school, discuss what support they can expect to receive, and sow the seeds of a positive relationship. If learners using EAL are moving from a primary school to several different secondary schools, the most vulnerable should be accompanied by adults, and the others met by peer mentors/Young Interpreters at their new school.

Whilst parents/carers will welcome translated material, open evenings, and contact with staff at the new school, the learners themselves are likely to respond positively to input from peers. Young Interpreters or peer mentors, preferably having already been introduced, can meet the learners as part of the transition day, perhaps at lunchtime, to check in with them and be a friendly face in the sea of new faces. If a language is shared, it might be a relief for the new pupil to be able to ask questions or raise fears, and anything the peer cannot answer can be fed back to staff.

If information has been shared, the Y7 pastoral team should be ready to welcome their new learners, including those using EAL. Tutors should be aware of proficiency in English levels and languages spoken. They might even have mastered a greeting in the language(s) of their new learners. “Getting to know you” type activities planned for tutor group time will take account of these factors and, for example, allow new to English learners to work with others who share their language.

Subject classes on transition days are a chance for teachers to drum up enthusiasm for their classes amongst the new cohort. They are usually standalone lessons, rather than part of a bigger unit, and they are designed to be fun, as well as informative. There is ample scope here for EAL friendly classes using plenty of visual material and activities such as barrier games ([bell-foundation.org.uk/barrier-games](http://bell-foundation.org.uk/barrier-games)), bingo, teacher in role ([bell-foundation.org.uk/drama-and-role-play](http://bell-foundation.org.uk/drama-and-role-play)), or dictogloss ([bell-foundation.org.uk/dictogloss](http://bell-foundation.org.uk/dictogloss)). This can be effective in setting expectations around participation as well as reassuring learners that the classes will be both accessible and enjoyable.

#### 4.4 September: welcoming new multilingual learners

*“I think the best things about this school are the teachers because if I don’t understand anything they can come and explain it for me. Also, if I have any questions I can ask them at any time, break time or lunch time.”*

(Refugee pupil in the North East of England, cited in Manzoni and Rolfe, 2018, p.58)



★ **Establish a welcoming environment.** As far as the learners themselves are concerned, it is important that they feel they are truly welcome in the school, and that they have a valued contribution to make. Anderson et al. (2018) refer to “the need to foreground linguistic and cultural diversity when considering how young people construct their identities within school settings.” Seeing and hearing their own culture and language displayed and reflected in the day-to-day life of school will go a long way towards helping learners feel that this new school is somewhere they can belong, learn, and thrive.

It is vital to avoid the phenomenon observed by Galton et al. (1999) in which “some pupils develop negative images of themselves as learners and seek refuge in friendships with the result that powerful anti-work peer groups can develop.” Therefore, take steps to establish healthy peer networks. Research by Jindal-Snape (2018) found that positive bonding with new peers and teachers and good social integration helped learners develop resilience to the transition and its changes. Initiatives such as conversation clubs, buddies and careful groupings in class can all help to facilitate this.

★ **Be aware of language challenges.** As detailed earlier, there is research to suggest a significant leap in the linguistic demands of secondary schools, from those of primary. Teachers need to be aware of this, perhaps through relevant Continuing Professional Development (CPD), and to amplify and explain features of vocabulary which may cause confusion. This includes polysemic words (the word “bar”, for example, can refer to chocolate, gymnastics equipment, a part of a graph, a time unit of music, or appear in a text as connected to a courtroom or a public house. It can also mean “except” or “ban”). Also clarify interchangeable terms such as minus, subtract, deduct, and take away. It is important to be patient and remember that learners are experiencing these new linguistic challenges in every subject, so they may take time to become embedded.

★ **Revisit metacognitive skills** (<https://bit.ly/eef-metacognition>) “learning how to learn” with a secondary lens as learners experience a variety of teachers and are given greater responsibility for their own learning. Whilst strategies such as planning work (using any language which feels comfortable), being aware of one’s own progress and acting on teacher feedback are useful for all learners, those using EAL need to develop awareness of their acquisition of academic English as well as subject knowledge. This metacognition work is especially important for refugee and asylum-seeking pupils who have experienced major upheaval and disruption to their education (Capstick et al., 2018), as they may not have had the opportunities to develop effective learning strategies.

★ **Invest in CPD.** Longer term, teaching and support staff will benefit from ongoing CPD on adaptive teaching and grading language. Structured programmes of development are a better investment than one-off events. In the short term, ensure from the very start that lessons are accessible (<https://www.bell-foundation.org.uk/effective-teaching-of-eal>), expectations high, and that newer to English learners are given suitable tasks, including for homework. The Y7 pastoral team, including any learning mentors who might support children from refugee and asylum-seeking backgrounds, would benefit from training such as that provided by UNHCR (<https://bit.ly/unhcr-stress-trauma>) or the International Rescue Committee (IRC) (<https://bit.ly/healing-classrooms>) in recognising and responding to the needs of children suffering from trauma.

★ **Listening and responding to student voice** will also inform schools about the efficacy of their transition arrangements and enable the adoption and adaptation of strategies to work (Van Rens et al., 2017). If student voice is sought, from incoming students and those who have made the transition, be sure to include a range of learners who use EAL. They may require translations and explanations but will provide the best feedback to help schools tailor their transition offer to include this diverse group.

★ **Seek to extend a warm welcome to the parents and carers**, laying the foundation for a long and mutually beneficial relationship. Manzoni and Rolfe (2019, p.33-34, 64-65) list some tried and tested examples of the different ways in which schools involve parents/carers, and which could be ways of beginning that relationship in Y7. These include:

- Creating parent ambassadors to aid communication between the school and their communities;
- Employing staff from different local communities, who can facilitate communication and translation;
- Actively seeking to recruit parent governors from different communities;
- Holding workshops for parents/carers (for example, in cooking or creative activities) as a chance for parents/carers to mix and develop links with the school and other parents. Newly arrived families can be at risk of social isolation;
- Hosting community schools on Saturdays and after school, and developing links between parents/carers, community school staff and mainstream school;
- Running or hosting English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) classes for parents/carers who need to develop their English, and focussing some of these on school matters such as uniforms, timetables, policies (for example, language policy or attendance policy), rewards, and sanctions etc.

## 5. Transition to Key Stage 5: what can secondary schools do?

For many learners who arrive late to the UK education system, academic success comes later, at further education (FE)/training level. Links with local providers are therefore paramount. It is important for Year 11 (Y11) pastoral leads and those responsible for careers education to be aware of the various offers from local FE providers. This includes academic pathways such as GCSE resits, A-levels and access courses as well as vocational pathways and apprenticeships. Many colleges offer EAL support and/or ESOL courses to complement the mainstream provision.

The best place to start is by consulting learners and parents/carers regarding career goals and aspirations. Recently arrived families may not be conversant with the UK exam system and the various academic and vocational pathways available post-16. It is vital not to make assumptions but to listen to the learner before outlining possible pathways to reach their objectives.

Schools and colleges working together can ensure that parents, carers, and learners have access to the information they require to make informed choices. This can be facilitated by providing translated information, option evenings and open evenings with interpreters

available. Learners themselves might benefit from 1:1 or small group sessions with school careers advisors, perhaps aided by peer support from Young Interpreters or language mentors.

Time spent at secondary school for late arrivals should not be regarded as merely passing time whilst waiting to reach the age for further education. This is an important time to develop social and academic English skills as well as metacognitive ones in order to transition more smoothly onto the FE course. Look into qualifications which might help the learner along their chosen pathway. This might include first language GCSEs, an iGCSE or Trinity qualifications, or stepping stones towards taking GCSEs at college, such as AQA's Step Up to English or their Unit Award Scheme. It is also time in which a relationship with the college can be established through visits, meeting with student ambassadors from the college and perhaps work experience placements which lead to apprenticeship schemes.

## 6. Case studies

### 6.1 Primary case study

#### → Introduction

Adriel, a ten-year-old girl originally from Albania, moved to Bedfordshire, UK with her family, after spending the previous four years in Attica, Greece. Upon arrival, Adriel was able to speak Albanian competently and fluent Greek. She was able to understand and speak a few words and phrases in English such as greetings, colours, numbers, and briefly describe family members. Adriel was also able to read some common high frequency words in Greek and could write simple sentences too. Her parents were both new to English and when they were first introduced to the school required support for all forms of communication.

#### → Initial meeting

Upon allocation to the school by the admissions team in March, a welcome meeting was arranged between Adriel, her parents and the school. The school was made up of an extremely diverse and multilingual team of staff who were able to interpret and translate into a wide range of languages. Prior to the welcome meeting being held, translated documents were created in English, Albanian and Greek. Visuals, using Widgit<sup>1</sup> and photographs, were also used when creating these translated documents to ensure there was a clear understanding of key information. Examples of these documents were uniform requirements, class timetable and lunch menu.

During the welcome meeting, an Albanian-speaking member of staff was released to interpret when necessary, ensuring that the meeting was as supportive for Adriel and her family as it was for the school staff.

<sup>1</sup> Widgit is a software programme that the school subscribes to online and uses symbols to support text. It can be used to support all pupils to read, understand and communicate. Symbols can be selected from a range of pre-set options or additional ones uploaded to the user's preference.



### → **Adriel's first day at school**

Adriel was carefully paired up with a buddy who was able to speak Albanian and made her feel as comfortable as possible. The child selected to be her buddy was in the same year group, however in a different class. The buddy was spoken to during the previous week to ensure they were happy to be a supportive peer when Adriel started school. On Adriel's first day, time was allocated in the morning for the children to meet and start to get to know one another. On reflection, this time was noted as invaluable as it then meant that Adriel was comfortable and well supported during more unstructured times within the school day, for example break and lunchtimes. In class, Adriel was supported by the teaching assistant on a daily basis to accelerate the pace in which she developed an understanding of the English language.

### → **Further support**

Due to Adriel starting mid-way through the spring term and being in the final year of primary school, the family required and were provided with support, via the Family Worker and Admissions Officer, to register their daughter for a place at secondary school. The Family Worker contacted the local secondary school and arranged for Adriel's parents to go and view the establishment. This was seen as an important factor to consider, as due to timings of the academic year, all open days and evenings had been arranged for earlier in the year. Primary school staff also offered the parents places on an English conversational group, delivered in partnership with a local charity, to help the family understand the English language and develop their confidence and communication skills whilst living in the United Kingdom.

Following on from the visit to the secondary school, staff were then able to answer questions the family had in terms of the application and allocation process of the secondary school. Once it had been confirmed that Adriel had been allocated a place at the school the parents had requested, links were set up between the primary and secondary settings. This enabled the secondary school to gain a clear understanding of the support that was currently in place for Adriel and allowed them time to prepare to ensure that transition activities, meetings and days were highly effective, inclusive, and removed the barriers that Adriel would have potentially faced being at the early stages of English language acquisition.

The primary school used The Bell Foundation's Assessment Framework across all four areas of the English language (speaking, listening, reading and viewing, and writing) to provide the secondary school with a detailed picture of Adriel's strengths and areas to develop so that they could be fully prepared to support Adriel's language development, which in turn supported her learning.

As the academic year ended, Adriel explained that she felt the support she had been given had really helped her to quickly feel part of the school family and eased her anxiety about moving to secondary school. Her parents described their experience of Adriel starting school as detailed and very helpful. When referring to the additional support and translated documents and meetings that were provided, they commented, "We never expected to get so much help. We are very thankful."

## 6.2 KS3 mid-year arrival who is disadvantaged and receives free school meals

### → Introduction

Daria, a Year 9 pupil, arrived in September 2022 from Ukraine but was not part of a refugee programme. Originally from a small town, Daria was unused to an inner-city environment. She was well educated and academically able but was exhausted from the many changes she had experienced during her displacement and subsequent resettlement. Her mother had worked in London and spoke fluent English. Daria joined her mother in a London borough and started school there but due to a change in her mother's employment, they both relocated to a different borough shortly afterwards, which meant that Daria had to join yet another new school.

### → Pre-application

The EAL team in place at her new school consisted of the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) from the safeguarding team, the Admissions Officer, a Pastoral Lead and an EAL Lead. This team's role was to support refugees, unaccompanied minors, and other EAL new arrivals. As soon as the school place was offered and accepted, the EAL Lead contacted Daria and her mother to discuss her new school place.

The school prepared to take Daria by setting up a home language buddy, arranging for initial school uniform, identifying a key set of people to check in with, and designing a timetable. She was given a lunchtime that coincided with other Ukrainian speakers to encourage friendship groups. Teachers were apprised of her language needs, general educational background, and experience.

### → Initial meetings

The Admissions Officer then met both Daria and her mother for a tour of the school. He gave a list of key staff names and contact details. On site with them, he applied for free school meals (FSM) and gave them an initial set of school uniform to help encourage immediate attendance.

Daria's medical issues were discussed and her mother provided medical documentation in Ukrainian. A daily check-in was agreed with Daria, who was introduced to several key staff, including the safeguarding team, to ensure her needs were known by more than one staff member. This would prove to be a lifeline for Daria.

### → Induction day

On her first day, Daria was given her timetable, a bilingual welcome pack, dual-language readers, and a translation device. Daria was introduced to a home-language buddy who helped her find her way around the school. The Admissions Officer and her buddy ensured that Daria was able to get the free school meal she was entitled to.

The Admissions Officer also checked in on her periodically throughout the day to ensure she was in the right class, and that the teaching staff were aware of her language needs. In the following week, teachers provided translations of lesson titles and objectives; they also provided key topic vocabulary which Daria worked on in the Admissions Office with the Admissions Officer's help. The quiet seemed to help her process all the new information given to her during the day.



Daria was assessed as being new to English; she was not attempting much English and was not engaging as expected with the other Ukrainian students. The current school contacted the previous school and completed a hand-over of information and assessments; since Daria had unknown medical issues and the school sensed she was vulnerable as a disadvantaged and new to English mid-year arrival, information sharing was even more urgent.

#### → **Emergency measures**

Within a fortnight of Daria joining the school, her mother became seriously ill and was taken to hospital. The Admissions Officer and the DSL kept in contact with Daria's mother by text and email while she remained in hospital and helped her arrange for a friend to care for Daria.

The Admissions Officer accompanied Daria to the hospital to help the family navigate the NHS. The DSL had an out-of-hours mobile phone and gave this number to Daria and her mother. The Admissions Officer and the DSL checked in with Daria daily, including over the weekends. Her mother was in hospital for three weeks and during that time, Daria was extremely worried and had difficulties washing her uniform, shopping, and cooking. She was still relatively new at navigating public transport, and as a result, her attendance fell for a couple of weeks. The Attendance Officer and the DSL kept in contact with her, occasionally directing her over the phone on public transport and ensuring she arrived home safely.

Daria then had her own medical issue and needed to go to the hospital. The Attendance Officer was released by school leadership to accompany her to the hospital.

#### → **Embedded support**

Daria is now settled and learning English more quickly. The team-based wrap-around support she received enabled her to successfully cope and adapt in very difficult and stressful circumstances. The most important measure for her was to have the Admissions Officer and the DSL available for a daily check-in both about her and her mother. The extra safeguarding support put into place anticipating her double vulnerability helped when medical issues compounded the situation.

## 6.3 KS4 learner with special educational needs

#### → **Introduction**

Martín, a Y11 pupil, arrived in England in Y7 from the Dominican Republic. He arrived in time to join his South London secondary school with the new incoming Y7 cohort. He is a Spanish speaker and is currently on the SEND Register for speech, language and communication needs. He was placed on the SEND Register after two years in his English secondary school, and appropriate and intensive EAL intervention.

### → Pre-application

The school had little notice Martín was coming, but already had a large Spanish-speaking Caribbean and South American cohort and so made use of their Spanish-speaking staff, including support staff and a Receptionist who helped Spanish-speaking parents. Martín's parents were helped through filling in the forms and getting the uniform; they were given that key member of staff as a contact. They were not asked to have an initial meeting because the school felt Martín's participation in the Y7 transition day would suffice.

### → Induction day

Fortunately, because Martín was able to join the transition activities planned for all Y7s he had a rich and exciting introduction to his new school. His parents were welcomed on transition day during drop-off and pick-up and were able to meet other Spanish-speaking parents.

Whereas the EAL Lead would normally meet the child first and do a personalised introduction and walk around, in this case Martín could participate in a whole school introduction along with his peers, many of whom were also Spanish speaking. A Spanish-speaking Teaching Assistant (TA) flagged that Martín seemed to have trouble pronouncing words and saying grammatically complete sentences in his own language.

Martín was timetabled to attend three hours of English lessons a week with the EAL Lead throughout Y7 and received similar support in Year 8. In addition, he had TA support in his other lessons. The school provided literacy interventions both in English and in his home language. However, he made slower than expected progress acquiring English or improving his Spanish literacy.

### → Medical needs

The EAL Lead and SENDCo jointly proposed that due to his pronunciation, Martín might have a hearing impairment. Although he had no history of glue ear or Eustachian tube issues, they supported the family to request a hearing test from their GP, and this came back with no indicators of hearing impairment. They then had him assessed by the school's Speech and Language Therapist (SALT), who noticed short-term memory issues and specifically visual-verbal weakness in associative memory. He was given speech and language input for developing his working and associative memory while he continued to have in-class support from TAs, translated vocabulary lists, and small-group GCSE English literature, maths, and functional skills interventions.

### → Moving to Key Stage 5

Martín does not think he has any special needs. This may be due to his positive attitude towards receiving support, which he perceives was for his English. He feels that his earlier home country schooling was weak because teachers did not necessarily follow through with him or give him extra explanation. Martín believes that the translation help he got in his subject classes helped him the most. This may be because it was close to his real-time learning and not learning that he had to transfer post-event. He feels successful because he will be attending a mechanics course (his dream job) at a local college and will receive additional support with his maths and English towards completing that course.

## 6.4 KS4 learner

### → Introduction

Gabriel, a Year 10 pupil, arrived in November 2022. He is a Brazilian Portuguese speaker from a medium-sized city in the Southeast of Brazil. He is well educated, and his ambition is to be a doctor. Upon arrival he spoke very little English – mostly basic greetings.

### → Pre-application

The school received three days' notice that Gabriel had been given a place on roll from the local education authority. The school, which had dealt with many mid-year admissions before, used its well-established check-list approach to an EAL mid-year arrival: they sent Gabriel's family an email with links to the free school meals and Universal Credit application forms, information about his school uniform, and an invite to an initial meeting with the Pastoral Lead. A Portuguese-speaking member of staff then called the family to ensure they had understood the information sent by the school and were prepared with questions the school could help with during their initial interview.

At the interview, Gabriel's parents were asked details about their child, including his educational history and medical needs, and their preferences for contact. The family were given details of the school day and school requirements, and Gabriel was given an EAL proficiency test to determine his level of proficiency in English, and an exploratory maths assessment to assess his previous curriculum exposure. GCSE options were discussed and agreed upon, based on Gabriel's prior education. Because Gabriel was academically oriented, an early morning English language learning intervention was scheduled before tutor time three times weekly, to avoid withdrawing him from any subjects.

### → Induction day

Gabriel was introduced to his 'team': the EAL Lead, the Pastoral Lead, his buddy (who did not speak Portuguese) and his form tutor. His buddy and the EAL Lead took him around the school and showed him his specific classrooms and subjects, discussed the canteen menu, and agreed a meeting place in case Gabriel got lost. He was given an iPad, which he had to pick up and drop off daily.

Teachers were given advanced notice that Gabriel would be coming and some basic advice around support including suggestions around translation.

### → Post-induction

Gabriel's parents were contacted a week later to arrange a meeting to discuss how they felt Gabriel was settling in. During the meeting, in which an interpreter was present, Gabriel was given the chance to highlight any issues with his GCSE options, the food, his friendship groups or anything else that was relevant. Gabriel said he wanted to reduce the number of GCSEs he was taking, and the family explained that they wanted more English language learning support for him instead.

The EAL Lead then actioned what was needed; Gabriel was taken out of a double humanity option to enable him to attend three periods of curriculum-related English input by the EAL team.

The school also offered ESOL classes to his parents at the attached primary school.

### → Moving to Key Stage 5

Gabriel is very happy with his progress. He is looking forward to Y11 although he is worried about having the level of English needed for his exams. Because of this, the school is planning an early careers interview for him in the autumn to outline his possible pathway to a foundation year medical school programme and to help him direct his efforts at learning academic English.

## 7. References

- Anderson et al. (2018) *Policy, Pedagogy and Pupil Perceptions: EAL in Scotland and England*. Available at: <https://www.bell-foundation.org.uk/app/uploads/2017/05/Policy-Pedagogy-and-Pupil-Perceptions-Final-full-report-Web-Version-.pdf.pdf>
- Capstick, T. (ed) (2018) *Language for resilience*. Available at: [https://www.britishcouncil.org/sites/default/files/language\\_for\\_resilience\\_-\\_cross-disciplinary\\_perspectives\\_0.pdf](https://www.britishcouncil.org/sites/default/files/language_for_resilience_-_cross-disciplinary_perspectives_0.pdf)
- Deignan, A., Candarli, D., and Oxley, F. (2023). *The Linguistic Challenge of Transition to Secondary School*. Oxon: Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003081890>
- Education Endowment Foundation (2020) *EEF blog: Getting transition right (part 1 of 2)- four practical, evidence-based strategies to support pupils moving from Year 6 to Year 7*. Available at: <https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/news/eef-blog-getting-transition-right-part-1-of-2>
- Education Endowment Foundation (2021) *EEF Teaching and Learning Toolkit. Metacognition and self-regulation*. Available at: <https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/education-evidence/teaching-learning-toolkit/metacognition-and-self-regulation>
- Galton, M., Gray, J., and Ruddock, J. (1999) *The impact of school transitions and transfers on pupil progress and attainment*. Available at: <http://bit.ly/2LTWKYo>
- Manzoni, C. and Rolfe, H. (2019) *How schools are integrating new migrant pupils and their families*. Available at: [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/332030613\\_HOW\\_SCHOOLS\\_ARE\\_INTEGRATING\\_NEW\\_MIGRANT\\_PUPILS\\_AND\\_THEIR\\_FAMILIES](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/332030613_HOW_SCHOOLS_ARE_INTEGRATING_NEW_MIGRANT_PUPILS_AND_THEIR_FAMILIES)
- Sobel, D. (2019) *Getting transition right for vulnerable pupils*, SecEd, June 2019. Available at: [https://www.sec-ed.co.uk/best-practice/getting-transition-right-for-vulnerable-pupils-1/?utm\\_campaign=SecED%20BP%20Bulletin%20-%202020523&utm\\_content=Read%20more&utm\\_term=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.sec-ed.co.uk%2Fbest-practice%2Fgetting-transition-right-for-vulnerable-pupils-1%2F&utm\\_medium=adestra\\_email&utm\\_source=SecEd](https://www.sec-ed.co.uk/best-practice/getting-transition-right-for-vulnerable-pupils-1/?utm_campaign=SecED%20BP%20Bulletin%20-%202020523&utm_content=Read%20more&utm_term=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.sec-ed.co.uk%2Fbest-practice%2Fgetting-transition-right-for-vulnerable-pupils-1%2F&utm_medium=adestra_email&utm_source=SecEd)
- Manzoni, C. and Rolfe, H. (2019) *How schools are integrating new migrant pupils and their families*. Available at: [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/332030613\\_HOW\\_SCHOOLS\\_ARE\\_INTEGRATING\\_NEW\\_MIGRANT\\_PUPILS\\_AND\\_THEIR\\_FAMILIES](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/332030613_HOW_SCHOOLS_ARE_INTEGRATING_NEW_MIGRANT_PUPILS_AND_THEIR_FAMILIES)
- Van Ren et al. (2017) *Facilitating a Successful Transition to Secondary School: (How) Does it Work? A Systematic Literature Review*. Available at: <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s40894-017-0063-2#citeas>



