

# Supporting Students with Home, Heritage and Community Languages: Information for schools and trusts (secondary)

This paper aims to provide guidance for mainstream secondary schools in supporting school communities to realise the value of bilingualism and support mainstream schools in facilitating home language exam entries for their pupils.

The wealth of diverse home, heritage and community languages spoken in the UK has strategic significance for the country and personal meaning for the individuals and their communities.

Home languages are defined by UNESCO as “language learned in childhood in the home environment”. Throughout this paper, the term ‘home language’ incorporates home/heritage/community languages.

In October 2021, Robin Walker MP, former Minister for School Standards, called for “the teaching of modern foreign languages [to be] more reflective of “modern Britain” with greater numbers of pupils learning languages such as Arabic and Polish”. In schools in England, one in five pupils are known to bring lived experience of at least one other language and culture to the classroom. Currently, there are over 360 languages spoken in school settings. In the global and interconnected society of today, the ability to communicate in more than one language and to be culturally aware represents a significant asset.

Approximately 30,000 students take a qualification in their home language every year. A majority of students entering home language exams through their mainstream school do not study the subject in their school, but in a community-led supplementary school setting. At a national level, recognition of the value of pupils developing their home languages is gradually gaining momentum. Policy makers and national institutions acknowledge the strategic role and contribution of home languages to the country’s economic growth and global trade, security, defence, and international relations, in addition to the significance of language skills and cultural capital for social cohesion and social mobility and educational achievements of pupils with English as an additional language (read more in the British Academy’s report **Towards a National Languages Strategy: Education and Skills**).

There are 19 language GCSEs available in England (excluding ancient languages). These are offered in Arabic, Bengali, Mandarin Chinese and Cantonese, French, German, Greek, Gujarati, Modern Hebrew, Italian, Japanese, Panjabi, Persian, Polish, Portuguese, Russian, Spanish, Turkish, and Urdu. However, legacy issues from the pandemic have meant that fewer pupils have been able to sit these qualifications in their mainstream school.

Linguistic diversity is a reality but one that our classrooms fail to address. To recognise and reward the rich linguistic diversity of our classrooms, home languages and their relevant qualifications where they exist, should be supported by all schools.

## Promote and support home languages and qualifications across the whole school

### Leadership and management: staff perspective

- 1 Develop a curriculum policy that reflects an intercultural and inclusive approach to language education, acknowledging all the languages spoken and taught within the school's community.
- 2 Develop cross-curricular materials (with relevant experts) that support language and intercultural education outside of the language classroom, such as topics on the history, culture and politics of specific home languages (history, geography), and the linguistic and aesthetic creativity of home languages (literature, art and music). This approach offers all pupils opportunities to explore and appreciate language and cultural diversity and enhance and enrich global and local perspectives
- 3 At open evenings, include reference to support for home languages and relevant qualifications.
- 4 Ensure support for pupils studying home languages is included as part of your school's inclusion policy, especially in relation to exam requirements or technique.
- 5 Where possible, through local networks, encourage the training of teachers on the basic facts of bilingualism, language learning, and language development in younger and older children. These elements are often missing in teacher training provision (see information on **Bilingualism Matters website**).
- 6 Find out if any of your teaching and support staff speak other languages or have any links with local supplementary school settings. Carry out the same process for any volunteers and governors you may have regularly coming into school.
- 7 As part of your general recruitment process, include language skills in 'desirable skills', especially the languages of your school community.
- 8 When recruiting and appointing new teaching staff and teaching assistants, find out if they have any familiarity with home languages or have any experience of drawing upon different languages in their teaching and support for pupils.
- 9 Encourage the use of home languages between staff and students.
- 10 Use your staff audit to ensure you know the language skills of your staff so they can help with translating where parents do not speak much English.

### Leadership and management: pupil and parent perspective

- 1 Conduct a survey of language skills, including any languages other than English spoken at home, when pupils start in Year 7. Track the progress of the students from that point, checking on who is carrying on with their home language in a supplementary setting.
- 2 At each stage of surveying students' language skills, include questions to ascertain whether pupils are attending community settings (for example complementary or supplementary schools), for instruction.
- 3 It will also be of interest to track which bilingual pupils are continuing to learn a modern language after the age of 14.
- 4 Create space for pupil-led initiatives by connecting pupils of the same home languages to discuss how their language(s) and cultures can be more visible within their school and curriculum.
- 5 Include books in the home languages, as well as simple dictionaries and other reference material, in the school library.

- 6 Include events and workshops with parents and respective communities that promote home languages and the positive contributions of bi/multilingualism.
- 7 Make home languages visible across the school: in hallways and corridors displaying students' multilingual achievements.
- 8 Inform parents about the cognitive, social and academic benefits of bi- and multilingualism and the importance of acquiring home language qualifications.
- 9 In assemblies and school celebrations, emphasise how all languages are of value and how having different languages and different cultures in the school community benefits everyone.
- 10 Include reference to the progress of pupils studying home languages in the school's reporting systems as much as possible.
- 11 Research the Young Interpreter's scheme **Young Interpreters Scheme ([wokingham.gov.uk](http://wokingham.gov.uk))** which involves training pupils to act as mentors for their peers who are learning English as an additional language.
- 12 Integrate language comparison and word walls into language lessons.
- 13 Celebrate students' success as much as possible.

### **Making connections with supplementary education**

There are between 3,000 and 5,000 supplementary schools, most run their teaching on a Saturday or week- day evening. Up to 30% of all BME (Black, Asian and minority ethnic) pupils attend a supplementary school as well as a mainstream school. 80% of supplementary schools teach home languages and 68% offer core curriculum support and GCSE tuition. Offering home languages helps reinforce English language learning, makes children more effective communicators, develops problem solving abilities and reading proficiency.

The successful outcome of supplementary education is that pupils develop connections between their own heritage and that of their peers and acquire cultural agility so that they move between languages and cultures comfortably and confidently. Supplementary schools actively seek to encourage and assist social integration and are sometimes called on to support pupils' wellbeing and learning in mainstream contexts, it is about building confidence and a sense of pride in a bilingual, bicultural identity.

### **Practical activities to support local supplementary schools and your students**

- 1 If pupils have a non-English home language, find out which supplementary schools operate in your area (ask pupils for details) and encourage pupils to continue with improving their own language skills (see points 2 and 3).
- 2 Contact your local council to seek background information and records on local supplementary schools.
- 3 Alternatively, use the **NRCSE online database** to help inform you about local supplementary schools and their offer.
- 4 If your pupils are being taught a home language at a supplementary school or other out-of-school setting, ask for the details so you can contact the school and offer support/arrange to meet.
- 5 Arrange to visit the supplementary school so you can see the school in action. Meet their teacher and listen to their successes and challenges.
- 6 Allow supplementary school teachers to join CPD sessions at your school to provide opportunities for their training and development.

- 7 Collaborate on the delivery of training of teachers on the basic facts of bilingualism, language learning, and language development in younger and older children (see **Bilingualism Matters - Bilingualism Matters**).
- 8 Draw on expertise from supplementary schools and the EAL department to gain a full understanding of the needs and abilities of each student. Share curriculum resources.
- 9 Approach supplementary schools to exchange use of your facilities for their support for your pupils.
- 10 Support supplementary schools with safeguarding.

### Benefits to you and your students

There are many benefits to pupils, teachers and communities when schools make good contacts with supplementary schools and encourage pupils to achieve home language qualifications. Successful partnerships can support:

- 1 The attainment of your students, directly helping them achieve a qualification in their home language. All community language GCSEs contribute to the languages **EBacc pillar**.
- 2 Students' literacy skills in both languages (Cummins 2021).
- 3 The development of students' cultural identity and language, or sense of belonging, self-esteem and confidence.
- 4 The engagement with students' parents, especially those from what may be 'hard-to-reach' families, that are new to the country.
- 5 The school's intercultural work contributing to a school ethos that celebrates the linguistic footprint of its community.
- 6 Partnering with a supplementary school offers a cost-effective way to provide role models for your pupils and teachers from diverse backgrounds supporting the school's profile on internationalism and global citizenship.

### Practical whole-school support for students taking external home language examinations

- 1 Build exam information on home languages into the Year 9 and Year 11 Pathways days/options systems.
- 2 Source outside speaking examiners early in the year: use internal staff/staff contacts, for example advertise in school newsletter and staff briefings.
- 3 Track the progress of students from Year 7 onwards using a simple GCSE entry form/SIMS/awards.
- 4 Set up good communication systems with students, parents, tutors, the pastoral team and exam team. Tutors are key!
- 5 Set up exam-specific training: face-to-face and online/paper resources.
- 6 Where overlaps exist and where possible, train the speaking examiners alongside students for the speaking exam. Have practice run-throughs using old papers and feedback to both the student and examiner.
- 7 Invite speaking examiners to language faculty moderation activities.

Nuriye Mertcan, Assistant Principal at Duke's Aldridge Academy who supports the delivery of home languages at supplementary schools across the UK on a voluntary basis says: *"It is vital to recognise and value all the hard work which is taking place at supplementary schools and congratulating the students and their families for the additional time they have dedicated to their education. Through forming meaningful links with colleagues involved in supplementary education, we can better support our pupils to reach their potential."*

Bernadette Clinton, MFL Consultant at Hackney Education, has a long track record in this domain. She says: *“Schools are keen to serve their local communities and to meet their needs. As part of recognising the skills that pupils bring with them to school, it is vital for schools to celebrate the heritage languages that children speak. This demonstrates that the school values these skills and encourages the pupils to succeed and feel proud of their own talents. Local authorities and multi-academy trusts can support schools in discovering and making contact with the supplementary schools – a good starting point is to look at the NRCSE website.*

*Pupils themselves, of course, can furnish the names of the schools they attend. It is vital to provide a joined-up approach so that pupils do not fall between two stools and are disenfranchised from gaining the accreditation they deserve and the country needs.”*

## Further information

A range of related resources are available on the Association for Language Learning (ALL) Home/ Heritage/ Community Language zone including an annotated list ‘Resources to support linguistically and culturally inclusive practices in primary and secondary schools’. This detailed list brings together work by teachers and researchers in the UK and internationally, aimed at providing practical support for schools.

**Home / Heritage / Community Languages - Association for Language Learning ([all-languages.org.uk](http://all-languages.org.uk))**

**YPF Trust –NRCSE National Resource Centre for Supplementary Education**

Woll, B. and Li, W. (2019) *Cognitive Benefits of Language Learning: Broadening our perspectives. Final Report to the British Academy.*

<https://www.thebritishacademy.ac.uk/publications/cognitive-benefits-language-learning-perspectives-report/>

Cummins, J. (2021) *Rethinking the Education of Multilingual Learners. Bristol: Multilingual Matters.*

**What are community languages? 2011 NALDIC**

**Saturdays for success: How supplementary education can support pupils from all backgrounds to flourish | IPPR**

**Young Interpreters Scheme**

**Stephen Spender Prize Bilingualism Matters**

**Recommendation CM/Rec(2022)1 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on the importance of plurilingual and intercultural education for democratic culture**

**Nine Myths about Heritage Language Education**

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