

Welcome, admission and induction

Refugee and asylum seeker pupils may arrive in the classroom during the school year, not speaking English and having suffered disruption to their education. Some will have lived through conflicts and experienced many losses. These children will need to feel safe and welcome and have the support they need to settle and become effective learners

Good practice

Teachers (and student teachers) can more effectively support the integration and achievement of refugee and asylum seeker children in schools that have developed clear admission procedures. These should ensure a positive welcome to all families, good communication, flexible responses to the wider needs of each child ([see Supporting refugee families](#)), initial [assessment](#), information sharing with teachers so they can effectively plan for inclusion, [peer support](#) and tracking and reviewing of progress.

Teachers can develop important skills, such as establishing trust and partnership, by meeting the parents of refugee and asylum-seeker children. It is important to be aware however that refugee families may have experienced many formal interviews with officials that may have been intrusive and even distressing. They may also have acute and painful memories of interrogation in their own countries. Stressing confidentiality, giving clear information to explain questions and making an effort to spell and pronounce names accurately will all contribute to a genuine partnership with parents. When meeting the parents of refugee and asylum seeker children it is important to check if they have been informed about the school curriculum, school routines and expectations. Many refugee families are new to the English education system and may not be accustomed to teacher's expectations of partnership and parental involvement. Some parents will need schools to provide interpreters.

Information gathered from parents can greatly assist teachers' understanding of the needs of their children. Refugee children come from a variety of national, ethnic, cultural and linguistic backgrounds. They may have had a formal education in their home country on or no previous school experience. They may be literate in a language other than English and speak and understand several languages. They may have learnt some English in school in their home country or already have attended school in England. To plan for their inclusion in classroom learning, teachers need to develop an understanding of each pupil's recent history, including their previous education and any gaps in learning there might be.

When planning to support a newly arrived refugee or asylum seeker pupil, student teachers need to consult other staff closely. Another teacher may have responsibility for refugee children; for example the school may have Ethnic Minority Achievement (EMA) staff or a teaching assistant or learning mentor who support new arrivals. The EMA staff can share initial assessment information about a pupil's level of fluency in English, useful resources and teaching strategies. It is also important to check the admission form which should have been completed during the family's welcome interview and see if there are any concerns that have been recorded. The school may have access to Bilingual Assistants who can support access to the curriculum, and the local authority may be able to provide specialist advice and support. There may also be local agencies and community organisations that help refugee children and families, and provide after-school and weekend clubs for them ([see Play, leisure and out-of-school-hours learning](#)).

Teachers can make the classroom welcoming by preparing equipment and learning groups to ensure the new pupil's welcome, allocating 'buddies' ([see Peer support](#)), learning how to pronounce the pupil's name, knowing his or her first language and cultural background and identifying other pupils in the class who may share this. Teachers need to plan to adapt and modify the curriculum to meet the pupil's needs and so she or he can experience success. A new pupil will find explicit and consistent routines helpful, and needs to know that there are clear and enforced procedures against bullying and racism. Early opportunities for autobiographical talk, drawing and writing can also be helpful to the pupil and teacher.

Teachers will need to carefully monitor the attendance and progress of each new pupil and also check on their well-being after break and lunch times. A review of early progress with the pupil and key staff after the first few weeks is essential to ensure that the pupil is in learning groups that are appropriately challenging; and any extra support that is needed is put in place. Gifted and talented new arrivals can be identified. If parents are also met to review progress then more effective home school partnerships can be developed, any anxieties tackled and the pupil's wider needs further assessed.

Creating an inclusive climate in the classroom helps refugee children to settle and feel welcome and valued ([see Peer support](#)). Teachers can ensure their classes learn something about the countries refugees are coming from and their cultural and educational background. They can encourage discussion about refugees, moving home and cultural diversity, seeing all children, including refugees, as resources for learning ([see Teaching and learning about refugees](#)). The use of home languages can be encouraged ([see Community languages](#)), for example through bilingual signs and dictionaries in the classroom. A welcoming and receptive classroom gives recognition and praise to the skills and knowledge children bring and to their developing successes and achievements.

Indeed, teachers are learning to value the wealth of understanding their school gains from admitting refugee and asylum seeker children, and the reaffirmation such connection can give of a classroom's relationship with the world

Frequently asked questions

A refugee or asylum seeker child may find school too overwhelming. They may not speak English and may also have had terrible experiences. Shouldn't they perhaps start on a part-time timetable or be taught separately?

It is important to remember that refugee and asylum seeker children want to go to school, make friends, play sports and games and feel safe and happy just like any other child. They are not a homogenous group and will cope with their experiences of adversity in different ways. The majority of refugee children are extremely resilient and show many coping skills in managing the changes they have been through (see [Supporting emotional needs](#)). For children who may be coping with stress and uncertainty, their school can provide vital stability and normality. For children who do not speak English, they can learn English through a variety of routes, particularly through interaction with English-speaking peers and the subject matter of lessons (see [Bilingualism and second language acquisition](#)). Everything schools do to help children feel safe and normal will help them make progress and rebuild their lives. It is vital that teachers have high expectations of refugee children. Refugee children can be expected to make good progress in their learning after a period of settling in.

What will be the main concerns of refugee parents on admission?

Refugee parents often have high expectations of schooling, are likely to come from educated backgrounds themselves, and provide strong support to their children who go on to achieve success. However, for many, the pursuit of a school place for their child will have been arduous and they may also not be informed about the English education system. They may not know about education benefits such as Free School Meals or how to apply. They may need interpretation and be very anxious about how their child will learn English and be able to catch up on missed schooling. Some parents or carers will want to know how best to help their child at home with schoolwork, but be aware of the general lack of availability and affordability of books, especially dual language books, and other study materials. Some parents may worry that schools will show little understanding of their recent experiences, especially in a climate where there is misunderstanding and even hostility towards asylum seekers.

Authors

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Key Readings

DfES (2003) *Managing Pupil Mobility: Guidance*. London : DfES [DfES/0781/2003 and DfES/0780/2003]. Retrieved on 24th September, 2005 from: <http://www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/sie/documents/pmguidance.pdf>

Dobson, J, Henthorne, K, and Lynas, Z. (2000) *Pupil Mobility in Schools: Final Report*. London : Migration Research Unit, University College

London Borough of Newham (2003) *Managing mid-phase pupil admissions: a resource and guidance folder for schools*. Newham : Newham Education Action Zone.

Save the Children (2001) *I didn't come Here for Fun...Listening to the Views of Children and Young People who are refugees or asylum-seekers in Scotland*. London : Save the Children

Spafford, T. and Bolloten, B. (1995) 'The Admission and Induction of Refugee Children into School' in *Multicultural Teaching Volume 14 Number 1*. Stoke-on-Trent : Trentham Books

Online Resources

<http://www.qca.org.uk/10005.html>

Guidance from QCA on supporting the admission and induction of new arrivals from overseas.

http://myweb.tiscali.co.uk/beginners/early_days.htm

Slough EAZ: Beginners in English as an additional language. A project jointly funded by Equality Services and Slough EAZ to help schools, mainstream teachers, and specialist staff locate and develop resources for pupils at early stages of learning EAL. This page gives guidance to teachers supporting the induction of new arrivals with EAL.

<http://www.antibullying.net/newcomers2.htm>

Centre for Education for Racial Equality in Scotland's Welcoming Newcomers website

<http://www.manchester.gov.uk/education/diversity/ema/newarriv.htm>

Manchester EMAS guidance on new arrivals

<http://www.blss.portsmouth.sch.uk/asylum/index.shtml>

Portsmouth Ethnic Minority Achievement Service's website giving background information and a range of guidance and resources for supporting refugee and asylum seeker pupils.

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