

Yvette

Contributed by Wanda Jarratt

Yvette is a 15 year old girl who was born in France. She is of African Congolese heritage. She uses French at home where she lives with her brother and sister in law. She was brought up in France and her whole education was French medium. She learned some English in school in France but her English is very basic.

She joined an inner London school shortly after arriving in the UK at the beginning of Year 10. In her tutor group, there are other French speakers (one happens to be her cousin and the other the son of a friend of the family). Her form tutor is a French speaking teacher. Yvette works very hard. She has attended homework club regularly, where she meets other EAL students and she gets support from EAL co-ordinator . She was introduced to the EAL co-ordinator soon as soon as she arrived at the school.

Yvette has made lots of friends, especially with other EAL students,(Somali, Turkish, Portuguese girls) that she meets regularly in the library at break, lunch and after school. She likes music and shopping and clothes and she is missing French food. She is a very happy girl and very popular around the school, especially with younger girls, because she is always polite and well mannered. She does not like reading.

She received 2 periods of withdrawal support, initially individually but now with other EAL students. She receives 2 periods a week of in-class support in English. She feels she has made greater progress in English of this. In English lessons she has been able to complete all her coursework and to talk for four minutes in front of the class in defence of her character "Sheila" from The Inspector Calls. Although she has a very strong French accent her speaking is clear. All students clapped except for the French speakers, who closed their ears and felt embarrassed about her accent. She likes working on her own in class. Lately she is making more friends with other EAL students.

Yvette usually uses French with her cousin and other French speakers. She finds it hard to use a dictionary to look up words . Despite the fact that she does not like reading, she has a very clear voice when she reads. She likes acting and this is the only way to make her read, to take a play and act it out with different voices. She is a keen writer and is happier writing than speaking, where she has to think 'on the spot'. She is able to express herself much better if she has first written down what she wants to say.

Yvette has developed confidence in speaking English and she asks regularly about expressions she hears that she does not understand. Her biggest problem is that she finds it hard to understand teachers and students, because they speak so fast. She understands the people speaking on TV more than she used to. She is writing longer passages in English and her targets for next term are to read a book every two weeks and to keep a log book of everything read. She would like to improve in Science, because that is her most difficult subject.

Her specific EAL targets are:

- read more texts/books for enjoyment (she gets easily bored with books and only reads if she can read to someone aloud)
- understand questions in the exam papers (she misunderstands or cannot understand the question set and needs reminding about the key words)
- understand basic text (especially in Science, where she finds it hard to understand as she does not understand the processes described. In this subject she finds it easier to understand text if she has visual support like pictures or a diagram with key words)

- be able to summarise text and to identify the main point of what she has read.(She currently copies lots of pages and feels good that she has written a lot, despite not understanding the text)
- build her confidence in speaking English on basic topics like describing a film she has seen (she finds speaking the hardest of the four skills and she needs to speak from something she has prepared beforehand)
- write using the correct pronoun and tenses (him, them, their, I am reading, I have read)

Yvette feels she has learned a lot and she appreciates the support she has received from the EAL department. She feels the EAL department provides a safe haven, and a non-threatening environment, where she can laugh, make friends and get advice.

Recently she wrote:

"Mrs J. (the French speaking EAL co-ordinator) helped me every time, with maths, English, Phse. Mrs J. helped me because I am a new student. I can see the difference with me and my cousin and my family friend Louis, because they did not have support last year. Instead, if I need help I can call Mrs J, and she is the only person who supports me. When Mrs J is not in, I panic because Mrs J. gives me moral support. Monday period 5 and 6 it was good to work with Anna and Jasmin and to complete work."

She would like to be ready in April for her pre-mock exams and to change some of her options now she understands more of the system. She would like to be able to understand other students and to improve her knowledge of the English language.