

# Welcoming Ukrainian children to schools and colleges

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With grateful thanks to Reading Ukrainian School and to newly arrived Ukrainian parents in Kent.

Thanks also to Richmond and Wandsworth Councils .

## Introduction

This pack provides guidance for schools, colleges and other places of education or training on welcoming Ukrainian children, young people and families into their settings. It includes good practice suggestions from experienced EAL providers, links to useful resources in English and Ukrainian, tips from children and young people who have arrived here from other countries and a comparison of the education systems of Ukraine and the UK. For simplicity, the term 'school' is used to mean any educational establishment and the term 'child' includes older children and young people. Your school will already be implementing many of the suggestions here to support all newly arrived EAL children and will have your own unique areas of good practice – this resource is intended as a supplementary aid.

## Top tips

- Consider the cultural, linguistic and academic needs of newly arrived children; recognise the positive contribution they can make to the school.
- Positively reflect the language and culture of new arrivals in the school environment.
- Welcoming new arrivals requires a whole school approach. Develop holistic processes for welcoming new arrivals. Building a welcoming environment does not have to be expensive: from creating displays in the school that celebrate diversity and refugees, to taking the time to learn how to properly pronounce a student's name, it is the small actions that make all the difference.



- Building partnerships with parents is an essential element of working with newly arrived children.

## Good practice across the school

- **Prior to the child starting school:** Ascertain languages spoken within the family and the child's previous educational experience and levels. Where Russian or other languages are spoken within the family there will be more multilingual resources available than if Ukrainian alone is spoken. Ask about the child's prior education, achievements and subjects studied, their academic strengths and level of literacy and numeracy. Have they studied English and if so, to what level? Where the child has good literacy skills a device can be used for translation. Bookmark a Cyrillic keyboard and model how to paste from it into, for example, Google Translate. A literate child will benefit from dual language texts and if they write, get them to complete a writing task in Ukrainian early on so their peers get to see that they can do it, just not in English yet.
- **Welcoming the child to their class:** Talk to the class they will be joining. You've probably already talked as a school about the war, so tell the class that a new pupil is coming from Ukraine and have a discussion about how we can welcome and be kind to them – they might not want to get lots of questions about the conflict or what has happened to them but it would be good if we could say hello in their language and think about what it would be like if we went to school and suddenly were not able to understand what everyone was saying.
- **Support for the new pupil:** Identify a group of empathetic children to be buddies – choose quite a few so they can buddy on a rota and you can have two buddies at a time – make sure they understand that their help is going to be most important during break and lunch and come up with a system to reward good buddying because otherwise motivation can flag after a time.
- **Support for parents/carers:** Parents may need help with understanding school systems and expectations. There are some useful guidance sheets for parents about the UK school system and about supporting their children's learning, in 22 different languages including Ukrainian, from The Bell Foundation – see links at end of this section. We have developed a specific guide for parents / carers and also one for children – a primary and secondary version. You may wish to use this in your setting, making it bespoke. Ukrainian parents will want to know about the detailed curriculum of subjects, particularly in secondary school, to identify differences and gaps in their child's knowledge. The maths and science curriculums are different in both content and methodologies; parents will want to know details so that they can help their children with any learning gaps.
- **Support with visual aids:** Praise all attempts at communication (verbal and non-verbal) but don't put the child or young person under pressure to speak English. Consider the use of response fans/visuals so the young person has a way to communicate basic needs immediately. Twinkl do a variety of communication fans – see resources section.
- **Support from peers:** Group your new arrival with children who are empathetic and articulate – a talk triad with the new learner in the middle can be effective. Find as many ways as possible to include the child/young person – even if it's as simple as asking them to be one of the children handing stuff out in a lesson it's good to help them feel part of it all.
- **Safe environment:** The priority to begin with is to make sure the young person feels welcome, safe and happy. Be aware that extended periods listening to a new language are very taxing, and the young person is likely to tire – it's useful for teachers to have a toolkit of activities with low language demand to give a child or young person downtime when they are flagging – art-based activities often do the

trick. Gradually increase the expectations around participation as you go and do everything you can to make the learning as concrete as possible.

- **Time out:** The child or young person has not only been through the trauma of war and leaving everything they know at short notice, they may also be separated from family and friends and be profoundly anxious about the safety of loved ones and what is happening and will happen to their home country. They need to know they can take 'time out' in a quiet, safe space away from a busy classroom when needed, communicating the need discreetly to a class teacher (e.g. time-out coloured card). See resources section

## Resources for Ukrainian parents (in English, Ukrainian and 20 other languages):

### English education system: Primary School:

English version:  [www.bell-foundation.org.uk/app/uploads/2021/01/Guide-for-parents-PrimarySchools-FV-English.pdf](http://www.bell-foundation.org.uk/app/uploads/2021/01/Guide-for-parents-PrimarySchools-FV-English.pdf)

Ukrainian version:  [www.bell-foundation.org.uk/app/uploads/2022/03/Guide-for-Parents-PrimarySchools\\_UA.pdf](http://www.bell-foundation.org.uk/app/uploads/2022/03/Guide-for-Parents-PrimarySchools_UA.pdf)

### English education system: Secondary school:

English version:  [www.bell-foundation.org.uk/app/uploads/2021/01/Guide-for-parents-SecondarySchools-FV-English.pdf](http://www.bell-foundation.org.uk/app/uploads/2021/01/Guide-for-parents-SecondarySchools-FV-English.pdf)

Ukrainian version:  [www.bell-foundation.org.uk/app/uploads/2022/03/Guide-for-ParentsSecondary-Schools\\_UA.pdf](http://www.bell-foundation.org.uk/app/uploads/2022/03/Guide-for-ParentsSecondary-Schools_UA.pdf)

### Supporting your child's learning:


English version:  [www.bell-foundation.org.uk/app/uploads/2020/09/Guidance-forParents-FV-English.pdf](http://www.bell-foundation.org.uk/app/uploads/2020/09/Guidance-forParents-FV-English.pdf)


Ukrainian version:  [www.bell-foundation.org.uk/app/uploads/2022/03/Guidance-for-ParentsUkrainian\\_UA.pdf](http://www.bell-foundation.org.uk/app/uploads/2022/03/Guidance-for-ParentsUkrainian_UA.pdf)

## Checklist for helping children settle in

In summary, an admission meeting plus the following can help the settling in period:

- peer buddies and named key worker
- agreed plan of support which will be put in place
- plan of school and tour
- plan of the local area, including the route to and from school
- names, introductions and 'about me' sheet to key members of staff including photos
- details of the school routine e.g. breaks, lunch, change of lessons (visual or colour-coded timetable and map)
- term dates/school events
- information on the curriculum
- information on how to access school online learning and after school support
- school clubs and activities
- uniform list, including PE and equipment list with any necessary religious or cultural adjustments
- information on wider community support, after school and local clubs and youth activities
- parents' evening dates and named contact person for parents if they have questions
- if possible, an introduction to another student or staff member who speaks their first language.

For activities for all children in KS1 and KS2 to learn about Ukraine, see 'getting to know' projects Ukraine Activity Pack (teacher made) at  [www.twinkl.co.uk/resource/ukraine-activity-pack-t-tp-1646652388](http://www.twinkl.co.uk/resource/ukraine-activity-pack-t-tp-1646652388).

For further information and ideas, see the comprehensive City of Sanctuary resource  [schools.cityofsanctuary.org/resources](http://schools.cityofsanctuary.org/resources).

## Ten essentials for EAL good practice (from Wiltshire Ethnic Minority and Traveller Achievement Service)

### 1. Using first language

Pupils feel confident they can use their first language in school. They use it for learning and socialising and being multilingual is positively welcomed: language talents are valued

### 2. Valuing language and heritage

Pupils see examples of their culture, language and heritage in the visual environment in books and resources and in the curriculum. Schools partner parents to value and develop multilingualism at home and in school and to build confidence and pride in cultural heritage.

### 3. High expectations

Schools are ambitious for pupils and have high expectations: EAL learners will acquire English quickly and make faster than average progress in learning

### 4. Assessment

Until they reach academic fluency, EAL learners' acquisition of English is continually assessed and monitored – using materials designed for this purpose, recognising that standardised assessments may be more a test of knowledge of English than subject knowledge for EAL learners.

### 5. Early reading

Early teaching of reading develops EAL learners' comprehension as well as decoding skills.

### 6. Adding context

Teachers talk and read using additional visual, actions, objects, gestures, repetition and shared learning experiences. Pupils have access to relevant ICT/translation resources to support their learning.

### 7. The Silent Period

We understand the Silent Period – new to English children are given opportunities to communicate verbally and non-verbally; they are encouraged (not pressured) to speak.

### 8. Academic language

We understand the difference between social and academic English and that children will continue to need support with the latter for several years after starting to learn English.

### 9. Fighting racism and discrimination

School is overtly anti-racist and creates a culture where EAL learners and all children are free from discrimination, prejudice or exclusion.

### 10. Setting and grouping

EAL learners are usually grouped with their cognitive peers and will acquire English from good peer models.

## Children and young people's tips for schools and teachers

From Oxfordshire Virtual School's resource on supporting unaccompanied children and suggestions from unaccompanied young people in Wandsworth.

### What has helped most at school?

"Make sure ALL of our teachers know we don't speak English."

"Miss X – I would talk to her if I was struggling – she's the best."

"I was given a Chromebook to help me learn English that I use in lessons and for homework."

"Everyone needs something different; I especially need help with spelling and writing – I didn't know anything when I came here."

"At primary school I had TA support and lots of basic English lessons, 1 to 1 twice a week."

### What helped me settle in?

"I was given support and a mentor – it helped having someone I knew I could talk to."

"I had a buddy at school the first week who I went everywhere with."

"I find it easy to make friends and that helped me settle in and learn English from them."

"My social worker introduced me to another Albanian girl outside school, this was helpful and we are still friends now."

"Study club has helped me learn, I have made new friends from lots of different countries."

"I enjoy the cultural trips and days out. We have just been to Hampstead Heath and Kenwood House."

### What do you wish schools knew/had known so that they could help you more?

"Don't make it obvious that we need extra help – come to us quietly during the lesson to check if we understand or need help. Don't assume that we are ok, just ask us."

“Don’t put too much pressure on us to learn English straightaway; don’t make us read ALL the time’....‘Make it more fun to learn English!”

“Be aware that things might be difficult for me and that might come out in my behaviour sometimes but I’m not faking it or doing it on purpose, it is just really hard sometimes.” (She also talked about needing a timeout card and somewhere safe to go when upset or angry).

“I just want to be a child – don’t make me ‘be the adult’ or have ‘adult conversations’ about really difficult things all the time, I’m a child and I want to be able to BE a child sometimes.”

“Be patient – we might not understand the rules yet or why we are being told off.”

“Make us feel confident – we’ll be shy and won’t be able to ask for help.”

“The first few weeks were very confusing and also boring because I didn’t understand what was being said, but slowly, slowly, it became easier.”

“Give us more help and time to find our way around – one day I just came home because I couldn’t find my classroom and was just walking round for ages – I know now that I could have gone to reception was too shy to ask because I couldn’t speak English.”


“We come from all different countries where things might be very different – EVERYTHING is different here. We might be scared about school and too worried to speak up at first.”

“If I had had someone to tell me the things I’m saying to you now, it would have really helped – I’d like to help other children when they first arrive so that I can say to them ‘Be confident! Don’t be shy, ask for help!’”

## Resources


### The Bell Foundation

Video by The Bell Foundation. Welcoming Refugee Children: Advice and Guidance for Schools

 [youtu.be/-\\_HGaHz9peA?si=eyKZVw6q3BhL8hEA](https://youtu.be/-_HGaHz9peA?si=eyKZVw6q3BhL8hEA)


### Hampshire EMTAS - Asylum Seeker & Refugee Support

A Moodle with open access to resources to support refugees and asylum seekers

 [emtas.hias.hants.gov.uk/course/view.php?id=84](https://emtas.hias.hants.gov.uk/course/view.php?id=84)


## Wiltshire Healthy Schools

How to talk to children about the war in Ukraine news article

 [www.wiltshirehealthyschools.org/news/items/talking-to-children-about-the-war-in-ukraine](https://www.wiltshirehealthyschools.org/news/items/talking-to-children-about-the-war-in-ukraine)

## Lingohut

Learn Ukrainian online - free online lessons

 [www.lingohut.com/en/l83/learn-ukrainian](https://www.lingohut.com/en/l83/learn-ukrainian)


## Lexilogos

Ukrainian keyboard

 [www.lexilogos.com/keyboard/ukrainian.htm](https://www.lexilogos.com/keyboard/ukrainian.htm)


## Twinkl

Useful EAL communication fans to aid communication in the early days. Some already translated into Ukrainian. Users have to subscribe.

 [www.twinkl.co.uk/search?q=eal+communication+fans&c=244&ca=243&ct=eal&r=teacher](https://www.twinkl.co.uk/search?q=eal+communication+fans&c=244&ca=243&ct=eal&r=teacher)


## Oak Academy

Oak Academy are providing Ukrainian translations of many of their worksheets. Other languages also provided.

 [classroom.thenational.academy/](https://classroom.thenational.academy/)


## NEU - Welcoming Refugee Children to your School

The Welcoming Refugee Children to Your School guide provides information about ways in which you can create a refugee-friendly school, make an accessible curriculum.

 [neu.org.uk/advice/equality/race-equality/welcoming-refugee-children](https://neu.org.uk/advice/equality/race-equality/welcoming-refugee-children)

## Hampshire EMTAS - New Arrivals video

Short video about supporting a new arrival to school. An accompanying pack also available.

 [www.hants.gov.uk/educationandlearning/emtas/primary-secondary-phase](https://www.hants.gov.uk/educationandlearning/emtas/primary-secondary-phase)

## The Phoenix Group

A resource for children to explain the processes in starting school.

 [www.phoenixeducationconsultancy.com/tools](https://www.phoenixeducationconsultancy.com/tools)

## For parents, carers and professionals: Information, resources and managing children's anxiety about war and international violence


- How to talk to your teenager about the invasion of Ukraine – tips from a clinical psychologist:  
[www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/articles/zbrdjsg](http://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/articles/zbrdjsg)
- Supporting your child if they see upsetting content online about what is happening in Ukraine (Childnet)  
[www.childnet.com/blog/supporting-your-child-with-upsetting-content/](http://www.childnet.com/blog/supporting-your-child-with-upsetting-content/)
- We should not hide from children what is happening in Ukraine (Schools Week/ Children's Commissioner)  
[schoolsweek.co.uk/we-should-not-hide-from-children-what-is-happening-in-ukraine/](http://schoolsweek.co.uk/we-should-not-hide-from-children-what-is-happening-in-ukraine/)
- How to talk to children about what's happening in Ukraine and World War Three anxiety (Metro)  
[metro.co.uk/2022/02/24/how-to-talk-to-children-about-whats-happening-in-ukraine-16163133/](http://metro.co.uk/2022/02/24/how-to-talk-to-children-about-whats-happening-in-ukraine-16163133/)
- Help for teachers and families to talk to pupils about Russia's invasion of Ukraine and how to help them avoid misinformation (Department for Education)  
[educationhub.blog.gov.uk/2022/02/25/help-for-teachers-and-families-to-talk-to-pupils-about-russias-invasion-of-ukraine-and-how-to-help-them-avoid-misinformation/](http://educationhub.blog.gov.uk/2022/02/25/help-for-teachers-and-families-to-talk-to-pupils-about-russias-invasion-of-ukraine-and-how-to-help-them-avoid-misinformation/)
- How and when to talk to children about war, according to a parenting expert (Independent)  
[www.independent.co.uk/life-style/children-war-talk-russia-ukraine-b2023695.html](http://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/children-war-talk-russia-ukraine-b2023695.html)
- How to cope with traumatic news - an illustrated guide (ABC News, Australia)  
[www.abc.net.au/news/2014-12-23/illustrated-guide-cope-traumatic-news/5985104](http://www.abc.net.au/news/2014-12-23/illustrated-guide-cope-traumatic-news/5985104)
- Talking with Children About War and Violence in the World (Family Education, US)  
[www.familyeducation.com/life/wars/talking-children-about-war-violence-world](http://www.familyeducation.com/life/wars/talking-children-about-war-violence-world)

- Tips for parents and caregivers on media coverage of traumatic events (The National Child Traumatic Stress Network, US)  
[www.nctsn.org/resources/tips-parents-and-caregivers-media-coverage-traumatic-events](http://www.nctsn.org/resources/tips-parents-and-caregivers-media-coverage-traumatic-events)
- National Youth Agency guides, toolkits and signposts for professionals working with young people to navigate discussions with young people about the crisis in Ukraine and conflict. Young people's space to create messages of solidarity and support.  
[www.nya.org.uk/ukraine-crisis/](http://www.nya.org.uk/ukraine-crisis/)

## Ukrainian educational resources

- There are supplementary Saturday and Sunday Ukrainian schools in London (and other towns and cities) providing education on language, history, culture, geography, literature, music of Ukraine and achievements of Ukrainian people in many different fields.  
[stmarysukrschool.co.uk/en/](http://stmarysukrschool.co.uk/en/)  
[www.readingukrschool.com/](http://www.readingukrschool.com/)
- There are also many online resources for Ukrainian children and parents. Whilst on some of these sites there is no 'on site' translation, Google Translate can be used to understand the approaches and content.  
[childdevelop.com.ua/](http://childdevelop.com.ua/)
- Edugames programme – interactive tasks, explanations and demonstrations for the Ukrainian education syllabus in mathematics and the Ukrainian language for grades 1-4 NUS  
[edugames.rozumniki.ua/](http://edugames.rozumniki.ua/)
- Official site for Ukrainian centre for distant supplementary education:  
[udcpo.com.ua/](http://udcpo.com.ua/)
- Full-time online Ukrainian secondary school Optima:  
[optima.school/](http://optima.school/)
- Resources from official education programme of New Ukrainian School  
[nus.org.ua/tags/383/](http://nus.org.ua/tags/383/)
- Free educational resources for Ukrainian children – Education without backpacks  
[www.obr.education/en/free-educational-resources-for-ukrainian-children](http://www.obr.education/en/free-educational-resources-for-ukrainian-children)

- The Association of Ukrainians in Great Britain (AUGB) is the largest representative body for Ukrainians and those of Ukrainian descent in the UK. It exists to develop, promote and support the interests of the Ukrainian community in the UK.

 [www.augb.co.uk](http://www.augb.co.uk)

## Tips for supporting all children who have experienced trauma

1. Don't make assumptions. Just like anyone else, a child or young person who is a refugee has their unique experiences, strengths, talents, coping mechanisms and level of independence.
2. Treat anything that the young person tells you as confidential as you would any other pupil, unless they have specifically said that something can be shared more widely.
3. 'Time out' cards and somewhere safe to go when overwhelmed. Some children may be triggered by sensory overload – playground, corridors. Be aware of large groups, noise and lighting and provide a quiet and 'safe space' that children can access as needed.
4. You can make a big difference. Relational trauma requires relational healing: create a relationship in which you are responsive, consistent, warm, empathetic and boundaried.
5. Behaviour is communication. Don't take it personally; ask yourself what the young person might be communicating.
6. When someone experiences stress and anxiety, it's difficult to engage until they have regulated themselves and come back to a state of calm. You can help by staying calm, speaking gently and providing space.
7. Stressed people do not always "hear" what is being said. It can be helpful to break down information and instructions into manageable pieces, use visual cues and several formats.
8. Avoid sarcasm and ambiguous language.
9. Sometimes, walking and talking can be more comfortable for an open discussion than sitting.
10. Laughter releases oxytocin, reduces stress and lightens the atmosphere.
11. Avoid direct questions and orders such as, "What's wrong?", "Don't do that ...". Try open, neutral, curious observations such as:
  - You seem to be having difficulty with carrying out your plan. Can I suggest...? Can I help?
  - I notice that... Is that right? Why is that?
  - I realise this is very hard for you right now. Let's just think about why...
12. It can be helpful to name and describe emotions. Young people who have experienced trauma can find it challenging to understand their own emotions and those of others
13. Use visual/auditory supports. Not all young people read or write with ease; support with clear notes, pictures, audio, flowcharts, diagrams, timelines, sketches, etc. to record information and to plan.
14. Frequent affirmation – always be specific, praise effort and encourage the idea that we only really learn when we make mistakes.

## About Ukraine

### Facts and Statistics

**Location:** Eastern Europe, bordering the Black Sea, between Poland, Romania and Moldova in the west and Russia in the east

**Capital:** Kyiv (Kiev)

**Climate:** Temperate continental; Mediterranean only on the southern Crimean coast; winters vary from cool along the Black Sea to cold farther inland; summers are warm across the greater part of the country, hot in the south.

**Population:** 44 million (2021)

**Ethnic make-up:** Ukrainian 77.8%, Russian 17.3%, Belarusian 0.6%, Moldovan 0.5%, Crimean Tatar 0.5%, Bulgarian 0.4%, Hungarian 0.3%, Romanian 0.3%, Polish 0.3%, Jewish 0.2%, other 1.8%

**Religion:** Ukraine is a secular state. The majority religion is Christian, with approximately 60 per cent of Orthodox affiliation,

seven per cent Greek Catholic and a very small number of Jewish, Protestant and Muslim believers. Thirty per cent identify as atheist.

**Language in Ukraine:** Ukrainian is the official state language (a subgroup of the Slavic languages). The language shares some vocabulary with other Slavic languages – Belarusian, Polish, Russian and Slovak. The language has been banned for periods throughout centuries but has thrived amongst Ukrainian people, kept alive in folklore stories, literature and songs and by musicians and writers.

**Ukrainian society and culture:** Ukraine has one of the earliest known ancient civilizations, the Trypillian civilization 7,000 – 5,000 years ago. About 75 per cent of the population is ethnic Ukrainian. The largest minority group is Russian – around 20 per cent. Belarussians, Bulgarians, Poles, Hungarians and Romanians make up the other major minority groups. Around 70 per cent of people live in urban areas.

Ukrainian culture places high value on a good education, hard work, generosity and hospitality. Visitors are always offered food and drink and it is considered rude to eat in front of another person without sharing. Ukraine has had a significant impact in the global fields of aviation, aerospace, IT, metallurgy, sport, art to name a few and like all cultures, has its famous writers, artists, scientists, sports people and musicians. The inventor of the helicopter was Ukrainian and the 19th century scientist who developed a vaccine for cholera and was knighted by Queen Victoria was a Jewish doctor from Ukraine.

Foraging for mushrooms and other edible plants is a national pastime (and the cause of several cases of food poisoning!)

**Meeting/greeting:** The typical greeting is a warm, firm handshake, maintaining direct eye contact, repeating your name. When female friends meet, they kiss on the cheek three times, starting with the left and then alternating, while close male friends may pat each other on the back and hug.

Ukrainian names are comprised of:


- First name, which is the person's given name.
- Middle name, which is a patronymic or a version of the father's first name formed by adding "-vich" or "-ovich" for a male

and "-avna", "-ovna", or "ivna" for a female. The son of Alexi would have a patronymic of Alexivich while the daughter's patronymic would be Alexivina.

- Last name, which is the family or surname. In formal situations, people use all three names. Friends and close acquaintances may refer to each other by their first name and patronymic. Ukrainians exchange gifts with family and close friends on birthdays, the Orthodox Christmas and some will celebrate name days (birth date of the saint after whom a person was named).

Traditional dishes include Borsch (beetroot soup), pampushky (garlic donuts), varenyky (dumplings) and the famous Chicken Kiev.

Please see useful resource on cultural sensitivities:

 [tunbridgewells.gov.uk/\\_\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0004/415309/Eng\\_Ukrainian-Refugees-Cultural-Sensitivity-Sheet-Base-Guidelines.pdf](https://tunbridgewells.gov.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0004/415309/Eng_Ukrainian-Refugees-Cultural-Sensitivity-Sheet-Base-Guidelines.pdf)