

HANDBOOK FOR PARENTS

ENJOY LEARNING WITH THE
WORLD'S ENGLISH EXPERTS

www.britishcouncil.xx



WELCOME TO THE BRITISH COUNCIL IN THE MIDDLE EAST & NORTH AFRICA

The British Council is the UK's international organisation for cultural relations and educational opportunities. We are on the ground in six continents and over 100 countries, bringing international opportunity to life, every day.

Millions of talented people of all ages, but particularly younger people, engage face-to-face and online with us, learning English, developing new skills, experiencing life and studying in the UK, as well as working towards UK qualifications.

From our extensive research and years of experience we have witnessed first hand, in every corner of the world, how English language learning creates life-changing opportunities for all. We know that as a parent, you want to prepare your child to take advantage of these opportunities. And we know that the British Council is ideally placed to give your child that preparation, providing them with world-class English learning and the best possible head start in life.

In this *Handbook for parents* we'll outline exactly why we believe you should choose us, the world's English experts, when it comes to teaching your child English. We hope this information helps you to understand the courses we have available, how we work and what you can expect as a parent with a child learning English with us. If there are any further questions you have, please do not hesitate to get in contact with us. We'd be delighted to talk those through with you.

1. Our teachers
2. Our approach
3. Your child's safety
4. Our products
5. Student behaviour
6. Your role as a parent

OUR TEACHERS

We are the world's English teaching experts. We employ the best-qualified and the most experienced English language teachers and use the most effective techniques to ensure our learners reach their goals.

Our core strength is the professionalism of our teachers and quality of the teaching in the classroom. This professionalism begins with our recruitment processes where only those with the highest international standards and qualifications are selected.

And because we believe a good teacher is a learning teacher, we provide an enormous range of professional and career development options. This includes diploma and master's level study and in-service learning, allowing teachers to specialise and develop expertise in teaching to all students, including English for young learners.

It's no surprise then that in this part of the world, we are known as the 'employer of first choice' for the brightest and the best teachers.



OUR APPROACH

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE TEACHER

Our teachers provide your child with the highest standards of accuracy and fluency. They guide the class through a language rich environment, encouraging them to be creative and experiment with English, both one-to-one and in small groups, building their language skills and confidence at the same time.

THE IMPORTANCE OF A CLEAR METHODOLOGY

The way we teach children is designed around the unique way they learn. We use a consistent, effective and monitored approach to learning in all our classrooms.

For example, we emphasise interaction and communication in all of our young learner programmes because this is how we make sense of the world around us and talk about our experiences.

We also encourage collaborative learning. By asking children to work in pairs and groups we facilitate lots of different types of interaction. This creates a secure, sociable and unthreatening environment for children to experiment and practise their language.

We teach grammar in clear contexts and according to their needs and interests. And we particularly value guided awareness raising and discovery based techniques.

Finally, it's very important that children understand that it's better to try and get it wrong, than not to try at all. Making mistakes is part of the learning and confidence building process. It helps your child understand what they are capable of, and it helps their teacher identify what they're ready to learn next.



THE IMPORTANCE OF THE LEARNING CONTENT

Content matters. Our tasks and activities are designed not only to get children to think about language but also to get them emotionally involved in the task. This level of involvement is crucially important to the learning process.

The topics and themes we use in the curriculum reflect the needs and interests of each age range. We emphasise activities which challenge and stimulate your child, such as those which contain language routines. Rhymes, stories, songs and games are used, especially with the younger age ranges.

And because speaking, listening, reading and writing are rarely distinct activities in real life, we reflect this in our classroom activities. They are integrated, not separated.

We also integrate literature and digital media because they are important sources of authentic content which encourage greater learner independence.

THE IMPORTANCE OF MOTIVATION

Your child's motivation to learn is essential to their progression and development. Whilst your encouragement of them is an essential part of that motivation, we help build a platform of motivation by making learning purposeful and meaningful and taking account of your child's individual needs and interests as an integral part of their learning process.

THE IMPORTANCE OF FEEDBACK

Feedback is constant and necessary. We provide a steady flow of both formal and informal feedback throughout the learning process as we believe counselling, testing and assessment are at the heart of effective learning and teaching.



YOUR CHILD'S SAFETY

At the British Council we take the issue of child welfare very seriously and we are committed to valuing, respecting and listening to children as well as keeping them safe and sound. So you can be assured that your child's safety is our first concern.

As a worldwide organisation, we believe good child protection requires everyone to take responsibility. We recognise that the care and welfare of your child is paramount and that all children have the right to equal protection from all types of harm.

We also recognise that we have a fundamental duty of care towards all of the children we engage with, including a duty to protect them from any sort of abuse. We achieve this through compliance with UK child protection laws and relevant laws in each of the countries we operate in. We also adhere to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) 1989 (which defines a child as anyone who has not reached their 18th birthday irrespective of the age of majority where they live).

We maintain up-to-date records of parental contracts and supervision arrangements are in place that are appropriate to the physical layout of the centre and the ages and the needs of children. Our centre staff have agreed arrangements for recording incidents that take place while children are under the supervision of our staff. We have policies on the administration of First Aid and on children leaving our premises and collection of children by someone unknown to our staff. These all need your understanding and agreement.



EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY

As part of our mission to provide high quality learning opportunities for local communities, we apply a carefully thought through equality of opportunity and diversity policy. This ensures that we will always be fair and transparent in the way we deal with everybody.

Our policy means we treat others with respect at all times. It means we actively discourage discriminatory behaviour or practice. We participate in training that enables us to adopt good practice. And we are committed to change unfair and discriminatory practices wherever they occur. This means everyone coming to the British Council should expect a welcoming and inclusive environment for work and study in which all individuals have the opportunity to contribute to their full potential.

Our equal opportunity and diversity policy also influences our learning content and approach. It means we adopt a variety of teaching methods. We have respect for different learning styles and apply fair assessment to all. We will always use non-discriminatory and appropriate language. Our materials and topics are sensitive to equality and diversity. And our learning resources ensure good access to information to meet individual needs (large print, on tape, using symbols). Finally, we provide opportunities for all learners to evaluate our courses in an open and transparent way.



OUR PRODUCTS

Our young learner programmes (known as EnglishKids and EnglishTeens) cover a wide range of ages and levels:

- Lower primary: 6–7 years old
- Primary: 8–10 years old
- Lower secondary: 11–12 years old
- Secondary: 13–14 years old
- Upper secondary: 15–17 years old

Within each age bracket we offer a range of ability levels, from beginner to advanced, depending on demand. We benchmark the levels using the Council of Europe's Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR). This is a highly regarded framework that describes the various language achievements of the learner in order to grade their level of proficiency. It is a valuable and useful guideline as an increasing number of schools, universities and employers recognise these levels.

HOW DO YOU CHOOSE THE RIGHT PROGRAMME FOR YOUR CHILD?

We offer two basic programme formats for children wanting to learn English – our annual courses and our intensive summer schools. Each has a different purpose and set out below is some additional information to help you choose the right programme for your child.

1. Annual courses

If your child needs more extended and ongoing contact with English during the school year and you want more explicit progress through a defined level, it's probably best to choose an annual programme. These courses run parallel to the school year from September to May (or sometimes June), and are after school hours or at weekends. And they usually consist of three to four class hours per week. On these programmes, which are usually coursebook based, your child will complete a full level over the course of the year. To get the maximum learning benefit and progress, it's best to complete the full year-long programme.

Some of the key features and benefits include:

- We group learners by age range and level to reflect a clear understanding of child development and learning. This provides a comfortable and appropriate learning zone for children.
- We design and select syllabus content to fit distinct age ranges. This ensures interest and engagement.
- We use the most professional assessment and reporting formulas. This ensures you can have an accurate and easy-to-understand view of your child's learning progress.
- Our administrative systems are clear and friendly. You'll always feel comfortable working with us.

- Our terms fit around your child's school year. This means they will have an English programme that fits well with their other learning patterns.
- Our world-renowned, thorough and accurate assessment procedures will ensure your child is placed with a class group that best reflects his or her proficiency level.
- Our end-of-term reports and parent events will give you full access to how your child is progressing and an opportunity to meet with teachers will supplement this.

2. Summer schools

If you are happy with your child's learning of English at school but you would like a more enjoyable but intensive boost to your child's English learning a short course during the holiday period is the perfect option. Our summer school will help activate and consolidate your child's learning and provide a bridge between school years.

We have designed and resourced our summer schools for the whole region, allowing hundreds of children, of all ages and levels, to benefit from an intensive programme. The courses are all storybook or reader based, and adapted for mixed abilities. They use a consistent teaching methodology and are fun and appealing to children. But, most importantly, are appropriate to age and cultural differences in our region.

The summer school programmes are usually three to four weeks long with options in June, July and August.

Some of the key features and benefits include:

- Short, intensive daytime programmes, covering different themes and topics.
- A regional programme designed for the British Council in the Middle East and North Africa.
- A stable and consistent focus on perfecting the English your child has learned at school.
- Class groupings according to age and ability.
- Clear approaches to assessment and reporting on progress.

ENGLISH LANGUAGE QUALIFICATIONS – WORLD-CLASS CERTIFICATES

The British Council is an examination centre for English tests of all levels, designed for children as young as seven, right up to teenagers. These tests identify gaps in learning, guide children to learn the English they need, increase their confidence and provide them with a strong sense of achievement.

We administer recognised school examinations on behalf of Cambridge International Education and Pearson Edexcel. These IGCSEs and A-Levels develop student's abilities and provide an excellent preparation for their next step into higher education and career success. The IELTS English test for teenagers and adults is run several times a month and is a passport to work and study both at home and overseas.

OUR APPROACH BY AGE RANGE

PRIMARY LEVEL

Primary level children are very good language learners, being naturally sociable, inquisitive and enthusiastic. They tend to be very active and get bored easily if they are sitting still for long periods. That's why physical movement, gesture and actions are important parts of our learning process. We use a good balance of physical and quiet activities to help keep those active minds attentive and interested. Primary level children also engage well with fantasy, and story time is a good way of revising or extending their learning.

As good pronunciation and confidence are the main advantages of learning English at an early age, we make good use of songs, chants, rhymes, drills and activities that focus on single sounds, or contrasting sounds, and help bring to life the stress and rhythm of the English language.

Children at this age can also be quite analytical about language so we do focus on grammar and the related discussion and reflection to develop greater learner autonomy. As a balanced skills development approach is important from the outset, reading and writing tasks form part of every lesson.

Finally, we encourage good classroom discipline. We have explicit routines, timed activities and clear teacher-led instructions in order to finish tasks in a prompt and timely way.

SECONDARY LEVEL

Students at this age range also make very successful language learners. They are more analytical about their learning, more used to learning generally and more autonomous. They will have developed much clearer learning preferences. They bring a wider

range of transferable skills to any new learning experience and they may already be quite proficient in English when they join our programme. But there are other factors that could potentially have a negative impact on the success of their learning. This may include the time they have available for extra English given their other study commitments at school and, critically, their levels of enthusiasm and motivation given their past English language learning experiences.

Secondary level students also tend to be less comfortable with mistakes and more likely to have developed hardened errors. This means they may take fewer risks and can be less efficient listeners.

However, despite these differences, a secure and friendly environment for learning still remains a key requirement with this age range. At these levels, we really encourage much greater learner autonomy and greater analysis of an individual's preferred way of working to give them the best results. We encourage learners to develop contact with English beyond the classroom and promote English language examinations as a means to develop more discipline in approach and a more balanced proficiency in all the language skills: reading, writing, listening and speaking.

Our approach reflects the interests of the age range but are judged and measured on a group-by-group basis. There is no 'one size fits all'. We encourage learners to maximise the use of English both in task management and completion. Syllabuses and the related approaches are varied, interactive and engaging and promote discussion, thought and reflection. There is more focus on grammar and language analysis at these levels and on developing writing skills and good reading habits.



PLACEMENT TESTING AND EVALUATING PROGRESS AND HOMEWORK

INITIAL PLACEMENT TESTING

We ask all young learners to take a language test just before they enrol. We also talk to the parents and child about previous language learning. The test has both an oral and a written component and the results are valid for six months.

Based on the results of the test we will then place your child on the right course for them. This will take into account age and ability against a clear competency level structure. We provide tests over time to see if the placement has been, and remains, accurate.

To track progress, we look at what the children do in class as well as their homework. We follow a system of continuous assessment against defined learning goals and ask them to complete assessed tasks regularly throughout the year with occasional testing.

Each term we make an evaluation of what has been achieved over that time period. This assessment is not necessarily based on a particular task, nor is it expressed by a mark or percentage. It does, however, include the teacher's opinion of how your child is getting on in terms of progress, attitude, participation, and general development. And before making any recommendations for further study, we consider their overall performance.

If your child is experiencing difficulties, we investigate why this may be the case promptly, talk to you and take any necessary action to get them 'back on track'.



REPORTING

We keep you fully informed of your child's achievements. We have the formal end-of-term reports, structured parent evenings and a range of other events for parents to feel connected and up-to-date on their child's progress.

ATTENDANCE

Attendance is very important. In order to achieve and be successful in their studies, learners need to be here! Our policy is that learners should aim to attend the full programme of study in order to progress to the next level. Whilst we understand some absence is unavoidable, all absences are logged and parents contacted if two consecutive lessons are missed. Persistent lateness will also be logged and considered as absences at the end of term.

STUDENT BEHAVIOUR

Staff, students and parents all have a role to play in ensuring positive student behaviour. And we expect students to be responsible for their behaviour and conduct while on British Council premises in class time and breaks.

Specifically, we ask students to show respect for:

- the teaching centre and its staff
- others and their property
- ethnic, racial, religious, and gender differences
- attendance and punctuality
- work habits, and homework
- British Council property
- fire alarms and safety equipment.

If a student's behaviour or conduct is detrimental to the welfare of individual students, staff or the efficiency of the teaching centre, it is our expectation that the parents work with us to resolve these issues.

PROCEDURE FOR SERIOUS MISDEMEANORS

In the event of a serious misdemeanor parents will be notified immediately and called to a meeting with a member of the management team.

PROCEDURES FOR MINOR MISDEMEANORS

Step 1 The teacher will talk informally with the student concerned.

Step 2 If the behavior persists, parents will be informed and a member of the management team will meet with the student to issue a verbal warning.

Step 3 The parent/s will be called to a formal meeting to discuss the necessary course of action.

Step 4 In the case of a failure to make the recommended improvements in conduct or behaviour, the British Council reserves the right to suspend the student from all or part of the remaining classes. In such cases, there will be no eligibility for a refund.

YOUR ROLE AS A PARENT

We firmly believe in the principle of parent as partner. And there are lots of ways that parents can get involved in their children's learning.

LEARNING AT HOME

Parents are an important partner in educating their children. To help you get the most from your child's learning at home, we offer lots of content and learning materials online. These are free to use and help provide a constant stream of interesting learning resources. We also provide free face-to-face workshops for parents that help you develop your child's learning at home.

For more English support outside the classroom, please visit:

www.britishcouncil.xx/en/english/learn-english-online

For more information about helping your child to learn English, please visit:

<http://learnenglishkids.britishcouncil.org/en/parents>

PARENTAL REPRESENTATION

We understand that parents need to express their views on their child's learning. That's why we encourage all parents to come to our parent's evenings, maintain good communication with their parent representative, to join focus groups and respond to surveys. We also offer opportunities for parents to see their child in action in class time and keep parents up-to-date via newsletters. Please keep an eye on the parent notice board and website for more details and published schedules.

THE BENEFITS OF YOUR INVOLVEMENT

Children do better and are happier when parents encourage them and are involved and interested

in their studies. As a parent you know more about your child and how they are feeling. If you're involved, teachers can ask for your advice and guidance about your child and you share your ideas for change and improvement with us. And ultimately this means your child benefits with improvements to their language skills and confidence.

RESOLVING DISAGREEMENTS

No matter how good communications are, disagreements and misunderstandings can occur.

If you have a concern or a complaint relating to your child, please raise the matter with your child's teacher face-to-face or through the parent email address (Parent-to-BC@britishcouncil.org or specific country address, for example Parent-to-BC@ae.britishcouncil.org) and indicate if this is a complaint, query or comment and how urgent. Also provide the full name of your child and his/her timetable, level and centre for study. Most concerns and complaints are easily resolved when people talk as early as possible.

However, if the concern or complaint isn't resolved and requires further investigation, we will inform you of the likely timelines for resolution.

Feel free to bring someone with you if you want support at a face-to-face meeting and decide if it would be helpful or not to have your child with you. And if you feel that you are not being heard or taken seriously you can always ask for the complaint or concern to be escalated to the senior management team.

GUIDE TO OUR LEVEL STRUCTURE

Common European Framework	Bands	Age groups					Cambridge ESOL Exams
		Primary (6–7)	Junior (8–10)	Secondary (11–12)	Middle Secondary (13–14)	Secondary Academic (15–17)	
B2	Upper-Intermediate			5	5	5	First (FCE)
B1	Intermediate			4	4	4	Preliminary (PET)
A2	Pre-Intermediate Plus	6	6	3	3	3	Flyers Key (KET)
	Pre-Intermediate	5	5				
A1	Elementary Plus	4	4	2	2	2	Movers
	Elementary	3	3				
A0	Beginner Plus	2	2	1	1	1	Starters
	Beginner	1	1				

CONTACT DETAILS

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Notes:
Map to be inserted here