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# **Polish Pupils in UK Primary Schools**

## **A GUIDE FOR PARENTS**

Magda Lopez Rodriguez, Rosemary Sales,  
Alessio D'Angelo, Louise Ryan

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# **POLISH PUPILS IN UK PRIMARY SCHOOLS: A GUIDE FOR PARENTS**

*Magda Lopez Rodriguez, Rosemary Sales, Alessio D'Angelo, Louise Ryan*

## **INTRODUCTION**

The school system in the UK differs in many ways from the Polish system. Schooling starts earlier than in Poland, generally before the child's fifth birthday, so many parents and children, especially if they have only just arrived in Britain, are unprepared for this. Choosing a school and getting your child enrolled can be complicated, especially if you are unfamiliar with the system. The aim of this booklet is to provide information and guidance to help you negotiate the school system and to suggest ways in which you can support your child settle into school and in progressing through primary school and the transition to secondary school.

The authors conducted a research project, *Polish children in London primary schools: opportunities and challenges*, during 2008. One of the main findings of this research was the need for a booklet such as this. A summary report of this project is contained at the end of this booklet and the full report can be downloaded from [www.mdx.ac.uk/hssc/research/centres/sprc](http://www.mdx.ac.uk/hssc/research/centres/sprc). Many of the issues and suggestions which we discuss here are based on the findings of this research. We also consulted a range of official sources, particularly government websites. A list of these, and other useful sources, is included in the appendix.

Government policy on schooling has changed considerably over the last decade and is likely to change further in the near future, especially after the election in 2010. A particularly important change has been an increase in the different types of school, often with different admission requirements. In addition, the structure of schooling varies considerably between local authorities and you will need to check information with your local schools and local authority (the elected body responsible for education at local level, e.g. borough, district or council).

There are differences between the education system in England and that in other parts of the UK (Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland) in particular in the role of school inspections and testing. Many of the issues covered here are the same but this booklet focuses specifically on the situation in England. For details of regulations in other parts of the UK see the websites listed at the end of this booklet.

We have included a glossary of some of the most common words used in relation to education in the UK. There is no direct Polish equivalent in Poland for many of these terms and these are explained in text.

We would be interested in your comments on this booklet and would be pleased to hear whether you have found it useful and of any issues which you think could be included. Please email us on [l.ryan@mdx.ac.uk](mailto:l.ryan@mdx.ac.uk)

## THE STRUCTURE OF STATE SCHOOLING IN ENGLAND

Schooling in the UK is compulsory for children between the ages of 5 and 16 and every child resident in the UK is entitled to free schooling up to the age of 19. In England and Wales, most local authorities accept children into school at the beginning of the term during which the child becomes five but for many schools all children start in September and so, depending on when the child's birthday falls, they may start school shortly after their fourth birthday. The child is not required, however, to attend school until the beginning of the term following their fifth birthday. The school year in the UK is divided into three terms.

Children attend **Primary Schools** from ages 4-11 and then transfer to **Secondary Schools** for ages 11-16<sup>1</sup>. Pupils who want to continue their education after this may do so in a variety of institutions (schools, colleges, training places).

Reception	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6	Year 7	Year 8	Year 9	Year 10	Year 11	Year 12	Year 13	
Primary School							Secondary School							Sixth Form College
Infant School			Junior School											

Children are placed into different Years solely on the basis of their chronological age rather than their competencies and they do not repeat years as in Poland if they have failed to reach the expected level of attainment. Those who have fallen behind or have particular special needs may receive extra help.

### Nursery Class

Nursery classes are provided in some primary schools and every child is entitled to a free place from the age of three either in a school nursery class or an independent nursery. These are generally three hours per day in the morning or afternoon. There are also private nurseries (which may take children from 0-5) which may operate longer hours but which charge fees.

### Reception Class

This is the first year of compulsory schooling and provides a transition to formal school with a focus on learning through play. Children born between 1 September and 28 February will start in September; children born between 1 March and 31 August may start in January in some areas.

### Primary School

Children are in classes generally of around 30 pupils. They have a class teacher who teaches them for most of their time in school. Primary schools can be split into a separate Infant School (age 5 to 7) and Junior School (age 7 to 11) or can be combined with both Infant and Junior Schools (age 5 to 11) (JMI). Children transfer to secondary school after Year 6 and choose their secondary school during that year.

### Secondary School

Children start secondary education at the age of 11 and continue to age 16 when they take a final examination, General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE). There may be several classes in each year group, each with their own tutor, and they generally start and end the school day with their class. Most subjects are taught by specialist teachers.

### Sixth Form College/Further Education

Students who wish to stay on can progress to the next stagem either at the same school if they have a 'sixth form' or at a College (the last two years at school used to be called the sixth form but are now Years 12 and 13). They will take A-levels (equivalent of Polish Matura), usually in 2 to 4 subjects (normally at the age of 18).

<sup>1</sup> In some areas there are **Middle Schools** which children attend between the ages 8-12 or 9-13.

# GETTING YOUR CHILD INTO A PRIMARY SCHOOL

## How to find school in your area

The process discussed below applies to people already living in England who are able to spend time looking for a school before their children are ready to start. Our research suggested that many Polish people arrive during the middle of the term and their children are required to start school immediately. You may not have much time to search for a suitable school but ideally you should do some research about local schools before moving. You should remember:

- Your child should be in full time school from the age of 5;
- Your child is entitled to be admitted as soon as you arrive and the local authority is legally required to ensure that all children resident in their area have a school place;
- There may be a delay in securing a place and you may not be able to get your first choice of school if it is already full. Your child can change school later providing another school is willing to offer a place (although you should remember that changing school can be disruptive for a child's education and can delay the process of settling down).

## Finding out about local schools

You can find the names and contact details of all schools in your area by looking on the internet at <http://schoolsfinder.direct.gov.uk/> and then typing in your postcode. You can also contact your Local Education Authority (LEA) which is the local elected body responsible for providing education. They can provide you with a list of schools in your area. In deciding which school might suit your child you might want to consider:

- How **close** is the school to your home? Most children, particularly in cities, will go to a primary school within walking distance of their home. This is more convenient and allows children to get to know others living in their area and parents to develop social networks around the school.
- Which school does your **child prefer**? Did s/he feel comfortable when visiting the school? Which school do her/his friends attend?
- Are there other Polish children attending the school?
- Does your child have **special needs**? If your child is very bright, shows particular patterns of behaviour or has learning difficulties it is important to find a school that will be able to give them the necessary support.
- Does the school offer access to **after-school childcare**?
- What kind of school do you want your child to attend? There are several different types of school in the state system (see box) as well as private (fee-paying) schools.

You need to find out as much information as you can about the schools in your area. For example, you might like to:

- visit the schools
- ask friends and neighbours who have children at local schools
- read the schools' most recent Ofsted reports
- read the local authority and schools' prospectuses

## Visiting the school

The best way to find out about a school is to go and see it and you should try to visit at least once with your child. It is important that your child feels positive and comfortable about being in the school and that you feel satisfied with the way the school is organised.

Most schools have open days or evenings, when parents and children will be shown round and you will have an opportunity to meet staff and ask questions. It is best to visit during the school day if possible. This will give you an opportunity to find out more about children's experience in the school and you may be able to see lessons. You will also be able to get an idea of the atmosphere of the school and the way children behave in lessons and around the school. In some schools you may be able to arrange to visit at a different time. Ring or visit the school and ask for an appointment.

While you are at the school, these are some of the things you might look out for or ask about:

- how welcoming does the school feel? Is parental involvement encouraged, both through informal contacts and formal organisations such as a Parents Teachers Association?
- are you impressed by the children's work that you see? Does it suggest they are encouraged to be creative (e.g. writing their own poems/stories)? How much feedback is given by the teacher on the exercise books? Are they given comments or just marks?
- if you see lessons in progress, how engaged do the children seem to be? How are they behaving with each other? are they able to explain to you the tasks they are doing?
- are there notices in different languages (including Polish) around the school?
- what kind of support is given to Polish children (and others whose first language is not English) to learn the language and access the curriculum? How well do they do in the school?
- what kind of support is given for children with special needs?
- What is the school's policy on issues like homework, whether children are placed in 'streams' according to ability, and how children's progress is monitored? (schools have individual policies on homework and whether they 'stream' children according to ability).
- what arrangements are there for communicating with parents about their children's progress?
- is the school well-equipped? - find out where pupils do sport, and what computer facilities are available.
- what extra activities are available? e.g. is there any music, does the school organise visits?
- how your child will get to school? Think about safe routes, transport and the length of the journey.

## School Prospectuses

All schools are required to produce a prospectus which gives information about the staff, curriculum, resources and examination/test results and results of school inspections. You may obtain one from the school or get this information online from the school's website using the link <http://schoolsfinder.direct.gov.uk/>.

## Reports by Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted)

Ofsted is the official body with responsibility for monitoring and evaluating the education taking place in schools and other education establishments in England. Schools are inspected at least every three years and the results of their assessments are available in publically available reports which can be obtained at: [http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/oxcare\\_providers/list](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/oxcare_providers/list). Ofsted's judgments are made on a four point scale:

- one – outstanding
- two – good
- three – satisfactory
- four - inadequate

Reports also suggest what the school should do to improve. It is important to remember that Ofsted inspections are generally short and focus on particular measurable issues so that a bad or mediocre report does not mean that your child will not do well at the school. If the last inspection took place some time ago, the situation may already have changed. Moreover, many evaluations made by Ofsted have been controversial.

## School attainment tables

National tables are available listing the results of school-administered test results for primary schools and national examination results for all secondary schools in England. You can use this information to see how each school near you compares with the average for:

- your local authority area
- across the country

For primary schools the tables show the percentage of pupils achieving the government-defined expected level of attainment (Level 4) in three subjects: English, Mathematics and Science at the end of Year 6. It is also worth finding out what percentage of pupils reach Level 5 which may be an indicator that they are being academically stretched.

These tables are only a guide to how well a school is doing in some areas and this should not be the only criterion you rely on when looking for a school. There has been considerable controversy about the value of using these indicators to measure school performance. Moreover, a school's results are affected by the background of the pupils who attend the school (the school's intake). For example if there are a large proportion of children whose first language is not English, they will tend to score low in their early years in the school. A school may score poorly on these average measures but provide good support for Polish children to enable them to progress. Social class also affects test results since better off parents may be able to provide extra coaching and learning resources.

## Contextual value added (CVA) scores

These scores show the progress the pupils have made from the end of one Key Stage to another and therefore provide a measure of the schools' contribution to the children's learning. CVA scores complement published test and examination results and give an additional guide to the performance of a school.

Test and examination results, CVA scores and Ofsted reports all give only a partial picture of a school and it is important that you visit the school and find out as much as you can about what goes on in the school.

## The different types of primary school

### State Schools

There is a large variety of schools within the state system in the UK, particularly at secondary level and the process of choosing a school and getting a place is becoming increasingly complex. Most children attend state schools which are maintained through public funds and free but a minority attend private schools which charge school fees. All state schools, except for some Special Schools, must follow the National Curriculum and are inspected regularly by Ofsted.

At primary school, the following types of school are available within the state system, and are free:

#### ***Community Schools***

These schools are managed by the Local Education Authority (LEA) through a Governing Body composed of 'stakeholders' (parents, staff, people appointed by the local authority people co-opted for their specific skills and experience). These schools have their own budget determined by the number of pupils and other factors such as levels of social deprivation, numbers of children with English as an Additional Language (EAL). These schools are non-denominational and all children of the relevant age may apply. Admission to community schools is managed through the LEA and places are allocated on the basis of residence (being in the 'catchment area') whether a sibling is already at the school and in some cases special educational or social needs.

#### ***Voluntary-aided (or voluntary controlled) schools***

These are mainly religious or 'Faith' schools although some are linked to charitable foundations. There are a large number of these schools at both primary and secondary level. The majority of their funding comes from the local authority but the faith group or charitable foundation controls the governing body, with minority representation from other groups, and sets the admissions requirements. Most faith schools are Church of England or Catholic, but there are a smaller number of Jewish, Muslim and Sikh schools within the state system. For faith schools, except for Church of England (C of E) schools, members of other faiths are only admitted if there are spare places. C of E primary schools have generally been open to everyone and in rural areas may be the only local school available. In many cases the majority of the intake is non-Christian. Popular C of E schools are, however, increasingly selecting on the basis of religious observance, for which you will need to provide evidence.

These schools follow the National Curriculum but their faith status may be reflected in their religious education curriculum and acts of worship as well as admissions criteria and staffing policies.

#### ***Special schools***

Special schools cater for children with specific special educational needs (physical disabilities or learning difficulties). These may be community schools or voluntary aided. Special schools may be for Mild Learning Difficulties (MLD) or Severe Learning Difficulties (SLD). Some mainstream schools have special units for specific learning difficulties and many children with learning difficulties or disabilities attend mainstream schools.

#### ***Maintained boarding schools***

These offer free tuition, but charge fees for board and lodging. They are for children with particular social or educational needs.

### Independent (or private) schools

There are around 2,300 independent, or privately run schools in England. Confusingly, some of the most well known private schools are called 'public schools'. These schools set their own curriculum and admissions policies. Classes are generally smaller than in state schools and they often offer better facilities for e.g. sport and music. Entry is based on ability to pay, but particularly for the more prestigious schools, this may include a test of aptitude. For information see the Guide to Independent Schools: <http://www.goodschoolsguide.co.uk/>. Some independent schools offer subsidized places to children who do well in their entrance exams but whose parents might be unable to pay the fees. See: [www.feeassistancelondonschools.org.uk](http://www.feeassistancelondonschools.org.uk)

## Applying for a place

When you have chosen the school (or schools) which you would prefer, you are not guaranteed that your child will get a place. You need to make an application and places will be allocated according to a set of criteria which will vary according to the type of school.

Before submitting your application, it is important to read the school's admission criteria since these will give you a realistic idea of your child's chances of getting a place there. Community schools allocate places primarily according to the distance of your home from the school, whether there is a sibling in the school and in some cases particular educational or social needs. Faith schools generally require proof of religious observance.

The local authority coordinates the admissions process for all state schools in the area, including Voluntary Aided Schools. The application form will ask you to list your chosen schools in order of preference. The form should be submitted to the local authority by post or on line.

### When to apply

You should start finding out about primary schools well **before your child reaches their fourth birthday**. Apply in the **autumn term a year before your child is due to start** (your child is likely to be 3 years old at that time). The admissions process usually starts in the autumn term for admission in the following September and each local authority sets a deadline for applications. You can apply for a school place at any time, and your application must be considered straightaway but if you miss the deadline you are less likely to get offered a place at your preferred school.

If you move house and you have to change your child's school you will need to go through the admission process again. Contact your new local authority for more information well in advance of your move - some schools in your new area may already be full.

### What you need when applying for a school place

- document confirming your child's date of birth (for instance passport)
- document confirming your place of residence (e.g. electricity bill or a Child Benefit letter)
- if you are not the parent, a letter stating that you have parental responsibility for the child
- for faith schools, a document which confirms that you belong to that faith – usually a letter from a priest and a certificate of baptism (in the case of Catholic and C of E schools).

### When you will hear about your application

Primary school offer dates vary, so it is best to check with your local authority.

### Appealing against a school place decision

If your child does not get a place at your preferred school, you have a legal right to appeal to an independent appeal panel. You will find details of how to make an appeal in the local authority's admission letter outlining your offer. The letter will also specify a deadline that you must meet if you want to appeal. If your child has not been allocated a school place you will need to contact the admissions team at your LEA. They can let you know which schools have places available.

## Home schooling

As a parent, you must ensure your child receives a full-time education from the age of five. Most parents send their child to school, but you do have the right to educate your child at home. The education provided must be 'appropriate' to their age and aptitude. You do not need to gain permission from the local authority but they may ask you to provide evidence that the education is appropriate. Home education involves considerable commitment from parents. You can find out more about your rights and duties on: [www.homeeducation.co.uk](http://www.homeeducation.co.uk)

## **STARTING SCHOOL**

Before your child starts school you will need to find out some practical issues such as how to get there, when to arrive and what your child needs to bring to school. You also need to think about preparing your child for the major step of starting school.

### **Term dates and school holidays**

For community schools, the dates of the school term and holidays are set by the local authority though schools have discretion to set particular days as teacher training days. The dates will be provided by the school and you can also find out online from your local authority website. For other schools term dates are set by the governing body and you need to contact the school directly to find out their dates. Independent schools set term and holiday dates themselves.

### **School uniforms**

In most schools in the UK children wear a school uniform. These can be quite simple (such as requiring white shirts and black trousers or skirts) or involve more specific clothes. The governing body of each school decides on the uniform policy or dress code, and it is the responsibility of the headteacher and other staff to make sure pupils keep to the rules. As well as a uniform, the dress code could include for example not wearing jewellery. School uniform often includes clothing required for PE lessons, usually a t-shirt, shorts and plimsolls.

The uniform should not be so expensive that it prevents parents from sending their child to the school of their choice. Governing bodies are expected to consult parents before changing or deciding on a new uniform policy. In England some local authorities provide grants to help with buying school uniforms. For many schools you will be able to buy uniform in high street shops.

### **Other equipment**

School materials such as text books, exercise books, pencils, art materials, photocopies, design and technology materials are usually provided by school. Children can bring in their own pencil cases. Children do not bring textbooks and exercise books home unless they are being used for homework.

### **Getting to School**

The healthiest and cheapest way to get a child to school is to walk. Most children in cities will be able to attend a primary school in easy walking distance of their home. In other cases you may need to use public transport or special transport provided by the LEA.

In London all those under 16 can travel free on buses and trams and at children's rate on the Tube, DLR and London Overground services if they have an Oyster photocard. In other areas they will be entitled to free transport if they need to attend a school which is further away than the 'statutory walking distance' (two miles for pupils aged under eight and three miles for those aged eight and over). In rural areas they may need to take a special school bus.

## The first day at school – overcoming fears

Starting school can be a difficult, and sometimes traumatic, experience as children may be leaving their family perhaps for the first time to spend time with strangers. In our research *Polish Children in London Primary Schools*, we found that this is particularly difficult for children who have recently arrived in the country and who may not speak much English. Some Polish children starting school in the UK may have been to school in Poland and therefore have some experience of what it is like to be at school, although it may be very different from in Britain. For younger children, this may be their first experience of any kind of formal schooling. As several teachers and parents told us in our research, it is particularly difficult for children aged 6 or 7 who may not have been to school in Poland but who are placed in Year 2 or 3 in the UK.

In the early days, your child may be overwhelmed with the new experience and need time to unwind. Don't question them closely about what they have done at school – let them tell you what they want and give them time to relax. Children who do not speak much English may not start to speak English straight away and it may be several weeks before they begin to speak. Do not worry but speak to the teacher if you are really concerned.

There are plenty of practical things that you can do to prepare children for their first day at school. Obviously these will vary depending on the age of your child and the length of time you have been in the UK before they start school.

For all children – whatever their level of English language – the following can help children to settle in quickly at school:

- visit the school with your child so they become familiar with the building and the local area
- involve your child in choosing things needed for school such as school bags or uniform (though bear in mind that there may be peer pressure dictating what type of clothes/bags etc. are seen as acceptable)
- try to get to know other children who attend the school and their parents
- explain where they will be going, what they will be doing, and for how long and emphasise the things they may enjoy doing
- make sure your child is able to do simple tasks such as putting on shoes, buttoning coats
- get them used to using pencils and other equipment
- play games that involve taking turns or speaking in front of a group and activities, such as drawing, which involve sitting down quietly for short periods of time
- let the school know of any particular difficulties/worries your child might have and of any special needs

**If they do not speak much English** you may need to do some extra things, for example:

- teach your child some important words/expressions in English such as 'I am hungry/thirsty' 'I need the toilet'
- get them used to hearing English through for example listening to children's television programmes, radio programmes, speaking English yourself
- play games, sing songs in English
- if you are not confident in your own English, learn English together with your child

**Older children** who have already been to school in Poland need to know how schools are different from the schools they are used to. Explain to them, for example:

- how the length of the school day and the pattern of activities differs
- about the diversity and multiculturalism they will encounter in many British schools.

## **Attendance**

School attendance is strictly monitored in UK schools. If your child is sick and not well enough to attend you should notify the school (usually by phone) at the beginning of the school day.

It is not normally acceptable to take your child out of school for family holidays during term time. Schools can, at their discretion, grant up to 10 days leave each school year but most schools will be reluctant to do this if they believe that your child's education will suffer as a result.

## **What your child will be doing at school**

At primary school your child will be placed in a class of about 30 other children. There will be one class teacher who will be with them for most of the day, working with them on a range of subjects and activities. There may be some additional support to help with, for example, children with special needs and those who need support in learning English. There will be a classroom assistant in the reception class. In the early years, children's learning is less formal than in Poland and children may spend some time sitting on the carpet (e.g. for stories) or in other activities. Children normally sit around tables to work rather than at desks. Children are not given timetables as in Poland but you as a parent may request one from your child's teacher.

## **The school day**

The following is an example of a typical school day in an English primary school. This is only an example and the times, and the pattern of activities may vary between schools and from week to week. You will need to check the exact arrangements, especially for arrival and going home, with the school.

8.50	Arrival – children form into class groups in playground and move into classroom in lines
9.00	Register – teacher makes a note of those attending
9.10	School or year group assembly
9.30	Lessons
10.15	Break – children will play in playground unless it is raining. Free milk will be provided
10.30	Lessons
12.00	Lunch
12.45	Lessons
2.00	Break
2.15	Lessons
3.30	End of school day

## **Assembly**

All state schools are required to provide a 'broadly Christian' daily act of worship. In faith schools this will be accordance with their particular observance. In community schools this may focus on more general moral issues rather than having a specifically religious dimension. Parents may withdraw their child from assembly if they object on religious grounds.

## **Lunch**

A hot meal is served daily in the school hall/dining room. A charge is made but your child may be entitled to free school meals if you claim certain benefits. You will need to apply to your local authority.

Children can also bring in their own lunch and they will eat this in a designated space in the school. If you provide a packed lunch this should be healthy and avoid things like sugary drinks.

### Playtime

Children are usually split into infants and juniors during playtime which means that younger children are with older ones only for short periods. There are always members of staff present in the playground during breaks to assure the safety of children. Free milk and a portion of fruit is provided at this time.

Older children may have fewer breaks and more formal sessions for each subject.

This is an example of a school week for a Year 5 class in a faith school.

	9.10-9.20	9.20-10.00	10.00-11.05	11.05-11.25	11.25-12.30	12.30-12.45	12.45-13.45	13.45-15.30		
M	<b>R E G I S T E R</b>	Assembly	Literacy	<b>P L A Y  T I M E</b>	Numeracy	Spelling test	<b>L U N C H  T I M E</b>	Quick Maths	Science	Guided Reading
T		Assembly	PE		Foreign Language	Time tables test		PSHCE/ Handwriting/ Comprehension	Literacy	
W		Assembly	Numeracy		ICT	Guided reading		Literacy		Choir/ Guided reading
Th		Singing	Numeracy		Geography	Literacy/ Extended writing		Literacy/ Extended Writing	RE	
F		Chapel	Guided reading/ Golden Time		Design & Technology	Quick Maths		Numeracy		Library/ Guided reading

## The School Curriculum

The children follow a National Curriculum which sets out the core subjects your child will be taught during their time at school and the 'Key Stages' through which they will progress. All children aged five to 16 in 'maintained' or state schools must be taught the National Curriculum. Those with special needs may be exempted.

### National Curriculum subjects

Compulsory National Curriculum subjects are the same for Key Stages 1 and 2:

- English (literacy)
- Maths (numeracy)
- Science
- Design and technology
- Information and Communication Technology (ICT)
- History
- Geography
- Art and design
- Music
- Physical education (PE)

Schools are also required to teach religious education, though parents have the right to withdraw children for all or part of the religious education curriculum. These will normally involve learning about several different faiths, although religious schools will focus more particularly on their own faith. In addition, schools are advised to teach personal, social and health education (PSHE) and citizenship, together with at least one modern foreign language. Your child’s school may cover these subjects under different titles and may teach more than one subject together under the same title.

**National Curriculum stages**

The primary school curriculum covers the first two Key Stages of the National Curriculum. Children develop at different rates, but National Curriculum levels can give you an idea of how your child’s progress compares to government target levels for their age group. For example, by the end of Key Stage 1, most children are expected to have reached level 2, and by the end of Key Stage 2, level 4. Your child's school will send you a report telling you what National Curriculum levels your child has reached in any formal assessment.

Levels which children are expected to achieve according to Year:

<b>Year</b>	<b>Key Stage</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Expected Level of Achievement</b>
Nursery and Reception	Foundation Stage	3-5	
Year 1	Key Stage 1	5-6	1a/2c
Year 2		6-7	2b
Year 3	Key Stage 2	7-8	2a/3c
Year 4		8-9	3b
Year 5		9-10	3a/4c
Year 6		10-11	4b
Years 7-9	Key Stage 3	11-14	
Years 10-11	Key Stage 4	14-16	
Year 12-13	Key Stage 5	16-18	

The Scale goes from 1c to 4a (1c> 1b> 1a> 2c ...etc...)

**Teacher assessments**

Your child’s teacher will carry out regular checks on their progress in each subject as a normal part of their teaching. At the end of Key Stages 1, 2 and 3 they will carry out a formal “teacher assessment”, indicating which National Curriculum level best describes your child’s performance in each area of learning.

**Homework**

Unlike in Poland, children may get different homework depending on their abilities and the levels they have achieved. Homework is intended to be set so that all activities are appropriate for individual children. Not all primary schools set homework, particularly in the early years and schools develop their own homework policy.

The amount of homework set varies across schools but is generally less than in Poland. In most primary schools children get homework twice a week, once in maths and once in English. They will also be expected to read aloud to their parents/carers for about 20 minutes a day. Each week they will get a list of words to learn to spell and they will be tested on these the following week.

These are rough guidelines how much time children should spend on their homework in primary school, according to the government:

- Years 1 and 2: 1 hour per week
- Years 3 and 4: 1.5 hours per week
- Years 5 and 6: 30 minutes per day

The guidelines for secondary school children are:

- Years 7 and 8: 45 to 90 minutes per day
- Year 9: one to two hours per day
- Years 10 and 11: 1.5 to 2.5 hours per day

## **Reading Schemes**

In Britain children learn to read mainly through ‘reading schemes’ (usually Oxford Tree); they are given books of different levels to take home and are meant to practise reading with their parents for younger children or on their own for older children. Children do not get lists of books, which they are supposed to read in each year, as in Poland.

## **Support for children with particular needs**

### **English as an Additional Language (EAL)**

Children who come to school with little or no knowledge of English will normally need help with learning the language at school. The way that this is organised varies between schools but they will normally be taken out of classes for some part of the day to work in small groups with a teaching assistant or a language specialist. They may also have extra support from other staff (e.g. teaching assistants) and resources (e.g. bi-lingual books) during lessons. This type of provision is coordinated by a member of staff who is designated as the Ethnic Minority Achievement (EMA) coordinator. When choosing the school for your child it is worth finding out what kind of language support for newly arrived children the school provides. More information can be found in our research report ([www.mdx.ac.uk/sprc](http://www.mdx.ac.uk/sprc)).

### **Special Educational Needs (SEN)**

Children with special educational needs all have learning difficulties or disabilities that make it harder for them to learn than most children of the same age. These children may need extra or different help from that given to other children of the same age. They may need extra help because of a range of needs, such as in thinking and understanding, physical or sensory difficulties, emotional and behavioral difficulties, or difficulties with speech and language or how they relate to and behave with other people.

Schools have a Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCO) who will, with the class teacher, seek to identify those children in need of special support. As a parent, you know your child best and may have concerns which the school has not picked up. You should discuss these with the class teacher and the SENCO.

Many children have special needs at a certain stage which may be resolved through extra help. If your child needs continuing support then s/he might have a formal assessment which may result in a Statement of Special Needs which sets out the help which s/he is entitled to (see [www.teachernet.gov.uk](http://www.teachernet.gov.uk))

### **Gifted and talented**

The Gifted and Talented Programme provides extra support for children identified as having the ability to develop to a level significantly ahead of their year group (or with the potential to develop those abilities). This might involve abilities in one or more academic subjects or a particular talent in areas like sport, music, design or creative and performing arts.

Schools identify children based on test results, quality of work and the views of teachers and parents. If you think your child is gifted or talented, you should first discuss their abilities and needs with your child's teacher or headteacher. Children identified as gifted or talented will be given more challenging work and extra tuition.

### **Discipline**

Your child's school should have a written policy setting out the standards of behaviour it expects. The policy should outline what the school will do if your child's behaviour falls below these standards. Schools have a legal right to impose reasonable sanctions if a pupil misbehaves. Sanctions might include a reprimand; a letter to parents or carers; removal from a class or group or confiscating something belonging to your child if it is inappropriate for school (e.g. a mobile phone).

Teachers are not allowed to punish pupils physically, but can physically restrain them where that is necessary to stop a pupil injuring him or herself or someone else, damaging property or causing serious disruption.

In serious cases, usually involving persistent breaking of school rules, the child may be excluded for a fixed period of time or permanently. The decision to exclude permanently is taken by the headteacher but it must be reviewed by the governing body and you have a right to appeal. The local authority is obliged to find alternative education, either in school or elsewhere, but some children may remain out of school for a considerable time while a school is found which is willing to take them.

### **Diversity**

Many schools, particularly in large cities, are highly diverse in relation to the ethnicity, religion and nationality of their pupils. It is against the law to discriminate on grounds of race or ethnicity and schools have a legal obligation to promote equality and social cohesion. Schools may recognise this diversity by, for example, celebrating different religious festivals or providing multilingual resources. However, despite these efforts, children from minority groups occasionally experience negative stereotyping. Moreover in our research we found that many pupils from Poland, and their parents, were unaccustomed to the diversity and this could lead to some misunderstandings. On the other hand, our research suggested that some Polish children have themselves suffered some bullying, e.g. name calling. Many schools have welcomed the fact that Polish pupils increase the diversity of their schools.

## **Supporting your child in school**

Your support is vital to your child's progress in school. You can help in all sorts of ways, including reading with your child, helping with homework, doing activities with them which help them learn new things. Most important is taking an interest in their learning and providing a good model for them by, for example, reading books yourself and being involved in the sort of activities that you would like them to be interested in. Making time to talk to each other during the day, for example at meal times, is also important.

### **Parents' evenings**

Parents' evenings play an important part in making sure you are kept up to date with your child's progress. These provide an opportunity for an individual meeting with your child's teacher (usually 10 minutes long) to discuss how the child is doing in class and in school and to decide how best to work together to support their progress and achievement in school. Your child's latest school report (usually given once a year in July) should help you to identify issues you want to discuss. It will contain information on your child's progress and *levels of achievement* in the subjects they are studying, together with details of their attendance, behaviour and - where appropriate - special needs.

As well as these formal occasions, you can make an appointment to see the teacher to discuss your child's progress if you have any particular concerns. It is important to remember though that teachers are busy and that they have many demands, with large classes. You may also be able to speak to the teacher informally, for example when you collect your child from school. Misunderstandings can sometimes be resolved through an informal chat.

If you do not feel confident in speaking English, you may want to bring a friend to help you at these meetings. It is not a good idea to use your children as interpreters since you may need to discuss sensitive issues with the teacher. In many schools, there are now Polish-speaking staff, including teachers and Teaching Assistants who are responsible for helping particular groups of children with their learning. They can play a particularly important role in helping to communicate with parents.

## **Involvement in the life of your child's school**

As well as supporting your own child, English primary schools offer many opportunities for parents to get involved in the life of the school more generally. Involving parents is a key aim for many schools and is seen as an important part of the education process. Some schools offer parents the opportunity to help out in the classroom, with after-school activities and with school events or trips. It can be particularly useful to have help from parents who are able to translate for Polish children, especially new arrivals.

### **Parent – Teacher Association**

Parent-teacher associations (PTAs) are groups made up of parents, teachers and sometimes others within the school community. They provide a range of opportunities for you to get involved in school life, many of which don't take up too much of your time. They may organise fundraising and social events which allow parents to get to know each other and meetings to inform parents about issues concerning education. Ask your child's teacher or other parents about getting involved in your local PTA.

### **Governing Body**

All state schools in England are run by a governing body working with the headteacher and senior management team. Governors include some members directly elected by parents at the school. Your

parent governors may hold meetings to inform parents of important issues. You may wish to become a governor yourself.

### **After school clubs, breakfast clubs and holiday play schemes**

Schools may provide after-school activities such as sport clubs, music or language classes or special interest groups. You need to enquire within your school what activities are available. Schools may also provide after school childcare in collaboration with local authorities.

This can be especially useful if you are a working parent. They can take the form of breakfast club (8-9am, usually a healthy breakfast is provided and various activities take place), after school clubs (after 3.30) or holidays play schemes (usually half terms and summer holidays).

Fees for out-of-school-hours activities which are provided by schools or Ofsted-registered institutions can be partly refunded through Childcare Tax Credit by Inland Revenue, depending on your income.

## **TRANSFER TO SECONDARY SCHOOL**

Choosing a place at secondary school can often be more complex than for primary schools. There are more types of school, including schools specialising in particular subjects and some secondary schools are mixed sex and some boys or girls only. Competition for places in some schools may be intense.

As with primary schools, admissions for state schools are managed by the local authority. The deadline for applying for secondary schools is October in Year 6. Offer letters are sent out in the following March. But you should start thinking about your preferred school when your child is in Year 5.

Different types of school have their own admissions systems. Places at comprehensive schools will be allocated on the same basis as primary schools but some local authorities use different strategies to ensure that there is a balance of different abilities. Some use a lottery system. In areas where the state system is based on selection, all children have to sit an examination, known as the 11 plus, which determines whether they are 'selected' to go to a Grammar School or whether they go to a comprehensive or secondary modern school. Some other types of state school also admit some of their intake on the basis of ability. Some independent schools also set entrance examinations.

As in the case of choosing a primary school, you should use as many different sources of information as you can in deciding on a school. The school that will be best for your child may not be the one with best examination results or best Ofsted report and it is important to find out more about what actually happens in the school. Your local authority will often provide events where schools give information about what they offer and you have a chance to ask questions of staff. You should try to visit all the schools you think you may be interested and bear in mind the questions we suggested in relation to primary schools.

## Types of Secondary School

### Community Schools

**Comprehensive Schools** do not select according to ability and are expected to have a range of pupils reflecting the local area. These represent the majority of community secondary schools. They may be single sex or mixed.

**Grammar Schools** select their intake on the basis of a test taken at the age of 11. A minority of local authorities have a fully or partially selective system and around 20% of children in these areas gain places in grammar schools.

**Secondary Modern** these schools take the children who do not receive grammar school places in areas where there is selection. They may also be called 'comprehensive' but their intake will be skewed by the existence of the grammar school.

### Faith Schools

These are run on similar lines to Faith primary schools. They may be of various types, including comprehensives or grammar schools. Faith groups have also invested heavily in Academies (see below).

### Other types of State school

**Foundation and Trust schools** are publicly funded but their governing body has chosen to 'opt out' of local authority control following a ballot of parents. The governing body is responsible for setting their own admissions criteria and they may select on academic grounds. Following legislation in 2006, Trust Schools were established which operate in the same way as Foundation Schools.

**Academies** have a sponsor from business, faith or voluntary groups who contributes £2 million towards the capital costs of the school. The remainder, and the running costs, are provided directly by the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF). Academy Schools are independent of the local authority and the sponsor appoints the majority of the governing body and chooses a 'specialism' for the school. They are allowed to select 10% of their intake on the basis of 'aptitude' for the specialism.

**Specialist Schools**, generally community schools, specialise in one of the ten national curriculum subjects. They must also have a sponsor who will provide at least £50,000. Specialist schools get additional funding per pupil. They can select 10% of their pupils by aptitude in the chosen subject.

**City Technology Colleges** are independently managed schools in urban areas which focus on science, technology and vocational subjects. Like Academies, they have a sponsor who appoints the majority of the governors and they organise their admissions. They do not select on the grounds of ability.

## APPENDIX I - USEFUL WEBSITES

### In Polish

<http://www.education-support.org.uk/polish/parents/>

<http://www.london.polemb.net/index.php?document=13>

<http://londyn.gazeta.pl/londyn/3481800,85424,4529528.html>

[http://dzieciak.co.uk/index.php?kat\\_id=21](http://dzieciak.co.uk/index.php?kat_id=21)

### In English

DirectGov – UK Government website

[www.direct.gov.uk](http://www.direct.gov.uk)

Teacher-net

<http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/>

Curriculum

<http://curriculum.qcda.gov.uk/>

International baccalaureate

<http://www.ibo.org/>

Independent schools

<http://www.schoolsearch.co.uk/>

League tables

[http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/education/league\\_tables/default.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/education/league_tables/default.stm)

Wales

<http://wales.gov.uk/topics/educationandskills>

Scotland

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Education>

Northern Ireland

<http://www.deni.gov.uk/>

## **APPENDIX II – GLOSSARY**

**Academy** - typ szkoły średniej

**Admission criteria** - kryteria wg jakich szkoła przyjmuje kandydatów

**Advanced Level (A Level)** - egzamin który jest odpowiednikiem polskiej matury

**After-school clubs / activities** - kółka zainteresowań, zajęcia pozalekcyjne

**Appeal** - odwołanie się od decyzji

**Application deadline** - termin składania podań

**Art and Design** - zajęcia plastyczne

**Assessment** - ocena postępów w nauce

**Attendance** - frekwencja

**Boarding school** - szkoła z internatem

**Breakfast club** - zajęcia poranne (ze śniadaniem)

**Bullying** - dokuczanie, znęcanie się, zastraszanie

**Carpet session** - nauka w grupie gdzie dzieci siedzą na dywanie

**Catchment area** - rejon szkoły (przy rejonizacji)

**Community school** - szkoła środowiskowa

**Comprehensive school** - szkoła przyjmująca wszystkie dzieci, bez względu na wyniki w nauce

**Design and Technology (DT)** - WT, prace techniczne

**English as Additional Language** - język angielski jako język dodatkowy (dla obcokrajowców)

**Ethnic Minority Achievement (EMA) coordinator** - koordynator osiągnięć mniejszości etnicznych

**Faith school** - szkoła wyznaniowa

**Fundraising** - zbieranie funduszy na określony cel

**General Certificate of Education (GCSE)** - egzamin zdawany w wieku lat 14/15

**Geography** - geografia

**Gifted and Talented** - dzieci szczególnie uzdolnione w danym kierunku

**Governing Body** - zarząd

**Grammar School** - szkoła selektywna, przyjmuje uczniów na podstawie testów akademickich

**Half term holidays** - tygodniowa przerwa śródsesemestralna (zwykle w październiku, lutym i maju)

**Head lice** - wszy

**History** - historia

**Homework** - praca domowa

**Independent school** - szkoła prywatna, płatna

**Infant school** - pierwszy etap szkoły podstawowej/nauczanie początkowe (klasy 0-2)

**Information and Communication Technology (ICT)** - zajęcia komputerowe, informatyka

**Inset day** - dzień szkoleniowy dla ciała pedagogicznego

**Junior school** - drugi etap szkoły podstawowej (klasy 3-6)

**Key Stage** - nauka w angielskiej szkole jest podzielona na 4 etapy (key stages) które kończą się egzaminami

**LEA (Local Educational Authorities)** - lokalne władze oświatowe

**League tables** - rankingi/tabele szkół

**Learning difficulties** - trudności w nauce

**Literacy** - język angielski, nauka czytania i pisania

**Music** - muzyka

**National Curriculum** – narodowy program nauczania / podstawa programowa

**Numeracy** - matematyka

**Nursery class** - oddział przedszkolny

**Open day/evening** - dzień otwarty, dzień lub wieczór, w którym potencjalni kandydaci mogą obejrzeć szkołę

**Ofsted report** - raport sporządzony po inspekcji szkoły

**Parent evening** - zebranie dla rodziców/opiekunów

**Parent Teacher Association (PTA)** - Komitet Rodzicielski

**PE kit** - strój na W-F

**Physical Education (PE)**- W-F

**PSHE and Citizenship** - zintegrowane zajęcia wychowania obywatelskiego oraz godziny wychowawczej

**Playscheme** - pólkolonie

**Playground** - boisko, plac zabaw, miejsce gdzie dzieci odpoczywają podczas przerw

**Primary School** - szkoła podstawowa

**Reception Class** - klasa zerowa (dzieci rozpoczynają zerówkę w wieku lat 4)

**SAT** - egzaminy zdawane po kolejnych etapach nauczania (key stages)

**School report** - opisowa ocena postępów ucznia

**Secondary school** - szkoła średnia

**SENCO** - koordynator d/s specjalnych potrzeb edukacyjnych w szkole

**Science** - nauki ścisłe

**Selective school** - szkoła selektywna (może być państwowa - zwykle 'Grammar' lub prywatna)

**Special Educational Needs (SEN)** - specjalne potrzeby edukacyjne

**Statement of special needs** - orzeczenie o posiadaniu specjalnych potrzeb edukacyjnych (np o upośledzeniu umysłowym lub wybitnych uzdolnieniach, wiąże się to z dodatkowymi funduszami na edukację dziecka)

**Support staff** - personel wspierający

**Teacher** - nauczyciel

**Teaching assistant** - nauczyciel wspomagający

**Term time** - okres semestralny

**Uniform** - mundurek/ strój szkolny

# POLISH PUPILS IN LONDON SCHOOLS: OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

## Draft Summary Report for Parents

*Rosemary Sales, Louise Ryan, Magda Lopez Rodriguez, Alessio D'Angelo*

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The entry of Poland into the European Union in 2004 led to a rapid increase in Polish migration to Britain and with it many children enrolling in British schools. This has brought new challenges as well as opportunities for children, their families and schools. Many press reports have emphasised the difficulties of incorporating large groups of new arrivals but the response from schools and education authorities has generally been positive. Polish children are generally seen as high achievers and their parents as supportive of their children's learning and of teachers. Schools have also welcomed the fact that Polish children increase the diversity of school life.

Detailed information is not available but most Polish children appear to do well in British schools and their parents are generally satisfied with their progress. Misunderstandings can occur, however, between schools and parents especially in the early stages. These can cause frustration and disappointment on both sides but much of this could be reduced through more information on both sides. This booklet is designed to contribute to that aim.

This booklet was developed as a result of a research project by a team of researchers from Middlesex University. The research aimed to provide information to teachers to help them support Polish children in settling into school and to Polish parents about what to expect from schools in Britain. The project included interviews with school staff and with parents of children at primary schools. Below we summarise some of the main points from the report. The whole report can be downloaded from [www.esrcsocietytoday.ac.uk/ESRCInfoCentre/Minisites/polishpupils](http://www.esrcsocietytoday.ac.uk/ESRCInfoCentre/Minisites/polishpupils) or from the Social Policy Research Centre page: [www.mdx.ac.uk/schools/hssc/research/centres/sprc](http://www.mdx.ac.uk/schools/hssc/research/centres/sprc)

### 1. Moving to Britain

*Jolanta did not want to come to London but her husband had been living here for a year and did not want to return to Poland. Her son missed his father and she felt that she would not be able to maintain the 'relationship at a distance' so would either have to join him in London or the marriage would break up.*

*Her decision to come to England was thus not a choice and she made little preparation for the move. She spoke no English and knew nothing about the differences between the Polish and British education systems. Although her husband had been here for some time, he was 'not into schools, education'. She arrived in May when her son was four and another Polish mother told her that he had to go to school. She found the process of finding a suitable school very difficult.*

*Her son had never attended school or nursery before and also spoke no English, although she said his Polish was very good. She said 'it was a terrible shock for him'. She has now been in London for three years and feels settled and her son is doing well.*

The particular form of the new Polish migration to Britain has important implications for the experience of children in British schools and the challenges they face.

- There has been a very sharp rise in migration – and thus the number of children attending schools - in a few years and many Polish pupils arrive in school mid-way through the school year, which means teachers need to incorporate new pupils into the curriculum while at the same time working with a full class;
- Many people expect their stay in Britain to be short and thus make little preparation for the move. Neither they nor their children may have learnt English and parents may know little about the British education. Children are often placed in an unfamiliar environment with little understanding of the difficulties they face. Those with some knowledge of English are able to make a better transition to school and faster progress.
- Many parents retain the option to return to Poland and for their children to enter or re-enter the Polish system, including taking exams in Poland. They may take extended holidays and for example continue to visit doctors in Poland. This harms the school attendance of their children, which is strongly discouraged in Britain. It can also reduce the motivation to learn English.
- Parents may not be aware of the differences between the school systems in Poland and Britain and there is often a tendency to criticize British schools for not conforming to their experience of schooling as it is in Poland.
- Parents may not be aware that children start school earlier than in Poland (at 4 or 5 years) and this can cause a delay in enrolling children
- Enrolling a child in a school is more complicated in Britain which gives more emphasis to 'parental choice'. There are different types of schools (e.g. Catholic schools) within the state system and schools are also judged by the results in national tests. It may be difficult to get a place in schools considered 'good'. This problem is increased for new arrivals who are highly mobile before they find work and settle down.

## 2. Starting School

*Marta brought her child with her to join her husband who was already living here. Her son was 4 when he started school and he could not speak any English at all. Before he went to school she taught him to say 'where is toilet?' because she felt it would embarrass him if he had an accident. That was the only preparation she made, and she said 'we thought somehow he would get on'.*

*Marta later discovered how traumatic his first few weeks at school had been. This was the first time he had been to school or been left on his own without his family. He did not understand what people were saying and everything was unfamiliar. As Marta said, 'for the first month he was just observing everything, he was looking at everything, but he didn't speak'.*

There is a tendency for parents to underestimate, or be unaware of, the problems their children face in starting school. These can be more severe and longer term than expected and can be both emotional and practical:

- The early days in a new environment can be quite traumatic. Children may have lost many familiar people and places through the move and have to adjust to a new language. They often feel scared and isolated and may find it difficult to communicate at first.

- Younger children face particular difficulties because of the earlier school starting age in Britain. A 7 year old might be placed in a third year class but – as well as language difficulties – may not have had any experience of schooling and lack the skills expected of 7 year olds in Britain (e.g. reading and writing) as well as familiarity with school routine.
- Learning the language may take much longer than expected. It may take several weeks or months before children feel confident enough to speak English. It is particularly difficult to move from ‘playground English’ to the specialized language needed for the curriculum. Younger children cannot rely on ‘assimilating’ the language and may need help to enable them to progress. Support from parents as well as teachers is important in helping children make this transition.
- Parents are often unaware of the amount of resources (both staff time and materials) which schools use to help children settle in and to make them feel that they belong. Schools use a variety of strategies including small groups support and Teaching Assistants in lessons. They also use a range of resources including induction packs and bi-lingual books.
- Identifying a problem in learning (a Learning Difficulty or Special Educational Need) may take longer because teachers are unable to distinguish between poor skills in English and an underlying problem. This can delay getting appropriate support.
- There is much greater diversity – in relation to ethnicity, religion, nationality – in London schools than is generally the case in Poland. This is generally seen as a positive aspect of schools and the expression of racist attitudes is strongly discouraged. Polish children and their parents may not have experience of positive engagement with other groups.

### 3. Mismatch of expectations

*Lucja has a girl who is now in Year Five and a younger boy. When her daughter started school she was upset that she did not receive the same amount of information about her progress as she expected. She said ‘I don’t know what the children are doing; I have no clue what they are doing. It is a disaster’.*

*She was not able to communicate with the teacher easily and so she waited until the end of the year when she was able to attend a parents’ evening and see her daughter’s work. She would have felt much more comfortable if she had been able to have more regular feedback but did not feel able to approach the teacher to discuss it before then.*

School staff reported generally positive contact with Polish parents. Language barriers were often a concern and schools used a combination of translation and interpretation by Polish speakers to help communication. In spite of this our research suggested some differences between the expectations of parents and teachers. This was particularly in relation to what parents perceived as inadequate information about their child’s progress, an issue teachers seemed unaware of:

- British schools emphasise *involvement in school life* more than in Poland but there is less emphasis on *engagement in their children’s learning*. There is less detailed day to day information about what their children are studying. Parents often felt that were ignorant of what their children should be doing and how they were progressing.
- Children are given less homework, particularly at younger ages and do not regularly bring home exercise books. This also reduces parents’ opportunities to monitor their children’s progress.
- Children are grouped (‘streamed’) by ability at an early age in British schools. Those in higher ability groups tend to get more challenging work, which can mean it is difficult for those placed in lower ability groups to catch up.

- School attendance has become closely monitored in Britain – frequent holidays affect attendance and are strongly discouraged. Polish parents may not realise this and it can be a source of misunderstanding.

#### **4. What you can do**

In spite of the difficulties outlined above, the schools in our study were positive about the progress of Polish pupils and most parents were satisfied with their children's progress. Schools have often made considerable efforts to help Polish children integrate into schools and to help communication with parents. Parents can also help with these by for example:

- Finding out more about the British school system and organisation and expectations of parents in relation to e.g. attendance, uniform, homework.
- Raising questions or concerns about children's progress or aspects of the school with the appropriate person (generally the class teacher). An informal approach can often quickly resolve these issues but if parents are still unhappy then they can raise concerns with, for example, the headteacher. Polish speaking teaching assistants may be able to help explain issues, especially if language is a problem.
- Attending meetings and activities in the school, including social activities as well as parents' evenings, and encouraging other Polish parents to become involved.
- Helping new Polish parents to settle in by explaining the system and where appropriate helping with translation and interpretation
- Reading with their children – even if you don't speak English yourself, it can help a child to listen to them read in English

Encouraging children to develop their English skills at home (e.g. by having books, television programmes) while maintaining their understanding of the Polish language.

