



BORDEAUX INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL

BECOMING BILINGUAL

First and Second language

Parents are asked to choose the First Language when the child enters the school (French or English). This indicates the language that the child will use to learn to read and write in. Normally, it is the language that the child is already able to understand and communicate to others in.

A very important cycle runs from Year 1 (Grande section) to Year 3 (CE1). This is the Red, Rainbow and Yellow groups at BIS. These 3 years of school involve the development of reading and writing skills in the First Language.

Until the age of seven reading and writing skills will be in this chosen language. During this period the child's second language is used only in verbal communication such as games, audio-visual activities, role-play and drawing.

Only after children are skilful in their First Language will they begin to introduce others skills into their Second Language.

The reason why we work in this way is that learning to read and write in French and English at the same time may cause confusion and instability. We therefore ask parents of children who are already bilingual to work hand-in-hand with us and not to try and teach their child to read and write in their Second language at home.

How long does it take for a child to become bilingual ?

This obviously depends on the individual child but experience has shown that most children need a minimum of two years before being confident to communicate in their Second Language.

Children whose mother tongue is neither French or English

It is very important that these children continue to progress in their native language within their family; it is a precious support for learning their Second and Third languages. Non-French or English speakers may need extra help in language lessons. This will be discussed with parents.

Handwriting

For children who are beginning to write we introduce a special handwriting method, which is calligraphy based and used by handwriting consultants for children experiencing handwriting difficulties.

We have adopted this style of handwriting as it incorporates good posture, hand-finger coordination and tactile sequencing before actually starting to use a pen.

Children who come into the school already knowing how to write are allowed to continue their own method although many children find our method unusual enough to want to try.

Active learning

Children learn differently: some are visual, others auditive, others need to touch and manipulate materials and some children need to draw or write to compound their understanding and indeed some children need a combination of these. It is for this reason that our learning methods are multi-sensory.

The children are encouraged to:

- work actively and autonomously
- work individually, with partners and in groups
- express and discuss ideas, make conclusions and record findings coherently