

The importance of bilingualism

Key principles

➤ Bilingualism is an asset; and first language has a continuing and significant role in identity, learning and the acquisition of additional languages.*

➤ Children need to develop strong foundations in their first language as first language skills are transferable to new languages and strengthen children's understanding of language use.*

➤ Research has shown that encouraging children to become bilingual can contribute to their cognitive flexibility.
(Shutnabb - Kangas 1981) (Milne and Clarke 1993)

➤ Insistence on an 'English only approach' in the home may lead to a child being denied opportunities to develop proficiency in either language.*

➤ First languages are needed to maintain family connections.
(Siraj-Blatchford and Clarke 2000)

➤ Practitioners have a key role in reassuring parents that maintaining and developing their home language will benefit their children and support their developing skills in English.*

*Supporting children learning English as an additional language. Primary National Strategy, Department for Children, Schools and Families 2007

Czech
Somali
Russian
Arabic
English
Albanian
Bengali
French
Kurdish
Polish
Punjabi

Produced by The Leeds Speech and Language Therapy Service
- building communication skills for life