

EAL & NEW ARRIVALS · GRADES 2–6

School Life Explained

A guide for newcomers

About this guide

Schools in different countries have very different routines. Things that seem obvious to children who grew up here may be completely strange to a child from a different country. This guide explains some of the things that often confuse newcomers.

Things you might not have seen before

Wearing PE kit On certain days, you bring sports clothes (shorts, T-shirt, trainers) to change into. The teacher will tell you which day. If you don't have the right kit yet, the school usually has spare clothes you can borrow. Tell your parent or teacher.	Packed lunch vs school lunch You can either bring food from home in a 'lunchbox' OR have a meal made by the school kitchen. Both are normal. Ask your parent which you want. Many schools have free lunches if your family can't afford them — ask the office.
Sitting on the carpet In younger years, children sit on the floor on a big carpet for some lessons (story time, register, instructions). It feels strange at first but everyone does it. You sit cross-legged with your hands in your lap.	Assembly Once or more a week, the whole school gathers in a hall. There might be singing, the head teacher talks, sometimes a child is celebrated. You sit quietly. Nobody is in trouble — it's just everyone meeting together.

Things that might be different from your old school



<p>Calling teachers by their last name</p> <p>In English-speaking schools, teachers are usually called 'Mrs Brown' or 'Mr Smith' or 'Miss Jones'. Not by first name. Not 'Teacher'. Always with 'Mr' / 'Mrs' / 'Miss' / 'Ms' before the last name.</p>	<p>Putting your hand up to speak</p> <p>If you want to answer a question or ask one, raise your hand and wait for the teacher to point at you. Don't shout out. This is important and takes some children a while to get used to.</p>
<p>Working in pairs and groups</p> <p>You'll often be asked to talk to a partner or work in a small group. This is normal and expected — it's not 'cheating'. Discussing your ideas helps you learn.</p>	<p>Asking questions</p> <p>Teachers WANT you to ask questions. If you don't understand something, raise your hand. It's not rude. Saying 'I don't understand' is a brave and good thing to do.</p>

Special days you'll experience

<p>School trips</p> <p>Your class will sometimes leave the school to go on a trip — a museum, a park, a farm. You travel by coach. Bring a packed lunch. The teachers and parent helpers will look after you.</p>	<p>Sports day</p> <p>Once a year, the whole school does outdoor sports together. Races, jumping, throwing. Sometimes parents come to watch. You wear PE kit. It's competitive but mostly fun.</p>
<p>World Book Day</p> <p>One day a year (in March), children dress up as characters from their favourite books. It's optional. You can wear costumes from any culture's books.</p>	<p>Christmas / Eid / Diwali / Hanukkah</p> <p>Many schools celebrate festivals from many religions. There may be a winter concert, a special assembly, decorations. Your family's celebrations are welcomed too — let the teacher know.</p>

If you're confused, ask

Schools have lots of unwritten rules. The children who grew up here learned them gradually. You're learning them all at once. That's hard. Whenever you don't understand something — even something small like 'why are we lining up?' — ask the teacher or your buddy. Nobody will think it's a stupid question. They might never have realised it was strange until you asked.

