



# Welcome to SWALS in the Anglophone Section, European School Brussels 1, Uccle

## What is SWALS?



SWALS stands for *Student Without A Language Section* i.e. there is no section teaching in your child's dominant language in this school. SWALS families can choose either the Anglophone, French or German sections. You have chosen to put your child in the Anglophone section. This means that most of the curriculum will be delivered in English, apart from first language lessons in Slovenian.

## How does SWALS work?

A SWALS pupil's curriculum and timetable are adapted to provide Language 1 (Slovenian) and Language 2 (English) lessons as well as other parts of curriculum. Below is a simple breakdown of how this *usually* works out throughout the school.

### Primary School

**Language 1 (L1) (Slovenian):** 4 or 5 periods a week with Martina Kroflic, the Slovenian teacher.

**Language 2 (L2) (English):** 9 periods a week of English language lessons with the English class teacher. Maths, Discovery of the World, Art, Music, Gym, and Religion/Ethics are all also delivered in English.

Your child has L1 (Slovenian) lessons when their classmates have L2 (French or German) and they follow the school programme for that language. English is officially designated by the school as your child's second language (L2) but it will be taught as a first language in class. However, in the school reports (*carnet scolaire*), it will be graded and assessed as a second language. Your child receives an English L2 report and is assessed by different criteria than their classmates. Their Slovenian report is their L1 report. All grade 5 pupils go on a second language trip and your child will be able to participate in the English L2 trip to Liddington PGL centre, Swindon, England, alongside other pupils learning English as a second language.

### Secondary School

**Language 1 (L1) is Slovenian:** lessons with the Slovenian, L1 teacher.

**Language 2 (L2) is English:** lessons in an English L2 class (possibly in the advanced class, following assessment).

SWALS pupils now have L1 (Slovenian) lessons when their classmates have L1 (English). English remains your child's officially designated second language (L2) but the difference is that English is now taught in an L2 class. SWALS pupils often enter the advanced class, following assessment. As all students progress through secondary school, subjects like History, Geography, ICT will be taught in the L2. For Swals students in the Anglophone section this means English.

## Extra support for SWALS pupils

We have children from many cultures and language backgrounds within the Anglophone section, and we endeavour to celebrate and explore this richness in our classroom life.



If your child speaks little or no English when they join the school, the first few months can be very daunting and tiring as they find their way around a new environment, through a new language. They may become frustrated as they find it difficult to express themselves adequately and make friends. Many pupils go through a silent or passive period. Understanding usually precedes speaking and writing. Some pupils may choose to remain silent until they acquire enough confidence to engage in oral communication. This choice to remain silent (possibly for several months) should not be seen as a lack of ability or a lack of cooperation. Most pupils will speak when they feel confident enough to do so. Be reassured, this is completely normal and the vast majority of pupils quickly settle in and soon begin to function comfortably and confidently in their new language.

### SWALS English L2 Support

Depending on your child's level of English, they may be eligible for extra lessons, targeted to help them to improve their English. The lessons are delivered by teachers from the Anglophone section (not your child's class teacher) and take place in small groups, usually once or twice a week, depending on the age of the children and level of English. Your child will leave their main class, usually during English language lessons. However, timetable constraints mean that this is not always possible. The extra support teaching is tailored to the particular needs of each child. Planning for these lessons identifies achievable and manageable targets for your child, to enable them to progress in English, as well as to explore language needed for other parts of the curriculum (for example mathematical or scientific terms). These lessons can also be used to share focus texts and discuss characters, plots and storylines before they are shared in the classroom and also to pre-teach vocabulary necessary for an upcoming topic in class.

The class teacher and SWALS English L2 support teacher will decide if extra support lessons are necessary and will inform you. If support is no longer needed, then the extra lessons will discontinue. This decision will be made by both the class teacher and the L2 support teacher.



## What is the Anglophone philosophy of education?

The Anglophone section is staffed by teachers trained in a variety of countries, including Ireland and the UK. They all follow the European School syllabus for each subject and the section has agreed many common approaches to ensure continuity between classes. Of course, each teacher will deliver the programme with their own individual touch and philosophy, but you will almost certainly find that some of the pedagogical practices used are very different to what you yourself experienced at school, or what you might expect from a school in your own country. Indeed, this is the case for many families in the Anglophone section - we have children from a wide variety of backgrounds and countries. The teachers will adapt to this as much as possible, but the core of your child's education will be based on an Anglophone approach to teaching and learning.

It is difficult to summarise what an 'Anglophone' approach is, and each class will be different, but some of the defining characteristics might be:

**Learning through discovery and fostering creativity:** through cross curricular work, investigations, drama, art and music.

**The importance of listening and speaking :** some of the most effective and important language work is not written down. Listening and speaking skills are critical to good language development in all pupils, but in particular those learning English as an additional language.

**Acknowledgement of learning styles:** children learn in a number of different ways (visually, through movement, through reading and writing, and through listening) and some children have a preference for a particular style. Activities are planned to take account of these different ways of learning.

**Assessment for learning:** this approach involves children in the assessment process to help them become aware of their strengths and weaknesses, and thus make better progress. Written tests are **not** central to this approach.

# Stages in learning English as a second language

Language development should be seen as holistic in nature so that development in one aspect supports learning in another. The four skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing generally do not progress at the same rate, and so your child may speak quite well but find reading and writing much more challenging. Their spoken language should not be taken as an indicator of their overall proficiency as oral fluency does not automatically translate into the same level in written fluency. Social language is very different to academic language: unlike the language of the playground, the language of school learning takes much longer to develop. Everyday basic communication skills do not require the language associated with higher order thinking skills, yet these are the language functions essential for full cognitive and academic development. This table shows how your child's second language learning *may* develop although please bear in mind that every child is different.

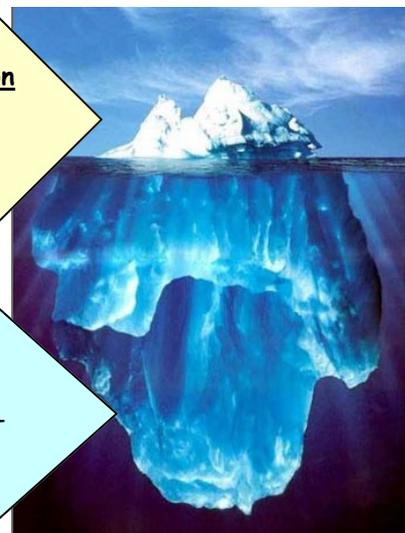
<b>New to English</b> 0-1 years of English	<b>Becoming familiar with English</b> 2 years of English	<b>Becoming confident as a user of English</b> 3 years of English	<b>Competent user of English in most social/learning contexts</b> 4 years of English	<b>Fluent user of English</b> 5 years or more of English
An initial silent period is a common feature. The child may rely on gestures to indicate meaning. There is a focus on understanding and learning survival and day to day language. The child will begin to put words into phrases. The child may begin to decode text without comprehension. The child will require considerable support to access the curriculum. Listening and speaking will develop before reading and writing.	The child understands more than they can use and is more concerned with communication than accuracy. Vocabulary will increase. Will move between English and other languages at home. Oral skills will be better than literacy skills but literacy should begin to develop. Increasingly grammatically correct language use. Awareness of tenses but limited use. Needs support structures for writing.	The child is confident using English in most social contexts and is less reliant on the home language for understanding. Gaps between social and academic language. May underperform in tests, exams and written assignments. Increasing vocabulary but still gaps (often subject related). Begins to write independently but still needs support structures for extended writing. Operates independently but requires support to fully access curriculum.	Competent use of English in many different contexts. Can express and develop ideas orally but not always transferred into writing. Can access information in complex texts. Idiomatic language and complex grammatical structures still not strong. Still developing a better understanding of language genre and register, and linking and structuring ideas. Operates independently but still needs support to develop higher order language.	Fluent communicator in English. Able to access all aspects of the curriculum. Confident using higher order language skills. No additional support required.

## The iceberg model of second language acquisition

Researchers have used the model of an iceberg to illustrate how early oral fluency does not necessarily indicate that higher level language has been acquired. If your child has no English when they arrive in school, initial teaching will focus on basic communication. As they progress, they will be consolidating these communication skills, along with an increased focus on cognitive and academic language. This becomes the main focus of our teaching approaches and assessments.

**Basic Interpersonal and Communication Skills** e.g. playground and social language.

**Cognitive and Academic Language Proficiency** e.g. classroom and higher order thinking language



## How can I help my child at home?

Your interest and involvement in your child's learning are the best ways you can help.

- Talk to your child about what happens at school. Encourage them to teach you and talk about their new English skills.
- Provide as much exposure to English as possible through books (see list of bookshops below), television, films, songs and visits to English-speaking countries.
- Build up a home library of English fiction, non-fiction and reference books. As your child begins to read, it is essential that they can choose books to suit their mood and interests.
- Help your child to build up a collection of words and phrases they can use and understand. You could keep a notebook of words in the child's first language and the English translation.
- It is important to continue speaking and reading to your child in their home language to develop fluency and proficiency. These skills will transfer when learning English and strengthen their understanding of language use. The school library has books in Slovenian.
- Maintain friendships outside school, for example, having a friend to play after school; going to the park with other parents and children.
- Find an English speaking community group e.g. Scouts, football club, drama groups.
- Pay particular attention to the above before returning to school after a holiday, especially the long summer holiday when your child has maybe had little or no exposure to English.



Reading a bedtime story to your child is a great way for them to improve their listening skills

## Where can I go for resources?

### English Bookshops in Brussels:

*Waterstones* - 71, Blvd Adolphe Max Brussels 1000

*Sterling Books* - 23, Fosse aux Loups Brussels 1000

*Treasure Trove* - Hoornzeelstraat 35 3080 Tervuren

Second-hand shops such as *Les Petits Riens* and *Pele Mele* have excellent selections of good condition, cheap English books for children. As well as your child's class library, the school library is available to all children, and the Anglo-phone section has a book club and encourages to buy English books.

### Useful websites

#### BBC

[www.bbc.co.uk/cbbc](http://www.bbc.co.uk/cbbc) (older primary)

[www.bbc.co.uk/cbeebies](http://www.bbc.co.uk/cbeebies) (younger primary)

#### British Council (for early language learning)

<http://learnenglishkids.britishcouncil.org>

#### Story Sites

<http://onlinestoriesforchildren.blogspot.com/>

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

## People to contact

Your child's class teacher will tell you who their SWALS English L2 support teacher is.

**Marla Candon** Deputy Head of the Primary School

**Anke Busing** SWALS Coordinator

**Martina Kroflic** Slovenian L1 Teacher

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