

One school, 71 languages

1 WARMER: LANGUAGES WE KNOW

Complete the sentences with languages (e.g. French, Japanese, etc).

1. All of the pupils in our class speak _____.
2. Some of the pupils also speak _____.
3. Most of our lessons are in _____.
4. We also have lessons in _____.
5. My first language is _____.

2 WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

Decide which words from the article fit into the gaps. The paragraph numbers are given to help you.

improve proud culture miss chaotic immerse
experiences preparing community college activities

1. When you _____ something, you are not there when something is taking place. (para 2)
2. In the UK, a _____ is a secondary school that the local people can use for classes in the evening. At Southfields, kids can also attend school full-time. (para 3)
3. something that happens in a confused way and without any order or organization _____ (para 4)
4. When we talk about _____ - we mean a set of ideas, beliefs, traditions and language. (para 4)
5. to make something better _____ (para 5)
6. When you _____ someone in something, they spend most of their time doing it or thinking about it. (para 5)
7. things people (like to) do, especially in their free time _____ (para 6)
8. things that happen to you in your life _____ (para 7)
9. When you are _____ for something, you are getting ready for it. (para 7)
10. When you feel _____, you feel happy about what you can do and who you know. (para 8)

One school, 71 languages

ONE SCHOOL, 71 LANGUAGES

by Toby Skingsley



- 1 The kids in a school in south London come from 60 countries. At home they speak a total of 71 languages – at school their lessons are all in English.
- 2 Imagine taking all your school exams in English, even in maths and history! What if you had to talk to your teachers in English every day? In London lots of teens do this – although English isn't their first language. Their families have moved to Britain from other countries, but these kids can't miss school.
- 3 At Southfields Community College, in Wandsworth, south London, the 1,300 pupils come from all over the world – from around 60 countries altogether. "I have friends from Pakistan, Ghana, Nigeria and Britain," **Tifunseyani Mtonga**, 14, from Zambia, says. Southfields pupils speak 71 languages – more than at any other school in Britain!
- 4 Don't all those different languages make school very chaotic? **Shahid Syed**, 16, from Pakistan, speaks Urdu, Punjabi and a little Pashto. But he tries to make things easy at school. "We all speak English in the classroom," Shahid says. "But at home I speak Urdu as much as possible because we try to keep our culture."
- 5 London has many multicultural schools. At Southfields many of the pupils spoke little or no English when they first arrived. "We believe the best way for pupils to improve their English is by listening and speaking in class," said **Anita Sollis**,

a teacher at Southfields. "Most teens have some basic English when they arrive, and we immerse them in English in class. It's fantastic how quickly they learn the language." If kids speak no English at all, Southfields takes these pupils out of class for one lesson a day to give them extra English.

Sports and activities are also important. **Ibrahim Omar**, 15, from Somalia, speaks Somali and Arabic. She said after-school clubs helped her to make friends in Britain. "When I got here, I met friends playing sport. I didn't know how to play the games, I couldn't speak English and I didn't know anyone – but the others helped me. I still have these friends today." Southfields offers a lot of after-school sports and activities. "Clubs and sports are a great way for people to mix," said Anita Sollis. "It's interesting for the British pupils too because they meet other teens from all over the world."

A lot of kids at Southfields know that education is very important. Some had bad experiences before coming to Britain. **Fadumo Yusuf**, 15, from Somalia, told the British newspaper *The Guardian* that she saw kids shot dead in her home country. She even had to hide under her desk at school so she wouldn't get killed. Once, she was shot in the hand. "When I came here, I didn't know any English," said Fadumo. "Now I'm preparing for my GCSEs."

But Southfields offers much more than exams. It's a chance to learn about other cultures. **Kristina Dimova**, 13, from Bulgaria, has been there for just a few months. But she's already learned a lot about other cultures. "My friends come from Brazil, so I'm learning about their country and language. I also teach my friends about Bulgarian traditions." Walking around the playground is like a trip around the world. Kids from Italy, South Africa, India, Iraq, China, Somalia, Thailand, Bangladesh and many other countries play together. Shahid knows a lot of the kids and he's proud of his knowledge of other cultures. He said, "It makes you feel clever to know people from so many different backgrounds."

© Spot on, October 2009, www.spoton.de

One school, 71 languages

3 FIND THE INFORMATION

Match the sentence halves to make a short summary of the article.

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1. The kids at Southfields Community College ... | a. ... because there are so many kids from so many countries. |
| 2. The pupils come from ... | b. ... in English. |
| 3. All the lessons are ... | c. ... in their home countries. |
| 4. If they can't speak English, the kids get ... | d. ... speak 71 different languages. |
| 5. They speak their first language at home so that ... | e. ... extra English lessons. |
| 6. After-school activities help the kids ... | f. ... 60 different countries. |
| 7. Some kids had bad experiences ... | g. ... they do not forget their culture. |
| 8. Walking around the playground is like a trip around the world ... | h. ... make friends. |

4 WEBQUEST: FIND OUT MORE

Fadumo says she is preparing for her GCSEs. These are British school examinations.

What does GCSE stand for?

How old are most pupils when they take these exams?

Do you take exams like GCSEs in your country?

5 WRITING: A POSTER

Make a poster for an after-school club. The poster should tell other pupils:

- what they can do at the club;
- where and when the club takes place;
- how the club will help them in and outside school;
- why it is a great club.

One school, 71 languages

6 SPEAKING: A TYPICAL GAME FROM MY COUNTRY

Think of a typical playground game that kids play in your country. How would you explain this to people from another country? Use the table below to make notes about the game and then explain and teach others how to play it – in English of course!

name of the game	
number of players	
what you need to play the game	
what you do	
how you win	

One school, 71 languages

KEY

2

1. miss
2. community college
3. chaotic
4. culture
5. improve
6. immerse
7. activities
8. experiences
9. preparing
10. proud

3

1. d
2. f
3. b
4. e
5. g
6. h
7. c
8. a