

ONE SCHOOL, 71 LANGUAGES.

Read the following article and do the activities.

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. Between them, 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, but Southfields can be especially proud. In 2006 it was one of the top 100 most improved schools in the country. This is great because 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 from being surrounded by the language." If kids speak no English at all, Southfields takes these pupils out of class for one period a day to give them English lessons.

Sports and activities are also important. **Ifrah Omar**, 15, from Somalia, speaks Somali and Arabic. She said after-school clubs helped her to make friends and settle down 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 are extremely motivated after bad experiences they had before moving 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 and still has a scar. "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."

I. What does it mean?

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

proud	experiences	immerse	scar	improve
surrounded	motivated	multicultural	settle down	
community college	activities	period		

1. In the UK, a is a secondary school that the local people can use for classes in the evening. (para 3)
2. You can say something is when it has people from many countries and backgrounds, speaking different languages. At Southfields, kids can also attend school full-time. (para 5)
3. To make something better: (para 5)
4. When youin something, they spend most of their time doing it or thinking about it. (para 5)
5. When you are by something, it is near you all the time. (para 5)
6. A part of a school day, when a particular subject is taught: (para 6)
7. When you you become comfortable and relaxed in a particular place. (para 6)
8. Things people (like to) do: (para 6)
9. Someone who is enthusiastic and wants to succeed is (para 7)
10. The things that happen to you in your life: (para 7)
11. A permanent mark on your skin where you have been injured: (para 7)

12. When you feel, you feel happy about your achievements, your possessions or people who you are connected with.
(para 8)

II. Find the information:

Choose the right answer according to the information in the article.

1. How many languages are mentioned in the article?
 - a . 5
 - b . 6
 - c . 7
2. How many countries are mentioned? (just in the article)
 - a . 12
 - b . 14
 - c . 15
3. How do after-school activities help the kids?
 - a. They get extra points for their exams.
 - b. They make friends from all over the world.
 - c. They help them learn other languages
4. What happens if the kids cannot speak English when they arrive at the school?
 - a. They get extra lessons after school.
 - b. They get extra lessons in the lunch break.
 - c. They get one extra lesson a day instead of another subject.
5. Why is it important for the kids to speak their mother tongue at home?
 - a. So they can watch TV in that language.
 - b. So that they do not forget their cultural background.
 - c. So that their parents can understand them.
6. What does Kristina like about the school?
 - a. She can learn about people from other countries and their cultures.

- b. She has friends from Brazil.
- c. She is able to play a lot of games.

III. Find out more...

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

- 1. What does GCSE stand for (mean)?.....
.....
- 2. How old are most pupils when they take these exams?
.....
- 3. How do these exams compare to exams in your country?
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