Your home language is important. It is part of you and your child/ren's identity.

To keep this alive:

- allow time for your child to play with other children who share your common language.
- do not be afraid to use your language in public.
- teach your child the different names of the languages they hear around them.
- help your child to feel proud of his/her languages. This will help him/her develop strong cultural identity
- if your child prefers using English words, you can still respond and repeat back what they said in your own language.

Remember to:

- look at your child as you talk. This helps him/her to see your facial expression and how you form words.
- make 'special time' for you and your child when you can play together.
- give lots of opportunities and time for your child to respond to you.

Portsmouth CITY COUNCIL

For further information please contact:

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Portsmouth CITY COUNCIL

Ethnic Minority Achievement Service (EMAS)

The importance of home language

www.portsmouth.gov.uk



Frequently asked questions

Why is it good for children to keep their home language?

Learning more than one language is good for their general learning, they can communicate with all members of both communities and it is a great skill to have as an adult.

Should we speak our own language at home or should we speak English to help our son/daughter learn English faster?

You should speak your own language at home. The stronger the first language is, the easier it is for the child to learn another language.

By speaking English at home, you run the risk of your child/ren not learning your language and missing out on the richness of your culture.

My child has speech problems/speech delay… Should we only speak English at home to help him/her overcome his/her difficulties?

Children learning more than one language can sometimes start speaking a bit later than monolingual children.

A child with speech issues needs to be surrounded by good language role models.

i.e. home language.

My child/ren refuse to speak our language. What should we do?

Carry on speaking your home language to them. Try visiting other members of the community to motivate them to communicate.

Even if the children do not speak their home language, they are still acquiring it by hearing it at home.

My child mixes the two languages when s/he speaks.

Is s/he confused?

Your child is not confused, s/he is simply making use of all the languages s/he knows.

We arrived in England 6 months ago and my child is still not speaking at school. What can we do?

It is common for children, when they just arrive in school, to go through a ‘silent phase’ which can last several months. It can take a while for them to feel confident enough to speak English.

Give them time, support them and be patient.