

Resource 25: How can the school support pupils during this phase?

Up to a point, these signs of stress are normal. There are so many new stimuli in a new EAL pupil's life. During their period of adjustment, these types of behaviour are one way of 'letting off steam'. The pupils are coming to terms with the situation that someone else has put them in.

If the behaviour continues with very little change for months, teachers and parents need to meet. It's important not to alarm parents when you do this. You also need to keep a member of the leadership team informed and refer to school procedures.

It's important to discover whether there are enduring reasons why a pupil is finding it so difficult to adjust. Perhaps a key family member has not yet moved to the new home. Perhaps a pupil has experienced trauma and loss in their former home. Perhaps one of the parents is experiencing great difficulty in accepting the move to a new country and the pupil is responding to this unhappiness.

There may be no special reason why EAL pupils find it difficult to accept the situation and settle into a new school. Teachers and parents need to work together to help pupils adjust to the loss of their former life.

Activities in the class that raise issues of changing country and schools are valuable. For instance, it's helpful if you:

- give pupils opportunities to reminisce aloud or to write (in their own language if necessary) about the special people, pets and places they have left behind
- get to know the backgrounds of your new EAL pupils in depth
- include appropriate references to their home cultures and geographical locations in your teaching
- consider giving a memory book to pupils who are leaving – encourage them to keep in touch with you
- make sure that you help pupils who've been left behind when one of their friends leaves the school

Experienced teachers report that the main thing that changes how EAL pupils feel is making a real friend. All the adults in an EAL pupil's life need to work together to try to make this happen.