

Bilingual Project Report June 2024

My name is Kate Scheffler and I am British. I trained in the UK as a primary school teacher and taught there for several years before moving abroad. While working in Cambodia I met my German husband, and after many happy years in Asia and Africa, bringing up our two children, we decided to return to our European „roots“. We have been living in a small town near Bad Oldesloe since 2016.

Our children have been raised bilingually. As an adult who is still trying to learn German I envy their ability to switch effortlessly between English and German. This is just one of many reasons why I am a strong advocate of bilingual education.

I started working as a Native Speaker at the Stadtschule, Bad Oldesloe in November 2023. It was a completely new approach for both myself and the school and there was a sense of nervous excitement about this new concept.

We began with Years 1 and 2 and wanted to offer the children as many different opportunities as possible to hear and speak English. During break times, games and fun activities are offered. During „outside school“ lessons we discuss their surroundings. In the classroom, English was introduced in Maths, Art and Topic lessons enabling the children to hear key vocabulary, such as colours, numbers and vocabulary relating to different topics such as the human body, planets and robots. Breakfast time and Morning Circle are additional opportunities that allow English to be spoken in a relaxed and authentic setting.

The response from the children has been both amazing and fascinating. Some have no fear when hearing another language and immediately translate what is being said to their friends. The cautious ones take more time before they actively participate; but within a short period of time, they gain enough confidence to engage with the new language. And around the school, it is now quite normal to hear conversations in a mixture of both English and German.

We started an English drama course for children in Year 4, adapting familiar children's stories and using props to help with understanding new vocabulary. Within a few weeks they moved beyond mime and gesture to acting using only English. The subsequent pride in performing the play to their friends is just one of the many benefits of the drama class.

As a school, we have all been learning together and within a short period of time we have come a long way. I am fortunate to be working in a school surrounded by children and staff who are motivated, hard working, curious and willing to take the plunge into the bilingual concept.

I believe that the chance to learn English as an additional language at an early age is a passport to providing a wide range of opportunities both cultural and economic, helping our children to become confident and successful global citizens.