

Overview French is spoken in many countries throughout the world, but many of the EMTAS French-speaking referrals originate from France, therefore this overview will focus on facts about France. Although there may be some minor differences in the French language spoken in other parts of the world, the language notes on page 2 will generally still apply to any French speaking country, and your Bilingual Assistant can help with providing further information about education systems for other francophone countries.

Population

In 2014 the population of France was 66.2million, (similar to the population of UK at 64.5million) in an area a little over double the size of the UK).

Climate

Seasons and average temperatures in France are broadly similar to UK, although this varies by region.

EDUCATION SYSTEM (France)

Ecole maternelle (nursery)

	Class name	age
Ecole primaire	CP	6
	CE1	7
	CE2	8
	CM1	9
	CM2	10

Collège	6ème (sixième)	11
	5ème	12
	4ème	13
	3ème	14

Brevet des collèges

Lycée	2ème	15
	1ère	16
	Terminale	17

(Baccalauréat)

Due to differences in the educational system, a 6 year old child arriving from France may have little or no experience of Primary education, compared to a 6 year old in UK who has completed 2 years of Primary education.

Education System – main differences and implications for schools.

Comprehensive details of the French Education system can be found on www.education.gouv.fr.

School starting age

Children generally start school at the age of 6 years. In rural areas of France, primary schools may have only a few children in each year group and a correspondingly small number of teachers, so children may be unused to the much larger size of class and school. However, French children and their families often appreciate the benefits of larger classes, as the social aspect is enhanced with a larger number of peers, and most find the collaborative learning style in UK is highly beneficial to language acquisition.

School day

Typical day in Primary school starts at 9.00, ends at 17.00, with 2 hours for lunch and a half day on Wednesday.

Sitting on the mat is associated with Ecole Maternelle.

Teaching in France is more formal and there is rarely time for hands-on application (eg building a fishing game as part of learning about magnets). It may be necessary to explain to parents that children are not playing but learning through practical activity.

Children are used to more homework in France and families often seem surprised to find that there is much less homework in UK Primary schools. Therefore, requests to participate in pre-learning activities at home such as sharing and discussing a text, in order to help familiarise the child with an upcoming topic, would not be seen as unduly onerous.

The French minister for education has made prevention of bullying a priority, and there is a government website which could be used by French speakers, www.agircontreleharcelementalecole.gouv.fr (act against bullying at school) for PSHE research about bullying.

Curriculum

In Primary, children attend for 24 hours per week, of which 10 hrs is French, and 5 hrs is Maths in CP. In CE2-CM2 there is 8 hrs French, 5 hrs Maths, with the remainder spread across Science, Humanities, Art and PE, and including 54 hours of a modern language per year.

Secondary School: In 6ème, the curriculum is similar to UK, and includes 3hours of MFL per week. Hours increase to 28.5hrs per week by 4ème, and may include latin or a regional language. Pupils undertake up to a week of work experience in 3ème. There is a choice at age 14 of continuing on to Lycée Général or Lycée Technologique, which prepare students for the Baccalauréat, (with the aim of continued study at higher education); alternatively, there is Lycee Professionnel which offers vocational courses, and leads to CAP(certificate d'aptitude professionnelle) after 2 years, and Baccalauréat professionnel after the final year.

Literacy There is a different approach to the education of 6 and 7year olds, who spend more time than children in the UK on handwriting with great emphasis on presentation. Much of the first year in school is spent on phonology and on learning the alphabet. Copying and dictation exercises are common, rather than emergent writing, so aside from any difficulties presented by language, a young child will not be familiar with attempting to express their own ideas on paper, or 'having-a-go' at spelling. French children usually learn a cursive style of handwriting, using writing paper with 2 lines initially and progressing to five lines once they have acquired basic letter formation. French children are often unfamiliar with the different genres of writing practised in UK schools eg persuasive, balanced discussion etc.

Maths The Maths syllabus is quite different, with more time being spent on computation and little on investigative work. Older pupils joining schools in UK may feel that the 'number' element of the curriculum is too easy. Conversely, the manipulation of numbers within Mental Maths is often challenging, as mental strategies are not taught to the same extent, although the curriculum does now include 15 minutes of Mental Maths per day.

Times Tables are 'inverted' ie the 2x table would be said as $2 \times 1 = 2$, $2 \times 2 = 4$, $2 \times 3 = 6$ etc

There is more emphasis on decimals, and less on fractions. In France the decimal point is written as a comma (2,5).

Similarities: Maths vocabulary is often similar between the two languages, especially number operations and shape names.

Parental involvement and attendance in France

These are broadly the same as in schools in the UK.

Language differences that may cause problems with Literacy

Alphabet/Script

Alphabet is the same as English, with the addition of accents (é è ç à)
h in French is very often silent (so a French speaker may not pronounce it in a word like 'hat' or may write 'hat' as 'at')
English 'th' sound does not exist in French and is difficult for French speakers to say.
Months and days of the week do not start with a capital letter in French.

Spellings

The sounds of the following letters are very similar and can cause confusion, if verbally giving a spelling.
English letter 'e' and French 'i'
English letter 'g' and French 'j'
English letter 'j' and 'g' in French

Vowel sounds particularly are written differently, and digraphs such as ;ea; 'oa a-e, o-e etc will need additional input.

Plural 's' in French is not pronounced.
Likewise many other French verb endings are not actually pronounced (eg regarde, regardes, and regardent, are all pronounced the same, like English 'regard')
Final 't' on words in French is not pronounced.

Punctuation

Broadly similar to English punctuation. Direct speech often uses – to indicate speech rather than "...". As noted under Alphabet, many words which are capitalised in English are not in French.

Modal verbs

Modal verbs in French are used with the infinitive form in a similar way to English. However, 'would' has it's own tense, the Conditional, where the verb ending signifies the idea "would" eg je partirais demain, si possible,(I would leave tomorrow, if possible)

Auxiliaries/negatives/questions/tenses

There is no equivalent in French to the auxiliary 'do' which we use to form a question. In spoken French, a question is often formed simply by applying question intonation to a statement, otherwise prefix the statement with "Est-ce que".
Negatives are formed by adding *ne* and *pas* to either side of the verb. Je vois/je *ne* vois *pas* (I see/I do not see).

French uses the verb 'avoir' (to have) to express many ideas which use the verb 'to be' in English.
Eg j'ai soif = (*literally*)I have thirst
Tenses are broadly similar.

In French, there is only a single form of the present tense, for example, je fais = 'I make' and 'I am making', which may lead to confusion over which to use in English.

In the Perfect tense in French, verbs of movement are generally formed using être rather than avoir, eg nous *sommes* allés, (we went) or nous *avons* mangé (we ate). There are many irregularities and complexities to formation of past tense in French, so at least irregular past tenses in English do not come as a total surprise to French speakers!

Word order

The French and English grammatical systems (including word order) are broadly similar.
However:
Adjectives usually follow the noun, rather than precede it. They must also 'agree' with the noun in gender and number (la maison *blanche* = the *white* house). There are exceptions to this, such as grand/petit (big/small) eg la *petite* maison *blanche*.

Adverbs are placed between the verb and the object (je vais *souvent* à Paris = I *often* go to Paris)

Gender/Articles

All French nouns have an article, which has a masculine (le/un) or feminine (la/une) form. Plurals for both masc. and fem are les/des. A phrase in English which omits the article must have one in French eg I like bananas = j'aime les bananes.

Useful classroom words

Greetings

Welcome	bienvenue
Hello	bonjour
Thank you	merci
Please (to child)	s'il te plait
Please	s'il vous plait
Goodbye	au revoir
Morning	le matin/la matinée
Afternoon	l'après-midi
Are you OK?	ça va?

School Routine

School playground	la cour
School office	le bureau
Hall	la salle de rassemblement
School	l'école/le collège (secondary)
Assembly	le rassemblement
Toilets	les toilettes
School field	le pré
Classroom	la salle de classe
Registration	l'enregistrement
Computer	l'ordinateur
Tutor group (class)	la classe
Break time	la récré(ation)
Outside	à l'extérieur
Inside	à l'intérieur
Fire drill	l'exercice à incendie
Packed lunch	les sandwiches
School dinner	le déjeuner
School nurse	l'infirmière
First aid room	l'infirmerie
Staff room	la salle des profs
Lunchtime	le déjeuner
School uniform	l'uniforme scolaire
Library	la bibliothèque
Reading book	un livre
Library book	un livre
Copy	copier
Label	annoter
Colour	colorier
Pen	un stylo
Pencil	un crayon
Yes	oui
No	non

Days of the week

Monday	lundi
Tuesday	mardi
Wednesday	mercredi
Thursday	jeudi
Friday	vendredi
Weekend	le weekend

Numbers

Zero	zéro	
One	un	
Two	deux	20 vingt
Three	trois	30 trente
Four	quatre	40 quarante
Five	cinq	50 cinquante
Six	six	60 soixante
Seven	sept	70 soixante-dix
Eight	huit	80 quatre-vingt
Nine	neuf	90 quatre-vingt-dix
Ten	dix	100 cent
How many?	Combien?	

Instructions/Questions

Work with a partner
Travaille avec un partenaire
Use your dictionary
Cherche dans le dictionnaire
Do you understand?
Est-ce que tu comprends?
Talk about this at home
Discute à la maison
Translate these words at home
Traduit ces mots à la maison
You can write in French
Ecris-le en français
Write in sentences
Ecris en faisant des phrases
Fill in the blanks
Remplis les trous
Annotate
Annoter
Draft
Fais un brouillon
Please be quiet
Silence
Where does it hurt?
Où est-ce que tu as mal?
Well done!
Bravo