

Children from Algeria

Background information

Algerian asylum seekers started arriving in the UK in 1991, fleeing violence that erupted after general election results were annulled.

More recently, some Algerians have become targets of Islamist militia groups because of their secular lifestyles, whilst others have fled because they were associated with Islamist groups and feared persecution by the Algerian security forces. Other arrivals have included journalists and human rights activists.

Some Algerian families have arrived in the UK having previously lived in France.

Languages, ethnicity and culture

- About 74 per cent of the population of Algeria identifies itself as Arab.
- The main minority ethnic group are the Berbers who comprise 25 per cent of the population. Their home language and culture are distinct from the Arab-speaking majority.
- Modern Standard Arabic is the official language of Algeria, although rarely spoken outside official situations.
- The majority of the population speaks the Algerian dialect of Arabic, which is similar to Moroccan and Tunisian Arabic.
- About 15 per cent of the population speaks one of the Berber languages, particularly Tamazight.
- French is also widely spoken.
- Not all Algerians in the UK speak Arabic as their home language; some will have one of the Berber languages as the first language and others French.

Religion

- Islam is the official religion of Algeria and the vast majority of the population is Sunni Muslim. This is reflected also in the UK Algerian population.
- There is a small Christian community (predominantly Roman Catholic) and a very small Jewish community in Algeria.
- Some Algerians are secular in outlook and lifestyle.

The education system in Algeria

- Education is free and compulsory between ages six and 15.
- Primary education begins at age six.
- At the end of the primary phase pupils sit the *brevet d'enseignement fondamentale* (a basic education diploma).
- Secondary education starts at 15 and lasts for three years.
- Students may attend a *lycée* (secondary school) or enter the vocational school system.
- At the *lycées*, there are two programmes: general and technical. At the end of the third year of *lycée*, students take an examination to qualify for a general or technical *baccalauréat*. Passing the *baccalauréat* allows students to go on to higher education.
- A *baccalauréat* pass is considered to lie between GCSE and A level standard.
- The vocational school system offers five-year apprenticeship programmes to meet the demands of industry and agriculture.
- Arabic is compulsory during the first nine years of education.
- French is introduced in the third year and it is the usual language of instruction for mathematics and science.
- Children may also learn other languages such as English, Spanish or Italian.

Some issues for teachers and schools in the UK

- Very few Algerian children arrive in the UK without a parent.
- Some Algerian children may have witnessed violence or killing and may find it difficult to settle and learn as a result. The [supporting emotional well-being \(http://www.qca.org.uk/10014.html\)](http://www.qca.org.uk/10014.html) area of this site provides further guidance.
- Monitoring of Algerian children's progress in schools in north and central London shows high levels of achievement.
- There are a number of supplementary and community schools that teach Arabic and are working with children of Algerian origin. The [supplementary and mother-tongue schools \(http://www.qca.org.uk/10007_10032.html\)](http://www.qca.org.uk/10007_10032.html) section of this site provides further information.
- Including the cultural heritage of Algerian pupils in the curriculum promotes inclusion and achievement. The [culturally diverse and inclusive curriculum \(http://www.qca.org.uk/10010.html\)](http://www.qca.org.uk/10010.html) area of this site provides further guidance.

Useful classroom resources

Please note: QCA is not responsible for the content of external resources

Arabic and English words for school use, [Refugee Council \(http://www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/publications/pub006.htm\)](http://www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/publications/pub006.htm), 1998

Maths words for school use (Arabic and English), Refugee Council, 2004

Science words for school use (Arabic and English), Refugee Council, 2004

Multilingual words for classroom topics – Arabic, [Enchanted Learning \(http://www.EnchantedLearning.com/French/\)](http://www.EnchantedLearning.com/French/)

[Enchanted Learning \(http://www.EnchantedLearning.com/French/\)](http://www.EnchantedLearning.com/French/)

An online French-English dictionary for children.

My life story – Arabic and English, Mahmout, U and Thompson A, [Mantra Lingua \(http://www.mantralingua.com/\)](http://www.mantralingua.com/) 2001