

# AZBUKA Prospectus



**The Azbuka Foundation** has been pioneering Russian-English bilingual education since its launch in 2000. The Azbuka Nursery was opened in 2002 and became the UK's first Ofsted registered pre-school, with a Russian curriculum for bilingual children. Over the course of the next 13 years, the Foundation established a Saturday school for older children and a Russian Children's Cultural Centre, both of which were instant successes which were quickly over-subscribed. **In 2015, Azbuka went on to fulfil its dream with the opening of the UK's**

Azbuka Foundation is a non-profit organisation comprising:

- Russian-English bilingual primary school and nursery
- Russian Saturday school
- Russian cultural centre for children and families
- Bilingual education resource

## Azbuka Ethos

We strongly believe that the best kind of education is firmly rooted in the linguistic and cultural background of each family and caters to the unique qualities of the individual, the family and the community. This approach is critical to the success of any educational programme. It delivers high academic attainment, personal fulfilment and happiness, strong self-esteem and social and emotional security, all of which give children the skills and confidence they need to prepare for adulthood. Childhood is a precious time, full of wonder and joy, and it is a privilege for our teachers to work with students during this critical phase in their life and to be able to shape their experiences. The determination to combine the spirit of discovery with the best methods of bilingual education is an intrinsic element of the Azbuka philosophy. Children at Azbuka engage in exciting approaches to learning that draw on the arts, maths, science, language and culture, ensuring that everyone is happy and eager to learn. As our children progress through Azbuka's unique programme, they gain the practical and cognitive advantages of bilingualism while enjoying the opportunity to explore the world through different cultural lenses. Bilingual education prepares children for the challenges of a rapidly changing world where social and cultural flexibility are essential. We aim to celebrate and bring together different cultures, creating an educational model for our families that promotes cultural diversity, safe and healthy environment, as well as academic excellence. The multiple benefits of bilingual education are well researched and documented, but a far greater asset is the ability to hold more than one view of the world, to see and experience the world around us in different ways. Azbuka creates the educational environment for every family seeking to enjoy life in all its richness and variety.



**first primary school with a full-time Russian-English bilingual education programme.** It has since won widespread approval for its creative and innovative methodology, embracing and celebrating both languages and cultures - providing children with the best of both worlds. Azbuka's governors, patrons and consultants include professionals and leading authorities in the fields of bilingualism, linguistics, pre-school education, the arts, finance and business management.







The joy of learning that our 4 year old son wants to go to school was simply overwhelming. He started Reception year in September 2015 at Azbuka school in Mortlake and after the first term break he was so keen to go back to school that the night before the first day of the second term a miracle happened – he for once behaved as a responsible adult and went to bed without even a hint of trying to sneak out of it. Several months before that, my wife and I had no problem with making a decision to apply for a place at a school that didn't even exist at the time. However, the thesis behind the proposition – a fully bilingual education in English and Russian following English curricula – was strong and unique enough for us to take chances... Teachers and managers turned out to be not only as a dedicated, determined and highly qualified team of professionals, but also interesting and nice individuals. Daily studies and activities are varied, engaging and creative. The whole environment inspires and encourages learning. So, after all, we should not be surprised our son wants to go to school. In fact, I secretly wish I could somewhat go back in time and go to Azbuka from the age of 4 myself. I am sure had I had that chance I would have done much better in life. But then at least I have an excuse...

AZBUKA Parent

## Benefits of Bilingual Education

International research has clearly demonstrated that a bilingual education provides children with cognitive advantages well beyond the practical benefit of fluency in another language. A bilingual education can boost a child's overall memory and powers of concentration and improve creativity and cognitive function. Studies have also found that bilingual children have higher self-esteem, are more connected to their family's culture and identity and better communication and conflict management skills than their monolingual counterparts. There is ample evidence to support the academic advantage that children enjoy when educated within a structured bilingual education programme. Among our trustees, patrons and consultants, we have leading professionals, teachers and academics. Azbuka runs a bilingual education resource which is open to the wider community, while the nursery, primary school and Saturday school are also



available to academics involved in related research.

## Bicultural living

Azbuka provides more than just bilingual literacy; it is a place for the Russian and English to thrive. The majority of our staff are native Russian or English speakers who are committed to sharing their traditions with others. Children learn about and celebrate days of cultural significance to both countries. Our special Russian-European kitchen opened its doors in 2016, giving all our children and staff (as well as parents) the option of enjoying homemade hot school lunches including various traditional dishes from Russia and Europe. Our dynamic curriculum is regularly enriched with special guests who give performances or run workshops in drama, dance and art. Special visits by various Russians involved in theatre, art, music and education have always enhanced our curriculum.

The leading Russian children's poet Andrey Usachov is one of the many great friends and patrons of Azbuka. Special cultural projects for children are an important part of our work to strengthen links between England and Russia. Romanoff foundation, Garfield foundation, Peterson Institute, Count Nikolai Tolstoy, an English historian of Russian heritage, Dr Vally Lytra and Dr Charmian Kenner, prominent academics, Greg Hands, MP, Peter Reznikov, former head of Russian at Eton College, are among the patrons, governors, consultants and partners of Azbuka. The special events and celebrations run by the Azbuka Cultural Centre are available to all – not simply limited to children from the nursery or school.

## Curriculum

Our unique educational programme is anchored in a deep understanding of bilingualism, linguistic behavior and the social, emotional and cultural development of children. We strive for academic excellence as well as bilingual proficiency through our two-way linguistic and cultural immersion programme. Our curriculum reflects the traditions of both cultures while incorporating best practice and the latest research into bilingual pedagogy. We take a child-centered, inquiry-based approach, allowing children to explore a rich and diverse curriculum, nurturing



their natural curiosity and inspiring a love of learning. Children at Azbuka develop well-rounded literacy skills in both Russian and English, with emphasis placed on the minority language (Russian) in the nursery. This is reflected in the language distribution of our curriculum and ensures that Russian is embedded as native from the youngest age. As the children progress through our programme, the amount of English gradually increases so that Russian and English have equal language distribution by Year 1. Azbuka aims to prepare children for optimal performance across all disciplines in both Russian and English monolingual environments, while at the same time supporting children's identity and bilingual communication skills. Azbuka's full-time bilingual school and nursery meet all the requirements of independent schools and those set by Ofsted/ISI. The assessment of children's work is an ongoing process that ensures understanding and progress are achieved. Our children are fully prepared for UK standardised testing and they and their families are well supported in making a seamless transition into secondary education, be it in the UK, Russia or elsewhere abroad. Parents are involved in the process of teaching and learning, with ongoing meetings, events and joint projects. Reports on children's progress are prepared by the teachers at the end of each academic year alongside assessments shared



with parents throughout the academic year.

### Class Sizes

One of the most substantial advantages of an education with Azbuka is our commitment to small class sizes. The maximum number of children per class is currently 12. We understand the value of educators truly getting to know their children and having the time to meet their individual needs. Our small classes encourage children to take the lead and allow teachers to tailor the programme to suit students and help them to excel. Small class sizes also mean teachers are able to observe progress accurately and spend more time working individually with each child.

### Azbuka Staff

Every member of the Azbuka team is a dedicated, fully qualified teacher, experienced and passionate about their subject, about education in general and bilingual education in particular. Our staff regularly undertake training and professional development to ensure they are consistently working to the highest standards. Azbuka takes great pride in the quality of its team and maintains the highest standards through ongoing training and rigorous vetting processes. All Azbuka staff are native Russian, English or bilingual



speakers.

### Inclusion

Azbuka aspires to provide an inclusive environment for all children. Our small class sizes allow us to provide the support required for all children to learn together.

We aim to support special needs children to the best of our abilities, working together with parents, professionals and relevant support organisations. We believe that all children, regardless of their academic potential, financial circumstances or special needs, should be given the opportunity to learn within an educational programme that is deeply rooted in the linguistic and cultural profile of their family and community. We seek grants, donations and funding from various organisations and individuals to be able to offer bursaries to any families in need.

### Extra-Curricular Activities

There are plenty of opportunities for children to further their interests or receive additional support through one of our many extra-curricular programmes. Clubs, run in both English and Russian, include chess, football, music, violin,

science/STEM illustration and dance and are taught by Azbuka's professional teachers. We welcome visits, lectures, workshops and masterclasses from well-known Russian and English artists, musicians, poets, writers, sportsmen and Olympic champions who come to share their knowledge and talents with our children.

The Cultural Centre's events and celebrations normally take place on weekends several times a year and are open to all families and Club members.

### Policies

Azbuka's work and educational process is regulated by Azbuka's Policies and Procedures. They cover safeguarding and child protection, relationship and health/sex education, special needs, health and safety, wellbeing, equal opportunities, online safety, behavior and assessment procedures. The three key parts of Azbuka – the pre-school (nursery and Reception), full-time primary school and Saturday school – follow their own policies and procedures in their work.

### Timetable and holidays

The Azbuka school year is divided into three terms – autumn, spring and summer. The school year starts at the beginning of September. The spring term normally starts after Russian Christmas (7th January). The academic year finishes at the end of June.

### Azbuka Community

Azbuka recognizes that children thrive within a supportive community and we take every opportunity to encourage parents and the wider community to get involved through:

- Introductory courses in bilingualism and bilingual education
- Cultural events run by the Azbuka Foundation
- Talks and open days regarding the curriculum and children's progress
- Parent meetings
- Our website and Facebook page
- Newsletters and additional information on the children's development and education
- A well-established, warm and welcoming parent and school community



## Fundraising

Azbuka Foundation is a non-profit organisation and a UK-registered charity, aiming to give Russian and British children and their families the opportunity to thrive together. It is also an independent school. School fees cover only a small part of our costs. We therefore depend on the generous support and contributions of our patrons, grant-giving organisations and donors. We welcome marketing, fundraising and professional support from the community, parents and organisations that appreciate the importance of our educational project for London and wish to take an active part in its growth and development.





### The Azbuka Nursery and Pre-school

(Reception) admits children between the ages of two and four. To ensure our children receive the best possible attention we provide a child/teacher ratio of 3:1 for 2 year olds and 6/8:1 for 3-5 year olds. At Azbuka Nursery we take a child-centered approach to teaching and learning based on active learning and individual inquiry, allowing our children to explore our world through stimulating learning experiences and play-based activities.

### Curriculum

Our Curriculum has been designed to conform to EYFS (Early Years Foundation Stage) and the requirements of the English pre-school education system while at the same time delivering a bilingual education and incorporating Russian educational traditions.

**Areas of learning and development:** physical, social and emotional, language and foundations of literacy, mathematical, musical, creative knowledge and understanding of the world and cultural. Daily activities are based on a two-week theme/topic and are complemented with excursions, outings, visits, cultural events, celebrations and theatre productions. There are ongoing cookery projects every week and music and dance sessions. Outdoor activities take place every day in addition to visits and projects with external companies and professionals.

**Language distribution in the curriculum.** At **Nursery level**, 90% (Russian) – 10% (English). In line with best practice for bilingual education, emphasis is placed on the foundation and development of Russian as a minority language in our society. 90% of our activities are led in Russian. The school implements a one-language-one teacher arrangement, giving children the opportunity to learn from native speakers and to use both languages with increasing fluency.

**Reception level** (4 year olds): 80% (Russian) – 20% (English). In Reception, children spend approximately one day per week with the English teacher and the other four days in a Russian learning environment.

### Teachers

All our teachers are qualified and highly experienced in working with small children. Most have been working for Azbuka for many years and are deeply committed to the care and education of our



children. They are native Russian, English, Ukrainian or bilingual speakers. All are DBS-checked and completed all vetting checks required by law. The excellent child/teacher ratio is one of the greatest strengths of the Azbuka School and Nursery.

### Observations, assessments and progress

We have ongoing observations of our children, using journals, formative and summative assessments, two-year old checks, individual plans and end of year reports.

### Nursery/Reception lunches

We offer the option of either a packed lunch or a hot lunch served in our newly opened Russian-European kitchen.

## Timetable

### NURSERY

2-4 years

9:30 – 13:00/14:30  
Minimum of 3 days' attendance

### RECEPTION

8:45 – 15:15  
5/4 days a week

## Admission

Please refer to the full Admission policy. Priority will be given to siblings. For registration, see the Azbuka Foundation website: [www.azbukafoundation.org](http://www.azbukafoundation.org). Open days are run several times a year.





**The Azbuka School** admits children between the ages of 5 and 11. To ensure we provide the very best education for our children, the maximum class size is 12 pupils. We take a child-centered, inquiry-based and holistic approach to learning, allowing children to explore the world around us (history, geography), language and literacy, maths and science, physical, arts and musical education through stimulating learning experiences and play-based activities, cultural events, school trips, assemblies, visits and celebrations. Children follow a unique programme ensuring equal language distribution. Each class has two teachers dedicated to teaching in their native language. Under our specialist programme, the subjects are taught in rotation, allowing children to explore, learn and develop their vocabulary and skill sets in both languages.

## Timetable

8:45-15:15  
Monday – Friday.  
3 terms a year. The academic year runs from the beginning of September to the end of June. The spring term starts after Russian Christmas (7th January).

## Admission

Please refer to the full Admission policy. Priority is given to children who have attended the Azbuka Nursery and to siblings of the Nursery and School.

**Year 1 – Year 6**  
admission by interview and entry assessments in English, Russian and maths.



The Azbuka School meets all Ofsted and independent school requirements and fully prepares children for UK and Russian standardised testing, allowing for a seamless transition to secondary education in Russia or the UK.

## Curriculum Subjects and Areas of Learning

Two-way immersion bilingual curriculum. Our curriculum is a blend of the Russian and the English education systems. Subjects are taught in both Russian and English. The curriculum complies with all English legislation relating to primary school education, enhanced with the best of Russia's educational traditions. Homework and projects begin in year 1.

## Subjects and areas of learning:

Maths and science, Russian, English, the World around Us (history, geography), ICT, music, art, dance, third foreign language (from year 3) – language of the family or Spanish, PSHE (inc Relationship and sex/health education) citizenship and culture; charity, environment and community. After-school and evening clubs are run by the Azbuka Foundation.



## Language distribution in the curriculum

50%-50% in core subjects

## Teachers

Native Russian and English teachers, qualified professionals, with teaching experience from the UK, Russia, the Baltic States, Europe and the rest of the world. Most teachers have many years' experience of teaching their subjects to monolingual or bilingual speakers in English or Russian schools or schools with a bilingual educational curriculum from around the world. All are DBS-checked.

## Class sizes

Small class sizes – between 5 and 12 children.

## Assessments and progress

Ongoing teacher observations, formative and summative assessments, tests, preparation for exams.

## School lunches and uniform

There is the option of either packed lunch or hot lunch in our newly opened Russian-European Kitchen.



**The Azbuka Saturday School** is a Russian complementary school for children aged between 5 and 16. The school first opened in January 2005. The Azbuka Saturday School has developed a special culture based on a curriculum designed to develop Russian as a second language and culture and to maintain a Russian identity within a bilingual context using the Azbuka methodology of language immersion. The curriculum has been devised to reflect the specialisms and interests of the Foundation members (in Russian philology and applied linguistics) as well as the experience and work gained in the field of bilingual education.

## Curriculum and language of instruction

The programme and curriculum aim to develop all areas of language, culture and identity, including spoken language, reading and writing, Russian and bicultural identity.

## Language of instruction – RUSSIAN.

## Curriculum and school day

The school day consists of several structured blocks – SPOKEN LANGUAGE and LITERACY (reading, writing and grammar) followed by CREATIVE STUDIO (language through a creative project). This is supported by a compulsory HOME PROJECT. The curriculum is enhanced by excursions, trips, lessons and activities outside schools, Russian cultural celebrations, theatre productions, the involvement of parents and Russian artists, musicians, writers and professionals.



## School Trips

Special outings and other activities outside school are organised several times a year. Older children follow the Azbuka curriculum at a secondary level. In addition to the language, they study Russian history, are immersed in the Russian culture and help the younger children. Although it is not the only aim of the Azbuka Saturday School, we also prepare children for GCSE and A Level exams in Russian. All our children have passed the exams with top grades two or three years ahead of their peers. For 15-16 year olds and students who have completed the primary and secondary stages of the Azbuka curriculum, we provide the unique opportunity to enter the Azbuka Students'



Programme (two or three places each year), where the students devote the first part of the day to their Russian (language, history, literature and culture) and spend the second part of the day gaining experience as teaching assistants. This allows them to contribute to the work of Azbuka while enjoying the company of Russian-speaking children, teachers and families of the Azbuka community.

## Teachers

All our teachers are native/bilingual Russian speakers, with experience and qualifications from the UK, Russia and elsewhere in teaching, linguistics, art and music.

## Class sizes

We are committed to small class sizes. We accept a maximum of 10 children per class. Where the classes are larger there is a teaching assistant.

## Assessments and progress

Ongoing observations, end of year tests and an end of year report.

## School Lunches and Uniform

Pack lunch. Uniform. School backpack.

## Admission

Although we firmly believe that the best route to bilingual and bicultural proficiency is through a full-time bilingual school, there are cases and family circumstances where only a complementary school can support bilingual development. We do not accept more than 65 children to our Saturday school. The Azbuka Saturday School is extremely popular and heavily over-subscribed. Currently we are only able to admit pupils who have previously attended the Azbuka Nursery.

## Registration

Please consult the Azbuka Foundation website: [www.azbukafoundation.org](http://www.azbukafoundation.org)

Open days are held several times a year.





The Azbuka Cultural Centre provides a broad range of cultural events and activities for families and was the starting point for the Azbuka organisation. Visits by theatre companies, artists and poets, trips, Russian cultural celebrations and thematic events are held around once a month during the academic year. Children at the Azbuka School and Nursery attend these events but they are also open to the wider community. The Azbuka Cultural Centre is geared for all ages but the activities tend to be pitched at children between the ages of 2 and 16. Register and sign up for events on the website: [www.azbukafoundation.org](http://www.azbukafoundation.org)

**The Azbuka Bilingual Education Resource**  
The Azbuka Bilingual Education Resource is available to children, families and the wider community. It aims to raise awareness of the benefits of a bilingual education and provide support to a wide range of families in London (regardless of the languages spoken), as well as offering practical assistance to numerous bilingual education groups across the UK. This involves the provision of library resources, courses, talks, seminars and help with premises, especially to smaller language groups in London.

The Azbuka Bilingual Education Resource is also open to academics carrying out research into bilingualism and bilingual education. We welcome researchers from Russia, the UK and other countries interested in collaborating with other educational and academic institutions.

Sign up for specific events or register your interest on our website: [www.azbukafoundation.org](http://www.azbukafoundation.org)



**I applaud the initiative shown by the AZBUKA group in offering a Russian-English based education. AZBUKA has now joined the growing numbers of schools that have recognised the cognitive, social and cultural benefits to be gained from a bilingual education. Their initiative will strengthen UK-Russian understanding, be to the profit of AZBUKA pupils and their families, and on a broader scale will undoubtedly support UK economic development. In other words this school has the potential to be something very special.**

Marc Wolstencroft  
**Retired Headteacher of Wix the first state school in England to offer a French-English Bilingual education, consultant, supporter of AZBUKA Foundation.**

