WORLD CLASS
HOW GLOBAL THINKING CAN IMPROVE YOUR SCHOOL

https://schoolsonline.britishcouncil.org
Over recent years there have been a large number of studies conducted into the impact of international education work in UK schools. This booklet uses that research to show exactly how these programmes have been proven to improve literacy and learning, help teachers’ professional development and meet inspection requirements.

We have included highlights from 26 research studies from around the UK, 22 of which are from the last five years, focusing on schools, teachers, learners and the community. We believe better teachers lead to better performance and better performance leads to higher learner motivation, happier parents, and a more cohesive school community.

Some of the research has been undertaken by British Council but it also uses extensive references from independent bodies such as the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) and the University of London’s Institute of Education. The full list of studies can be found on page 18, with sources referenced throughout.

*Turn over to read how international education could impact your school and the key benefits for teachers, learners and communities.*
The research studies referenced in this guide reveal the ways in which global learning can be of significant benefit to school communities, irrespective of school type, size or location. We found engaging in international activities within the curriculum motivates learners by adding relevance and dynamism to lessons, helps young people of all ages to develop an appreciation of cultural diversity, reinforces the value of learning a language and allows learners to enjoy a better understanding of the world. These experiences prepare young people to play a positive role in society.

Teachers benefit from professional learning and growth through collaboration with colleagues in other countries, enabling the sharing of expertise and discovery of innovative and inspirational practices from around the world which can be implemented in your classrooms.

Schools across the UK participate in international learning, in turn bridging boundaries and opening up exciting opportunities to learn about different cultures in stimulating ways across a range of subject areas. Read on to find a more detailed analysis of the evidence in the individual chapters as well as the support available from British Council to introduce or expand the global dimension in your school.

BENEFITS FOR LEARNERS
(See page 4 for more details)

- Contributes towards improved reading, writing and communication skills \[23, 26\]
- Improves the performance of under-achieving learners \[7, 16, 23, 25\]
- Enhances skills that are relevant in a global economy \[8, 19, 26\]
- Helps improve motivation \[23\]
- Develops core ICT skills \[26\]
- Raises awareness and understanding of different cultures and religions \[4, 5, 7, 13, 14, 27, 23\]

BENEFITS FOR SCHOOLS
(See page 10 for more details)

- Helps reduce the performance gap amongst pupils \[23\]
- Builds professional capacity in schools \[8, 13, 16, 20, 21, 23, 25\]
- Makes the curriculum more stimulating and improves ethos around the school \[4, 13, 20, 21, 23, 25\]
- Improves engagement with the local community \[5, 16, 20\]
- Helps schools meet the objectives of inspection bodies \[22\]

BENEFITS FOR TEACHERS
(See page 8 for more details)

- An important method of professional development \[8, 13, 23, 25\]
- Improves confidence in the classroom and develops leadership skills \[8, 13, 23, 25\]
- Can help improve behaviour of learners in class \[16, 24\]
- Improves stimulation through refreshed content and resources \[16, 24\]
- Promotes knowledge of other countries and cultures \[4, 8, 10, 13, 17\]
- Improves knowledge of global development \[4, 8\]

BENEFITS FOR THE COMMUNITY
(See page 14 for more details)

- Improves relationship with parents \[20\]
- Brings the local community together \[16, 20\]
- Helps the transition from primary to secondary schools \[10\]
- Develops partnerships with local authorities and businesses \[5, 16\]
International education contributes towards improved reading, writing and communication skills

Learners are especially motivated because they are “writing for purpose” about real-life circumstances. For example, a teacher in a special school in Wales with an overseas partnership said: “There’s a definite improvement when they’ve got a real audience – definitely, without a shadow of a doubt. When they know they’re doing work for either another school in general, or in particular for one of their peers, their attention to detail is astounding. They don’t want to make a mistake. They want to write and they want to be perfect.”

International education improves the performance of under-achieving learners

A report about the effect of eTwinning concluded that learners showed greater motivation, improved performance and quality of work, and enhanced relationships with staff. In some cases, this effect can be transformed into sustained and improved academic achievement, better lifelong skills such as teamwork, cooperation and independent learning skills, and improved communication skills.

International education contributes towards a more open-minded attitude with regard to global issues, and a belief that learners have the ability to take action and bring about a change locally or globally.

The benefits for learners are at the heart of international education, and the research revealed some interesting insights into how they benefitted from it, aside from the expected global awareness.

Reading, writing and communication skills all improved, as did the learners’ moral and spiritual development, such as awareness of right and wrong, and understanding of cultural and religious behaviour. The research also showed that it had a major effect on the performance of under-achieving learners, who became more focussed and motivated, resulting in improved behaviour in classrooms and around the school.

Finally, international education was found to contribute towards a more open-minded attitude with regard to global issues, and a belief that learners have the ability to take action and bring about a change locally or globally.
Connecting classrooms is an invaluable means of achieving the very highest standards from our pupils: it provides an exciting and inspirational stimulus for writing; it is a brilliant tool for developing thinking skills and speaking and listening as well as being a real and meaningful way to learn about another country and the wider world. Most importantly it has opened the eyes of our children to the world they are part of: they can see their place as global citizens and want to embrace that role positively.

International coordinator in an English primary school.

International education enhances skills that are relevant in a global economy

A major study by the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER), which compared impact in schools participating in the Global School Partnerships (GSP) programme with non-participating schools, concluded "pupils in GSP schools generally had a clearer understanding of interdependence, and were able to give specific examples of instances where our actions impact on those in poorer countries, for example in areas of trade and the environment."*  

International education helps improve motivation

Key immediate outcomes for schools participating in international educational programmes include:
- greater motivation, as learners want to share ideas and work with learners in partner schools
- improved performance and quality of work because learning has a real purpose
- enhanced working relationships between staff and learners. 23

International education develops core ICT skills

An eTwinning review revealed improved ICT and literacy skills were the most commonly cited benefits for pupils.23 In one Northern Irish primary school, literacy and ICT skills played a large part in the work that learners carried out on their shared topic, such as giving oral presentations in class, and producing work and material that was ultimately shared with their counterparts in Trinidad. Teachers felt that the work had quite a lot of impact on developing pupils’ performance in these areas. 26

International education raises awareness and understanding of different cultures and religions

Case study analysis of the impact in schools involved with an international education programme produced this summary of longer term effects on learners that may occur:
- learners exhibit greater tolerance of cultural beliefs and practices
- they recognise similarities and differences between their lives and their peers, and become less prejudiced about those differences and about ‘difference’ in general
- they gain greater awareness of the bias in their previous perceptions and those of their parents
- they are better able to question racism and racist attitudes. 23

Research studies have found that future global work skills can be increased, such as thinking skills, use of ICT, communicating internationally and cross-cultural competence. 8, 9, 10

Communicating with partners overseas:
- often involves the use of ICT
- sometimes requires solutions to language differences
- requires learners to understand the contexts of people living different lives
- challenges learners to reflect on their own lives and compare those with people overseas
- sometimes leads to them attempting to solve problems, either locally or globally.

To find out how you can get your staff and learners motivated with a school partnership, visit https://schoolsonline.britishcouncil.org

94% of all respondents out of more than 1,400 teachers agreed or strongly agreed that international engagement contributes to learners’ understanding of their own and other cultures. 5
For many teachers the renewed content provided by international education and improved awareness of global development led to a boost in confidence in the classroom and greater motivation.

Online courses and face-to-face workshops draw on the experience and knowledge of education practitioners and experts from around the world. They provide an ideal opportunity for teachers to network, share experiences, increase knowledge, discover new ways of doing things and inspire one another.

Teachers return to their classrooms with renewed enthusiasm and a host of new ideas to share with the wider school community.

International education builds confidence in the classroom

“I’m more rounded – I see the curriculum links more easily and I can use them in a more creative way.” In her career, she feels “going to Tanzania and wanting to promote something made me want to become a Deputy Head. It developed my leadership skills. It was through me helping other staff to see how to bring the Tanzanian partnership into the curriculum and their teaching that made me see that I wanted to promote it more and help them and lead them…”  

Deputy Head of a rural primary school in England.

International education promotes knowledge of other countries and cultures

(This Northern Irish secondary teacher) feels the partnership has increased her knowledge and understanding. She has learned much about Sri Lankan life, their attitudes to food, the different culture and religion. “It has made me respect (the differences) far more.”

Headteacher of large primary school in England.

International education helps refresh content, resources and motivation

A major National Foundation for Educational Research study into an international education programme found that the vast majority of 197 teachers felt that both they and their learners were more motivated and that lessons were more relevant and stimulating as a result of participation.

To register for a range of online and face-to-face workshops visit https://schoolsonline.britishcouncil.org
The effect of international work in schools isn’t just felt around the world – its impact locally is equally significant. The studies showed many benefits to the schools themselves, such as stimulating all areas of the curriculum and reducing the gap in performance among learners, which led to a better ethos throughout the whole school.

The research also showed international education helped teachers with their own professional development and built stronger relationships with the community, including other local schools. All this contributed towards meeting the objectives set by inspection bodies.

The evidence indicates that eTwinning schools do experience a reduction in the gap. A textual analysis of 244 successful applications for the Quality Label found that more than 1,200 extracts refer in some way to closing the achievement gap.

Inspectors commented on a range of global citizenship qualities that learners involved in international work had developed, such as tolerance, understanding the wider world, responsibilities, reducing racism and discrimination and knowing the difference between right and wrong.

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International education builds professional capacity in schools

YOU’RE A REASONABLY FULLY FORMED TEACHER WHEN YOU COME INTO THE CLASSROOM, BUT I WOULD STRONGLY AGREE THAT MY DEVELOPMENT AS A TEACHER IN THE PAST FEW YEARS HAS BEEN STRONGLY LINKED TO (MY INVOLVEMENT WITH THE INTERNATIONAL PARTNERSHIP).

Primary school teacher in Northern Ireland.

International education helps schools meet the objectives of inspection bodies

Inspectors commented on a range of global citizenship qualities that learners involved in international work had developed, such as tolerance, understanding the wider world, responsibilities, reducing racism and discrimination and knowing the difference between right and wrong.

Learn more about how your school can get involved in our international education programmes visit https://schoolsonline.britishcouncil.org
The Head at a large primary school in England believes their partnership has made a "huge, huge difference – we’re a different school. This is who we are – and you’ll see that as you move through the school. It’s had a profound effect on us".

Of the 35 staff, she maintains all of them are involved in the partnership. When asked about whether the partnership features in school development or improvement plans she was slightly amused: "Oh, we’re well past improvement plans – that was years ago. This is just who we are – it’s not in our improvement plan. The point being that the partnership is so integrated into the ethos and curriculum that it is not necessary any more to focus on it in planning."

The Head stressed that the impact on the curriculum and ethos of the school had been profound. “It’s absolutely massive, it feeds everything here – it’s a core part and it’s seen in that way. Yes, it’s a massive part of the life of the school and its curriculum.”

International education makes the curriculum more stimulating and improves the ethos around the school

The findings from an in-depth study into the impact generated by the Global School Partnerships (GSP) programme showed that it made a significant difference to the curriculum in participating schools. By the end of their involvement with GSP, schools on average were using the partnership, sometimes repeatedly, as a stimulus across many areas of the curriculum.

International education improves engagement with the local community

Some schools use international partnership working to build links with the local community. At one inner-city special school in England, this ambition was successfully realised through a global project and, combined with the profound impact on staff and curriculum, ensures that international education is central to the school ethos. “It’s not an added-on thing... In some schools, it’s like an add-on, (here) it’s what we do and we don’t even think about it anymore because it’s a part of everyday life here.”

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International education brings the local community together

In a survey by the National Foundation for Educational Research of over 1,400 teachers, 63% either agreed or strongly agreed (14%) that international engagement helps develop relations with the community around the school.

International education improves relationship with parents

“We buck the trend of all the secondary schools in the area (which) have declining rolls. Over the last five years we’ve increased by about 10% – which is quite remarkable in terms of local demographics. Now, you can’t say that this partnership is (solely) responsible for that but we get tremendous links with our primary school clusters through the partnership programme, and also with neighbouring primary schools – it (the partnership)’s big, big in the primary schools.”

– Head of Geography in a UK secondary school.

International education develops partnerships with local authorities and businesses

Some international school partnerships take place within a wider community partnership, which can involve external bodies at local, national and international levels. A secondary school in Wales has such a partnership, which involves working with external bodies on projects such as local tree planting and eco-initiatives, which has been recognised by the UN and the Welsh Assembly Government. It has also forged relationships with local businesses as part of the overseas development work.

All schools have experienced great benefits from the work they have done within the UK. For example, connections formed between primary and secondary schools means that children know faces when they make the transition from the primary to senior school and will experience continuity through the Connecting Classrooms work itself.

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BENEFITS FOR THE COMMUNITY

The studies also looked at life outside of the school environment and the effects international work could have in and around the local community. As well as improving relationships with parents, the research showed that international education helped build partnerships with local businesses and authorities and, in certain instances, smoothed the transition for many learners between primary and secondary school.

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Below you’ll see an overview of how your school, staff and learners can access international education through the British Council. We are always happy to help you in any way we can, so please contact us if you want to know more about the programmes, get help and support, or would like a suggested partner school to link up with.

**CURRICULUM RESOURCES**

Try our curriculum resources, designed to engage learners with the world around them and support your teachers to educate young people for global citizenship.

- **Lesson plans, classroom activities and assembly plans**
  - Curriculum-relevant materials with options for all age groups.
- **Language learning teaching resources and classroom activities**
  - Focused support for language learning and teaching.
- **Template projects and ideas for working in partnership with schools in other countries**
  - Projects with countries worldwide
  - Projects within Europe

**LANGUAGE LEARNING & CULTURAL IMMERSION**

We offer a wealth of resources and opportunities to support the teaching and learning of world languages in UK schools.

- **Classroom assistants**
  - Native speakers of foreign languages will enthuse learners and help you bring other languages and cultures to life.
- **Language courses**
  - Immerse learners in another language and culture to improve confidence levels and ability.
- **Language competitions**
  - Encourage confidence and enjoyment in speaking and understanding modern languages.

**PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

We can help your staff to expand and improve their own practice, and equip them to internationalise the curriculum to develop young people as global citizens.

- **Teaching and school leadership**
  - Explore and share different approaches to teaching and school leadership with international colleagues.
- **Global citizenship**
  - Enrich practice with the knowledge and skills to educate young people for global citizenship and work with partner schools in other countries.
- **Network**
  - Share ideas and work collaboratively with teachers and school leaders internationally.

**INTERNATIONAL LINKING**

Try our classroom resources or link up with a school in another country to enable learners to work together on curriculum-relevant projects.

- **Lesson plans**
  - Classroom activities and assembly plans to support global learning in the curriculum – options for all age groups and subject areas.
- **Online projects involving schools in different countries**
  - Online partnerships and projects.
- **Find a partner school in another country and make contact**
  - Link with schools worldwide
  - Link with schools in Europe
- **Deepen your partnership and create more opportunities for collaboration by visiting your partner school, and hosting a return visit**
  - Visit a partner school – worldwide
  - Visit a partner school within Europe

Visit our Schools Online website for further information [https://schoolsonline.britishcouncil.org](https://schoolsonline.britishcouncil.org)
After a literature review, a long-list of relevant reports was reduced to the following short-list. Most, but not all, of these reports have been referred to within this booklet. The list is in chronological order.


About the British Council

The British Council creates international opportunities for the people of the UK and other countries and builds trust between them worldwide. We are a Royal Charter charity, established as the UK’s international organisation for educational opportunities and cultural relations.

We work in more than 100 countries, and our 7,000 staff, including 2,000 English language teachers, work with thousands of professionals and policy makers and millions of young people every year through English, arts, education and society programmes.

We earn over 75 per cent of our annual turnover of £739 million from services which customers pay for, education and development contracts we bid for, and from partnerships. A UK government grant provides the remaining 25 per cent. We match every £1 of core public funding with over £3 earned in pursuit of our charitable purpose.

For more information, please visit

www.britishcouncil.org