

# **WORLD CLASS**

## HOW GLOBAL THINKING CAN IMPROVE YOUR SCHOOL





**THE 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.**

*Primary school head teacher.*



CONTENTS	
Introduction	1
Overview of research	2
Benefits for learners	4
Benefits for teachers	8
Benefits for schools	10
Benefits for the community	14
Global thinking	16
References	18

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.***

## OVERVIEW

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 <sup>23, 26</sup>
- Improves the performance of under-achieving learners <sup>7, 16, 23, 25</sup>
- Enhances skills that are relevant in a global economy <sup>8, 19, 26</sup>
- Helps improve motivation <sup>23</sup>
- Develops core ICT skills <sup>26</sup>
- Raises awareness and understanding of different cultures and religions <sup>4, 5, 7, 13, 14, 21, 23</sup>

### BENEFITS FOR TEACHERS

*(See page 8 for more details)*

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

### BENEFITS FOR SCHOOLS

*(See page 10 for more details)*

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

### BENEFITS FOR THE COMMUNITY

*(See page 14 for more details)*

- Improves relationship with parents <sup>20</sup>
- Brings the local community together <sup>16, 20</sup>
- Helps the transition from primary to secondary schools <sup>10</sup>
- Develops partnerships with local authorities and businesses <sup>5, 16</sup>

*Read on to see how international education can help your school meet inspection objectives.*

## BENEFITS FOR LEARNERS

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.



### **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.”<sup>24</sup>

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.<sup>23</sup>

### **International education improves the performance of under-achieving learners**

A number of reports concluded that international education is of particular benefit for under-achieving learners, due to increased engagement, confidence, and motivation, in turn boosting self-esteem amongst usually low attainers and reaching those not easily engaged.<sup>7, 16, 23, 25</sup>

“Children who are less able have found something that they can be joining in, if it’s a group presentation or if they’re working with a partner, it gave them a sense of purpose, an audience, or their parents coming in. They know that somebody in another country will be reading it, and they’re really buzzing about it. Even the ones that find it really hard because they haven’t got good literacy skills, they’ve made a really big effort with their presentation because it is being sent to somebody... I’ve found that (in) the two classes I’ve done it with, the low attainers have responded really well.”<sup>26</sup>

*Principal teacher in a Scottish primary school*

**IN ONE COMPREHENSIVE STUDY OF SCHOOLS ACROSS THE UK, 61% OF TEACHERS FROM 59 SCHOOLS SAID THAT INTERNATIONAL WORK IS DEFINITELY MAKING A CONTRIBUTION TO IMPROVING LITERACY.**<sup>25</sup>

## 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”.<sup>8</sup>



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.**<sup>10</sup>

*International coordinator in an English primary school.*

### 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.<sup>23</sup>

### International education develops core ICT skills

An eTwinning review revealed improved ICT and literacy skills were the most commonly cited benefits for pupils.<sup>23</sup> 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.<sup>26</sup>

## 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.<sup>23</sup>

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.<sup>8, 9, 10</sup> 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.



**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.**<sup>5</sup>

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

## BENEFITS FOR TEACHERS

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 is an important means of professional development

"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..."<sup>20</sup>

*Deputy Head of a rural primary school in England.*

### International education builds confidence in the classroom



**I THINK IT ENRICHES PEOPLE'S LIVES AND THEREFORE MAKES THEM... I CAN'T THINK OF A BETTER PHRASE... MAKES THEM BETTER PEOPLE AND THEREFORE MAKES THEM BETTER TEACHERS, BY DEFINITION.**<sup>20</sup>

*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.<sup>8</sup>

### 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."<sup>19</sup>

### International education improves knowledge of global development

In two thirds of the (50) schools involved, European school partnerships significantly improved participating teachers' knowledge of other educational systems, particularly as regards competences acquired by learners at partner schools and various aspects of such systems (curricula, evaluation, etc.).<sup>16</sup>

## BENEFITS FOR SCHOOLS

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.



### International education helps reduce the performance gap amongst pupils

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.<sup>23</sup>

### 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.*<sup>25</sup>

### 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.<sup>22</sup>



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. <sup>20</sup>

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.” <sup>20</sup>**



**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. <sup>21</sup>

**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.” <sup>19</sup>





## 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.



### 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.”<sup>20</sup>  
– *Head of Geography in a UK secondary school.*

### 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.**<sup>5</sup>

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.<sup>10</sup>

### 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.<sup>20</sup>

Learn more about how your school can get involved in our international education programmes visit <https://schoolsonline.britishcouncil.org>

# HOW YOU CAN BRING GLOBAL THINKING INTO YOUR SCHOOL

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

## REFERENCES: RESEARCH & EVALUATION REPORTS

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.

**1. Kirtley, R. (2007).** *Comenius 2.2 in-service training KS2 modern foreign languages: report on the evaluation of impact.* London, British Council.

**2. Edge, K., Higham, R. et al. (2009).** *Multi-country partnerships: Evidence from schools involved in Connecting Classrooms in the UK and Sub-Saharan Africa. Research report Year 2: Study of successful partnerships.* London, The London Centre for Leadership and Learning, University of London.

**3. Edge, K., Khamsi, K. et al. (2009).** *Exploring the Global Dimension in Secondary Schools.* London, Institute of Education, University of London.

**4. Hirst, B. (2009).** *Global School Partnerships: Impact Assessment for 2003 - 2009.* London, British Council.

**5. Southcott, C. and Pyle, K. (2010).** *NFER Teacher Voice Omnibus April 2010 Survey: International engagement.* The British Council, Slough, National Foundation for Educational Research.

**6. Nicholas, J et al (2010).** *Assessing the International Dimension in Education in Schools in Wales Phase II: Final Report.* Slough, National Foundation for Educational Research.

**7. Edge, E. et al (2011).** *Learning from innovative partnerships: Exploring the PLAN School Linking Programme. Research and Development Report Year 3.* Plan, London, Institute of Education, University of London.

**8. Sizmur, J., Brzyska, B. et al. (2011).** *Global School Partnerships Programme: Impact evaluation report.* London, National Foundation for Educational Research.

**9. Ware-Austin, H. and Sattar, N. (2011).** *Evaluation report of British Council Connecting Miprur-UK Project. Supported by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office.* Oxford, International NGO Training and Research Centre.

**10. Connecting Classrooms (2011).** *A Report on the Impact within UK Schools of the British Council Connecting Classrooms Programme: UK Schools Linked with Bangladesh.* London, British Council.

**11. Connecting Classrooms (2011).** *A Report on the Impact within UK Schools of the British Council Connecting Classrooms Programme: UK Schools Linked with Pakistan.* London, British Council.

**12. River Path Associates (2011).** *Connecting Classrooms 2010-11 Global Impact Assessment: Evidence and Analysis.* London, British Council.

**13. Cook, A. (2012).** *The value of Comenius school partnerships.* Cambridge, Cambridge Education.

**14. McNicoll, K. (2012).** *Do students benefit from North/South school partnerships?* Thesis, Oxford, Oxford Brookes University.

**15. Bourn, D. and Cara, O. (2012).** *Evaluating partners in development: Contribution of international school partnerships to education and development.* Development Education Research Centre, London, Institute of Education, University of London.

**16. Centre International d'Etudes Pédagogiques (2012).** *Study of the impact of Comenius school partnerships on participating schools: Institutional changes and the European dimension. Executive Summary.* Brussels, European Commission.

**17. Martin, F. and Wyness, L. (2013).** *Global Partnerships as Sites for Mutual Learning, in Policy and Practice: A Development Education Review.* Vol. 16, Spring, pp13-40. Belfast, Centre for Global Education.

**18. Bourn, D. and Cara, O. (2013).** *School linking - where next? Partnership models between schools in Europe and Africa.* Development Education Research Centre, London, Institute of Education, University of London.

**19. Hirst, B. (2011).** *Impact of the GSP programme on UK Schools: Case Studies Report A.* London, British Council.

**20. Hirst, B. (2012).** *Impact of the GSP programme on UK Schools. Case Studies Report B: The Professional Development of Teachers and School Staff.* London, British Council.

**21. Hirst, B. (2013).** *The impact of the Global School Partnerships programme on UK schools.* London, British Council.

**22. Suttman, P. (2013).** *The International Dimensions in Schools: An analysis of Section 5 Ofsted inspection reports which recognise international work in schools 2012/13.* London, British Council.

**23. Cook, A. (2013).** *British Council eTwinning. Learning from international collaboration: Report.* Cambridge, Cambridge Education.

**24. Hirst, B. and Cook, A. (2013).** *British Council eTwinning: Case studies report.* Cambridge, Cambridge Education.

**25. Hirst, B. and Associates (2014).** *Connecting Classrooms: UK Evaluation and Audit 2013/14.* London, British Council.

**26. Hirst, B. and Associates (2014).** *Connecting Classrooms: UK Evaluation and Audit 2013/14. Annex 4: School visit reports.* London, British Council.

## 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](http://www.britishcouncil.org)**

