

Building Successful School Partnerships



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Whether you already have a school partnership, or are thinking about developing one, this guide will help you ensure that everyone gets the most out of it.

It aims to:

- explore some of the ways in which school partnerships can contribute to global education
- explain some of the pitfalls and how to avoid them
- identify the essential elements of successful school partnerships
- provide signposts to more detailed sources of information and guidance to help you on your way.

The guide is especially relevant to UK schools linked with a school in an economically poorer country.

School partnerships: the educational opportunities

There are many benefits to be gained from developing a school partnership. At their best, partnerships can:

- generate enthusiasm and motivation for learning
- cultivate an openness to new thinking and ideas
- inspire a desire for positive change, locally and globally.

They can help pupils develop:

- self-awareness
- respect for others
- skills of enquiry and critical thinking, and the ability to apply these to local and global issues
- the ability to communicate in different ways and settings
- an appreciation of diversity
- a sense of injustice and a commitment to tackling it
- an understanding of how local and global are interconnected, and of the impacts that actions have at both levels.

It is clear from this range of benefits that partnerships offer many links with national curricula – although for most teachers the outcomes listed above will simply represent good quality education. Moreover, partnerships also lay strong foundations for Global Citizenship. For all these reasons, school partnerships are capturing the imagination.

The Meare–Mundini partnership (below) provides an excellent example of the distinctive contribution that school partnerships can make to a good education. The partnership has had a profound effect on the pupils of Meare Village Primary School in Somerset, not just in terms of learning, but also in terms of their wider lives and the character of the school.

The Global Citizen

Oxfam sees the Global Citizen as someone who:

- is aware of the wider world and has a sense of their own role as a world citizen
- respects and values diversity
- has an understanding of how the world works
- is outraged by social injustice
- participates in the community at a range of levels, from the local to the global
- is willing to act to make the world a more equitable and sustainable place
- takes responsibility for their actions.

Reflection point

- What does the Meare–Mundini partnership tell us about the nature of a successful school partnership?

Case study: developing Global Citizenship

Meare Village Primary School (UK) and Mundini Primary School (Kenya)

'The link has enabled children to explore sustainability, diversity, healthy living and interdependence, making them more aware of their responsibility as "world" citizens in ensuring that their own lifestyles become more sustainable. The project involved joint planning with the Kenyan partner school, and the teachers from Kenya visited Meare. Initially, the focus of their collaborative work was waste. [Meare] pupils visited a landfill site and provided information to the Kenyan school about recycling in the United Kingdom. In exchange, they discovered how pupils in Kenya recycled materials. The realisation that Kenyans are better at reusing

their waste has created a desire within the school to improve matters in their own back yard. Subsequent studies about the use and misuse of water, as well as comparisons about food and transport, have had a profound impact on the lives of these pupils and the character of the school. Pupils are now at the centre of the participatory process and have come up with detailed action plans for healthy eating, water, energy and resource use, the development of community and global links as well as travel. Their ideas are now incorporated into the school action plan and they are seeing practical outcomes for their efforts.'

David Bell, formerly Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools, Ofsted (England)



▲ A view of Banjul, Gambia's capital

School partnerships: the educational pitfalls

Unfortunately, school partnerships do not automatically lead to the educational benefits listed on page 2. In some circumstances, they can even undermine these goals. There is a risk that they may:

- close minds instead of opening them
- promote pity and sympathy for those in the poorer country, rather than empathy with them
- focus on differences, with too little recognition of a common humanity
- reinforce stereotypes
- cultivate paternalistic attitudes and feelings of superiority
- fail to examine global issues of inequality and injustice.

These dangers exist in both primary and secondary school partnerships, wherever there is economic inequality between the partner schools – as illustrated by the case studies on this page and on page 4. To assume that simply having a school partnership is a ‘good thing’ in itself is, therefore, to risk short-changing pupils. In some cases, it also risks taking advantage of economically poor communities. If school partnerships are to have real educational value and lay strong foundations for Global Citizenship, they must include a number of key elements. These are listed on page 4.

Case study: good education?

The following extracts are from interviews with five Year 2 children in a UK school which is linked to a school in the Gambia. The children's only exposure to the Gambia was through the charitable activities of the partnership – the Gambia as a ‘distant place’ did not feature in the curriculum until Year 4.

(T = Teacher)

T: I want to ask you... what do you know about Gambia?

1: *It's a hot country.*

2: *They speak different languages.*

T: Do you know which languages they speak?

2: *They speak African.*

3: *They've got different coloured skin.*

4: *They wear straw.*

T: Where do they wear straw?

4: *Around their necks.*

3: *The boys wear skirts too. They wear straw skirts.*

5: *They have nothing to wear on their feet.*

2: *They wear rags.*

4: *Why are we so lucky?*

T: What do you mean?

4: *Because we've got clothes and houses.*

T: Do you think we're more lucky?

4: *Yes.*

3: *Their houses are made from wood.*

5: *And they've got straw roofs.*

2: *They stick them together with mud.*

3: *They have sand on the floor.*

1: *Yes but it's yucky wet sand.*

4: *Yuk! Gross things like flies go into their mouths.*

T: Why do you think that?

5: *They have food on their mouths.*

2: *Because they are muddy.*

5: *Because their mouths are brown and the flies think their mouths are made of mud.*

3: *The flies can't tell the difference.*

...

T: What about the children in Gambia, what do you think the children are like?

5: *Hmm. Well, not that happy because they don't have many toys to play with so they have to make them.*

4,2,1: *Operation Christmas!*

1: *Yes! We gave them toys. I sent a Noddy car.*

...

3: *For Christmas, every single Christmas, we get boxes and put paper on it and then put toys in it and send to Gambia.'*

'North-South School Linking as a Controversial Issue', Fran Martin in *Prospero* 11 (4), 2005 (based on research by Sally Wood).

Reflection points

Read the case study opposite and the one on page 3. Consider:

- What might have caused the pupils to develop such views of their partner schools?
- How might other school or community activities with a global or international theme affect the educational outcomes of a school partnership – for better or for worse? What could be done differently to improve those outcomes?
- What are the implications for those setting up school partnerships?

SIGNPOST

For more information about Oxfam's views on education, visit www.oxfam.org.uk/resources/issues/education/introduction.html.

The Global Campaign for Education campaigns for free, good-quality education for every child. For more information, visit www.campaignforeducation.org.

Case study: short-changed?

A research article by Kate Brown for Cited describes educational outcomes for pupils in three UK secondary schools partnered with schools in South Africa. While the partnerships appeared to inspire a concern for others, the pupils could only perceive their partner school in terms of material poverty, with no mention of cultural, social and spiritual wealth and diversity. Furthermore, their perception of poverty and ways it might be tackled did not include any understanding of the global or historical causes of inequality, the nature or impact of globalisation, or wider global issues. The research suggested that the partnerships reinforced stereotypes of peoples of the 'South' as being poor, passive and dependent, while leaving students unable to identify any means of taking action other than fundraising.

www.citized.info/pdf/commarticles/Kate_Brown.pdf

Can Oxfam help me set up a school partnership?

Oxfam can help you make the most of an existing or planned partnership through resources and ideas for embedding the partnership in the school curriculum. However, we do not provide support for UK schools wishing to find a partner school. This is because:

- School partnerships are only one of many tools teachers can use to explore global citizenship. Oxfam focuses on supporting teachers in other ways.
- Other agencies help schools in the UK to link with other schools (see page 16).
- Oxfam's purpose is to end poverty, and we do not think that school partnerships necessarily tackle the underlying causes of poverty. They can contribute to doing so by building awareness, empathy and a commitment to fighting injustice, but must never be seen as a substitute for governments fulfilling their responsibility to fund education so that it is available free to citizens of their countries. School partnerships can sometimes undermine campaigns for education to be properly funded, because they can lead to governments providing less money for schools. They can also foster inequality between schools and encourage dependence on schools in economically richer countries. This reduces the accountability of governments and the power of local people, and is detrimental to democracy.

Elements of successful school partnerships

There are no easy recipes for success, and schools that have reaped the benefits of partnerships generally testify that it takes time and effort. But there is a growing body of evidence that the following elements are important:

- **commitment to an equal partnership with educational aims**
- **commitment to partnership learning through the curriculum**
- **effective communications**
- **good whole-school practice in Education for Global Citizenship.**

The remainder of this guide sets out the issues relevant to each of these key elements, along with guidance on where to find further support.

Commitment to an equal partnership with educational aims

Who benefits?

UK schools' partners in economically poorer countries commonly feel that UK school improvement agendas dominate the partnership. Great care is needed to ensure that one school's agenda is not simply dressed up in the language of equality and global citizenship, and imposed on another.

Working with an experienced partnership organisation which has programme staff in both countries is no guarantee of an equal partnership, but it can offer guidance and a structure to help both partners share the benefits.

SIGNPOST

There are several schemes available, offering substantial guidance and support for developing equal partnerships. Two examples are:

- Link Community Development – www.lcd.org.uk/uk/
- Department for International Development (DFID) Global School Partnerships – www.britishcouncil.org/globalschools

A partnership has a much better chance of helping pupils to understand and value diversity, mutual respect and social justice if they can see that it is conducted according to these values itself. Also, an emphasis on equality creates an environment in which teachers and pupils in either school are open to learning from the partner school, which opens up many more learning possibilities.

However, equal partnerships can be very difficult to achieve, since we live in an unequal world and the two partners may have differing objectives and priorities. This is especially true of partnerships between schools in economically rich and poor countries. Such imbalances and differences need to be acknowledged rather than brushed under the carpet. In most cases, equal partnership is a goal that schools will need to keep working towards – it depends on ongoing dialogue rather than mere one-off discussions.

What does 'equal partnership' actually mean?

The UK One World Linking Association (UKOWLA), which has been supporting community-based international partnerships since 1984, defines equal partnership in these terms:

- All partners participate in decision-making.
- Activities are managed jointly.
- Culture, beliefs and values are mutually respected.
- Information is shared.
- There is discussion and agreement before any policy is defined and before any decisions are taken concerning the partnership.
- The partners are free to express their needs in a spirit of mutual confidence.
- Activities and relations are regularly evaluated with the participation of all partners.

(*Toolkit for Linking*, UKOWLA, 2007)

It is useful, however, to remember that 'equal' does not necessarily imply 'the same'. Each partner school is likely to have different educational priorities, structures and curricula – and a commitment to equality means respecting these differences. While broad educational aims should be shared and agreed, this does not mean that they have to be achieved in the same way in each school.

Reflection points

Equality in a school partnership is about more than just financial resources. The following aspects also need to be considered:

- **Learning** – Is one partner using the partnership for its own educational enrichment at the expense of the other partner?
- **Power relations** – How are decisions made? Whose voices are represented in decision making? How do differences in the schools' hierarchies affect the partnership? How do gender issues affect the partnership – and vice versa?
- **Time commitment** – Is there equality of commitment by all partners?
- **Visits** – Are exchange visits genuinely reciprocal and mutually beneficial? What are their impacts on each partner – in economic, social, cultural, political and environmental terms?

Getting it right from the outset

Think about your reasons for setting up a school partnership. They will shape the nature and equality of the relationships that develop as well as the partnership's educational outcomes – so it is vital to examine them openly and critically. The most common reasons are:

- new educational opportunities for pupils – for example as part of a school improvement plan
- professional development – as a result of gaining new perspectives on teaching and learning
- a desire to help schools in economically poorer contexts
- recognition – for example through the International School Award scheme
- response to government policy – for example the joint Treasury/Department for International Development publication *The World Classroom: Developing global partnerships in education* (see www.dfid.gov.uk/pubs/files/world-classroom.pdf) encourages UK schools to forge international school partnerships.

Of these reasons, Oxfam believes that the desire for new educational opportunities forms by far the best basis for securing both an equal partnership and positive educational outcomes – although of course a number of motives may coexist. For example, a partnership based on the desire for new educational opportunities is also likely to involve ample scope for professional development. You may find the following reflection points helpful in exploring your motives and their implications.

Reflection points

- What are your school's reasons for developing a partnership?
- What do you know of your partner school's motivations?
- How might your reasons affect the partnership (particularly in terms of its equality)?

A Ugandan perspective

'For teachers and school leaders in Uganda, the primary motivation for partnership is professional development. They are interested in anything that can improve their teaching and learning ...

Approaching from finance and fundraising is the wrong philosophy. If you make it sound financial you are saying "I have; you don't give me." There's a lot that can be shared that doesn't require money and that is at the heart of the twinning. The richness of development lies in ideas.

The Ugandan child also has a great chance to see what life in the UK is really like. That the streets aren't paved with gold, that the daily reality can be hard and unemployment is a feature of life there ... A partnership also provides a chance for Ugandan children to realise how much they have to give.'

Derek Nkata, District Education Officer, Masindi, Uganda

David Sanderson



▲ Schoolchildren in Uganda

It is a natural response for communities to want to offer “help” to their link partners in the form of money and some partners may expect it. However, successful partnerships depend on equality and mutuality, and such charity can actually hinder development. The importance of reciprocity, or “mutual exchange” must be recognised. ▶

Toolkit for Linking, UKOWLA, 2006

Take every penny you have set aside in aid for Tanzania and spend it in the UK explaining to people the facts and causes of poverty. ▶

Julius Nyerere, President of Tanzania, 1961–85

Scolastica Njaya, a teacher from Tanzania, and Lynne Sugden, a teacher at Buckie High School, watch pupils Scott and Amy playing a trade game. See page 13 for further information about how this partnership helps pupils to learn about global issues. ▶

The problem with charitable aims

The question of financial aid comes up sooner or later in many partnerships between schools in very different economic circumstances. This can be a difficult issue to manage: while schools may want to express their support for their partners in this way, and their partners may request such help, it can be very difficult for schools receiving financial aid from their partners to collaborate with them as professional equals.

More specifically, charitable aims can undermine the equality of a partnership by:

- focusing it on finance at the expense of other activities to which both partners can contribute equally
- putting financial inequalities centre stage and so diverting attention from other imbalances in the relationship which ought to be addressed
- making the partner receiving the aid dependent on this income
- seeming to patronise the partner receiving the aid.

Charitable aims can also undermine the educational aims of a partnership by:

- reinforcing – rather than challenging – stereotypes of rich, powerful and independent communities and poor, weak and dependent communities
- perpetuating narrow views on poverty and development
- hindering critical thinking about underlying injustices and causes of poverty, and so encouraging an acceptance of aid as a long-term solution.

Not dependence but interdependence

Rejecting charitable aims does not mean that schools cannot support their partners. The question to ask is ‘How can we support each other?’ Many schools find this easier to talk about once the educational basis of the partnership has been established. Furthermore, there is a difference between fundraising to provide aid for a partner school and fundraising to support the partnership itself. For instance, people from both schools can raise funds to cover partnership expenses. As with most partnership dilemmas, principles of equality and mutual respect, along with a good dose of self-awareness and critical thinking, will be more useful than hard-and-fast rules.

Reflection points

- How does charitable fundraising affect the relationship between partner schools?
- How can your school partnership best manage the tensions between expectations of financial aid and educational aims?



Sharon Smith, Buckie High School

Cornerstones for successful partnerships

Commitment to an equal partnership with educational aims

A partnership has a much better chance of enabling pupils to understand and value diversity, mutual respect and social justice (for example) if they can see these concepts and values being applied to the partnership itself.

- What are your motivations?
- What are the motivations of your partner school?
- Are your motivations and the motivations of your partner school compatible?
- Who will benefit most?
- How will you address imbalances of power and resources within your partnership?
- What are the expectations (of both school communities) about fundraising? How will these be managed?
- How will both partners be involved in reviewing and evaluating the partnership on an ongoing basis?
- How will you recognise the wealth of expertise, experience and personal qualities brought by your partner?

Tips

- Both partners should try to agree a common vision for the partnership, and refer to this regularly.
- A partnership agreement is invaluable – but it can only be developed once some discussion has taken place between partners.
- Put educational aims rather than charitable aims at the heart of the partnership.
- Acknowledge imbalances and differences rather than brushing them under the carpet.
- Recognise, and seek out, alternative perspectives within each partner community.

Think as

Effective communications

Effective communication is key to the success of a partnership. People from different cultural backgrounds communicate in different ways, so that even where the same language is used, use and interpretation differ.

- Whose language will be used for communications? How will you acknowledge other languages spoken?
- What means of communication will you use?
- How will you manage expectations around communications (e.g. frequency, people, etc)?
- Who will be involved in communications? How will you involve as many people as possible?
- How will you ensure clarity of interpretation?
- What systems will you establish to enable open and honest communications when difficulties arise?
- How is your partner school being represented in your school? How will you know how they feel about that?

Tips

- Agree the main means of communication but use all channels available.
- Be aware of who the key contacts are, in order to avoid crossed wires.
- Appoint a strong link co-ordinator at each end of the link, but ensure that there are means of sharing knowledge with others.
- Learning at least some basic elements of your partner's mother tongue will help things along greatly.
- Familiarise yourself with cultural norms around communication.
- Avoid the use of jargon.

Commitment to partnership learning through the curriculum

School partnerships will only yield good educational outcomes if there is an emphasis on drawing out the learning through the curriculum. Otherwise they risk doing more educational harm than good.

- What are your educational objectives? How will teaching and learning benefit?
- Is a partnership the best way to achieve your educational objectives?
- How might your motivations for partnership affect the educational outcomes?
- How will you engage other teachers and, in particular, subject leaders?
- How will you assess the educational impact?
- How will you motivate, equip and prepare staff?
- How will you prepare pupils?
- How will pupils contribute to an evolving partnership?

Tips

- Start small, with just a couple of curriculum areas – quality is more important than quantity.
- Global issues and shared experiences provide good foundations for curriculum development work.
- Sharing an overall commitment to educational aims does not mean that both partners must have the same educational objectives and projects. Each partner will have differing educational priorities, curricula and structures, which may mean that joint projects are not always possible or even desirable.
- Oxfam's Curriculum for Global Citizenship provides a framework for developing clear educational objectives (see page 11).
- The Oxfam *Catalogue for Schools* contains more than 400 tried and tested resources for bringing a global dimension to teaching and learning (see page 16).

you link!

Good whole-school practice in Education for Global Citizenship

The educational rewards of school partnerships are maximised where they are rooted in a much broader strategy for Education for Global Citizenship which involves staff from across the school.

- Is Global Citizenship part of the school's mission statement and included in all curriculum planning?
- Does the school provide a welcoming, safe and nurturing environment, where the self-esteem of pupils and adults is affirmed?
- Is there a commitment to learning from the experiences of people from diverse backgrounds and from around the world?
- Is there strong CPD support for staff wishing to develop their own practice in educating for Global Citizenship?
- Are pupils supported in developing and managing their own democratic contributions to the organisation and structures of the school?
- How will you engage colleagues and others in working towards good whole-school practice?

Tips

- Development Education Centres have resource centres and provide training and advice for teachers wishing to bring a global approach to their teaching.
- The Oxfam Education website contains a range of CPD activities and materials to support the whole school community in getting to grips with Global Citizenship.
- Start with an audit of existing practice using the auditing tool on the Oxfam Education website.



Crispin Hughes / Oxfam

Commitment to partnership learning through the curriculum

Embedding a partnership in the curriculum

Embedding a partnership in a school's curriculum means making space within the curriculum for all members of the school to see the world through the eyes of their partner school – and so to learn not only about their partner school's community, but also about themselves, their own culture and the world in which we all live.

It also means having clear educational objectives and some kind of route map for reaching those objectives (while recognising that there will also be a fair amount of unplanned learning). Unfortunately, it is not possible to provide a complete ready-made route map, since every partnership is unique and will have to navigate uncharted territory. Of course, such a journey takes a fair amount of time and effort. However, the most exciting and rewarding journeys are often the most challenging! While this guide cannot offer a route map, this section at least provides some useful signposts to set you on your way.

Signs of a good educational partnership

- ✓ Mutual exchange at all levels of the partnership
- ✓ Active participation and decision-making by pupils
- ✓ An openness to learning from, as well as about, life in a distant locality
- ✓ A commitment to exploring both similarities and differences between the lives of people in the partner schools and their respective communities
- ✓ An examination of one's own assumptions, attitudes and values – and a safe space in which this can happen
- ✓ An exploration of different forms of wealth
- ✓ A commitment to learning about the wider global issues that impact on each partner
- ✓ A willingness to think critically about all aspects of all cultures – including one's own
- ✓ An emphasis on exploring – and learning from – how others work to improve their lives
- ✓ A readiness to explore sensitive and controversial issues in the classroom in a safe, respectful environment

Signs of problems ahead

- ✗ A focus on the symptoms of poverty with no exploration of its causes
- ✗ A focus on financial aid instead of rights and justice
- ✗ A failure to engage with issues of power and (in)equality
- ✗ An assumption that simply exposing children and young people to different cultures and ways of life will challenge stereotypes and prejudice
- ✗ An emphasis on showing pupils 'how lucky they are'
- ✗ A focus on differences without acknowledging important similarities, leading to 'them and us' thinking
- ✗ An over-emphasis on showing pupils that everyone in the world 'is the same under the skin'. (This insight is an important corrective to 'them and us' thinking but when it is greatly stressed it risks reinforcing dominant perspectives and denying the right of others to express their difference.)
- ✗ A belief that respect for other cultures means learning about them uncritically
- ✗ A belief that a Northern partner has more to give to a partnership than to receive from it, in terms of either resources or learning
- ✗ A reluctance to explore sensitive and controversial issues in the classroom

Some essentials for the journey

SIGNPOST

The full Oxfam Curriculum for Global Citizenship is set out in the free publication *Education for Global Citizenship: A guide for schools*. See page 16 for details.

- 1. Clear educational objectives** – The Oxfam Curriculum for Global Citizenship provides a framework to help schools focus the learning objectives of a school partnership and develop specific curriculum projects. It identifies learning goals for different age ranges, against each of the key elements in the table below.
- 2. A commitment to quality rather than quantity** – It is much better to focus on just a couple of curriculum areas in a meaningful way to begin with, rather than trying to force every subject or scheme of work to pay lip-service to the partnership.
- 3. A flexible approach** – There are many cases where joint curriculum planning can work to good effect – as in the Buckie High School case study on page 13. But embedding does not always mean having the same activities running in parallel on opposite sides of the globe. To some extent each partner may need to find its own way, as the embedding of the partnership may call for a very different approach in schools with differing constraints, curricula, structures and priorities.
- 4. Support from senior management and recognition in the school development plan** – This always makes things easier!
- 5. Willingness to tackle sensitive and controversial issues** – It is impossible to be in a vibrant partnership for long before sensitive and controversial issues come to the fore, since such issues feature in the lives of pupils in both Northern and Southern schools. They may be to do with conflict, justice, power, inequality, poverty, trade, racism, the environment, HIV and AIDS – the list is endless. Such issues form some of the most exciting and important learning opportunities in school partnerships and should not be overlooked. Furthermore, a partnership affords the chance for either school to share resources on these issues – for example, a UK school might use a (translated, if necessary) version of a resource used by a partner school in the South in order to learn more about an issue and to view it from a different perspective.

Sometimes, these issues will be central to the planned curriculum, but at other times they will arrive unannounced. Teachers therefore need to plan carefully how to tackle these issues in the classroom, while also feeling ready to handle them when they arise unexpectedly.

SIGNPOST

See page 16 for details of Oxfam's free guide *Teaching Controversial Issues*.

Education for Global Citizenship – key elements as defined by Oxfam

Knowledge and understanding

- Social justice and equity
- Diversity
- Globalisation and interdependence
- Sustainable development
- Peace and conflict

Skills

- Critical thinking
- Ability to argue effectively
- Ability to challenge injustice and inequalities
- Respect for people and things
- Co-operation and conflict resolution

Values and attitudes

- Sense of identity and self-esteem
- Empathy
- Commitment to social justice and equity
- Value and respect for diversity
- Concern for the environment and commitment to sustainable development
- Belief that people can make a difference

The Teaching and Learning section of *Partners in Learning* (DFID) includes a compilation of ideas for curricular work in Art, Citizenship, Design & Technology, Geography, History, ICT, Language & Literature, Mathematics, Music & Drama, PE, Religious & Moral Education and Science.

See page 16 for further details.

Foundations – starting with shared experiences and global issues

A good starting point is themes that are common to young people's lives in both partner schools – for example, water, food, transport, farming, land use, trade, homes, school, waste, conflict and play. This approach, which can be developed in a cross-curricular way or within specific subject areas, has the advantage of focusing pupils' minds on the things they share with young people around the world, before considering how these aspects of life are experienced differently.

Key building blocks for teaching and learning

The following building blocks are not suggestions for specific curriculum projects but themes that should be integral to any curriculum development if the educational value of the partnership is to be maximised.

1. Exploring global interdependence

We live in an interconnected world in which decisions and actions taken in one place can affect people living on the other side of the world. School partnerships can help bring this to life. However, the idea of global interdependence goes further, recognising that even the wealthiest countries rely heavily on the riches of other countries. These riches might be in the form of physical commodities such as foodstuffs and minerals, but they could also be in the form of knowledge and culture. A school partnership provides opportunities to explore these links (e.g. through looking at historical and contemporary trading relationships) and also the contribution of a partner school's culture, country or region to what we might think of as European or Western knowledge or culture. An investigation into such influences on our understanding of mathematics, science, technology and social and political organisation, on art forms such as dance, music and painting, and on religion, may well bring some surprises!

2. Exploring our own identities

Pupils need to be aware of the diversity that exists within their own community (there is often more than at first realised), and to feel secure with their own identity, before connecting with an unfamiliar community. If they do not respect and value themselves, it will be all the more difficult for them to connect with others in a way that is open-minded, free from fear, and respectful. Time invested in exploring questions such as 'Who am I?' and 'Who are we?' (i.e. the class/s/school's identity), in ways that acknowledge the multiplicity and complexity of our identities, is never time wasted.

3. Exploring and challenging perceptions

A consideration of how we see other people and how they see us can help us to appreciate the importance of questioning stereotyped views and assumptions, and so to overcome misconceptions. Pupils at Henry Box School in Witney were asked to write about what was important to them and what they thought would be important to their partners in Rwanda. The Rwandans did the same, and it proved to be an illuminating exercise.

4. Developing media literacy

The mass media plays a key role in shaping perceptions of different localities and cultures. Yet media coverage of Southern countries is dominated by natural disasters, conflict and poverty on the one hand, and an obsession with the exotic on the other – with very little in between to convey the realities of daily life for most people. This can easily lead to stereotyping.

Media literacy activities enable pupils to develop the skills to question the media's images and stories, and to challenge received assumptions, perceptions and stereotypes. They also encourage pupils to think critically about power and representation in the media (whose views are represented? whose voices are not heard? how is language used?), and to respect and value other people's perspectives on a given issue.

5. Thinking critically about poverty

Images and perceptions of poverty are often narrowly focused on a lack of material wealth, with little value placed on other forms of wealth. Such perceptions are liable to lead (often unintentionally) to a view of people in economically poorer countries as dependent and maybe even inferior. It is important to encourage critical thinking about poverty – not just about its effects, but about how it is defined and how it arises – and to recognise that its causes are complex and global, and that there are rich and poor (in all senses) in every country.

6. Exploring rights

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child provide frameworks for exploring issues common to children the world over – as well as internationally agreed benchmarks by which to assess issues. The Just Linking case study below shows how a rights-based approach can also help young people to engage with the justice dimension of global issues such as poverty, rather than viewing them simply as a problem to be solved by financial aid.

Linking rights and trade

'As part of the Just Linking project the children would be learning about trade and life in a distant locality. They needed to have already identified universal rights – e.g. to a home and an education, which, at least hypothetically, apply regardless of race, colour, creed, gender, age and ability. They explored them in their own community before moving on to learning about rights in a global context: for example there are still 150 million children who grow up without having a basic education. Having done this topic, later in the project the children were able to see Fair Trade as a way of honouring workers' rights and were able to view aspects of poverty in the South as a denial of human rights rather than as a focus for our charity.'

Just Linking (Leeds DEC)

Resources for developing learning

There is a wealth of resources in the Oxfam *Catalogue for Schools* to support the development of these themes and issues (see page 16). However, there are also useful resources for teaching and learning within the partner schools' communities – good curriculum development starts with encouraging pupils to ask questions, express themselves and develop enquiry skills. They can learn from handling resources such as images and artefacts, from analysing media reports and from participating carefully and critically in exchanges (in the form of correspondence or visits). There may also be an important role for people in your community whose roots or heritage lie in the same country or region as your partner school.

Case study: developing A Curriculum for Excellence

With our partners in Mawenzi Secondary School in Tanzania, we are exploring the global issues of diversity, sustainability and social justice, along with differing values and perceptions. Curriculum projects take place in both schools – a trade game in Geography, an exploration of perceptions of key events in History, energy comparisons in Science, and a jewellery project in Art & Design. Pupils and teachers compare results. It is as important to explore the similarities as the differences.

Exploring complex global issues together compels us to move from coverage of content towards 'uncoverage' of what really matters. Being able to ask questions such as 'why is this so?' or 'why do they think that way?' helps pupils become successful

learners. Pupils can be helped to reflect on their understanding and become confident individuals when tackling or taking a stance on big issues such as the environment or social justice. The Tanzanian perspective can help pupils look again at how they can, as responsible citizens, participate in the political, economic, social and cultural life of Scotland and of their own community. As pupils become aware of the resilience, self-reliance and enterprising attitude of their counterparts in Tanzania, they can reflect on their own attitudes and values and what they need to do to become effective contributors.

*Sharon Smith, Partnership Co-ordinator,
Buckie High School, Banffshire*

Effective communications

SIGNPOST

Toolkit for Linking (UKOWLA) contains guidance on planning effective communications between partners.

A Good Practice Guide to Whole School Linking (MUNDI Centre for Global Education) provides plenty of advice on communicating your aims to senior management teams and governors in ways likely to win their support.

See page 16 for further details.

SIGNPOST

Toolkit for Linking (UKOWLA) and *Partners in Learning* (DFID) both provide detailed guidance on the development of a partnership agreement (see page 16 for further details).

A British headteacher and two Ugandan colleagues have a meeting about their school partnership ►

The developing of successful, equal partnerships is greatly helped by good communications. However, many schools find communications with their partner school very difficult and at times frustrating, for all sorts of reasons. There are not always easy answers, but the centre spread on pages 8 and 9 provides some useful pointers for managing this challenging aspect of partnership. A partnership agreement is particularly valuable here for setting out realistic expectations.

Good communications are also essential within each partner school. Embedding the partnership in the curriculum will almost certainly depend on the commitment and co-operation of other teachers and, not least, of senior management. The aims and benefits of the partnership therefore need to be clearly communicated – and owned – across the school, and concerns and reservations need to be aired and sensitively addressed. Much of the guidance under ‘Good whole-school practice in Education for Global Citizenship’ on page 15 is also relevant here.

Partnership agreements

A partnership agreement can help schools navigate their way through many difficult issues by clarifying joint objectives, priorities, expectations, and mechanisms for communicating and decision-making. But it is best to start small: a simple document that is clearly understood and regularly reviewed and built upon is better than a lengthy, complicated, all-encompassing set of rules. And the principle of equality should also apply to the writing of any agreement, so that it reflects the views of all partners.



Link Community Development

Good whole-school practice in Education for Global Citizenship

📌 *Schools which have developed good global dimension practice prior to getting into partnership have the firmest foundations for successful global school partnerships.* 📌

Partners in Learning, DFID, 2007

Schools get the most educational benefit from school partnerships when there is good whole-school practice in Education for Global Citizenship (i.e. not just through the partnership). This provides a favourable environment for partnership curriculum development. Without this broader context, the partnership's educational benefits are likely to be undermined by inconsistency of practice across the school. With it, there is every chance of successful partnership learning.

This does not mean that a school has to have an award-winning whole-school approach to Education for Global Citizenship in place before it can consider developing a partnership. After all, a partnership can help capture the imagination of others within the school beyond those directly involved, and can stimulate a wider engagement with global issues. But a dual approach is required – embedding the partnership through specific curriculum projects while at the same time monitoring how the school's wider curriculum and ethos promote the skills, values and attitudes associated with Global Citizenship, independently of the partnership.

SIGNPOST

For further guidance on each of these steps, consult *The Global School Guide* (Leeds DEC). See page 16 for further details.

Good whole-school practice can be based on the following steps:

- **Step 1: Establish a team and get the support of others.** Find out which staff members are already supportive and then determine which others it is essential to involve – and how to gain their support. Clarity is needed about the amount of time and commitment people are prepared to give, in order to set realistic goals. Proactive support from at least one member of the senior management team will also make progress easier.
- **Step 2: Conduct a Global Citizenship audit.** This will help ascertain what the school is already doing well, and what areas it needs to work on. The latter can provide the basis for action planning. There is an auditing tool on the Oxfam Education website (www.oxfam.org.uk/education).
- **Step 3: Develop an action plan.** This should specify targets within an achievable time frame. It should also aim to foster a shared understanding of how Education for Global Citizenship can be implemented across the whole school, and to clarify the contribution to be made by each individual department or team.
- **Step 4: Provide training and support.** Teachers will need time and space to discuss the issues, and encouragement to think outside the way they normally view and teach their subjects. This can be done in-house (there is a range of CPD activities on the Oxfam Education website) or with external support (for example, from your local Development Education Centre (DEC) – see page 16).

Resources and further reading

Catalogue for Schools

Oxfam's *Catalogue for Schools* contains over 400 specially selected resources for Global Citizenship across all curriculum areas, including teaching packs, books, games, posters and videos/DVDs.

The catalogue is available free of charge from: Supporter Relations Team, Oxfam House, John Smith Drive, Oxford OX4 2JY
Tel: 0870 333 2700
Email: education@oxfam.org.uk

You can browse and buy resources online at: www.oxfam.org.uk/publications

For further free copies of this guide or general information about Oxfam's work, contact the Supporter Relations Team at the address above.

Partnership handbooks

A Good Practice Guide to Whole School Linking, MUNDI Centre for Global Education 2005
This guide focuses on the experience of a group of English schools undertaking partnership projects with schools in Zimbabwe, and shares the benefits they enjoyed and the challenges they faced. It provides a wealth of practical advice for dealing with everyday issues that arise in linking.

Just Linking: A guide to linking schools, Leeds DEC, 2006

Although developed primarily for schools wanting to explore global issues by linking with a contrasting school in the UK, this handbook and DVD explore issues common to all partnerships and identify good practice in using partnerships to develop global themes in the curriculum.

Partners in Learning: A guide to successful global school partnerships, Department for International Development, 2006

A thorough guide to the big questions and practical issues of developing partnerships, drawing on the experiences of schools around the world that have been supported by DFID's Global School Partnership Programme.

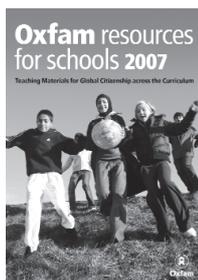
The Global School Guide, Leeds DEC, 2005

A practical manual for teachers wanting to develop the global dimension across the curriculum and wider life and ethos of the school.

Toolkit for Linking: Opportunities and challenges, UK One World Linking Association, 2006

This guide provides a framework for thinking through the key questions that any school, local authority or community group needs to address in order to develop rewarding, sustainable and equal partnerships.

Front cover photo: Children at Dihlabeng Christian School in Clarens, South Africa, which has a partnership with Peatmoor Community Primary School in Swindon. Published with kind permission of DFID Global Schools Partnerships.



Partnership programmes

There are a number of organisations which will help schools to arrange and manage partnerships. Below are two examples.

Link Community Development

LCD organises and helps to maintain links between schools in the UK and schools in Africa. The emphasis is on good-quality education. www.lcd.org.uk

DFID Global School Partnerships

This scheme, run by a consortium of organisations on behalf of DFID, offers advice, training, grants and support for UK schools setting up and running partnerships with schools in Africa, the Caribbean, the Pacific, Asia and Latin America. www.britishcouncil.org/globalschools

Recommended classroom resources

Get Global! A skills-based approach to active global citizenship, ActionAid, 2003

A toolkit to help teachers guide children and young people in identifying, investigating and acting upon local and global issues. It can be ordered from Oxfam's Catalogue for schools or downloaded free of charge from: www.oxfam.org.uk/education

Positively Global, Leeds DEC

A series of booklets (also available as an interactive CD-ROM) that helps linked schools in their teaching and learning about globalisation and global issues.

Most of the handbooks and resources listed above are available from the *Oxfam Catalogue for Schools* (see above). They can also be ordered directly from our distributors, BEBC (tel: 01202 712993; email: oxfam@bebc.co.uk).

Useful information on Education for Global Citizenship

Education for Global Citizenship: A guide for schools, Oxfam, 2006

Free teachers' guide explaining the what, why and how of Education for Global Citizenship. Includes Oxfam's Curriculum for Global Citizenship, which can help focus the educational objectives of school partnerships. Download or order at: www.oxfam.org.uk/education

Teaching Controversial Issues, Oxfam, 2006

Full of strategies and activities to help teachers tackle the kind of controversial issues that can (and should!) arise in the classroom as a result of school partnerships. Download or order at: www.oxfam.org.uk/education

Developing a Global Dimension in the School Curriculum, Department for Education and Skills, 2000

This booklet explains the global dimension, and shows opportunities for building it into all Key Stages and all subjects. Like Oxfam's Curriculum for Global Citizenship, it provides a framework for developing clear educational objectives. It is available free from DFID (tel: 0845 300 4100; email: enquiry@dfid.gov.uk). Copies can also be downloaded from: www.dea.org.uk.

The Global Dimension in the Curriculum: Educating the global citizen, Learning and Teaching Scotland with DFID, 2007

Advice for Scottish schools and early education settings in developing the global dimension in relation to the values and purposes of A Curriculum for Excellence. It is available free from DFID (tel: 0845 300 4100; email: enquiry@dfid.gov.uk). It can be downloaded from: www.ltscotland.org.uk/citizenship/globaldimensions/index.asp

Education for Sustainable Development and Global Citizenship, National Assembly for Wales Advisory Panel on Education for Sustainable Development
A website that explains Education for Sustainable Development and Global Citizenship as an overarching curriculum planning tool for schools in Wales. Includes a directory of further support. www.esdgc-wales.org.uk

Useful websites

www.globaldimension.org.uk

A directory of teaching and learning resources that explore global themes.

www.oxfam.org.uk/education

Oxfam Education, Oxfam's website for teachers and pupils (formerly 'Cool Planet') contains hundreds of downloadable lesson plans and activities, plus photo-stories, online resources, our fully-browsable online catalogue and useful background information on key global issues.

Contacting Oxfam's education teams

Oxfam supports Education for Global Citizenship by publishing resources for teachers and working with other organisations (such as DECs, government bodies, other NGOs and teacher training institutions) to support curriculum development and educational practice.

For further information, or to view the resources in Oxfam's *Catalogue for Schools* (by appointment), contact us in London, Cardiff or Glasgow.

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Development Education Centres

DECs offer professional support to teachers. Typically they have resource centres, and provide training and advice for teachers wishing to bring a global approach to their teaching. For details of your nearest DEC, visit: www.globaldimension.org.uk



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