

Theme: School Exchanges and Study Visits - International Experience

Background:

Vicky Gough's Last Word article in Languages Today (January 2019) outlined issues affecting the traditional School Exchange (and Study Visits) in some sectors and some, but not all, parts of the country.

Since then there have been developments which are summarized here:

BBC announced (January 2019):

Government to fund 2,900 school exchanges for poorer pupils

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/education-46928243>

with further details from British Council:

Thousands more young people now (2019) have the chance to take part in international exchanges and visits, thanks to a new £2.5 million Department for Education programme running in partnership with the British Council.

The programme will fund trips for an estimated 2,900 pupils. It is aimed at young people from disadvantaged backgrounds, and we encourage participation by schools with above-average numbers of pupil premium students.

<https://www.britishcouncil.org/school-resources/exchanges>

All-Party Parliamentary Group on Modern Languages held a meeting (February 2019) with this agenda.

International school exchanges are a vital part of school life, offering students experiences which stay with them for their entire lives, and are recognised as a key driver for students' languages, interpersonal skills, confidence and resilience.

Mounting challenges for schools, including stricter guidelines on DBS checks for host families and concerns over Brexit, have led to a sharp fall in the number of schools offering this opportunity to their students in the UK, with cases of decades-long international partnerships coming to an end.

<http://bit.ly/APPGMFLhome>

This argument was taken further in the APPG Framework Proposal (March 2019) which includes the aim:

Every child to have the opportunity for international experience at home or overseas.

<https://ukandeu.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/A-national-recovery-programme-for-languages.pdf>

(See the ALL Briefing: <https://www.all-languages.org.uk/news/live-language-learning-issues-in-the-media/> for further proposals, campaigns and papers published in March 2019.)

Key messages :

British Council now refers to International Experience as the catch-all term for activities that may involve travel or may involve encounters nearer to home or by virtual means

To be most effective an international experience is well prepared and well followed up, and reaches beyond the individual student to the family and community.

On the matter of safeguarding the official wording is that ‘Schools **should** (*NB not ‘must’*) check UK parents ..’

The DfE funding (above) is available to ‘disadvantaged’ students; teachers should describe the nature of the disadvantage (which may be more diverse than a simple Pupil Premium definition.)

The international experience (and especially the exchange) has a major impact on:

- students’ soft skills, and personal development
- aspiration
- many aspects of SMSC – especially the cultural and social
- confidence and examination performance / opportunity to practice

It may, throughout the years of schooling, include:

technological access, parcels, podcasts, personal contact, video links or e-twinning among other strands.

<https://www.britishcouncil.org/contact/press/worrying-decline-international-opportunities-school-brexit-approaches>

Case Studies

Shirebrook Academy , Mansfield

<https://www.news-journal.co.uk/school-revives-foreign-exchange-visits>

The academy wanted to revive exchanges to support its modern **languages** curriculum as well as its **broad co-curricular aims** of widening horizons and giving students experiences that enrich their lives and prepare them for life after school.

Anglo-European School, Ingatestone

<https://www.aesessex.co.uk/international-dimension/visits-and-exchanges/>

Points for reflection / action:

Departments might consider which aspects of international experience are currently included in the scheme of work.

When reviewing Departmental / School documentation (e.g. in light of the new OFSTED Framework with its focus on rich, ambitious, memorable curriculum) teachers may like to describe the school’s approach to international experience year by year.

This would clarify the Department’s role in SMSC issues as well as curriculum.

A clear, progressive plan would be evidence of the connection between Primary and Secondary schools.

Teachers in some parts of the country may wish to consider applying for DfE funding described above.

References :

British Council Schools Digital Platform (Schools Online) website includes:

Exchange starter pack

Links to apply for funding

Child Protection guidelines

ASCL Guidance

Search tools once registered

<https://schools-teachers-account.britishcouncil.org/>

<https://www.britishcouncil.org/etwinning>

<https://www.etwinning.net/en/pub/index.htm>

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Association for Language Learning, 1A Duffield Road, Little Eaton, Derby DE21 5DR

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