

The Eco-Champions: incorporating critical thinking into the curriculum and discussing global issues with Key Stage 2 pupils

Kingsbury Green Primary School has embedded global learning across the whole curriculum, with a particular focus on critical thinking. We value depth and breadth of the curriculum, and we vowed in our mission statement ‘to provide memorable and engaging enquiry-based learning which children call “fun”.’ As part of our Expert Centre role for the Global Learning Programme (GLP), delivering the CPD network sessions has helped our school solidify this vow and support our vision, and the GLP has provided many resources and ideas to incorporate global learning within our school.

‘The curriculum is outstanding. It secures sequential learning of skills, knowledge and understanding in all subjects. Through careful planning, all groups of pupils learn effectively about a wide range of topics. These themes provide the framework for pupils to challenge stereotypes and develop leadership and life skills. Subjects ignite their creative and imaginative skills. The powerful promotion of independent thinking and learning means that pupils know that “Doing a good job when no one is watching” is the cornerstone to their work ethic and success. Entrepreneurial skills are developed through many activities, including “Enabling Enterprise” projects, and making and selling pickled vegetables which pupils grow in the school garden.’

Ofsted inspection report, February 2016

Who are the Eco-Champions?

The Eco-Champions are a group of fifteen pupils from Years 5 and 6. This extra-curricular club was established by the previous GLP Co-ordinator at Kingsbury Green, Simone Wright, in 2014–15 and has been continued by Leanne Chorekdjian, the new GLP Co-ordinator, in 2015–16.

The aim of the group is to make the school aware of global issues such as paper and food recycling, water conservation and



reduction of plastic bags. The responsibility of the group is to undertake citizenship projects around the school to respond to these global issues at a local scale. The pupils’ roles within the club are to determine which projects to run as well as how to conduct them. Deciding on a project provides the children with an opportunity to think and discuss critically. Together they

engage in stimulating debates about global issues, how they can tackle them in school, and the possible scope or limitations of the project. They then decide on the project that they believe they have the best capacity to achieve.

What kind of projects do they carry out?



Last year, the group engaged in a critical discussion about which global issues they could tackle in school immediately. After debating issues, they decided that they wanted to **reduce plastic bottle and plastic bag waste around the school**. The steps involved in this project included: finding out how much water and plastic bags are wasted globally; launching a competition in school to design the logo for new eco-friendly bottles and bags; and delivering an assembly educating their peers about the issue. They shared what they were doing in school to address the issue and how the wider community could support. The group sold the bottles and the bags to pupils and parents, and the money was put towards future GLP projects at school. This resulted in a reduced number of plastic bottles and plastic bag waste around the school, which the pupils viewed as a huge success!

This year, the Eco-Champions had another meeting about tackling global issues at a local level. They had a critical discussion about paper recycling and food waste. Eventually they decided they wanted to tackle a large problem within the school; they wanted to **tackle the issue of uncooked food waste**. As Kingsbury Green is a growing school, the club wanted to support this further by composting uncooked food waste from the kitchen to use in the school garden.



The pupils explored the process of composting using school research iPads and through discussions with the school gardener to understand the science behind it. They then undertook the task of educating staff and pupils about composting and collecting food waste through assemblies, further discussions, and posters that show which foods can and cannot be composted.

The group met with the head teacher, lead school meal supervisory assistant and school gardener to put forward their ideas, aims and research for the project. Once they had all the information they needed, they chose the compost caddies required to collect the waste. They then constructed the composter themselves and took full responsibility for collecting the food each week and loading it into the composter with the correct amount of carbon needed for composting. They even turned the compost themselves! The group has decided to continue to compost through the next academic year as well.



The impact of global learning

Projects like these around school **support the children's holistic development**. There is an extended responsibility for the school and the surrounding area, which extra-curricular activities such as these help to instil and sustain. Thanks to this project, the whole school community has become more conscious of the food they eat and whether or not it can be composted. Children and staff are supporting their peers, for example by showing each other which bins to put the paper and food waste into. They are also referring to the posters made by the club and are taking responsibility over their own recycling.

'The curriculum enriches pupils' learning extremely well and helps them to learn rapidly. It promotes their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development highly effectively.'

Ofsted inspection report,
February 2016

The club are continuing to deliver a series of assemblies to educate staff and pupils about the composting process as well as what others can do to support the project. Getting children involved in active citizenship projects such as these **helps build a sense of school community and belonging for the pupils**. It also supports the school vision and ethos, and reinforces other aspects of the GLP woven throughout the school such as: providing children with a better understanding of their role in a globally interdependent world; and giving them the opportunity to gain a greater awareness of poverty and sustainability, and to think critically about global issues that they can tackle in their own school and community on a local level. Next year we will engage again in critical discussions about the next projects to be taken on by the club.

The school's global learning work was commented on by **Ofsted** in February 2016: *'The promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is woven into the life of the school, including the curriculum. The school recently reviewed its vision, outlined in the BASICS charter (Belonging, Aspiration, Safety, Identity, Challenge and Success). This reflects fundamental British values of democracy. For example, pupils discuss and reflect on current moral and social disasters such as the war in Syria when they learn about World War II. They have myriad opportunities to make decisions, such as voting for the next school councillors and pupil ambassadors. There is total respect and a zero tolerance approach to any form of prejudice. Pupils from a wide range of ethnic heritages work and play harmoniously together. They learn through many visits and visitors about the cultural and religious history of all the key faiths.'*

There has been a **positive impact on pupils' engagement**: the club has grown in size with more and more children wanting to be part of the Eco-Champions. The positive buzz around supporting their school has improved behaviour of children as well as eagerness to learn and determination to achieve.

'I am proud of being an Eco-Champion because I feel like I'm helping our school as we are making our own compost. We are helping the environment around our school and hopefully I can help the world one day.'

Kingsbury Green pupil

Kingsbury Green Primary School is a GLP Expert Centre for the academic year 2015–16. It educates 680 pupils who represent the diversity of residents living in Brent, London.

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