

Sir John Lawes Secondary School, Harpenden

With a committed leadership team and an experienced and passionate coordinator, Sir John Lawes school uses pupil-led activities to drive a whole school approach to global learning. Bringing together a focus on Education for Sustainable Development (ESD), school links, awards such as the International School Award (ISA) and opportunities for thriving pupil leadership, the school has embraced a 'bottom up' approach using a chain reaction of catalysts to make global learning a core part of their vision and ethos.

School motivations and ethos

'Global learning is an intrinsic part of a good education... it equips pupils to be a positive member of society.' - *Jonathan Mountstevens, Assistant Head*

Achievement, Care and Excellence (ACE) are the central values at Sir John Lawes, so the potential of global learning to develop these principles is self-evident for the Senior Leadership Team (SLT). Care plays a central role in this ethos, installing in pupils care for others and the wider community.

Developing independent learners who can make a positive difference is a key part of this philosophy, and for the SLT, learning about global poverty and development creates excellent opportunities to put this into action.

The school also wants to encourage pupil leadership, and the 'bottom up' approach seen through much of the global learning projects in the school, allows pupil leadership to flourish, helping the school meet its goals.

The structure of activities

Sir John Lawes believes a whole school approach to global learning is essential, making it an integral part of everything the school does. Helen Cox, the Global Learning Coordinator at Sir John Lawes and an AST in the school's Global Dimension and Sustainable Development policy, provides a driving force ensuring this happens.

Planning a strong calendar of activities on an annual basis is the key way that Helen Cox and the SLT structure their approach. This allows the school to have a clear direction and plan, aiding cohesion and allowing the school to engage with parents and the local community. Opportunities for pupils are critical: the Oxfam group and Eco council play a central role in driving activities across the school. There is also deliberate flexibility in the structure to allow engagement with more opportunistic current events, such as the IF campaign in 2013.

Sir John Lawes in context

Sir John Lawes is a mixed comprehensive secondary school in Harpenden, a small affluent town in Hertfordshire. There is a below average number of pupils eligible for free school meals, and there are few pupils from minority ethnic groups or with English as an additional language.

'Our global learning is like an earthquake with an epicentre. There is a frenzy around Helen but the shockwaves are felt all across the school.' - *Jonathan Mountstevens, Assistant Head*

Every year, pupils in years 7 to 10 go off timetable for the International Enrichment Day, when each group explores a global learning theme. Teachers lead work on different themes with a focus on pupil participation and using events such as the Global Student Forum or modelling the United Nations as a way to structure activities.



Pupils at Sir John Lawes working on the IF campaign

Knowledge about development issues also forms an important part of the life skills lessons (incorporating Citizenship and PSHE) that pupils have each week, allowing discussion of real issues and events.

Sir John Lawes uses the lens of sustainability to carry out a lot of its global learning, and the school has Green Flag status, as well as contributing to the local Fairtrade Town initiative. The school is also a hub for the District Sustainable School Ambassador Programme, supporting other schools in the district. Ambassadors undertake at least one activity per term, such as Green Week

where pupils pledge to reduce their carbon footprint.

Through discussion and participatory approach to lessons, pupils explore global learning through a number of topics. For example, every summer Year 9 pupils help deliver lessons to Year 7 pupils on the topic of fair trade, linking their eco work into knowledge of global poverty and development.

'It's not an easy thing to define: it's not an initiative or a box ticking exercise, but is about an ethos.' - *Jonathan Mountstevens, Assistant Head*

The school's global learning journey

'It's like ivy that's grown over everything. It's integral to everything.' - *Claire Robins, Head Teacher*

Building a whole school approach to global learning has been an organic process, with staff and pupils instinctively including it in their activities, making its place in the school consensual rather than strictly enforced. Focussed around pupil-led activities acting as 'catalysts' for further work, gradually teachers and SLT have been more motivated and encouraged to get involved.



Sir John Lawes pupils at Ndeke High School,

Things really began in earnest in 2005 when the school established a strong partnership with Ndeke High School in Zambia, enabling curriculum work in many subject areas and visits between the schools, prompting Sir John Lawes to look at the International School Award (ISA) in 2006.

The structure of the ISA helped to widen activities and led to the creation of International Enrichment Days. Then, prompted by an Ofsted inspection on ESD in 2006, the school incorporated an ESD and Global Dimension Action Plan in their School Development Plan, using the ISA as a framework. This linked their approaches together and gave more coherence and impetus.

Sir John Lawes and pupil leadership

A key event at the beginning of the school's journey was in 2007 when a group of Year 9 pupils worked on a Send My Friend to School project with Action Aid. This involvement enabled them to travel to Kenya to work in Kibera, Africa's largest slum where they joined four Kenyan children to put together film footage for their campaign. This group then went on to meet Gordon Brown when they represented the J8 (Junior 8) at a summit in Germany, presenting their ideas on how they would tackle problems including climate change and HIV/Aids.

More recently the Oxfam group brought the IF campaign to the school, engaging their local MP and resulting in a trip to Downing Street.

The local authority supported Helen Cox becoming an AST in Global Dimension and Sustainable Development in 2007. With more time and focus, this helped her become a driving force within the school, providing support, guidance and inspiration to pupils and staff. Helen also used this role to support other schools in a growing local network.

Development of Sir John Lawes 21st Century Learning skills in 2009 reinforced the relevance of global activities, and global learning was further supported by involvement in the Eco-Schools award, leading to the school receiving the Green Flag in 2010 which supported wider pupil participation. The school also still uses the ISA framework, being re-accredited last year. With a broad sustainable base even when Helen Cox was recently on maternity leave, things continued in her absence.

The impact of global learning

'It's important that schools promote being confident and being able to put your voice across.' - *Sir John Lawes pupil*

Global learning has had a great impact on pupils in the school, with the development of leadership skills being a strong feature. Pupil leaders play a key role speaking up about global issues and feeding into the school ethos, with pupils talking about these opportunities helping to develop their self esteem and voice.

A focus on participatory activities and group work has also brought a strong sense of independence amongst pupils, supporting their personal development and allowing their confidence to grow. Pupils also talk about global learning improving their communication skills, resourcefulness and responsibility.

'Basic skills, like talking confidently with other people, are going to benefit you in later life. If you excel at that or you can build on that at school, that skill will help you.' - *Sir John Lawes pupil*

Another key impact is helping pupils to see the big picture making learning more relevant for them. Pupils also enjoy being more 'world aware', so they don't go into the world blind.

'It's not just facts to get you through exams, it's learning about what's happening and discussing it.' - *Sir John Lawes pupil*

Key links from Sir John Lawes

Global Student Forum

www.globalstudentforum.org/

International School Award

schoolsonline.britishcouncil.org/International-School-Award

Connecting Classrooms

connectingclassrooms-learning.britishcouncil.org/

Eco-Schools Award

www.eco-schools.org.uk/

Oxfam Youth group

www.oxfam.org.uk/education/global-citizenship/promoting-action/youth-action-groups

The head teacher Claire Robins sees clear links between the relevance and skills development provided by global learning, and the high academic standards which the school achieves. Jonathan Mountstevens, the assistant head, explains that whilst not necessarily a short term strategy for success, longer term a focus on these skills creates the sort of pupils who excel and achieve.



Pupils at Sir John Lawes meet their MP

Learning about life also helps Sir John Lawes pupils to challenge stereotypes and value difference. This has helped build a culture of respect within the school, raising behaviour standards and improving staff-pupil relationships. Improved confidence also allows pupils to speak up against, for example, bullying. Claire Robins says that this has an impact for teachers, as less of their time has to be spent on behaviour management allowing them to focus on their teaching.

Global learning at Sir John Lawes is exciting for teachers as well as pupils, enabling them to interact with pupils in a different way. The chances for career development and the

opportunities to travel through the Zambia link are perks to the job! The active and creative approach to teaching is seen as inspiring and has installed a sense of pride in the school.

'Global learning can help inspire you... you feel like you're doing something positive.' - *Manny Fernandez, Citizenship & Life skills teacher*

This pride has a ripple effect into the community, and the outward looking nature of the school enhances its public perception and visibility locally, enabling a positive image of pupils in the community. This can help the school in a competitive catchment area with lots of schools achieving high academic standards. The profile which awards and partnerships with organisations such as Oxfam bring to the school, also help to engage parents. And the work of Helen Cox as an AST engaging a variety of local organisations, including schools and campaigning groups, contributes to this.

Global learning has also contributed strongly to school development, with impacts captured through the School Development Plan, which supports Ofsted. This has helped to embed its ethos based on achievement, care and excellence, and in the words of Claire Robins, supported the school to become the kind of place it wants to be with the kind of pupils it wants to have.

'They are preparing us so we can have a greater voice and have a greater impact.' - *Sir John Lawes pupil*

Sir John Lawes' advice for other schools

Don't become overwhelmed by the task of introducing global learning. It's important to remember that impact is greater as a whole school approach so start by looking at what you are doing already and plan small steps with room for growth. Engage passionate members of staff, use external opportunities and make use of structures like ISA or Eco-Schools.