

A whole-school global learning project at Stubbin Wood School, Derbyshire

Our school began to explore developing the global element of our curriculum as we wished to become an outward-facing school, celebrating our own community and roots, but also positively engaging with other communities and different perspectives. We have a real desire to give our pupils a tangible awareness of the world outside their own immediate experiences while giving them an understanding of, and empathy with, other cultures. The links that we have formed and the experiences with which we engage have to be 'real', as our pupils struggle with abstract concepts. The work is also seen as a tool to raise aspirations, helping students to step outside their comfort zone and take part in new challenges within a supportive framework.



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'Across the curriculum we aimed to stimulate critical thinking, taking a creative, enquiry-based approach to learning through first-hand experience.'

Carolyn Briggs, Humanities and International Co-ordinator

School activities

Our school applied and was chosen to take part in a trek to Namibia, which entailed two teachers and four students going on an organised trip (with mainstream schools) to the Sorris-Sorris region of the country. During the trip, they met and engaged with the local population. The students were keen to learn at first hand about the lives and hopes of the students at the school in Sorris-Sorris, and they were asked to compare these to their own lives in England.

We decided to base our school's global work for the year on this trip. We carried out a lot of fundraising in the run-up to the trip, which was necessary to enable our students to take part in this project, and the whole school got behind this. We used many of these opportunities to involve the students and the staff in activities that spanned the curriculum – making the activities real and relevant to our students, and bringing the outside world alive for them.

The activities included sensory-based lessons in subjects such as art, science, literacy, ICT, design and technology, and geography. All the activities had to fit in with the aims of that particular curriculum area and reflect some of our school's core values, and the ethos of the whole-school community.

The core values we focused on included:

- valuing diversity, and actively promoting good interpersonal and community relationships
- staff and pupils learning from each other
- a commitment to democratic and inclusive processes, which explore local and global community issues
- a commitment to learning from the experiences of people from diverse backgrounds and from around the world
- a commitment to good environmental practice, such as procedures for recycling, waste reduction and energy.

Impact of global learning

Students and staff developed a better understanding of poverty and sustainability. This was done with our more senior and more able students within our speaking and listening curriculum. Concept lines were used to help the students to discuss fairness around the distribution of money and resources.

During this process the students had to learn about Namibia, and its landscape and climate. What weather would we have to deal with? How do people and objects travel around the world? Is the world a big or a small place? This allowed for lots of sensory work within our light and dark rooms. Our students began to get a better understanding of how countries and people are connected, and how the concepts of interdependence applied to this project. We explored the history of transport to help with travel concepts and time within numeracy. Learning was consolidated with practical visits to airports and train stations.

Work was done through PSHE about what is meant by poverty. Can we be poor of things other than money, e.g. friendship? Our students can be very isolated socially and they felt a great empathy for children who live in areas that are quite remote or where they do not have the means to leave if they wish to.

The main effect that this whole project has had on our students is that it has enabled them to begin to empathise with another culture. It has made them question what they see on the news and the images they see on the Internet – they are getting better at

'The world became a little clearer and more accessible for the pupils – some of them have begun to empathise with the lives of children from another country, and have begun to question images that they see through the media.'

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'walking in someone else's shoes'. For our more complex learners and those with communication issues, the project has enabled them to gain some understanding of the fabric and nature of another country and culture. They became very engaged with the sensory aspects of a place other than their own.

We are aiming to engage in more P4C work and are already trying to find ways to adapt the concepts for the more complex students that we now have in our school. We are having to look at the communication aspect and will possibly be restructuring some of our subject areas to bring humanities, religious education, PSHE (with our school council and anti-bullying team) and citizenship together. We will also bring in the Rights Respecting Schools Award to underpin this.

Stubbin Wood in context

Stubbin Wood is a special school located on the borders of Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire. We have an inclusive nursery in which there are five children with statements of Special Educational Need. Our main school encompasses pupils from 4 to 19 years of age. We currently have 107 students on roll. Our pupils are predominately White British and come from a wide catchment area, encompassing Derbyshire, Sheffield and North Nottinghamshire. We cater for a wide range of special needs profiles, but our cohorts have been shifting from the moderate/mild to the more severe and complex cases over the last three years.