

## A special school's holistic approach to global learning – the example of Swiss Cottage School, London

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Swiss Cottage School recognises the rights of its children and young people under the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, and is committed therefore to providing learning that builds connections between learners and their families and communities. For Swiss Cottage, global learning is necessary for supporting learners to make sense of their immediate environments, and many of the images and stimuli that they encounter on a daily basis. Global learning themes are embedded throughout the entire curriculum at

Swiss Cottage because they support children and young people to reach important developmental milestones around identity and belonging, space and perception, and social imagination. Swiss Cottage School is also committed to sustainability and Fairtrade, and to providing work-related learning opportunities that reflect a more just and ethical future.

### A varied range of global learning activities

- Curriculum themes run across the entire school and are linked to articles from the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, and significant dates on the Global Dimension Wallplanner (e.g. World Water Day).
- A designated Higher Level Teaching Assistant is responsible for delivering a programme of whole-school activities (e.g. a bread-baking competition for World Food Day) that bring diverse SEND cohorts together.
- An Annual International Evening is extremely well attended; it engages some 'hard-to-reach' families in the life of the school and provides meaningful contexts for learning.

*'To have the opportunity to observe lessons and have dialogues with other professionals has supported me to think differently about how I teach and why I teach [my subject]. It gave me the chance to reflect on my own practice and think about how I want to develop, not only as a teacher but as a person.'*

Tom Casson, Leader for Lifelong Learning, Swiss Cottage School, Development and Research Centre

- An Eco-Committee is led by the horticulture teacher and embeds sustainable practices across the school.
- Many successful global school partnerships are in place and enhance curriculum delivery. These include a partnership with New Horizon Special School in Ghana, which is supported by the British Council Connecting Classrooms programme.
- Swiss Cottage is a UNICEF Rights Respecting School. Through 'Class Charters', learners are active in shaping collaborative learning environments based around the notion that children's rights are universal and need to be enjoyed by all children and young people everywhere.
- In classes with learners with Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulties, 'Class Charters' support staff to be informed advocates for individuals with whom there are many barriers to communication.
- The Social Enterprise Qualification supports KS4 learners with Moderate Learning Difficulties to have meaningful economic interaction with other young people globally, for example, by selling craft products made by learners from partner schools.
- A programme of regular heritage learning activities is open to both learners and parents, such as a Boniko Club for Congolese children, and 'Global Knitting Workshops' for parents and carers.

## **The impact of global learning**

Global learning has had an impact on our pupils and on the whole-school community:

- A focus on sustainability has led to an enhanced work-related learning programme, through which learners make craft products, for example using recycled materials.
- Being a Rights Respecting School has enabled practitioners to develop additional strategies for eliciting learner voice, in situations where learners may be pre-verbal.
- Global learning has further extended the range and frequency of family involvement in the school.
- Individual learners have overcome significant barriers to cultural development, leading to improved outcomes in relation to behaviour and/or mental health.
- Staff have additional strategies to personalise learning, and embrace the holistic identity of an individual, when designing a bespoke programme or activity.

## **Swiss Cottage in context**

Swiss Cottage is a large, all-age generic special school in the London Borough of Camden. It accommodates 238 learners aged from 2 to 19, with a range of complex needs including Social Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties, autism, and Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulties. The school is also exceptionally diverse socially and culturally. Due to its location and the particular specialist support that it offers, children and young people from some of

London's wealthiest and most deprived families are on roll at the school. Over 50 languages are spoken across Swiss Cottage, and three part-time Community Support Workers are employed to serve the most highly represented ethnic minority groups within its population: Bengali, Congolese and Somali.

Swiss Cottage is also the lead school in the Swiss Cottage Teaching School Alliance and has an on-site Development and Research Centre – both making significant contributions to the development of policy and evidence-based SEND pedagogy.