

The Academy of St Francis of Assisi, Liverpool

Initiated through their strong specialism in the environment and sustainability, global learning at St Francis has developed into a multifaceted approach, being embedded through environmental, international and values-based lenses. Using Senior Leadership Team (SLT) led structures, rigorous curriculum planning and a range of pupil-led projects, global learning is at the heart of this vibrant school, supporting the development of the wider school ethos.

School motivations and ethos

Based on a Christian ethos of care and tolerance, St Francis aims to provide more for its pupils than just a set of exam results. Drawing pupils from challenging local circumstances, the SLT is driven by a moral duty to broaden their pupils' horizons and show them there is a wider world they can engage with.

Global learning enables pupils at St Francis to 'act local, think global', developing an understanding of who they are in both a local and global context. It supports pupils to engage and achieve through a motivating, meaningful and relevant curriculum, and it links in closely with the schools environmental sustainability specialism.

'We're here to prepare pupils for life. Our philosophy is to teach good lessons, but also create a curriculum that means something to them. We have a moral duty to show pupils that there's more out there than just what they see on a day-to-day basis.'

Ian Kelly, Vice Principal

As an open and tolerant cross-denomination community, global learning also supports the school to understand and value cultural diversity and develop caring helpful pupils. This is particularly important with shifting local demographics. This diversity is celebrated through the lenses of language and faith and a wide variety of charitable activities.

'Global learning means an understanding of where you are in your community, in the wider community and in the world.'

Ian Kelly, Vice Principal

The structure of activities

St Francis has a whole school approach to global learning, which means it's rigorous, well planned and embedded. Global approaches are used within its environmental specialism, its work with developing international school links and its wider values-based work across the school.

The school has nine Assistant Vice Principals (AVPs), each with a different curriculum focus including ethos and community, the international dimension and environmental sustainability. Each AVP promotes global learning through their focus.

The Academy of St Francis of Assisi is a joint Anglican and Roman Catholic Church school in central Liverpool. Half of the academy's pupils are Roman Catholic, with others from a wide range of faiths. Pupils are predominantly of White British heritage, with increasing proportions from other backgrounds, with 25% learning English as an additional language (EAL). The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is significantly higher than the national average, and a high number have special educational needs (SEN).

The AVPs set key globally-related themes for teachers and pupils to explore. They work closely with heads of departments responsible for writing schemes of work, and use INSET time to support teachers' understanding and confidence. Monitoring then takes place through audits, subject reviews and learning walks.



Values in action at St Francis

Values are an integral part of St Francis' ethos. Each form group explored values 'in action' to create 'values trees'. Some pupils carried out charity work for CAFOD and some looked into the work of the Fairtrade Foundation.

into the global perspective of food miles. One group of pupils completed a self-initiated environmental project in New York. The Fairtrade Foundation plays a big role in the school, with activities organised by the pupil-led Fairtrade Committee. The school is also involved in other external charitable organisations, such as letter writing through Amnesty International, Tearfunds' carbon fast and Lent sponsored fasting through CAFOD.

'The curriculum is important but buy-in and participation from the pupils will have a much bigger impact.' - *Julie McDermot, Environmental Specialism AVP*

Two key lenses are the environmental specialism and international links. Global citizenship, as one of Global Dimension's 8 key concepts, ensures global learning is brought into the school's key lenses, environmental and international links. This is supported by rigorous planning and monitoring. The British Council's Connecting Classrooms and the International School Award supports work with India, South Africa, China, Ghana and three schools in Liverpool on a range of joint learning activities.

The school's local links also have a global focus, for example there has been work to engage the local Polish community to support increased extra-curricular involvement for EAL pupils, and to get involved in the school's Community Festival. This festival celebrates local diversity through food, music and language whilst also bringing in global issues such as fair trade and sustainability.

'You've got all kinds of different layers. You've got it built into the curriculum, you've got a whole school drive on an initiative which can be run through assemblies, you've got people coming in to work with just small groups. It's a bigger picture than just built into the curriculum.' - *Julie McDermot, Environmental Specialism AVP*

'You hit it from lots of different directions. If you hit internationalism once you might miss, if you hit it six or seven times by different people and different structures in the school, then you'll succeed.' - *Mike Summers, International Dimension AVP*

This structure ensures a wide variety of activities take place, such as exploring fair trade through persuasive writing in English, globalisation in Geography and global poverty in RE. Efforts are made to make local to global connections, for example linking asylum issues to the local community, and more widely to human rights and the work of Amnesty International.

However, St Francis also places a large emphasis on pupil action, with pupil voice a key driving force. The school's eco focus means there are an array of activities in which pupils and the community are involved, such as gardening projects which link growing your own fruit and vegetables

St Francis' global learning journey

At its inception 8 years ago as a new school bringing together Catholic and Anglican faiths, St Francis was designed to support urban regeneration in an area of high economic and social need. Taking a unique specialism, the environment and sustainability, its building design exemplifies these principles – with a solar atrium, rainwater collection systems and school gardens.

With a flagship building followed a range of high profile environmental sustainability projects, led by an inspiring and committed vice principal which won national plaudits. Many of the projects had a global focus, including African rooftop gardens, and taking a group of pupils to Tanzania to carry out horticultural development work.

Four years ago, driven by a convergence of factors which included Liverpool becoming a City of Culture, changing local demographics increasing pupil diversity and a change in the SLT, St Francis reviewed its approach. They decided that high profile projects driving their specialism weren't impacting all pupils, and that their ethos needed embedding more deeply across the whole school.

This led to a new SLT structure, introducing the current range of Assistant Vice Principals, with a remit to ensure opportunities on a range of themes were present for all pupils within and beyond the curriculum. This helped improve curriculum planning and monitoring, and link growing school partnership work to the environmental specialism. A new Issues and Beliefs team supporting the wider school ethos, including a focus on values and diversity, was set up.



Pupils celebrate Green Flag success

the school's achievements.



Fairtrade at St Francis

During Fairtrade Fortnight in March, the Year 7 Fairtrade Committee ran a variety of activities, including an assembly (above) highlighting issues families across the world are facing and the impact that Fairtrade can have. They also organised a Fairtrade Stall, with Fairtrade cakes, milkshakes and selling Fairtrade goods. One of St Francis' teachers commented 'The event was a great success and the pupils demonstrated exceptional maturity and enthusiasm.'



'What we wanted to do was make sure more of our pupils understood what we were here for and what we were about. That's when we started to embed things like ethos and global specialism into the curriculum.' - *Ian Kelly, Vice Principal*

With these new structures, global approaches started to become embedded at a far deeper level across the school, as all teachers were expected to develop and deliver work. Working on external awards supported this process, with the Green Flag and ISA in 2010 providing clear structures and frameworks to follow, and most importantly developing a sense of pride in

Having established a more sustainable base, globally-focussed work has diversified and is now supported through a range of lenses across the whole school.

The impact of global learning

With close connections to the school's ethos, global approaches at St Francis have had a range of impacts on pupils' values, personal development and wider skills.

According to their teachers, global learning at St Francis has enabled pupils to gain an expanded knowledge of political awareness and current affairs, and they find these 'different' aspects of the curriculum particularly interesting, relevant and motivating.

'It's making the pupils empowered to make their own personal choices and lifestyle, and see how those choices can impact on other people at a local and global level.' - *Matt Walby, Geography teacher*

Being delivered through participatory approaches which emphasise their agency, global activities have therefore supported pupils developing key skills in literacy, persuasive writing and communication. And through leading their responses, pupils have also grown in their ability to think critically, and gained increased confidence to tackle new situations.

Therefore, global learning has helped develop pupils as more rounded individuals, who are able to work with other and use their initiative. All this has empowered them to make their own choices. Teachers at St Francis say their pupils are more prepared to 'go the extra mile', and being able to give pupils a 'role' has particularly motivated disengaged pupils and supported their attendance.

'I've had phone calls from parents saying how happy they are that their child is taking part in Fairtrade, especially with some of our pupils who have been disengaged. It's re-engaged them – it gives them a focus with targets to meet and a job to do.' - *Serena Cubbin, Assistant Vice Principal for Ethos*

Global learning has also supported values development across the school. This has helped pupils challenge their perceptions and stereotypes, and seeing 'values in action' helps build their sense of empathy. This has supported positive behaviour across the school, increasing a sense of community and an environment of respect and mutual support.

'We bring issues into the classroom and try to attack the stereotypes and prejudices, and the pupils react well. It does seem to be working, pupils are happier to challenge them.' - *Dan Fox, RE teacher (Issues and Beliefs team)*

Key links from St Francis

Green flag award

<http://www2.keepbritaintidy.org/ecoschools/>

International School Award

schoolsonline.britishcouncil.org/International-School-Award

Fairtrade Foundation

www.fairtrade.org.uk/schools/

Amnesty International

www.amnesty.org.uk/Teaching-Resources

Cafod

www.cafod.org.uk/Education

The expectation that lessons will incorporate global learning means teachers can find opportunities to bring their interests and passions into their teaching. This helps to make teaching more enjoyable. Teachers also say that it makes them ‘think outside the box’ and is challenging not just for their pupils, but also for their own practice. There is more creativity in their lessons and the pupil-led experiences bring a greater sense of collaboration to the classroom.

‘This is what teaching is about – it’s beyond the classroom.’ - *Kate Allen, Head of History*

Global learning has also helped the school take its philosophy and approach into the community more widely. Through environmentally focussed work, the community festival and supporting EAL pupils, the school engages parents and families with global issues. This helps to build strong school–community links and greater openness and tolerance in the wider community.

St Francis' advice to other schools

Start with an audit to establish what you’re already doing as a school and use this as your baseline. Use staff inset time to assess what global learning is being incorporated and share practice with each other. There needs to be someone at a senior level who can drive and coordinate the approach for the school. Using partnerships with other schools or agencies is a great way to get started.