

# DFID Global School Partnerships



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DFID Global School Partnerships (DGSP) aims to raise young people's awareness of global development issues and to equip them with the skills and knowledge to become active global citizens. The DGSP programme supports mutually beneficial learning partnerships between schools in the UK and Africa, Asia, the Caribbean and Latin America, which seek to embed a global dimension in the curriculum.

The programme provides advice and guidance, professional development and accreditation opportunities and grants to schools that are using school partnerships as a means for developing a global dimension within their curriculum. The programme is open to all schools following their respective national curriculum, from pre-school up to sixth form college, for learners aged from 3 to 18.

DGSP provides a dynamic and inspiring way for schools, teachers, learners and their wider communities to engage with the global dimension. We promote exciting, motivating, professional, innovative and creative approaches to learning and working together.

We value equitable and sustainable partnerships between schools, within the consortium and in other working relationships. The values within the programme reflect the global dimension concepts of: global citizenship, social justice, human rights, sustainable development, conflict resolution, diversity and equality, and interdependence

The DGSP programme is funded by the UK government's Department for International Development. It is delivered by a consortium of four agencies: the British Council, Cambridge Education Foundation, the UK One World Linking Association and VSO. The consortium delivers the programme through a global staff team based in each of the four UK nations and 14 Southern countries: England, Ghana, India, Jamaica, Kenya, Malawi, Nepal, Northern Ireland, Pakistan, Rwanda, Scotland, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Tanzania, Trinidad and Tobago, Uganda, Wales and Zambia.

Supporting the development of equitable and sustainable North-South school partnerships that embed a global dimension in the curriculum is the core purpose of the DGSP programme.

Developing equitable global school partnerships in an unequal world is a huge challenge. It is important to enable schools and teachers to share experiences and learn from each other. In our management of DGSP we support a new approach to relationships between the global North and global South, based on mutual learning, reciprocity, solidarity and genuine partnership. This focus on developing and supporting equity-based partnerships is at the heart of all that we do: equity-based partnerships grapple with difficult issues and yet have authentic dialogue and shared decision-making for the equal benefit of all partners. The role of our Southern team has been crucial in supporting the development of equity-based global school partnerships.

Our promotion of the use of Partnership Agreements has proved a user friendly and successful tool for developing and monitoring the equity and mutuality of a global school partnership. We believe it is important to provide guidance for schools to develop their own individual Partnership Agreement through dialogue, rather than providing standard templates. However, we do encourage a focus on specific learning outcomes. Mutually beneficial partnerships which are based on genuine sharing and listening, rather than one-sided domination by charitable fundraising or teaching expertise, enable teachers to plan together and students to learn through joint curricular projects.

The DGSP programme's key achievements have been:

- designing and implementing a successful global programme delivery structure and mechanism

- undertaking needs analysis and developing guidance and professional tools which respond to the identified need for flexible approaches which work for schools throughout their partnership journey, and which can be tailored to meet the requirements of a wide range of schools
- the design and development of two effective and increasingly popular grant schemes for global school partnerships – Reciprocal Visit and Global Curriculum Project grants – which support both individual school and cluster partnerships.
- leading the development of innovative professional development and accreditation programmes for teachers, and the publication of resources such as *Partners in Learning: A guide to successful school partnerships* and the DVD – *One World, One People*.
- contributing to curriculum guidance for schools on the global dimension and global citizenship, issued by the respective national education departments and curriculum bodies in England, Scotland and Wales
- creating opportunities for networking and the sharing of good practice between advisers and practitioners in both the UK and Southern countries, and positively influencing the approach of other school partnership initiatives
- support for, and promotion of, high-quality sustainable learning partnerships between schools in the UK and Southern countries which are based on development education theory and increase the global dimension in the curriculum
- working with universities in many countries to develop courses for teachers engaged in global school partnerships, in order to celebrate their learning and embed the global dimension at the higher education institution level.

The programme has supported a total of more than 2,000 (2,053) global school partnerships between schools in the four UK nations and 68 Southern countries, involving more than 2 million young people (2,028,689). We have funded more than 1,000 (1,051) global school partnerships, with 937 partnerships being awarded Reciprocal Visit grants and 350 partnerships being awarded Global Curriculum Project grants. These grants have so far enabled 4,574 teachers and 352 students to visit their partner school. We have delivered professional development training to more than 1,500 teachers in the UK and 16 Southern countries.

*“The learners in both schools have gained a new voice as citizens of a global village. Over the last 3 years the partnership has blossomed and the global dimension has been embedded in the wider school curriculum and in the hearts and minds of all learners in the partnership. Learners have discovered that, despite the great diversity between their two cultures, they share common ground and responsibility for sustaining and improving life on the planet.”*

DGSP has launched a range of networking events to bring advisers and practitioners together to share good practice in global school partnerships. It is vital to support schools to share good practice around their global dimension learning since it enables other schools to benefit and the consortium to continue our journey of iterative learning. This process of sharing good practice also provides ways of supporting and sustaining other partnerships. We have used the curricular practice and relationship building experience of exemplar partnerships to provide guidance for other schools working towards mutual learning partnerships with global dimension goals. We have encouraged the building of a shared perspective on the key qualities of North – South school partnerships as equitable, reciprocal, sustainable and inclusive of the wider community, and as a means of bringing a global dimension into education. We have promoted the educational benefits of school partnerships, and set up mechanisms to raise the awareness of schools, education advisers and the wider community for improving practice and learning from each other about global school partnerships.

DGSP has developed a unique suite of professional development opportunities for teachers through working in partnership with Development Education Centres (DECs) and Enabling effective Support (EES) networks in the UK, and Southern team members. This programme has been rolled-out through a Global Professional Development Network with Professional Development Co-ordinators in each Southern region. This has been managed by a Global Professional Development Team comprising experienced DGSP facilitators representing Africa, Asia, the Caribbean and the UK. This team has ensured that the workshop materials are inclusive and meet the wide range of needs of teachers involved in DGSP.

DGSP has developed and published a number of resources to promote good practice in global school partnerships. These resources have been developed through close collaboration with both teachers and Development Education Centres. *Partners in Learning: A guide to successful global school partnerships* is an essential reference that guides schools through all stages of partnership guidance. Published in 2007, and endorsed by the four UK Education Departments, it draws together best practice in global school partnership guidance based on the experiences of practitioners and advisers in both the UK and Southern countries. DGSP publishes an annual magazine – *Global Schools* – which features a wide range of curriculum ideas, case studies and other partnership resources, with contributions from both teachers and learners.

The most significant learning for both the programme staff and the schools we have supported is that despite the enormous economic and social inequalities between the UK and many countries in the global South, it is possible to develop genuine learning partnerships between schools that are based on the principles and practice of equity and that deliver mutual benefits. It is by no means easy, and is a significant psychological challenge for many schools in both the UK and global South, as it involves a paradigm shift in terms of the prevailing historical relationship between the global North and South being predominantly one of unequal power; whether exercised, for example, through the exploitation of natural and human resources on the one hand, or the provision of aid and charity on the other. These dynamics are at play in relationships between schools, and we have learnt that providing advice and support on the ground to Southern schools is absolutely essential in giving them the understanding, confidence and assertiveness to ensure that their global school partnership brings equal educational benefit to their teachers, students and communities.