

Case study: Kirklees school twinning programme

What was the issue to address?

The Cattle report identified schools as a key place for children and young people to mix. There were also concerns about the consequences of the lack of interaction between cultural, ethnic, and religious communities in Britain. The existence of mono cultural schools as a result of concentrated housing and schooling patterns added to separation and the perception of communities leading 'parallel lives'.

We have 151 primary schools in Kirklees of which, over 90 could be seen as being made up of pupils from one ethnic group or could be regarded as being 'mono-cultural'. In terms of numbers we have over 26, 000 pupils who will attend one of these schools. We also have around 18 primary schools that can be seen as being made up of only pupils from the BME communities.

What did we do?

We focussed on bringing together children from different ethnic groups to share in meaningful experiences. The twinning programmes enabled pupils to work and learn together; develop positive relationships; increase understanding and trust between children separated by culture or ethnic difference. Links between schools were carefully planned by teachers and support staff to ensure pupils' experiences were well structured and purposeful. Over the last 3 years 28 schools have been involved and in the current academic year 2007/08, 26 schools will be taking part in the programme.



What difference did we make?

It provided children with the first opportunity to talk to and work with, children from a different religion, culture and ethnic background.

Positive outcomes listed by pupils and staff included:

- Stereotypes were challenged and broken down; pupils realised that skin colour does not determine religion
- Attitude of pupils and their understanding of the different cultures and racial and religious background have increased
- Pupils made new friends across the cultural divides and learnt the importance of working, learning and living together.
- Teachers were provided with the opportunity to teach children from different ethnic groups for the first time and share good practice with colleagues from another school.

Shaping our future **Together**
Kirklees community cohesion strategy



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What were the keys to our success?

Time was allocated to teachers to plan programmes that were fun and linked to a curriculum area, having clear aims and objectives to provide a structure for planning.

Advice and support was provided to schools, head teachers and staff saw schools twinning as an excellent way of improving community cohesion and giving their pupils an opportunity to work and play alongside someone who was from a different culture, religion or ethnic background.

What are we doing next?

Kirklees Council is now fully committed to school twinning and sees it as playing an important part in building better community relationships. There will also be a focus on involving and engaging parents and extending twinning across high schools.



Shaping our future Together
Kirklees community cohesion strategy

