

Report

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Report to:	Education Resources Committee
Date of Meeting:	29 March 2011
Report by:	Executive Director (Education Resources)

Subject:	British Council - Comenius Regio Partnership Projects
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1. Purpose of Report

1.1. The purpose of the report is to:-

- ♦ provide an update on the two British Council funded Comenius projects in South Lanarkshire

2. Recommendation(s)

2.1. The Committee is asked to approve the following recommendation(s):-

- (1) that the positive impact, benefit and the opportunities to share good practice that have arisen from the international links established through the British Council funded Comenius projects be noted; and
- (2) that approval be given for Education Resources to continue those links to help establish additional future funded partnership arrangements.

3. Background

- 3.1. British Council funded Comenius Regio Partnerships aim to enhance the European dimension of education by promoting co-operation activities between local and regional authorities. The partnerships give educational authorities, in co-operation with schools and other services in education, in different regions, the opportunity to work together on one or more topics of mutual interest.
- 3.2. Comenius Regio Partnerships help the participating regions to develop and exchange best practice, to develop tools for sustainable co-operation across borders, to strengthen the European dimension in school education and to offer European learning experiences to teachers and pupils and those responsible for administering school systems.
- 3.3. Comenius Regio Partnerships consist of 2 "partner regions". Each partner region must involve:
 - the local or regional authority with a role in school education
 - at least one school
 - at least one other relevant local partner
- 3.4. The main purpose of Comenius Regio is not to involve pupils or students directly but to promote the development of structured co-operation among the partner regions. Some examples of activities that can be carried out in Comenius Regio partnerships are:-

- project meetings between all institutions involved in the partnership
- exchanges of staff involved in school education (e.g. teacher exchanges, study visits of staff working in the local/regional school administration)
- action research, small studies
- job shadowing
- exchanges of experience and good practice with partner regions/municipalities abroad
- peer learning activities and common training sessions
- conferences, seminars and workshops

3.5. Grants for a project's two year lifespan cover costs related to visits, the implementation of project activities and the dissemination of results. Staff costs are not covered, but count as own contribution to the project costs. The British Council has confirmed their approval for South Lanarkshire to participate as a partner authority. All overseas visits are funded through the British Council.

3.6. Since 2009, South Lanarkshire has been involved in two projects:

- Increasing Literacy Skills - partnership with Ringsaker, Norway
- Creativity to Break Barriers to Achievement – partnership with Madrid and the University of the West of Scotland

4. Comenius Project – Increasing Literacy Skills

4.1. Ringsaker Municipality, as lead partner, sought a partnership to improve educational performance through the development of a programme for increasing literacy skills and developing closer links with public libraries and schools in Norway and Scotland providing a context for the enrichment of international links as well as literacy skills.

4.2 The partnership involved establishments within the Clydesdale area and in particular Crawforddyke Primary School and nursery and Lanark Primary School and nursery.

4.3 Through a series of exchange activities a range of learning strategies and skills to learn independently have been shared. All project participants are positive in their feedback from their visits and communication links have been developed between schools and pupils. This has been a wonderful opportunity to experience at first hand another country's education and library system. Librarians will try to establish links with Nes Barnskole and the community librarians whom they met through this project. This, hopefully, will take place through the medium of GLOW and email.

4.4 Teachers from both regions report that they have benefited from exchanging experiences in the use of different pedagogical models and methods. They are making good use of GLOW and email in establishing links within classrooms.

4.5 The libraries have also exchanged ideas they want to implement in their practice, both within schools and in the public libraries. An example of this is that Ringsaker will try out the 'Storysacks' project based on an initiative seen in South Lanarkshire.

4.6 A bonus for Ringsaker has been the sharing of experiences to promote quality improvement. This is an area of development for Ringsaker and as a result of this, a quality improvement officer from South Lanarkshire held a seminar for head teachers in Ringsaker during the visit in November 2009.

- 4.7 Project partners are flexible and eager to maximize the learning outcome of the project. There is, therefore, a continuous dialogue on what to include in the partnership visits and how to co-operate in the future. There is already a link established for further co-operation through a Leonardo da Vinci project where Ringsaker has been granted funding to come to South Lanarkshire to study the work in nurseries.

5. Comenius Project – Creativity to Break Barriers to Achievement

- 5.1. South Lanarkshire, as lead partner, sought a partner organisation in Madrid because of the Spanish focus in Trinity High School and the fact that both Madrid and Cambuslang/Rutherglen served broadly urban areas and had an industrial legacy. Unemployment and poverty within both areas were above the norm. The project would widen understanding of the social and cultural issues which contribute to children's progress and widen international links.
- 5.2. Establishments involved were Trinity High School, IES Renacimiento, Fundacion Belen and the University of the West of Scotland.
- 5.3. At this point in time the modern languages project is still underway and it is hoped there will be a positive impact on educational performance. Students and staff have been using the study skills pack.
- 5.4. The use of 'Get the Edge' materials has had a positive effect already on students increasing their capacity for independent study. The materials provided advice, ideas and support. Following initial use the packs are being used by more than 300 students. Links will be continued and students and staff will continue to benefit.
- 5.5. A DVD is in its final stage of production and has been shared with partners in Madrid.
- 5.6. Parent packs were also introduced and feedback from parents suggests that it helped their children develop educationally and better equipped them to learn and study independently.
- 5.7. Teachers have also commented positively on the way the materials encourage independent skills. Both teaching staff and students felt that the material helped to change their views on how to approach their studies.

6. Employee Implications

- 6.1. None

7. Financial Implications

- 7.1. There are no financial implications as the projects are funded through the British Council.

8. Other Implications

- 8.1. There are no direct risks associated with this report.

9. Equality Impact Assessment and Consultation Arrangements

- 9.1. There is no requirement to carry out an assessment in terms of the proposals contained within this report.
- 9.2. Consultation has taken place with the British Council and partner participants throughout the application process and at all stages of the planning and organisation of visits.

Larry Forde
Executive Director (Education Resources)

8 March 2011

Link(s) to Council Objectives/Improvement Themes/Values

- Raise educational attainment for all

Previous References

None

List of Background Papers

- British Council Comenius Project Application

Contact for Further Information

If you would like to inspect the background papers or want further information, please contact:-

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