

RINGS OF FRIENDSHIP ERASMUS PROJECT ABSTRACT SUMMARY REPORT

What were the objectives for the project?

- examine ways of improving pupil progress through the use of different resources and methodology
- clear focus on improving outcomes for vulnerable pupils in mainstream schools. (This definition of “vulnerable pupils” in the context of our project included pupils from areas of deprivation, those who are identified as requiring Special Educational Needs (SEN) and those who are vulnerable in that they struggle to learn in a mainstream school environment)

Who was involved?

Our partnership was made up of 4 schools:

- St Augustine’s Catholic Primary School in Weymouth
- ICSG Bosco-Benedetto XIII Gravina-Poggiorsini in Gravina, Italy
- Zespól Szkól nr 36 in Bydgoszcz, Poland,
- CEIP Parque Europa in Zaragoza, Spain.

Over the two years 80 pupils and 24 teachers from all 4 countries travelled to take part directly in each of the 4 project visits.

What did we do?

Using the Olympic values of; Friendship, Respect and Excellence and the Para Olympic values of Determination, Inspiration, Courage and equality we worked together to explore our understanding and knowledge of these values, share teaching methods and real life situations to develop a range of teaching techniques and establish a portfolio of support materials and case studies. All of our resources are shared on our Etwinning page for the public to access.

The 5 Olympic rings represent 5 areas of curriculum learning. Each ring was allocated to a partner who used this and one other area as the overarching theme to a visit by all of the partners. The 5 areas of learning identified were: Science and Maths, Language and Literacy, Social Sciences (with a specific focus on refugee status across Europe) , Arts and Sports. Each visit reflected on our project motto “Rings of Friendship” and included specific sessions focusing on the refugee crisis in Europe and its impact on the host country.

The visiting teaching staff had dedicated time within the visit to observe and discuss teaching methods, case studies and resources etc to teach (eg Science and Maths) with a focus on learning difficulties and mixed ability classes. The pupils also joined in with curriculum specific activities (eg Science in Spain) and Social Science lessons as well as activities including sports focused on Friendship and Determination. They also took part in many activities designed to foster friendships and encourage them to use their language skills with their new friends.

What was the outcome for staff and pupils?

Impact on the children was evidenced by their responses during the trips and on completion of a post trip questionnaire (also completed by staff members and parents) and well as looking at attainment. An overwhelming majority confirmed they had improved their emotional and social skills, and that they had improved their understanding of different cultures and languages within Europe. The children readily took the plight of refugees from across the world to their hearts, especially after having the opportunity to meet refugees living in Spain and hearing firsthand what life was like for them. In terms of attainment, across the project there were mixed results in the short term, but teacher responses indicated that the children were more engaged with their learning as a result of taking part in the visits. It would be interesting to follow up these children at secondary school to investigate whether participation in the project had a longer term effect.

Staff benefited from visiting other educational settings in different countries, discussing pedagogy and sharing resources and ways to improve outcomes for children who may be disadvantaged in different ways. They wrote anonymous case studies and shared these at the meetings and visits. All teachers responded that they had improved their professional expertise and were more knowledgeable as a result of participating in the project. The case studies were also shared with members of staff who did not physically visit other countries to improve their own teaching skills.

Parental responses at the end of the project overwhelmingly confirmed that their children had benefitted socially and emotionally from participating in the project, and that their children were more aware of different cultures and traditions across Europe.

Longer Term Benefits

Children benefited not only from the planned activities within the trips, but also in terms of developing their independent skills; for example, children from Poland Italy and Spain lived with host families during the project. In all cases they improved their social 'soft' skills which are so important to help them develop fully into caring, compassionate members of society. It is hoped that we will continue to work together to keep promoting understanding and friendship between our countries and encourage children to use their experiences from taking part in the project to raise their aspirations and feel part of the global community.

Jane Gardiner

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