

education



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Pupils linking up to tackle world issues

Barriers being broken down by 'young ambassadors'

ISSUES affecting the world today are being discussed by "young ambassadors" across the world.

Every six weeks, children from Westhoughton High School speak to their counterparts from across the globe via video link to discuss issues normally tackled by the world leaders of the G8 — poverty, human trafficking and conflict, together with religion and culture.

Since the launch of the Tony Blair Faith Foundation's new Face to Faith programme in June, teenagers say that barriers are already being broken down and ignorance is being replaced with respect and understanding.

Elliott Grainger, aged 13, said: "Through the programme we are understanding different cultures and faith a lot more from people our own age."

Bethany Unsworth, aged 13, added: "We find that young people we talk to are quite similar to us. Taking part in something like this is a good experience and all schools should do it."

"If more people are aware of different faiths then there is respect and people are not scared of each other."

Westhoughton High School is the lead school in England taking part in the project.

There are nearly 100 schools from all over the world taking part — with more schools coming on board all the time.

A conference with a school in New Delhi is being planned later this month and there is talk of teacher exchange visitors together with a young people's summit being organised in



GLOBAL LINK: From left, Westhoughton High School pupils Jade Wilson, Bethany Unsworth, Hailey West and Elliott Grainger, all aged 13 who are taking part in the young ambassadors' programme

Singapore. Niall Holt, aged 13, said: "Taking part in something like this does develop you as a person because you learn how people live and are affected by issues."

In between conferencing, the teenagers spend time talking to their counterparts across the world in their own time learning about different ways of life and discussing issues affecting

young people — while at the same time calling upon their new friends to help with them with their school work.

Jo Malone, who leads the programme in school, said: "The pupils learn how to communicate to be able to address subjects with respect. They are discussing issues affecting the world today and are getting a different perspective from those images portrayed by

the media. For example when they spoke to children in Palestine, they found out they were not victims. Those children were eloquent, educated and ambitious." She added: "It hasn't happened yet but one day somebody will say a stereotypical comment, and these young people will turn around actually 'that is not right because...'"

Mrs Malone said: "This

experience will help young people develop as well-rounded people, and this is important in your career and in raising children."

RE teacher Bhavin Tailor added: "These young people are learning life skills and engaging with religion and citizenship. They are learning about the issues in these subjects first hand rather than learning about them in a text book."

TEACHER PROFILE



Name: Amy Johnson

Age: 29

Education: Bishop Vesey's Grammar School, Oxford University – Geology MSci, Birmingham University, PGCE

Year/Subject/School: Year four, all primary school subjects, Lever Edge Primary School, Great Lever.

Family: I'm the youngest of two children and my family all live in Birmingham.

Something readers should know: I love working in a classroom environment and spending my time with the children in my class.

Who or what encouraged you to choose teaching as a career? Both my parents and my sister are teachers so I always had a positive view of it as a profession. I initially became an engineer when I left university but quickly decided I wanted a job where I felt I was making more of a contribution to the community.

What has been your most satisfying moment in the classroom? We have just done our class assembly and all the children did brilliantly and I was incredibly proud of all of them.

What are you looking forward to this year? I have just moved up to year four, an age group I have not taught before, so I am looking forward to seeing how they develop and progress over the year.

What do you enjoy about teaching? I really enjoy the point at which children manage to complete an activity they couldn't do before and feel really proud of themselves for achieving their goal.

Should schools be able to introduce international GCSEs (iGCSEs) if they wish?

THE BOYS OF BOLTON SCHOOL, WHO STUDY IGCSE MATHS HAVE THEIR SAY



Leo Ettrick, aged 15, said: "Teachers should be able to choose the syllabus which most benefits the pupil. The iGCSE could be better for those who want to carry on studying maths at A-level."



Mohamed Bilal, aged 15, said: "Teachers should be allowed to introduce it if they think it suits their pupils. I am going on to study maths at A-level and I think the iGCSE is good preparation."



Neel Jain, aged 15, said: "We have been told that iGCSEs are better preparation for A-level study. Teachers know best whether the iGCSE or GCSEs are suited for their pupils and should be able to decide whether it is taught or not."



Matthew Trussell, aged 16, said: "Parents should be given a say in whether the iGCSE is introduced. Teachers should inform parents about it and a decision to teach it to pupils should be made that way."

Can YOU do your child's homework?

Emily makes 250 grams of a snack mixture. 15% of the weight is raisins, 25% is banana chips and the rest is peanuts. How many grams of peanuts does she use?



Work out the answer here

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Last week's: 1hr 20mins; 12.10 pm