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Key stages	KS2
School type	LA maintained, primary
Themes	Modern foreign languages, global citizenship

Maintaining a global perspective: the recipe for success at school

Whitehill Junior School

Context

Whitehill Junior School is an average-sized school located in the North Hertfordshire district. The proportion of pupils entitled to the pupil premium grant is below average and the proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds or pupils who speak English as an additional language is at the national average.

Brief description

In May 2015 Whitehill School was shortlisted in the Times Education Supplement Awards in the international (including modern foreign languages) category. This nomination recognised the outstanding contribution that the school has made in education, with a particular focus on its innovative work with languages. Previously, in September 2014, the school was awarded the British Council International School Award in recognition of its work of adding an international dimension into the classroom. Whitehill School has constantly promoted languages and international elements in all aspects of its curriculum. The headteacher Steve Mills believes maintaining a global perspective is “the recipe for success at school.”

An international dimension in all aspects of learning

Embedding languages into the curriculum

Teaching modern foreign languages has been part of the school’s curriculum for years. All pupils in the school are given French lessons once a week, taught by a native French teacher. The school also has several language clubs which allow pupils to have fun with languages. These include a French club which is available for all years, a German club run by MFL coordinator Katja Hudemann, a Chinese Club and a Japanese club. The Chinese club is taught by a teaching assistant and involves not only learning the language but also learning about several elements of Chinese culture.

Teachers at Whitehill are encouraged to embed languages into lessons as much as they can. Classroom registers are often answered in several different languages including Finnish, Greek, Hungarian and Portuguese. Katja

actively promotes languages in her classroom and has encouraged other teachers to do the same. Quite often teachers give out classroom instructions in Spanish even in lessons such as maths and English.

Whitehill School is part of the Language Ambassador Programme with its partner secondary school. This involves Language Ambassadors from the secondary school visiting the school to teach languages to three of the participating classes.

Bringing the world into the classroom

Whitehill School looks beyond the UK as much as possible and staff consider global dimensions when they plan their units of work. The school teaches the National Curriculum through the International Primary Curriculum which is a comprehensive curriculum for 3-12 year olds designed to create international mindedness within pupils.

Pupils in the school have often taken part in Skype conversations involving role play with international students. As part of a history lesson on Mount Vesuvius pupils took part in a video conference with a school in Washington. Pupils of Whitehill played the part of the inhabitants of Pompeii and pupils in Washington acted as reporters.

The school has recently supported and promoted the campaign of a pupil, in his work to raise money for a library for the Agta tribe in the Philippines. This pupil founded his own charity after a trip to the Philippines with his parents and initiated a whole school effort to raise money for a remote tribe. Together the pupils raised money, held assemblies and sent books to the Philippines, whilst filming the entire journey of the book from Whitehill to the Agta tribe.

Last year the school held an International Week during the World Cup. The eight different classes in the school focused on 8 different countries and the week ended with pupils taking their 'passports' around the world and sampling the food, culture and music of all the different countries. The French Café, where pupils used euros to pay for the food, was run by waitresses from a local secondary school. The school embraces the diverse nature of the community and regularly arranges assemblies where pupils from different backgrounds teach other pupils about their cultures.

Impact

Core values and the recipe for success at school

Steve Mills believes that giving pupils a cultural dimension in the curriculum is a fundamental part of the school's core purpose promoting profound individual growth. This core value is based on questioning *why* the school does things rather than *what* it does and has helped to develop individual growth and promote citizenship within pupils. This approach has spread a positive ethos around the school and a feeling of inclusion for pupils from different cultures. Steve believes that the school's approach "is really taking education to a whole new

dimension and one which the pupils are sure to remember. This is real learning."

Whitehill's efforts have been recognised by awards such as the British Council International School Award and a nomination in the TES awards. The school's Ofsted report stated that pupils at Whitehill show a 'good understanding of moral issues when learning about Fair Trade in the production of chocolate. They develop good social and cultural understanding through their links with children in Ghana, Canada and the United States.'

Developing the language skills of staff and pupils

Starting French lessons in year 3 gives pupils a longer time frame to develop their skills and remain consistent in their language learning throughout school. In the process of promoting languages through the Language Ambassador Programme, Whitehill has formed stronger links with a local secondary school and has prepared students for expanding their language learning abilities when they move on.

Katja believes that the school's dedication towards languages also provides excellent learning opportunities for staff, who continue learning French with the students. Although French lessons are taught by a French native speaker, every other week classroom teachers take over the lessons whilst the native French teacher teaches the other half of the school.

Next Steps

Steve Mills plans to continue in his efforts to promote languages and international learning within the school to ensure that the pupils remain truly global citizens.

The school has already taken its pupils to a trip to France four times, however from next year there are plans to make this trip annually. Katja Hudemann is trying to make links with French schools so that pupils can communicate with them before and after the trip.

Contact	Steve Mills, Headteacher at Whitehill School Katja Hudemann, MFL Coordinator
Related documents and links	http://www.whitehill.herts.sch.uk/ http://www.tesawards.co.uk/tessa2015/shortlist http://www.greatlearning.com/ipc/

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