

**Current international links and activities****1) Wirral's twinned and linked towns****Background**

Lorient is a coastal town with an annual Interceltic Festival that attracts many visitors. Gennevilliers is close to Paris and has a wealth of experience to share in terms of social inclusion. The main activity between Wirral and Lorient and Gennevilliers was student exchanges which have now ceased. It proved increasingly difficult to get teachers to accompany exchanges organised by central LA personnel, and the ensuing Health & Safety concerns led to the Head of Learning & Achievement's decision to stop them. The twinning link with Latina was via Nunzia Bertali (Honorary Italian Consul for Merseyside) and the sister-city relationship with Midland was led by Wirral Direct.

**Current activities**

- Health & Safety students from Lorient Technical University undertake work placements in Wirral companies and Wirral Council on an annual basis.
- Bebington Library took part in an interactive discussion with residents from Lorient and Latvia in May 07.
- The Mayor of Gennevilliers invites The Mayor of Wirral to join in the New Year celebrations every two years.
- There are occasional requests regarding twin towns – recent ones include a Wirral church interested in linking with a church in Gennevilliers and the Procurement section of Wirral Council.
- Lorient and Gennevilliers ask if placements can be found in Wirral for university students.

**2) Council involvement**

- Environmental Health has a link with Malawi. They have sent items to help environmental health colleagues. Phil Dickson is still in touch with Tomsk following the TACIS project on air strategy.
- Wirral has participated in the ERNACT programme, (European Regions' Network for the Application of Communications Technology), a consortium of European regions working together to derive the maximum benefit from the European Union's promotion of the Information Society, particularly in the area of information-sharing using advanced telecommunications, since 1994. The other countries involved are Ireland, Spain, The Netherlands, The Czech Republic, Italy and Finland.
- John Highton, Public Health & Regeneration Manager, Wirral Council & Wirral Primary Care Trust, is chair of a group of students who visited The Gambia in April 2006 as part of a Public health field trip associated with their studies. The group is raising funds for projects in a village called Manduar and is also trying to set up a school link with a Wirral primary school

**3) Community organisations**

- Revd. Dr. Pat Nickson (St.Mary's Upton) and the Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine are involved with a medical mission, the Pan African Institute of Community Health (IPASC) in Congo. Pat is a senior lecturer at the Tropical School of Medicine and is the Director of IPASC. IPASC was established in 1992 and is a training centre and hospital. The Rt. Revd. David Urquhart is the President.
- Heswall Youth Fellowship is planning to travel to Uganda in Summer 2007 to help with teaching and to offer practical help with building work and painting after having raised money to pay the salary of a schoolteacher as well as for materials and food. Several Wirral churches have links with countries abroad.
- Children from Chernobyl and Romania come to Wirral each year.

4) Companies

- Plexus, a Birkenhead – based company (annual turnover £7½ million) trades cotton fairly with Africa, providing advice and guidance to individual farmers. Plexus works for long-term sustainable development. They buy the seeds, etc. and give them to the farmer along with expertise and they are then repaid by the farmer out of the profits. It is an interest-free loan. Following meetings with the Chief Executive, Plexus have sent representatives from their plant in Uganda to meet Revd. Dr. Pat Nickson in The Congo.
- Peel Holdings is keen to develop relationships with China.

5) Cross-departmental activity

Since July 2006 an International Dimension Group led by the Children and Young People's Department has met to discuss how to support and encourage schools to have a link with schools in Africa (loosely linked to the Educational Attainment Theme of Woodchurch Neighbourhood Management). The group is composed of representatives from Regeneration, Discovery City Learning Centre and the Children & Young People's Department, including Headteachers and Deputy Headteachers whose schools have links with Uganda, Sudan and China.

6) Centrally organised activities for Wirral schools:

- The Wirral International School Award.
- Placements in schools for secretarial students from Limoges and Lorient and student teachers from Siegen, Germany.
- Placements in companies and Wirral Council for Health & Safety students from Lorient.
- A picture and letter exchange between schools in Wirral and Kyotanabe, Japan.

Several Wirral teachers and Headteachers have been on British Council funded visits/ courses abroad, including ARION (study visits for senior education specialists), school partner-finding seminars, Comenius projects (cross-curricular involving at least three schools in different countries), East West Programme (UK and Ireland), NCSL International Placements for Headteachers and the DfES Teachers' International Professional Development Scheme. Please see appendix 2 for more information.

7) Youth & Community Services Visits abroad

February 2004 –	Warsaw. Conference for Young People on "Breaking Stereotypes within Europe"
July 2004 -	Ponta Delgada, Azores. Youth Exchange on "Integration in Everyday Life"
Sept. 2004 -	Pozzuoli, Italy. Youth Exchange on "Pubs v Churches"
Oct. 2004 -	Hong Kong & China. Youth Exchange on "The Environment"
March 2005 -	Warsaw, Poland. Worker Conference on "Youth Projects for European Partnership"
May 2005 -	Wroclaw, Poland. Multi Youth Exchange on "Cultures within the New Europe"
Oct. 2005 -	Hong Kong and China. Youth Exchange on "Youth Participation"
July 2006 -	Jihlava, Czech Republic. Young People Conference on "Our citizens, Our Countries, Our Europe"
September 2006 -	Hong Kong & China. Youth Exchange on "Heritage and Culture"
May 2007 -	Bremen, Germany. Worker conference on "Prevention Work with Young People"

8) Schools' international activities and links:

Following the launch of the National Languages Strategy in 2002, many Wirral primary schools study languages and receive support from various sources: the Advisory

Teacher for Primary Modern Foreign Languages, Advanced Skills Teachers, Comenius Assistants from various countries (EU funded), secondary schools and also the four Language Colleges: Wirral Grammar School for Girls, Calday Grange Grammar School, Upton Hall School and St. Anselm's College. The four colleges are working together (as part of the Specialist Strand Steering Group) in order to plan and support jointly training and pupil events across Wirral.

There are at least twenty Wirral primary schools studying the International Primary Curriculum and they are required to have at least one link abroad.

Three secondary schools have particularly close links with China: Calday Grange Grammar School, Upton Hall School and West Kirby Grammar School.

Since October 2005, two Wirral primary and two secondary schools have received the full DfES International School Award, eight have achieved the intermediate award and five have the Foundation level.

Please see appendix 3 for more information on schools' international links.

9) International Strategy for education, skills and children's services

In this strategy the government set out eight priorities to work with partners on by 2010. Three of them are relevant to schools' self evaluations and their inspections:

1. Promote the inclusion of the eight key concepts of the global dimension in the learning experience of all children and young people.
2. Develop the International School Award as a key means to promote international partnerships between schools and global citizenship in the school curriculum. The government's aim is that, over time, all schools should gain the award.
3. Implement the National Languages Strategy ensuring that all children at Key Stage 2 have the opportunity to study languages by January 2010. The National Languages Strategy also highlights the importance of languages in business and of links between businesses and schools.

10) Linking the Every Child Matters Agenda to the Global Dimension

Under the "being healthy" outcome, children can be educated about global health issues. "They can be taught that polio and malaria could be wiped out if there was a political will, and they can look at what eating healthily and being active means to children in other parts of the world."

For "being safe", children will learn that safety for children is enshrined in human rights but that safety depends on where they live and their political and economic context.

For "enjoy and achieve" – the outcome in which schools are most closely involved – there are "big spin-offs in terms of raising children's achievement by engaging in this type of work", while for the outcome "make a positive contribution" they can have a positive outlook and self-image and realise that they can make a difference in society.

Finally, for the "achieve economic well-being" outcome, children can learn about the rise of global economies and see how economic well-being for everyone has a global perspective: "How we are rich in the West because other areas of the world are poor."

By learning about other countries and different cultures, children will generally develop good emotional literacy. They will also learn to get along with other people, and this will help them to be responsive and collaborative adults when they grow up". (*Extracts from an article from 'The Guardian' 14.11.06 by Phil Smith*).