

Global learning and community cohesion with young children and their families

An influx of new immigrant families, due to a Gurkha regiment having been based locally, led [Farnborough Grange Nursery and Infant Community School](#) to develop work which combines the global dimension with community cohesion.

What did the school want to achieve?

The aim was to develop a clear shared understanding of what community cohesion means at local, national and global levels by providing positive shared experiences for pupils and their families.

How did they set about doing this?

The school has a history of Education for Sustainable Development and a global dimension has been introduced through environmental themes. Its overarching policy is based on the [United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child](#), also encouraging a global perspective. As a consequence of a Gurkha regiment having been based locally, the school intake from the Nepalese community has recently grown to 25% in the space of three years, with implications for community cohesion and a local context for global learning. Karen Ingala, Deputy Head, explains that for her the eight key concepts of the global dimension and community cohesion are both underpinned by the quality of our relationships and communication with others, including empathy and the ability to see others' perspectives.

Farnborough Grange uses stories combined with [Philosophy for Children \(P4C\)](#) to explore such concepts, for example: 'What lies on the other side?', a story about animals who are fearful of others living in a different part of the forest, is used to explore difference, rumour, myth, fear and similarities underlying differences. With high numbers of children with special educational needs or for whom English is an additional language, P4C is adapted to be active and play-based, so the children re-create the stories through drawing, modelling or acting out. Teachers talk with individual children while they are working, culminating in a class discussion about the meaning behind the story. Key Stage 1 pupils (ages 5-7) develop a sense of place and an understanding of how communities work by making models to show how they feel in different parts of the school building. Collaboration and friendship emerge as features of the places where they are happiest.

Karen was inspired by [Glasgow 2020](#), 'a project to collect together the imagination of the city to tell a new story about its future' in which people told stories about their past, present and the future they would like to see. She talked to selected staff and parents about what the words 'community' and 'cohesion' meant to them and gathered their stories and hopes for the future, believing that in telling these stories people come to recognise that their futures are theirs to create.

At a staff training session, a group story about the school's past, present and future was created and recorded as a landscape, with high points and deep valleys. The staff talked about whether there were any remaining issues from low points on the school's journey, and how these might be positively



resolved. These individual and group stories have helped senior management to understand staff and parents' feelings and aspirations.

A bilingual English/Nepali song group was started for children about to start school and their parents. This contributes to friendship among children and parents and an acceptance of difference, as well as developing speaking and listening skills. A weekly 'card café' for Key Stage 1 pupils and their grandparents encourages sharing games and skills between cultures and generations, as well as developing number skills. The emphasis is on what the two cultures can learn from each other, though staff have also supported Nepali parents by acknowledging and making explicit the differences between the education cultures of the two countries.

A link has been set up with a school in Nepal. Class letters are sent between the two, focusing on what the children want to learn from each other and common experiences they can share. Rushmoor Borough Council and the school worked together on a community 'Festival in the Park' at which traditional Nepalese music and dancing took place alongside traditional English activities.

How well did they achieve their aims?

As the project is about providing experiences of being part of a cohesive community, the equal numbers of Nepali and English parents attending the song group and card café and the popularity of the Festival are indicators of success. In an evaluation of the pre-school song group, parents said that their children had gained in confidence and made friends, and the parents have formed their own ongoing informal support groups. The stories and feelings expressed by children and adults during the activities have given staff an insight into their lives. The school considers itself to be integrally linked with its community, local and global.

What do they plan to do next?

The school link project will be further integrated into curriculum plans, with the two school communities learning together, developing an understanding that local issues are often global issues. Karen hopes that grandparents will take increased responsibility for leading aspects of the card café. She plans to forge links with the local youth group and elders groups that meet at the church and library. The Festival in the Park will be repeated, including food from the two communities. Future work will also focus on sustaining the existing global ethos with new staff, pupils and parents.

More information

Karen has developed a presentation 'Using stories to understand ourselves and others' and a global dimension book list. These can be accessed via the [Global Dimension Website](http://www.globaldimension.org.uk).

