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Title	<b>0006</b>	07/20/2023
	by <b>David Stockdale</b> in <b>International School Award Intermediate Application</b>	id. 41433746
	<a href="mailto:dstockdale@blaconhigh.cheshire.sch.uk">dstockdale@blaconhigh.cheshire.sch.uk</a>	

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## Original Submission

07/20/2023

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Are you applying  
from the UK

Yes

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ISA Status

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Do you have an International School Award?	<b>No</b>
Application type	<b>Intermediate: The Intermediate level of the International School Award is for schools already working on international activities. It is ideal for schools that: have made links with other schools overseas and have worked on collaborative projects are beginning to raise awareness of global issues amongst students want to share educational practice with partners overseas There are no deadlines by which to submit your application, however, all activities included must have been carried out in the 12 months prior to you clicking the submit button. You can see more about the eligibility criteria for this level here.</b>
Your Details	<b>About You</b>
Title	<b>Mr</b>
Name	<b>David Stockdale</b>
Email Address	<b>dstockdale@blaconhigh.cheshire.sch.uk</b>
	<b>ABOUT YOUR SCHOOL</b>
School Name	<b>Blacon High School</b>
Type of School	<b>Secondary (ages 11-18)</b>
School Status	<b>State</b>
SENType	<b>Some of our pupils have special education needs</b>
Head Teacher name	<b>Rachel Hudson</b>
Website	<b>Blacon High School</b>
School office/admin email address	<b>admin@blaconhigh.cheshire.sch.uk</b>
School Address	<b>UK</b>
School address	<b>Blacon High School Melbourne Road Blacon Cheshire CH1 5JH GB</b>
UK Country	<b>England</b>
LEA	<b>Cheshire West and Chester</b>
Number of pupils at your school	<b>750</b>

What is your motivation for applying for the International School Award

**We have actively engaged in several international initiatives in recent years and are fully committed to achieving a broader, more diverse and inclusive sense of cultural awareness in our student cohort.**

International Activity Summary:  
Summarise the history of international work at your school (refer to key international partnerships, policy and projects). How has it developed?

**Blacon High School moved into a new building in 2016 and, at the same time, began communicating with a school in Karlovo, Bulgaria. Since that initial contact in 2016, the schools have twinned officially, completed one reciprocal fact-finding visit, and have, in June 2023, just completed the outward leg of a fourth, annual student exchange programme. Unfortunately, the programme was paused in response to Covid in 2020, 21 and 22.**

**The exchange programme is entirely about developing enhanced cultural awareness, along with improving key personal qualities such as building confidence and resilience, developing leadership and independence, understanding the power of compromise and learning to be diplomatic.**

**Also in 2023, the school hosted two groups of Spanish students and one group of Italian students who were visiting on a language immersion experience for three weeks each in the autumn term.**

**In June, our MFL department completed its first ever international visit with a residential trip to Barcelona for four days where students visited many of the city's cultural delights and had an opportunity to practice their Spanish speaking.**

**Also this year, MFL engaged a drama company who performed plays entirely in French and Spanish to all of KS3, along with those KS4 students who had opted to study MFL at GCSE.**

**Additionally, our PE department took a team of students to represent Chester at the International Youth Games in Senigallia, Italy, where they finished as overall winners.**

Do you have a tab for international activities on your school's website?

**Yes**

**Partner Schools At Intermediate Level you need to have created links with partner school(s) abroad and to have done at least one collaborative activity with them. Please list here details of your partner school(s) and how your partnership started and developed.**

Please tick to confirm each partner school you will be working with and complete further details below

**Partner School 1**

**Partner School 1 details**

Partner School 1 Name

**Vasil Levsky High School**

Partner School 1  
Address

ул. "Стремски полк" 6, 4300 кв. Васил Левски, , Bulgaria Phone:  
+359 33 595 593  
Karlovo  
Bulgaria  
3700  
BG

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Partner School 1:  
Describe how your  
partnership started  
and how you stay in  
contact

**In 2016, we were introduced to a school in Bulgaria who were interested in establishing an international link. From that point, regular contact was established with both schools keen on the idea of twinning.**

**After making the initial contact, students from both schools started communicating as pen pals. This escalated, and soon we were communicating in real time via Zoom using the IWBs in the classroom.**

**Our partners in Bulgaria were keen to formalise the twinning arrangement and so three colleagues visited the Vasil Levsky High School in Karlovo for the first time. During this visit we drew up and signed a memorandum of understanding, and we also discussed the possibility of starting a student exchange programme. When we hosted our Bulgarian colleagues on a reciprocal visit, we made plans for the first exchange in June 2017.**

**Since then, the relationship has gone from strength to strength and during the 2023 trip we also decided to create an alumni for all the staff, students, parents and carers, both English and Bulgarian, who have been involved with the programme. Also, the very briefest of outline plans were discussed for a ten year reunion to be held in 2026, when we hope lots of our alumni will meet up. Each trip has an outcome and the project for 2023 was 'Overcoming Adversity', with a focus on global warming.**

**We managed to maintain the relationship effectively throughout Covid, thanks to various social media platforms and a commitment to the relationship on both sides.**

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**International Activities Please describe a minimum of three curriculum based activities with international focus. One of those activities must be in collaboration with your partner school abroad (a two-way exchange of information between the pupils in your school and the pupils in the partner school). The activities should have taken place in the 12 months prior to your application date. The activities must be completed and evaluated before submitting your form. The activities must show that your pupils' knowledge and understanding of other countries, cultures or global issues has developed and increased. Roughly half of the pupils in your school should be involved in the international activities as a whole.**

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Confirm each activity  
to be completed  
(minimum 3, up to 5)

**Activity 1**  
**Activity 2**  
**Activity 3**

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**Activity 1**

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Title of the international activity	<b>Student Exchange visit June 2023</b>
Teacher responsible	<b>David Stockdale</b>
Partner school(s) involved in this activity?	<b>Yes</b>
Please list the partner school(s) involved and their country. (i.e. School name, country)	<b>Vasil Levsky High School Karlovo Bulgaria</b>
Start date of activity	<b>22\07\2023</b>
End date of activity	<b>27\ 07\ 2023</b>
Subject Areas - Select all subject areas covered in the activity	<b>PE History English Science ICT Chemistry Geography Politics Language</b>
If Other is selected please list here the additional subjects. You can also list here what languages were included in the activity	<b>Bulgarian</b>
Number of pupils in this activity, by age range	<b>Please list the number of pupils by age that were involved in this activity. Detailing the number of pupils involved by age range will help to show the impact of the activity across your school. Your application will be deferred if this information is missing.</b>
Less than 5	n/a
5-6	n/a
6-7	n/a
7-8	n/a
8-9	n/a
9-10	n/a

10-11	n/a
11-12	n/a
12-13	n/a
13-14	n/a
14-15	n/a
15-16	<b>16.0</b>
16-17	n/a
17-18	n/a
18-19	n/a
Over 19	n/a

Please describe the activity that took place. If you worked with a partner school, describe how you worked together.

**June 2023 saw the outward leg of the fourth school exchange visit to our twinned school in Karlovo since the inception of the programme in 2016.**

**Each trip is characterised by an identified focus for our joint work. In 2019, the work was centred around diversity and commonality and was called: 'Boundaries Are Only Lines on a Map'. In June 2023, following a winter of devastating floods in and around Karlovo caused by climate change, the 2023 project was called: 'Overcoming Adversity', and had a focus on identifying potential and achievable strategies that may begin to respond to, and challenge, climate change.**

**Each student from both schools delivered pre-prepared presentations to foreground the project before they began any joint work. Students from Blacon High School have not had empirical experience of natural disasters, but all have witnessed climate change on a smaller scale. For example, the four weeks immediately prior to the trip were characterised by record seasonal temperatures and zero rainfall. This was followed by thunder storms with heavy rains and flash flooding; perhaps foreshadowing more serious problems in years to come.**

**Conversely, several villages and towns close to Karlovo experienced flooding of up to two metres, which caused the loss of homes and livelihoods; the town of Karlovo stands immediately at the foot of the Balkan mountains and the run off from very heavy rainfall caused rivers to burst their banks. Many of the students in our twinned school have family members, including grandparents, who were directly affected by the floods. Whilst there were no deaths in the floods, several older people have subsequently died, seemingly having 'given up' following the loss of everything they own; the difference in what central government support might be expected in Bulgaria, compared to the response one might expect in the UK, was discussed in terms of each country's ability to finance its social system.**

**Students worked together in groups to research material to support the creation of an informative and advisory digital resource that can also be printed. Students are aware that, in their lifetimes, they are all, potentially, going to be adversely affected by the effects of climate change and need to educate others, perhaps especially parents and carers, about the small changes that everyone can make right now that will have a positive impact on the planet.**

**This work will be concluded during the return leg of the exchange trip in October.**

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What were the aims of the activity?

The aims of the activity were to educate everyone, the school communities of the twinned schools both here in the UK and in Bulgaria, parents and carers, and the wider community, about the potential devastating impact of climate change. It is planned that, once all of the physical resources have been achieved as a result of the research that has already taken place, the learning will be shared in assemblies at whole-school level in both countries. Additionally, it is hoped that it will have a wider impact, as the outcomes of the work are shared with the wider community.

Blacon High School is part of a long-term, voluntary relationship with the five primary schools in the area. In many ways, the Blacon Educational Village (BEV) functions like an informal MAT and numerous common policies and systems have evolved as a result of this relationship; obviously, this impacts positively on student transition from KS2 to KS3. For approximately the last six years, students from Blacon High School have led a collaborative project with the BEV where they deliver presentations on a pre-agreed topic, share conflicting opinions, and then host a debate with representatives of all of the school council representatives from each of the primary schools. This is an opportunity to share the learning from the project and this has been scheduled for the first meeting of the BEV student councils in the autumn term.

What were the outcomes of the activity?

Students in both schools became very aware that they will, almost certainly, have to react and respond to the negative impacts of climate change. In fact, in terms of dealing with extremes, on one of the days of the exchange, students had to cope with a temperature of 42c on a visit to Plovdiv, Bulgaria's second city. This was in excess of what most of the students from Blacon High School have experienced before, and was extreme even for the Bulgarian students who are used to much warmer summers than are usual in the UK.

Students developed awareness and an understanding of the real, cumulative impact that making small changes can achieve. They discussed strategies such as the potential of moving to 100% paper-free schools and the adaptations both teachers and students would need to make to facilitate this. Students felt that this was achievable with limited, further, central investment and that it would, potentially, be impactful. They also researched the importance of investigating new opportunities to challenge our reliance on fossil fuels and develop, both existing and new, forms of renewable and sustainable, clean power; part of this research prompted discussion about the prohibitive cost, for many, of clean energy products such as electric cars, and how it is important to enhance the availability of, and access to, these items in an affordable way for all.

All of this work will be delivered in a shareable resource that will be promoted locally and in the wider community.

Evaluation Evidence: **We have generated a bank of evaluation forms based on the impact of the visit on students and their families. Evaluation forms have been completed by staff, students, and parents and carers. When the work of the project is delivered in partner primary schools and in whole-school assemblies, further evaluations forms will be completed.**

What evidence of work or evaluation is available for this activity if required for review by assessors?

**It is important that, in addition to the focus of each visit, where students from both countries collaborate on a project, the aim of the exchange programme is also, and perhaps even mainly, designed to develop an enhanced sense of cultural awareness among a group of students who have limited experience of the wider world. Blacon High School sits in an area of significant social and economic deprivation and approximately 60% of its students are Pupil Premium. The exchange trip is significantly subsidised by the school and, for several students who have taken part in the programme since its inception, it was the first time they had held a passport, the first time they had been on a plane, and the first time they had been abroad; as you can imagine, these students represent an enormous responsibility for the staff who lead each trip.**

**The value of this experience, where students are immersed, and function, in a culture that is so dramatically different to the one they have grown up in, is hard to quantify. However, what can be measured is the number of students who have maintained enduring relationships with their hosts for years following the trip.**

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## **Activity 2**

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Title of the international activity **The Power of Language**

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Teacher responsible **Carly Thelwell**

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Partner school(s) involved in this activity? **No**

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Start date of activity **01/10/22**

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End date of activity **30/06/23**

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Subject Areas - Select all subject areas covered in the activity **Language  
Drama**

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If Other is selected please list here the additional subjects. You can also list here what languages were included in the activity **French and Spanish**

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Number of pupils in this activity, by age range

**Please list the number of pupils by age that were involved in this activity. Detailing the number of pupils involved by age range will help to show the impact of the activity across your school. Your application will be deferred if this information is missing.**

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Less than 5

n/a

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5-6

n/a

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6-7

n/a

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7-8

n/a

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8-9

n/a

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9-10

n/a

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10-11

n/a

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11-12

**150.0**

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12-13

**150.0**

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13-14

**130.0**

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14-15

**15.0**

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15-16

**8.0**

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16-17

n/a

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17-18

n/a

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18-19

n/a

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Over 19

n/a

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Please describe the activity that took place. If you worked with a partner school, describe how you worked together.

**The MFL department engaged a drama company who offer performances to schools, usually for students in Key Stage 3 who have recently began their study, and invited them to perform some short plays that would be delivered entirely in a modern foreign language. We arranged two performances on different dates, one in French and one in Spanish, which are the two languages that we ultimately offer as GCSE option subjects.**

**At the time, Blacon High School had a student population of around 680, so each of these performances were delivered to more than 50% of the school community; there are approximately 130 - 150 students in each of Years 7, 8 and 9. In addition to the KS3 students, all students who had opted for either French or Spanish at GCSE attended the performances.**

**As you might expect, the plot line of each play was deliberately simple, and there were clear references to many of the basic elements, and vocabulary, that might be associated with the early stages of studying of a new language. For example, there was a focus on number, days of the week, introductions and the use of names. Additionally, there was an appropriate element of challenge as there was emphasis on the use of the present and simple past tenses.**

**The plays were very entertaining and were characterised with humour, which helped to maintain engagement. What was particularly effective was the impact of the several instances of audience participation. This was achieved both in a communal sense, when all those present shouted warnings to characters in an almost pantomime-esque manner, and also on an individual basis when one 'volunteer' was invited onto the stage and became part of the production. The key part of the entire process was that, at no time, did any of the verbal communication revert to English.**

**Each of the plays were well in excess of an hour in duration and, despite the obvious language barrier, the performers were able to hold the engagement of an audience in excess of four hundred in total, although not all at the same time as the school hall can only accommodate approximately 250 - 300 students comfortably at any one time.**

**It is also commendable that, following the performances, student voice demonstrated that almost everyone, even our more 'challenging' students, had enjoyed the experience, and while they may not have understood every word of what was said, the 'over'-acting helped to ensure that everyone was able to follow the plot with little difficulty.**

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What were the aims of the activity?

The MFL department wanted to illustrate to students that, even with a very a limited bank of key vocabulary, it is possible to make yourself understood, understand others and engage in meaningful and effective communication.

Blacon High School is in an area of significant social and economic deprivation and, as a result, many of our students have no experience of foreign travel. For those who have, the greater proportion have only visited very touristed destinations on package holidays where there is limited exposure to the real customs that help to signify and celebrate a different culture. We want to encourage a thirst for knowledge and exploration, and an interest in other languages and cultures.

Students learn to understand, respect and be tolerant of other customs, religions and traditions, by encouraging them to develop an enquiring mind.

We are beginning to achieve this by exposing them to other languages, educating them about, and encouraging them to try foods that they may not have come across, and promoting dialogue, hence the plays that were delivered entirely in either French or Spanish.

We are also committed to introducing them to students from different countries. We have achieved this in a variety of ways such as making pen pals and communicating digitally, real time conversations achieved remotely, and face to face interactions with visiting groups of international students and the range of subsidised opportunities we have offered to experience foreign travel.

What were the outcomes of the activity?

As a school in a socially disadvantaged area, we don't have a massive uptake for MFL subjects at GCSE which, in turn, means that we also have well below national average numbers of students who achieve positive outcomes across the Ebacc subjects. For us, success can be measured in lots of ways and we are committed to getting the right students on the right courses. However, we are a truly comprehensive school and we do have a significant proportion of high achieving students.

Studying a language is incredibly empowering and is useful in many ways. As a result of all of international initiatives that we promote around school, we hope to remove some of the mystery around studying MFL and encourage students to consider studying either French or Spanish, the two subjects we offer, at GCSE.

Partly as a result of all of our KS3 students watching these plays, along with other initiatives, students have learned that languages can be fun, enjoyable and accessible.

The most measurable impact of our work is that this year, we have had a 70% increase in uptake of students opting for a language at GCSE in 2023/24. We will continue to explore initiatives to develop an interest in the wider world by instigating every opportunity and developing further international links.

Evaluation Evidence: **We have a range of evaluation forms from staff, students, parents and carers, who have been involved in, or engaged, both directly and indirectly, with our international initiatives. We have a bank of photographs of some of the events we have held that introduced students to a variety of foods.**  
What evidence of work or evaluation is available for this activity if required for review by assessors? **Part of the leadership responsibilities of one member of the Senior Leadership Team is dedicated to investigating opportunities to promote and develop international links. The governing body of the school fully supports this work and it is a regular feature on meeting agendas.**

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### **Activity 3**

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Title of the international activity **Hosting English Language 'immersion' trips for groups of international students**

Teacher responsible **David Stockdale**

Partner school(s) involved in this activity? **Yes**

Please list the partner school(s) involved and their country. (i.e. School name, country) **Link established via UK Language Courses:  
UK Language Courses (UKLC)  
Unit 1d Rossett Business Village  
Rossett  
LL12 0AY**

Start date of activity **20/09/2022**

End date of activity **14/10/2022**

Subject Areas - Select all subject areas covered in the activity **Art  
English  
PE  
Science  
Mathematics  
Geography  
Business Studies  
History  
Media Studies  
Technology  
Music  
ICT  
Drama**

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If Other is selected please list here the additional subjects. You can also list here what languages were included in the activity

n/a

Number of pupils in this activity, by age range

**Please list the number of pupils by age that were involved in this activity. Detailing the number of pupils involved by age range will help to show the impact of the activity across your school. Your application will be deferred if this information is missing.**

Less than 5

n/a

5-6

n/a

6-7

n/a

7-8

n/a

8-9

n/a

9-10

n/a

10-11

n/a

11-12

**120.0**

12-13

**120.0**

13-14

**121.0**

14-15

**120.0**

15-16

**12.0**

16-17

n/a

17-18

n/a

18-19

n/a

Over 19

n/a

Please describe the activity that took place. If you worked with a partner school, describe how you worked together.

**In the 2022/23 academic year, we developed relationships with two external companies who organise language immersion experiences for groups of international students. This was a new venture for the school and we were able to host three groups of approximately thirty students each for three weeks duration during the autumn term. Two of the groups were Spanish and one group was from Italy; we don't offer Italian at Blacon High School, but we felt that hosting the group offered an important opportunity for our students to engage with young people from a contrasting culture.**

**The visits were structured so that each of our visiting students were buddied up with one of our Year 10s and we had no shortage of volunteers. This involved approximately 90 students over the course of the three visits and meant that they spent most of each day with our guests as each of whom followed the timetable of their buddy. The only exceptions to this was when members of the visiting group went into language lessons across all year groups and delivered presentations about where they came from, and shared the similarities and differences between their lives and ours in all aspects such as family, the education system, homework, food and traditions amongst other things. They also were invaluable in supporting GCSE students with preparation for the spoken elements of the Spanish GCSE**

**Initially, our students were very inquisitive about having a group of international students on site, but the novelty soon wore off and this was replaced by acceptance, and a genuine desire to get to know them.**

**Soon, the presence of an international group became the 'norm' because they were involved in every subject in the curriculum and they joined in every lesson, including engaging in paired and group activities; teachers treated each of them in exactly the same way as any other member of the student body. Also, during breaks and lunches, they became an extended part of the school cohort and it was heartening to see them being welcomed in to established friendship groups and playing sports.**

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What were the aims of the activity?

**The aim of agreeing to host groups of international students was to encourage our students to develop awareness of the wider world by affording them a first hand opportunity to engage with other languages and cultures. Also, by exposing them to students of a similar age, often with similar interests, we believed that it would promote a greater awareness and acceptance of difference, by discovering huge elements of commonality. For example, they soon learned that teenagers, regardless of where they come from are all interested in, and motivated by, lots of the same things such as sport, social media, fashion and music, amongst a host of other things.**

**It was also a test of resilience, imagination and innovation in adopting various, alternative modes of communication; how can you make yourself understood when words literally fail you?**

**Additionally, for those students who were already studying Spanish at GCSE, and for those considering choosing it as one of their options, it was an opportunity to investigate the language and a chance to practice and develop their speaking and listening skills in a non-judgemental manner with peers of their own age.**

What were the outcomes of the activity?

**Students gained confidence in communicating with representatives from other cultures (Spanish and Italian) across the three immersion experiences.**

**They gained an enhanced interest in 'difference' and increased awareness of diversity and acceptance.**

**Students were able to practice and improve their own language skills. As each group left after their three week stay, there was an unplanned exchange of gifts and lots of tears; it was clear that several friendships had developed and the intention was to maintain contact via social media.**

Evaluation Evidence: What evidence of work or evaluation is available for this activity if required for review by assessors?

**Extracts from the blog that was kept by the leaders of the visiting school during their stay in England.**

**Lots of photographic evidence of international guests engaging with our students across a range of subjects.**

**Evaluation forms from 'buddies'.**

**Enhanced engagement in MFL and an increase of 70% in students who have opted to study wither French or Spanish at GCSE.**

I would like to be sent details of British Council activities, services and events. (Opt in to receive occasional emails from the British Council regarding activities, services and events (including social events) that may be of interest to you.)

**Yes**

**Thank you for taking the time to complete your application for the International School Award. Once you press the submit button below your application will be sent in for assessment, which can take up to six weeks to complete. After this six-week timeframe, you will receive an email with the assessment decision and feedback. If more than six weeks have passed and you have not received your outcome email, please contact us via the email below Please get in touch with us should you have any questions or need advice. Email [isa@britishcouncil.org](mailto:isa@britishcouncil.org)**

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