

Inter-Action: sections européennes and specialist schools update autumn 2009



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Please circulate to: headteacher – director of specialism – international coordinator – head of languages

Welcome

Inter-Action: moving up,
moving on

Welcome to the autumn update for the international partnership programme 'Inter-Action: sections européennes and specialist schools'.

Over 70 new schools from Tyneside to the tip of Cornwall joined the programme in 2008-09. The autumn update focuses on some of the developments associated with this latest group of schools. 2009 has seen the first 14-19 consortium to be linked up with France, enhancing the programme's support for applied learning, and the first partnerships established as part of the London-Paris area link. These fresh departures and many more examples of innovative collaborative practice are featured over the following pages.

For more information about the programme, its partnerships and how to apply for a French partnership school in 2009/10, please visit www.inter-action.eu or contact Ana Miranda on 020 7802 0682 or scninter@ssatrust.org.uk

Susan Fitch
Programme Manager
International



London - Paris: a tale of two cities

A major factor in contacts between England and France over recent years has been the emergence of area links: a local authority in England that agrees a formal partnership with a specific part of France to promote social exchange at all levels and in all contexts.

Tommy Izzett, teacher of French and citizenship at Central Foundation Girls' School in Bow, east London, talks here of his school's involvement in the London-Paris link:

Thanks to the successful matching made by the Inter-Action programme, we have been able very quickly to establish a meaningful partnership with not just one, but two partner schools in the Paris region.

This three-way partnership began when we met our French counterparts in person over a two-day period in London. We found the opportunity both for the French teachers to visit our school and then for us to discuss further at the conference the following

day, extremely fruitful. Unlike other school twinning programmes, where meeting your colleagues from across the Channel can only happen after months of telephone calls and emails, the chance for us to be able to sit down and plan collaboratively face-to-face from the very outset meant that after the two days we had agreed an exciting programme of online resource exchange and student visits abroad that will take us up to July 2010.

Our particular partnership is quite unique within the Inter-Action programme in that we have been able to begin a three-way link between ourselves, Collège Robert-Desnos in Orly and Lycée Evariste Galois in Sartrouville. Our KS3 students will link with the collège whilst our KS4 students will interact with students at the lycée. Rather than placing the burden on one or two individuals, this means that there are six enthusiastic teachers contributing to our exchanges and we are therefore able to organise culturally rich and meaningful activities.

The first of these came recently when we arranged a highly successful video conference between our school and the collège. Teachers from the lycée,

as well as other local French headteachers and the Mayor of Orly, were invited on the French side. The video conference took place half in English, half in French and allowed students from year 9 and 4ème to communicate with each other live using high definition cameras and good quality sound. Our students relished the opportunity to show off their language skills and were very enthusiastic about doing it again soon. We intend to use this kind of event regularly to forge links between paired classes and establish long-lasting cultural interaction.

The Inter-Action programme provides exactly the kind of intercultural learning opportunities our language learners need, as students who live in a diverse school set within a highly multicultural community. 75% of our students speak a language other than English at home; many are well accustomed to intercultural exchanges happening in their daily lives.

As a performing arts and citizenship specialist school with International School status, we have found that the Inter-Action programme fits ideally our whole school priorities too. The culmination of next year's work will be two visits between the partner schools, where students will exchange short drama pieces around the theme of Racines et Identités/ Roots and Identities in joint performances in front of parents and teachers. Students will also make videos about themselves and exchange them online, and we will of course continue video conferencing to embed regular live communication.

Overall, our Inter-Action partnership has been incredibly useful in immediately cementing a positive working relationship with our French colleagues and starting to exchange rich cultural experiences between our students.

Going beyond!

When Westcliff High School for Girls in Westcliff-on-Sea, Essex, applied to join the Inter-Action programme, its primary aim was to extend the range of international contacts available within the school and so promote cultural understanding. Little did the school realise at the time that the project it was about to embark upon could extend the horizons of students in the school much further than this.

Like many other French schools, the driving force behind involvement in Inter-Action for Lycée Polyvalent Rouvière in Toulon was the desire to support the teaching of science through English in their section européenne. This was just one of the factors that made them an ideal partner for a science and engineering college like Westcliff.

When Ed Tsang, International Dimension Coordinator at Westcliff, received notice that his school was to be matched with a lycée in the south of France and that this school's representative specialised in science and electronics, he immediately involved the Westcliff physics department, embracing the idea that collaborative activity should belong to the whole school. From the contacts made prior to the Annual Partnership Conference in February, when the two schools would meet in person for the first time, a unique and truly imaginative project idea began to emerge: working closely together and using the latest technology for communication, students from the two schools would be asked to design and build robotic telescopes!

Inter-Action doesn't simply bring schools together – it actively encourages innovation, and the high expectations of each and every new partnership at the conference helped confirm Westcliff High School and Lycée Rouvière's joint decision to undertake this ambitious project. Detailed plans were put together over the course of the two-day event in Kensington and rapid arrangements were also made for 40 students and three staff from Lycée Rouvière to travel to the UK just six weeks later. Visiting Westcliff consolidated the relationship that had been forged at the conference and allowed for further in-depth conversations involving senior management. The French students even had the chance to take part in biology lessons.

The project is intended to be truly cross-curricular, with the scientists dealing with the technical aspects and the linguists catering for the complex vocabulary that will help students share ideas with one another. It is hoped that video conferencing will have a major role to play in bringing the groups of students together and there is the possibility of involving a third partner school in China. The outcome also promises to be spectacular with one objective being to photograph the rings of Saturn and students are even likely to be able to control each other's telescopes over the internet.

Both schools are now fully committed to the project and hope to share their ideas with other schools in their local area. In fact you could say that for this particular partnership, the sky's the limit!

Westcliff High School for Girls

Right: Students and staff from both schools gather together as they begin their journey to the stars.



Wish you were here!



Just like Westcliff High School, Bournemouth's Glenmoor School is a girls' comprehensive in a well-respected British seaside resort that joined the Inter-Action programme in 2008-09. As a maths & computing college with well-established provision in leisure and tourism and a strong belief in promoting the international dimension, Glenmoor has, however, taken a very different route with its new partnership.

The school was delighted to discover that it had been matched with Lycée Honoré de Balzac in the centre of Paris and immediately asked year 9 students to begin writing emails. The first replies they received from their new friends in the French capital were greeted with great excitement by the Glenmoor students and they quickly advanced to sharing photos, recipes and other items of mutual interest.

The realisation soon dawned, however, that the two schools actually had something unusual in common. Whilst Bournemouth and Paris are very different places, they are both major centres of tourism that draw visitors from home and abroad. It was decided that students should not only produce brochures and DVDs about their local areas to exchange with their partners, as many Inter-Action schools do, but that the local tourist boards in each case should be closely involved in the project. In this way the activity could involve the wider community as well as providing realistic and relevant tasks for Glenmoor students.

With the enthusiastic input of both schools, it won't be too long before many more Parisians are sunning themselves on Bournemouth beach, whilst the good folk of Dorset are busy climbing the Eiffel Tower. Not so much an exchange as a real opportunity for the local tourist industry and a major benefit to students.

It is planned that photo collages and displays emerging from this work will be placed in the school's entrance hall signalling the contribution this new partnership makes to the global dimension within the school.

As well as a link with a school in China involving the use of maths and so building on the school's specialism, Glenmoor students have also taken part in expeditions to Sri Lanka and Morocco in recent years to assist development projects in those countries. More recently the school staged a European Day to coincide with the elections to the European Parliament. Each tutor group was given a country to represent and the European theme was included in lessons across the school. Students dressed up in the traditional clothes of their adopted country, ran food stalls and even took part in a mock EU election.

Integrating internationalism into every aspect of the curriculum features strongly in the school's development plan and there are even ideas that the school could lead the expansion in global education for other schools in the area.

Glenmoor School





Halesowen – the way forward!

On the day of this year's Annual Partnership Conference Britain was covered in snow. The BBC news began that morning with the image of a frozen reporter on a motorway bridge and as he pointed behind him into a blizzard, he uttered the words 'Somewhere back there, Halesowen has disappeared!'

Despite that fact, two teachers from Leasowes Business & Enterprise College and Windsor High School in the town were at that very moment on their way down to London to take part in an Inter-Action partnership that would be the first of its kind.

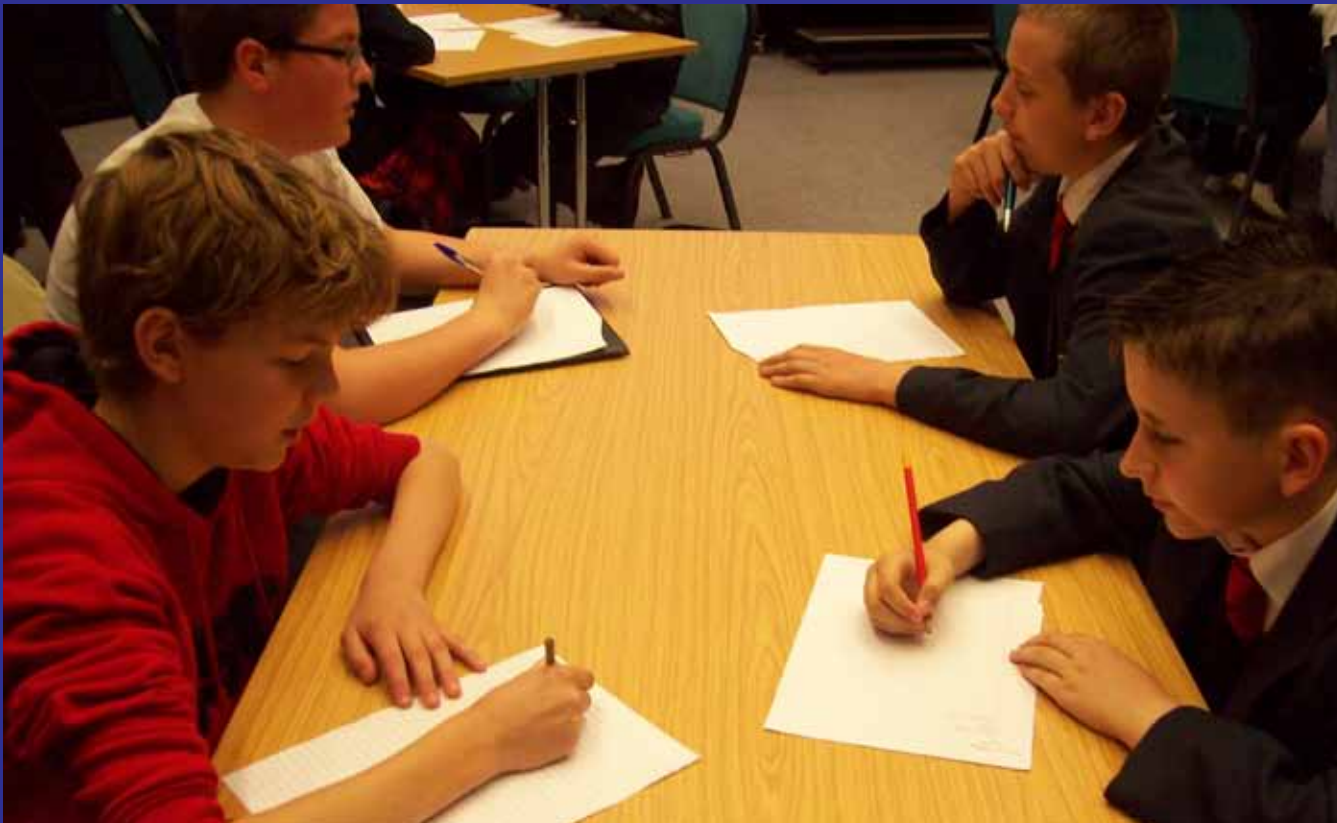
Inter-Action has supported curriculum development in both England and France since its inception and in recent years the programme has also encouraged a particular focus on applied learning. Establishing a partnership arrangement between the Halesowen Education Trust and neighbouring schools from Créteil on the outskirts of Paris was therefore a natural progression for Inter-Action in its support of 14-19 reform in England as well as the restructuring of teaching programmes in France.

Halesowen was a pathfinder in the development of 14-19 provision and has set itself the objective of delivering the widest possible range of qualifications for this age group. The Académie de Créteil is also at the forefront of educational developments and seeks to give its students every opportunity to meet the challenges of the 21st century. Engaging with English schools and preparing exciting international experiences for its students is very much in the thinking of the Rectorat, particularly when it comes to applied learning, so they were pleased to identify a lycée professionnel and a nearby collège to link up with the two Halesowen schools in a joint partnership.

The idea is that eventually students from every school in the consortium, including Halesowen College, would be able to participate in projects with students from a wider range of French schools with, wherever possible, this collaboration reflecting the specific areas of study they are involved in. In both countries the schools already work together extensively and therefore operating collectively, with students communicating by email and video conference will simply build on this experience in an international context that is bound to be of benefit to all.

The Halesowen Education Trust

Forging links: Ridgeway High School, Wirral and Collège Marie-Curie, Lille



Through the Inter-Action Partnership scheme, Ridgeway High School, the only non-selective language college on the Wirral, has forged some very successful links with both the staff and pupils at Collège Marie Curie in Lille, France.

In May we were delighted to welcome 25 pupils and five staff from France, to spend the day with us at Ridgeway.

We planned activities around the theme of 'Getting to Know Each Other' and we were lucky enough to be able to use the fantastic ICT facilities at Discovery City Learning Centre (CLC) on the Ridgeway site.

At 9.30, 30 very nervous Ridgeway pupils met the 25 equally nervous French pupils.

After some ice-breaking activities, which required the pupils to ask questions about themselves, the groups started to relax a little and paired up to produce some excellent interviews with each other, which were burnt onto DVD, and some brilliant PowerPoint presentations about their partners.

What was particularly great was that, thanks to the technical support from Discovery CLC, both groups got a copy of the DVD with all the interviews, photos and PowerPoints on it as a keepsake of the day.

The highlight of the day had to be at lunch time, when an impromptu football match took place with what seemed like the whole school watching! What was particularly lovely was that it wasn't the 'England vs. France' game that you would have expected; boys from all years at Ridgeway mingled in with the French boys, the language barrier presenting no problems at all!

By the time the French pupils left in the afternoon, firm friendships had been established, there were exchanges of MSN addresses and even tears!

Ridgeway plans a return visit to Lille in December, where we hope to spend a day at Collège Marie-Curie and a day taking in the delights of the Lille Christmas Markets.

Mrs. Kate Hytner, Head of Language Faculty, Ridgeway High School

A website to promote entente cordiale

Comberton Village College in Cambridgeshire began working with Lycée Jean Jaurès in the city of Reims as a new Inter-Action partnership this year. Alexandra Jarry from Comberton explains how she has used the website www.rafi.ki in the project work the two schools have done:

The main objective of our project is to raise standards and proficiency in using a foreign language and to achieve this we have been using the website www.rafi.ki. There is a cost involved, but we find it a most useful way of bringing our students into contact with one another as it allows them to get to know a different culture and improve their language skills as well as make new friends online. The website has been tailored to maximise the use of French and English as a listener, reader and speaker. All of the users' actions are logged and moderated. Teachers can access all their students' recent actions and so can check through the communications they have made. There are also automatic filters in place so that any issues are flagged up immediately.

We hope to deepen the links between the two schools with the help of this website developing the project further through using video conferencing and a wide variety of activities in all curriculum areas. We also believe that the website will allow the project to have its own momentum with students initiating contacts themselves as part of their independent learning.

Trouble in paradise

Inter-Action partnerships include links with mainland France and French overseas territories in the Caribbean and the Indian Ocean. Many schools have developed amazing projects with la Réunion and Guadeloupe and truly added a global dimension to their curriculum. Inter-Action partnerships with Martinique have also proved very successful, but earlier this year events on the island led to difficulties for some partner schools.

A general strike held Martinique in its grip for 38 days in early spring causing schools to be shut and inevitably leading to contacts with English partner schools via emails and video conferencing to be stalled. One unfortunate Inter-Action school even had to cancel the trip of a lifetime for its students the day before they were due to fly out to the Caribbean due to the unrest.

Thankfully the troubles on the paradise island ended with the signing of a protocol between the government and a coalition of trade unions that met the strikers' demands for a €200 monthly wage increase for low-wage earners.

About 20,000 people celebrated the historic victory in a march through the streets of the capital Fort-de-France. They repeatedly chanted the slogan 'Matinik leve,' or 'Martinique stand up' in the local Creole dialect.

Once back in touch, many of the English schools used images and details sent from their partners in Martinique to inform their students about what had been happening, offering them an insight into events on the other side of the world that they would have been unable to have in any other way.





2009 Annual Partnership conference:

Date: 5-6 February 2009

Venue: The Kensington Close Hotel, London

Teachers representing schools from all parts of England and France came together in Kensington as a further 50 new partnerships joined the Inter-Action programme in January 2009. With schools of every specialism taking part in the conference, there was also a large number of French colleagues present teaching subjects such as science and engineering in English in the section européenne of their collège or lycée.

Ian Arrowsmith, representing the Joint International Unit (JIU), and Michel Monsauret from the Service Culturel at the French Embassy, welcomed the representatives from both countries and set the scene for an enjoyable and very informative event. Over two days delegates were able to hear from existing partnerships about the impact a successful Inter-Action partnership can have right across the school as well as having the opportunity to share imaginative ideas for collaborative projects with one another.

'Excellent ambiance – it was great to be part of an Anglo-French gathering of teachers all with the same focus.'

'It was fascinating to share ideas from totally different educational backgrounds and contexts.'

'It was amazing to find we had not only been matched against courses taught, but also in terms of personalities. I feel I have already made a friend, which is the best way to maintain a long term contact.'

'The planning sessions were great – sharing ideas and discussing future projects was really motivating.'

- Delegates from the 2009 annual partnership conference: Inter-Action: sections européennes and specialist schools

Inter-Action: sections européennes and specialist schools – applying for an Inter-Action partnership for 2009/10 and Annual Conference in Paris January 2010

The introduction of the seven cross-curriculum dimensions <http://curriculum.qca.org.uk/> in the new secondary curriculum provides an opportunity for specialist schools to consider new ways of broadening young people's experience and knowledge through international links. If you would like to apply for a French partner school, please complete the online application form at www.inter-action.eu

Schools are carefully selected to match interests and priorities. Partnered schools will meet to plan their activity in Paris in January 2010. There is dedicated support from experienced SSAT colleagues for school partnerships including a dedicated website for advice and interaction with other partners. Schools in France receive similar support. The programme is open to all specialisms. Projects often focus on innovative ways to use ICT e.g. blogs, podcasts, skype, wikis and video conferencing.

Examples of current projects include:

- **engineering:** project to build racing cars
- **humanities and languages:** environmental studies through bilingual teaching
- **technology, maths and computing:** product design and website construction
- **special education:** special schools engaging students in language learning
- **applied learning:** specific strand focussed on links with lycées professionnels.