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Empowering children and young people - **languages, connections, cultures**

Speaking other languages, having international experiences and connections and understanding other cultures. These are key factors in enabling children and young people to achieve their potential, feel connected, valued and able to make a positive difference.

It is not any one of these factors, but three interconnected elements, that combined, can dramatically enrich the lives and experiences of children and young people.

By investing in all three from an early age and throughout their education, in schools and in communities, we can create an environment that embraces internationalism, language learning and intercultural awareness and enable children and young people to:

- appreciate other cultures and value diversity
- broaden their perspectives and understandings of the world
- explore issues of significance to themselves and others internationally
- build their confidence, communication and interpersonal skills
- be open to different ideas, views and new opportunities
- develop initiative, resilience and versatility
- improve attainment and future education options
- have broader career opportunities and employment choices.



Supporting and improving the teaching of languages in school, encouraging language take up and enabling young people to enjoy language learning and connect with others are essential to achieving these outcomes, as is opening up opportunities to explore other cultures. International connections can be developed

online through education links, making international collaboration and connections part of everyday experiences. Even more impactful is being able to participate in international visits. A strategic approach across all education settings can help achieve this.

Those who have different home languages have an instant advantage in terms of their linguistic capabilities and potential to learn new languages, as well as a broader cross-cultural understanding. Nurturing and valuing this diversity within education, society and the world of work brings advantages and opportunities for all.

We need to support and empower all young people to become active, global citizens to be able to flourish in an increasingly multicultural society and globalised economy and to be able to make a positive contribution.



About the author

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Declan has been the Director of International Newcastle since 2018. She is passionate about internationalism and languages and has 30 years of experience in collaborative working, policy and partnership development, lobbying and advocacy at local, regional, national and European levels. The role of Director of International Newcastle combines all the things she is passionate about - internationalism, languages, communities, building networks, supporting international links and connecting young people to opportunities.

International Newcastle leads on Newcastle City of Languages, which is a partnership approach to supporting language learning and teaching in the city and the celebration of cultural diversity.

Working closely with Newcastle City Council (School Effectiveness), International Newcastle also supports schools to develop international links and an international approach across the school community. In addition, International Newcastle co-ordinates the partnership which delivers the annual Express Yourself: North East Festival of Languages. This provides a range of free events, activities and resources to celebrate languages, the diverse cultures and communities in the region and our connections to the world. The third annual event took place in March 2023.

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