

The Influence of North South School Partnerships

Examining the evidence from schools in the UK, Africa & Asia

Final Report | Executive Summary

Funding



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International
Development

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A NOTE FROM THE MANAGEMENT GROUP

As education systems continue to evolve worldwide in order to provide a twenty-first century education for our learners, so too do the means of delivery similarly evolve in order to meet the constantly changing and increasingly complex needs of the students.

One of the emerging requirements for schools in the UK is to manage the demands of globalisation. In particular they need to develop in our learners the social skills and awareness of difference so that they can engage in effective inter-cultural dialogue both internationally and in their own communities and be equipped to work in a global environment. School partnerships can be an innovative and effective vehicle for delivering global education.

In order to prepare a skilled workforce for a global economy an international strategy “Putting the World into World Class Education” was launched by the then Department for Education and Skills (2004). It declared that every school and college in England and Wales should have, by 2010, a partnership with a similar institution somewhere across the world. This set in motion countless school partnership initiatives, some of significant value and others that resulted in detrimental relationships with their partnership institution.

We believe that unless global learning is incorporated into the everyday learning experiences of our young people through different curriculum areas, education is not going to help to bridge the cultural and economic divides that are prevalent today. As the gap between rich and poor widens within and between countries it is also starkly apparent that learners from poor backgrounds achieve less through education. Developing global citizenship through mutually beneficial school partnerships, we believe, is one way of bridging the divide and looking forward in the 21st century.

But we are also aware that partnerships do not always meet their objectives. Consequently it is vital to identify the ingredients for successful partnerships so that these can be propagated in other schools.

We need to understand the impact of the partnership on teachers, learners and the wider community in schools at both ends of the partnership, and to explore what the non-UK partner schools think of their relationships with their UK partner.

This research explores our questions.

Angela Cook
Cambridge Education Foundation

Nick Maurice
UKOWLA

A NOTE FROM THE PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR

Leading a multi-country research study can be an adventure at the best of times. When you are developing instruments and methods related to a relatively new topic of research interest, it becomes even more of a journey.

Our first year of research was challenging, complicated and rewarding. In many ways, via our efforts to develop partnerships with our Management and Advisory Groups as well as our research and professional colleagues across the countries, we have been experiencing and demonstrating the challenges and opportunities that many schools working on their own partnerships are facing. Through our research on partnerships between schools, we have learnt about the very nature of international partnership.

This report marks the conclusion of our two years of study. In the first year, we conducted surveys to understand more about the landscape of partnership across schools in the African, Asia and the United Kingdom. We invited school partnership leaders to complete surveys on their perceptions of how their partnerships started, evolved and influenced (or didn't) various outcomes within their schools. We present the data in summary form and pose some policy related questions.

Here, we present the cumulative findings from our two years of research. We focus, however, on the second year findings from our 55 school-level studies across the 5 countries in Africa, 3 countries in Asia and 4 countries of the UK. The data herein presents some interesting implications for organizations supporting partnerships, policy makers, practitioners and researchers!! We hope, this report will renew and continue many of the interesting debates and discussions.

Finally, we would like to thank Alex Isabirye, Headteacher at Nakanyonyi Primary School in Uganda, for allowing us to visit his school during the first and second year of the research. We were introduced to Alex via Ike Garson of Oxfordshire who had heard of our research through the development education grapevine. When Ike heard we would be in Uganda, he suggested by text, even before we had ever met in person, that we visit Alex and his colleagues. We jumped at the opportunity and had an amazing day at the school.

We thank Alex and colleagues because the picture on some copies of the front of this report is of the staff room at Nakanyonyi. It was deliberately built in the middle of the schoolyard so that the teachers and students could be in contact all the time. When we visited, the teachers were busy marking in the staff room but students felt no hesitation in entering and asking questions or for help. The picture, for us, symbolizes the serendipitous nature of many partnerships and of the connections and relationships that lead to partnerships. However, more importantly, it also symbolizes the value of what we can learn from each other when we are willing to offer our connections and support or build something in a new way.

We look forward to your feedback and questions on this report, so please be in touch.

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THE INFLUENCE OF NORTH SOUTH SCHOOL PARTNERSHIPS: EXAMINING THE EVIDENCE FROM SCHOOLS IN THE UK, AFRICA AND ASIA

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Executive Summary

INTRODUCTION

In this report, we present the findings from the second year of our two-year international school partnerships research study funded by the Department for International Development (DfID). Our research mandate was to explore the perceived impact of these partnerships on schools, leaders, teachers and students. We were also tasked to develop a better understanding of the types of schools that were engaging in partnerships: their characteristics, and implementation and leadership strategies.

As the title of the research project suggests, we were specifically interested in partnerships between the North (United Kingdom) and the South (Africa and Asia). In the North, we explored partnerships in the United Kingdom (UK), including England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales. In Africa, we collected data in Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, South Africa, Tanzania, The Gambia, Uganda and Zambia. In Asia, we worked in India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka.

During the first year of our research, we explored the landscape, practice and impact of partnerships in the UK, Africa and Asia, using a survey designed for Partnership Coordinators in 800 UK and 800 African and Asian schools. The findings from our first year of research¹ are based on responses to our survey from schools across the UK, Africa and Asia. In the second year of the study, our sample was drawn from schools located in all four countries of the United Kingdom (England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales), five countries in Africa (Ghana, Kenya, Uganda, South Africa and Tanzania) and three countries in Asia (India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka). Due to national and local-level challenges, our final sample included 17 pairs of schools and 55 school case studies.

We recognise that there are many different organisations that support schools partnerships. However, our purpose in this study is not to explore the different types of supporting organisations or to compare the support provided. Our primary goal is to understand more about how partnerships work and their influence on participants. We have deliberately avoided comparing programmes and approaches, and have instead rooted our work within the partnerships themselves. We hope that our findings will provide organisations working to support partnerships and schools with the evidence they require to accelerate their work.

¹ Copies of the first year report can be obtained by emailing Karen Edge (k.edge@ioe.ac.uk) or from the IOE, University of London website at <http://www.ioe.ac.uk/lcll/current/IOE-Edge08-SchoolPartnership-Report.pdf>.

THE REPORT

Although we have combined the findings from the first and second years of our study into this report, and highlighted the cumulative lessons from our work, we rely mostly upon the data from our second year of work. This summary follows the structure of the full report and is presented in six sections. First, we present the overarching *conceptual framework* that guided our work. While our primary task was to explore the influence of partnerships on the different stakeholder groups, we also wanted to understand the factors that influence those partnerships that are perceived to be moving ahead quickly with their implementation and are perceived to be having a significant influence on their leaders, teachers and students. Our *methods* section details how we conducted our second year research. As we have previously discussed the methods we used in our first year in other publications, we focus here on the details of how we conducted the school case studies in the second year of our research. In turn, we focus on what we have learnt about the *influence of partnership on teachers and students*. Within the report, we highlight our findings related to communities as well. Next, we present the distilled lessons from a set of partnerships that we believe are generating the most significant influence on their leaders, teachers and students. We have called these '*high momentum partnerships*' and we believe that the experience of these partnerships will be of value to individuals, schools and organisations involved in partnerships. Finally, we present our *conclusions and recommendations*. Due to the large volume of data we collected and analysed throughout our work on this project, we have included a summary of additional resources within the Appendices that will soon be available on our website and from our research partners.

THE CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK FOR OUR RESEARCH

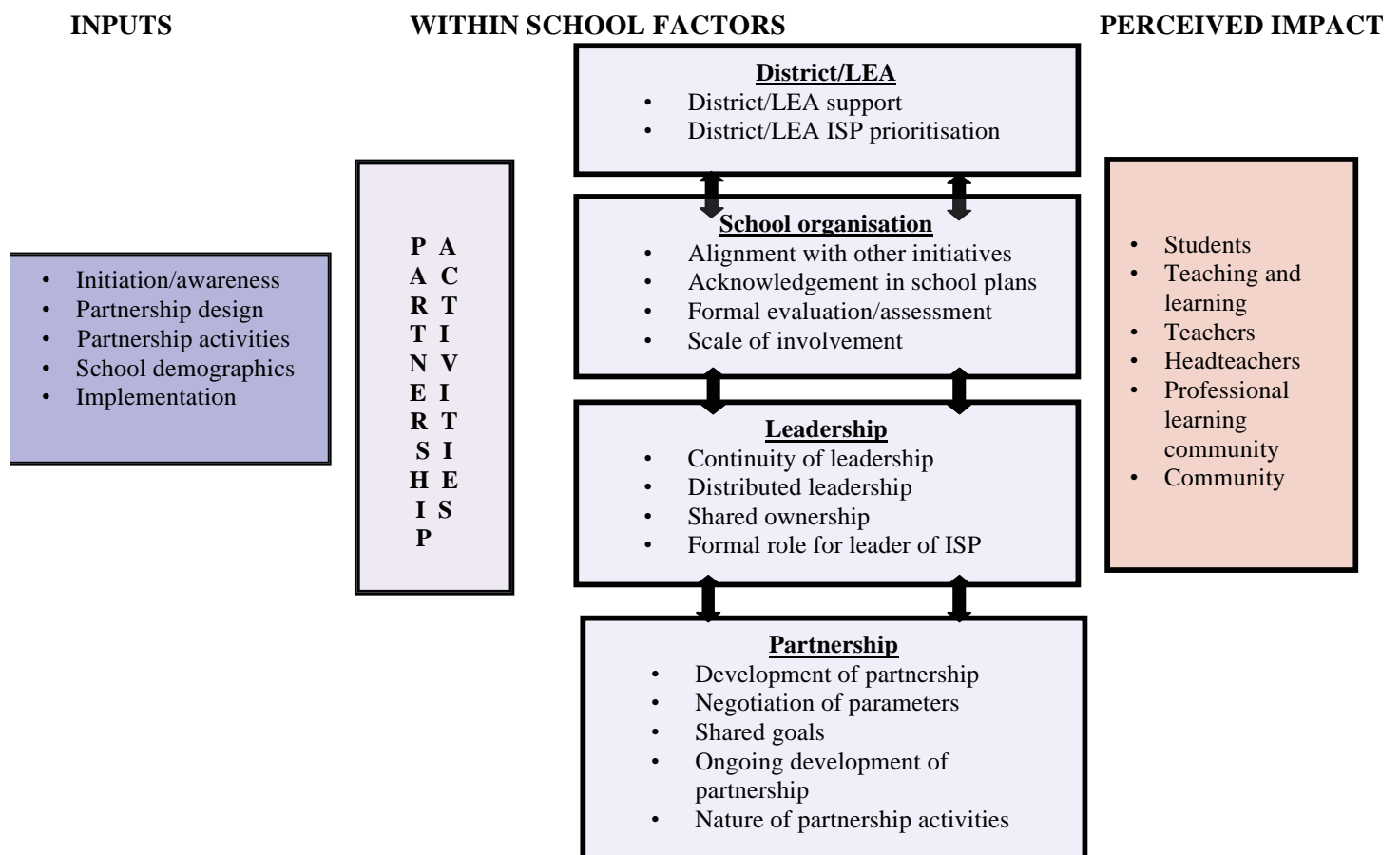
The complex nature of school-level work and the high number of simultaneous school-level policy interventions make it impossible to isolate how international school partnerships directly influence school- or individual-level change. However, we believe it is possible to understand how individuals view the influence of the partnership by using a range of factors associated with whole school and individual performance, learning and understanding.

At the same time, simply framing this research with the question: 'What is the impact of the international school partnership on various elements of your school and individuals?' would have only generated a simplistic picture of how participants perceive the influence of their partnership activities on students, teachers and whole schools. We would have been unable to attribute any perceived partnership success or failure to any factors and/or conditions that exist within and between schools that support healthy and productive partnerships.

There was little previous research exploring international school partnerships. As such, our conceptual model for this research is based on what we know about factors that influence successful school-level reform and partnerships, including: leadership, school effectiveness and improvement, reform implementation and partnership theory. In turn, we set about building a model that would not only allow us to examine the perceived impact of school partnerships but also to identify additional factors that may be influential. The model supported the design of the survey and analysis and provided us with three distinct sets of data: *inputs*, *in-school factors* and *perceived impact*. Based on our reading and synthesis of previous research and findings, we developed the following framework for the research.

We are most interested in understanding how survey participants feel that their partnerships have impacted on their school and teaching and learning. However, without being able to make some statements about the factors that have led to that impact, our research would not have provided a robust enough picture of the partnership landscape to contribute sufficiently to the policy and practice of partnerships within the UK and beyond.

Figure 1. Our conceptual framework for the NSSP research



Input factors. We gathered three types of information from survey and school case study participants. The first is the *basic demographic information* about each partnership school. The second is the *implementation information* detailing how the school became aware of, entered and designed their partnership. The third is the between and within-school *partnership activities*.

In-school factors. Much of the research literature on school improvement and leadership suggests that changes within schools and implementation of new initiatives are more likely to occur when certain conditions are met. These conditions include prioritising the initiative, alignment with other initiatives, consistent leadership, and deep and wide embedding of the initiative within the school. To explore the possible relevance of this information for partnerships, we gathered four types of information related to factors that may influence the perceived impact of a partnership. The first is related to the support that schools receive from their *district/local authority-level colleagues*. The second is *leadership*. We were particularly interested in who is leading the partnership, the recognition of their role, how it is prioritised within the school, and the stability of leadership within the school. The third is the *organisation’s characteristics*. This area of inquiry should provide some information related to how schools are working to align the partnership with their other work in the school as well as other related issues. The final category related to *partnerships* in general

Perceived impact. The end goal of this research is to assess the perceived impact of international school partnerships on schools, leaders, teachers, students and communities. As previously discussed, assessing the impact of any one initiative within this very complicated and congested reform climate is nearly impossible (Anderson, 1991). Based on the model presented above, we constructed a set of measures that contribute to the success of initiatives

in other contexts. As such, we developed a model that would not only gather feedback on the perceived impact of partnerships but also on the factors that influence impact.

OUR METHODS

The first year of our research focused on learning more about the landscape of international school partnerships between Africa, Asia and the United Kingdom. In our first year report, we detailed our process for gathering survey data from 1600 schools in 16 countries in Africa, Asia and the United Kingdom. Due to a very low response rate from Northern Ireland and Wales, the results in our first year report were based on a 21% response rate from England and Scotland, and a 59% response rate from Africa and Asia. Although these response rates represent a good first attempt at building an understanding of the reality of partnership in these regions, they are not statistically significant because of the relatively small number of responses from schools in some countries. However, in combination with our second year data, we built a more robust picture of partnerships and their influence.

In the second year of our research, we embarked on an ambitious journey to gather more detailed qualitative data on partnerships from 55 schools in 12 countries. We explored how schools are engaging in partnership and the perceived impact on students, teachers, schools and communities in the UK (England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales), Asia (India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka) and Africa (Ghana, Kenya, South Africa, Tanzania, and Uganda).

School selection. Across the sample and within each country, we were looking for schools that represented a balance of country/regions, location (urban/rural), phase (primary/secondary/all age), gender (single/mixed) and status (faith and special needs). Even though we were not comparing different partnership programmes, we wanted to ensure that different programmes were represented. Advisory Group members also recommended five schools they felt displayed what we defined as ‘interesting partnership practice’. These recommendations allowed us to have a small number of ‘recommended’ partnerships in each country, producing a stratified random sample. To maintain the anonymity of schools, we do not share their names here or anywhere in the report. However, we are in the process of gaining permission to identify schools in our technical papers and school resources.

Table 1: Final school/country selection breakdown

Continent	Country	Primary	Secondary	All Ages	Total cases
Africa	Ghana	1	1	1	3
	Kenya	2	1	1	4
	South Africa	3	1	0	4
	Tanzania	1	2	1	4
	Uganda	3	0	0	3
Asia	Pakistan	0	0	2	2
	India	0	0	4	4
	Sri Lanka	0	0	1	1
UK	England	6	10	1	17
	N. Ireland	0	3	0	3
	Scotland	3	1	0	4
	Wales	2	3	0	5
Total	12 countries	21	22	11	54 (+1)²

² We mention throughout the report that we conducted 55 school studies. We note here that one study was not included in the final write-up due to several issues related to the circumstances of the data collection.

We recruited a team of international colleagues in 14 different countries. Members of our team spent one day in each participating school, conducting interviews with school and partnership leaders, leading focus groups with teachers and facilitating activity workshops with students. For each school, we have developed a 6–10 page case study outlining its own unique approach to partnership. In each case, we present information using the same categories that guided our first year survey. As such, each case study includes sections on:

- School background and demographic information
- Partnership development: formation, support, training, leadership and policy alignment
- Partnership in practice: objectives, communication, involvement and curriculum initiatives
- Monitoring and evaluation: internal and external methods of evaluation
- Perceived impact: students, teachers, leaders and community
- Challenges and opportunities: improving the partnership, advice for schools.

In turn, we conducted pair-analysis of participating schools and their partners as well as continental cross-case studies to gain a better understanding of emerging trends related to the experience and impact of partnerships in Africa, Asia and the United Kingdom.

Access challenges. We experienced significant challenges in recruiting schools for this research – more than we had anticipated. Within the UK, we were successful in collecting data in 28 schools. Based on our original sample, 20 of the 32 schools were eager to participate in the study. We were surprised at the challenges we faced in securing the remaining 12 schools and have identified the following reasons for their decision not to participate: partnership is no longer active; school claims to be ‘too busy’; Partnership Coordinator has left the school; change in Headteacher; and the school cannot afford the necessary supply cover. As a result of the challenges in the UK, we also faced challenges in other countries. However, when we encountered access issues in Southern countries, researchers reported security and conflict as the main issues for resistance to participation. For example, in Pakistan, resistance to participation was directly related to conflict and insecurity in the school’s vicinity. In Sri Lanka, schools were also in the midst of national and local-level crisis.

Our research team. Our research explores the influence of international North-South school partnerships on schools, leaders, teachers and students. As such, we wanted our research team to echo all of these elements of our work. So while we were conducting research on partnerships, we were also developing our own partnerships with researchers around the world. We were not immune to many of the challenges our school colleagues face when building partnerships. We were actively seeking our partners, developing new relationships, communicating about important issues, and dealing with issues of funding, among many other challenges. We would like to think that, like our ‘high momentum’ partnership schools, we have turned these challenges into opportunities for learning, and that our research has gained from our collective perseverance and experience. The product of our collective efforts is presented within the summary and the full report. We hope that the research partnerships we have developed throughout our partnership research will continue in the future.

Our data collection and analysis teams. The data collection teams were responsible for arranging their school visits, conducting all in-school data collection and preparing their final school-level case studies. In the United Kingdom, our data collection team consisted of colleagues from the IOE, University of London including: Sonia Ben-Jaafar, Jodi Coats, Meli Glenn, Dr Rob Higham, Khatera Khamsi, Neil Gillbride, Marie Lall, James Lawrie and Victoria Showumi. We also had the pleasure of working with Elaine Lam (Bath Spa University). Our data collection and analysis colleagues in Asia include: Dr Marie Lall (IOE,

University of London) and Dr Mallica Misra (Mata Sundri College for Women, India), Kulsoom Jaffar and Nilofar Vazir (Aga Khan University, Pakistan) and Fazna Ahmad (Sri Lanka). In Africa, we worked with Viet Cooke (IOE, University of London, working in Tanzania), James Lawrie (IOE, University of London, working in Kenya), Nicanor Ogolla (Maseno University, Kenya), Connie Ssebbunga Masembe, David Kabugo and Charles Kyasanku (Makerere University, Uganda), and Everard Weber and Mathramuthu Pillay (University of the Witwatersrand, South Africa). Our analysis team was led by James Lawrie and included: Fazna Ahmed (Sri Lanka), Michael Clements (UK), Katherine Descours (Canada), Keren Frayman (Israel), Khatera Khamsi (Switzerland), Elaine Lam (UK/Canada), Heather McCuaig Edge (Canada), Shaun Phillips (UK), Bronwen Robertson (UK/New Zealand) and Melissa White (UK/Canada).

Our advisory group. In addition to our extensive team of research colleagues, we had two sets of colleagues providing instrumental support. Our Management team, Angela Cook (Cambridge Education Associates) and Nick Maurice (UKOWLA and BUILD), were responsible for the finance and contracting of the project. We were fortunate to work with an excellent advisory group throughout the process. The group assisted in the definition of the research, designing of the tools and feeding back on drafts and process. These colleagues include: Shirley Addies (DFID); Angie Cook (Cambridge Education Foundation); Lynn Cutler (UKOWLA); Diana Dalton (DFID); Mary Dawson (LCD); Sandy Docherty (DFID); Bob Doe (Independent); Andy Egan (British Council-DGSP); Ann Harper (DCSF); Stephen Harvey (LCD); Judith Hemery (British Council); Andrea Mason (British Council -DGSP); Nick Maurice (UKOWLA and BUILD); Ruth Najda (British Council-DGSP); Ann McCabe (VSO); Marie Niven (DCFS); Manisha Prajapati (DFID); Sue Schirmer (LCD); Brenda Sole (British Council -DGSP); Olga Stanojlovic (British Council); Nikki Stoddart (DFID); Helen Young (DEA); and Leena Vadler (VSO).

In-school data collection. During our one day of data collection in each school, we employed four distinct data-gathering tools to support our work with leaders, teachers, other staff and community members (where possible) and students. Our UK research team designed the tools and then tested them in Uganda and, in turn, Ghana. During our visits, we conducted interviews with school and partnership leaders. We conducted a teacher focus group with those involved as well as those not directly involved with the partnership. Within each school, we conducted two student workshops to explore their experiences, knowledge and enjoyment of their partnership activities. Based on funding constraints, this data has been briefly examined but not fully analysed for inclusion here.

Data analysis. We conducted our data analysis in three distinct phases. ***Phase one*** occurred at country-level and was completed by the researcher responsible for collecting the data. Based on the interviews, focus groups and observations within school, a 6–10 page case study was developed. Our international team worked across all 55 case studies to identify the emerging trends related to partnership initiation and development, leadership and management and recommendations for future development. ***Phase two*** engaged our team in conducting specific analyses that led to the development of continental and phase-based analysis. Within this strand of work, we developed the following distinct analysis summaries: UK-Primary, UK-Secondary, Africa-Primary, Africa-Secondary, Africa-All Age, and Asia-All Age. ***Phase three*** involved our team in examining the perceived influence of partnerships on teachers, students and whole schools. To explore the influence of partnerships on students, we re-analysed all 55 cases to understand more about student development of ‘knowledge’, ‘skills’ and ‘understanding.’ We also focused on student enjoyment. We also wanted to know more about the influence of partnerships on teachers and explored the content, depth of skills development. We used more general analysis categories in the ‘influence on communities’ section due to limited information available here.

Data presentation. Throughout the remaining sections of this summary, and in the main report, we present introductory findings from our first year surveys. However, we focus our attention on the second year school case study data. The remainder of this summary focuses on three core strands of our findings: *influence of partnership participation on teachers; influence of partnership participation on students;* and *factors contributing to high momentum partnerships.* This summary concludes with recommendations for policy makers and organisations that support partnerships and schools.

INFLUENCE OF PARTNERSHIP PARTICIPATION ON TEACHERS

Teachers' professional development is an important part of personal and school improvement strategies. Within partnerships, teachers and leaders involved in the partnership activities consistently report learning new things as a result. Students are not the only participants who gain new knowledge, skills and understanding as a result of their partnership work. Based on our findings, teachers believe they gain a wealth of knowledge and skills from the activities. In this section we present more detailed findings from our first and second year data.

Survey findings: Highlights from Year 1 report

Our understanding of professional learning communities and the evidence that productive professional relationships between teachers can enhance their overall motivation and skills inspired our interest in exploring if partnerships influenced teachers' relationships within schools and within partnerships. We were also partially motivated by our assumption that gathering evidence on a specific teacher's skills and knowledge development would be difficult using a survey instrument that was being completed by the leader of the school or partnership. As such, we focused our questions on whole-school and teacher collaboration as a proxy for the conditions that traditionally inspire teachers' development of knowledge, skills and understanding. Several key findings are summarised below; the complete findings can be found in our first year report.

Teacher collaboration. In the North, **69%** of schools compared to **85%** of schools in the South agreed or strongly agreed that the partnerships had had a positive impact on teacher collaboration and skills development.

School involvement. When reporting how they perceived their partnership's influence on school involvement, **72%** of Northern respondents and **89%** of Southern respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the partnership positively influenced involvement of students, teachers, the whole school and the community around educational issues and improvement.

Influence of partnerships on teachers: Summary of school case findings

In this section, we summarise our findings from all school cases studies from across Africa, Asia and the UK. We describe the five core themes that emerged during our analysis, including: *partnership influence on teachers' skills; pedagogic changes; teacher's general knowledge development; teachers' understanding;* and *teachers' enjoyment.* These different elements of how partnership participation influences teachers are drawn directly from the data. It is important to reiterate that we did not rely on existing structures or theory to constrain our analysis of the data.

Partnership influence on teachers' skills. In order to explore the depth and breadth of teachers' skills development through their partnerships, we examined our data from across all 55 schools to identify the skills that teachers are developing as a result of their participation in partnerships. These skills can be grouped into six categories, including: *teaching skills;*

interpersonal skills; leadership skills; planning and management skills; creativity; and ICT skills.

Partnership influence on pedagogic changes. Across our participating schools across Africa, Asia and the United Kingdom, teachers often profess changes to their teaching practice as a result of their participation in their international school partnership. Specific pedagogical changes can be grouped into six categories, including: *behaviour management; delivery of lessons; greater range of resources to support learning; different teaching methods based on fewer resources; lesson planning; and other.*

Partnership influence on changes in pedagogy. As teachers clearly indicate, many have changed their pedagogies as a result of the partnership. Based on our conversations in schools, there are four main catalysts for changes in pedagogy, including: *exchanging ideas and mutual learning between partner schools; borrowing teaching methods; reflecting on teaching and learning practice; and other.*

Partnership influence on teachers' general knowledge development. As we know that pupils are learning about their partner countries, we were specifically interested in the influence of the partnerships on the acquisition of knowledge by teachers. Upon reviewing all of our school case studies, we discovered that teachers' general knowledge development can be categorised in the following four groups: *global issues; their partner school's country; school management and organisation in their partner country; and school management and organisation in their own country.*

Partnership influence on teachers' understanding. During our time in schools, we asked questions of teachers and leaders about the type of skills and knowledge they were developing. However, during our analysis, information about teachers' understanding (including understanding of different cultures) permeated elements of our school case studies. Three distinct categories of understanding emerged: *differences and similarities between cultures; challenging their preconceptions and stereotypes; and developing their understanding of other cultures.*

Partnership influence on teachers' enjoyment. Students enjoy their participation in partnership. We believe that the teachers' enjoyment of partnership is an important factor in how students experience their partnership. As such, we wanted to mine the data in our case studies to explore if and how teachers are enjoying their partnership. Teachers and leaders experience the partnership, specifically in terms of their levels of enjoyment of different activities, can be categorised as follows: *personal connections; learning about other cultures; management or organisation of projects or activities; learning different teaching methods; increased student learning and/or motivation; and other.*

INFLUENCE OF PARTNERSHIP PARTICIPATION ON STUDENTS

What is the impact on students of participating in a school partnership? More specifically, what is the influence of partnerships on students' knowledge, skills and understanding? Throughout both years of our research, we focused on learning more about the influence of partnership participation on students. Based on our data, students develop knowledge, skills and understanding through their participation and this is especially true in well-developed and high momentum partnerships. The different types of knowledge, skills, understanding, enjoyment and motivation have been identified as recurring across all three regions. In the full report, we specifically describe the predominant outcomes in the particular context of Africa, Asia and the United Kingdom. In the full report we also, highlight any specific issues related to the outcomes of primary, secondary and, where appropriate, all age students.

However, before moving to our second year school case data, we want to review key findings from our first year survey research.

Survey findings: Highlights from Year 1 report

Student development and context knowledge and student outcomes. Data from the first year report shows that partnership leaders in both Northern (**91%**) and Southern (**85%**) schools perceived the partnership to have a positive influence on students' development of content and context knowledge. In terms of student participation and engagement, **66.7%** of Northern schools and **88.6%** of Southern partnership leaders agreed or strongly agreed that the partnership has had a positive influence. Specifically, these findings show that in schools in the South (Africa and Asia) the partnerships seem to have more strongly influenced student outcomes, behaviour and learning than in the Northern schools.

Changes in students' academic and social behaviour. In response to their perceptions of the partnership's influence on students' achievements, academic and social behaviour, and learning, responses from participants in the South were twice as positive as those in the North. When reporting how they perceived their partnership's influence on changes in their students' academic and social behaviour, **49%** of Northern schools and **85%** of Southern schools agreed or strongly agreed that the partnership had had a positive influence.

Influence of partnerships on students: Summary of school case findings

Based on interviews with teachers and leaders, focus groups and, in some cases, analysis of student activity data, there was a strong belief that partnership participation has an influence on students. It is important to note that within each theme, the different elements of how students are influenced through partnership participation are drawn directly from the data. We did not rely on existing structures or theory to constrain our analysis of the data. The five themes include: ***partnership influence on students' knowledge; partnership influence on students' skills; partnership influence on students' understanding; partnership influence on students' enjoyment; and partnership influence on students' motivation.***

In this section we present summary findings from all case studies across Africa, Asia and the UK. Within each theme (students' knowledge, skills, understanding, enjoyment and motivation), the different elements of how students are influenced through partnership participation are drawn directly from the data. It is important to reiterate that we did not rely on existing structures or theory to constrain our analysis of the data.

Partnership influence on students' knowledge. Looking across all case studies in all countries, we found that students often develop three core areas of knowledge in relation to their partnership work. While knowledge acquisition is evident to different degrees in different schools, partnerships appear to influence student learning related to knowledge of the ***partner country; knowledge of their home country; and knowledge of global issues.*** Often, when discussing what they have learned about their partner country, students and teachers believe they have developed knowledge related to the climate, culture, education systems and food of their partner country. Knowledge of their own home country often relates to exploring their national traditions, heroes and events. Students' knowledge of global issues often relates to climate change, fair trade and other issues affecting countries around the world.

Partnership influence on students' skills. When we examined our data related to students' skills development, eight distinct categories of skills emerged, including: ***ICT; leadership; literacy; numeracy; interpersonal; creativity; planning and management; and analytical.*** Any skill that fell beyond these categories was grouped in an '***unspecified skills category***'.

Partnership influence on students' understanding. We wanted to identify areas of student learning, and of specific knowledge and skills developed as a result of partnership participation. During our research, it became clear that students' understanding – beyond knowledge and skills – is an important outcome of partnership participation. As we analysed the school cases with an eye to capturing information on students' understanding, we found that students develop an *understanding of others* through *exploring similarities and differences between cultures; challenging preconceptions and stereotypes; and learning about other cultures.*

Partnership influence on students' enjoyment. We were interested in learning more about students' enjoyment of partnerships and partnership-related activities. This was inspired by our belief that students who are enjoying a particular subject and/or activity are more likely to pursue their learning and develop deeper understanding. Based on our research, four categories of student enjoyment emerge from the data, including: *personal connection; learning about other cultures; assistance in the management or organisation of projects or activities; and other.*

Partnership influence on students' motivation. While pupils in our participating schools clearly enjoy the partnership, we were interested in exploring how partnerships may influence their motivation to learn. Although during our interviews we did not ask a direct question about whether pupils' motivation for learning increased with the link, motivation to learn emerged consistently as an outcome of students' partnership participation. Looking across all of our participating schools, several themes emerge from the data related to students' motivation, including: *opportunities to develop personal connections; learning about other cultures; assistance in the management of projects or activities; and other.* In African schools, we identified several sources of motivation: *interest in global issues; financial benefit; building friendships; and learning English.*

FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO HIGH MOMENTUM PARTNERSHIPS

Students and teachers are clearly influenced by their participation in partnerships as evidenced by our first and second year findings. Based on our desire to know more about the types of school partnerships that were most likely to produce these sorts of outcomes, we developed a strategy for re-examining all participating pairs of schools in our study. During this process, six partnerships emerged as having strong evidence of momentum, including: *mutually beneficial partnerships; enthusiasm among the majority of the school; and a commitment to maintain and support the partnership.* In this section, based on our analysis of these partnerships, we present the factors and conditions we believe are necessary for well functioning and high momentum partnership.

Partnership formation. In order to understand the detailed nuances of the factors that contribute to the formation of high momentum partnerships, we examined how these schools began their partnerships. We found that *early exchange experiences*, or exchanges during the actual initial development of the schools pairings, are more prominent in all the high momentum partnerships. Other fundamental factors to laying the foundation for high momentum partnership include: *a personal connection; whole school involvement in the decision making process; a clear purpose; supportive leadership; and a support organisation's assistance.*

Support and training. Well functioning, high momentum partnerships have all received some form of financial support for their partnerships. Five of the six partnerships have received *core funding support* from a common organisation. However, this funding comes in different formats. Most high momentum partnerships are receiving *other organisation funding; local*

community support; local authority support, and non-governmental organisation non-financial support. In two of our six partnerships, two are using their own funds to maintain and support the partnership. This is particularly with respect to funding student exchanges. Our high momentum schools also highlight training as an important component of their development.

Leadership and management. At the heart of each high momentum partnership is a strong and committed leadership and management structure that support and nurture partnership development. In all cases, a ***strong leader, active school leadership support and staff support*** emerge as important factors in partnership success. Another important factor, which directly relates to the extent of engagement in the partnership across the school, is the role of ***teacher, student or parent partnership committees, and extracurricular clubs*** to support the ongoing development of the partnership.

Connection to school structures. Our high momentum partnerships demonstrate that their partnerships are closely tied to the overall work and priorities of the school. Also, the partnership serves to enhance the overall work of the school and, in some cases, relates directly to school improvement. One common and strategic way to ensure that partnerships are embedded within schools involves connecting it directly to the school's development plan. In other countries, where nationally required school development plans are not part of normal school practice, these schools also create links between the partnership and the school structure by including the partnership in their overall objectives. Both strategies point to the value of creating a formal and recognised strategy for positioning the partnership within the school's priorities and plans. There are, of course, other methods for connecting partnerships to school structures in our high momentum schools, including securing cooperation from Governors and/or linking it to other significant documents and priorities within the school.

Partnership objectives. All of our high momentum partnership schools are pursuing a ***variety of partnership objectives***, which suggests that one clear, unified purpose among both partner schools is unusual. High momentum partnerships appear to design their partnership objectives to meet the overall needs of the school. It appears that our high momentum partnerships are those that are using the partnership to fulfill the true interests, ambitions and needs of the school. In addition, these partnerships have focused on any of the following objectives including: ***broadening horizons/global citizenship/exploring cultures; student and teacher learning; school improvement; and fundraising/charity.***

Communication between partners. Across all of our high momentum partnerships, schools use a ***variety of different communication methods***. Each pair of schools uses ***more than one method*** to communicate with their partner. Telephone communication is the most prominent; however, it appears to be used as a last resort when other forms do not work. Four schools mention using both fax and email. Post and email are used by four schools. Two schools also report active text messaging. Other important communication-related lessons from our high momentum schools include: ***students' emails/texts/letters; minimum monthly communication; and overcoming the limitations of a weak Internet connection.***

Staff and student involvement. All schools in our high momentum partnerships, except one Southern school, have participated in and endorse the value of ***teacher exchanges***. Just as early exchanges are fundamental to the growth of a high momentum partnership, continued teacher exchanges appear to be equally as valuable. Teacher exchanges motivate and offer professional development opportunities for staff, as well as renew and refresh the important personal connections developed in the partnership. ***Student exchanges*** take place in all the partnerships in our high momentum category and appear to be important factors in motivating students to get involved in the partnership and in creating a more tangible partnership experience for them.

Curriculum initiatives. There is evidence of shared curriculum initiatives within each of our high momentum partnerships. All schools include the partnership in a number of subjects, with two schools having curriculum projects in a number of subjects involving all students. In all but one school, these in-lesson activities are also combined with extracurricular whole-school events. In addition, curriculum work across schools is supported in our high momentum partnerships by *shared teaching of lessons; subject inclusion; and special events.*

Challenges and opportunities. Without exception, challenges arise in all partnerships. What differentiates these six partnerships from others is how they approach resolving these challenges. In all six of our high momentum partnerships, the morale of the participants and whole school community sustains their partnership success. The actual challenges are varied and include: *communication; funding; commitment and time; leadership; and government involvement.* However, they are seen as inconveniences, not barriers to success!

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Our adventure in researching international school partnerships has also become our own adventure in developing international research partnerships. The many months we have spent leading and facilitating this project have allowed us to build our collective knowledge about how schools can make their international school partnerships into exciting and meaningful contributors to the growth and development of both schools and individuals. We are aware that there are many different audiences for our findings. To simplify the lessons from our research and to provide the greatest access to our conclusions and recommendations, we present them below for leaders and teachers of partnership schools, for supporting organisations and for policy makers. As many of the recommendations apply, however, in slightly different ways to each group, we highly recommend that each group extend their reading beyond those recommendations specifically geared to them. In the near future, our team will be creating a resource for each group to support their usage and work with the findings.

Prior to moving onto the final conclusions and recommendations, we want to highlight how the findings related to our original conceptualisation of school partnerships. The model comprised three distinct, yet overlapping categories: *input factors; in-school factors; and perceived impact.* This summary and the full report focus much attention on the perceived impact of partnerships in schools and on teachers, leaders and students. We have also touched on the importance of the input and school-level factors that can enhance partnership participation. These include, but are not limited to:

- Engaging teachers and leaders from across the school in deciding to embark on the partnership
- Sourcing available start up funding
- Creating incremental partnership development strategies that build on ongoing work
- Ensuring widespread teacher and student involvement in the partnership
- Distributing leadership of the partnership to ensure its sustainability within the school and ensuring it is manageable and attractive to teachers and leaders
- Embedding the partnership within the structures and planning infrastructure of the school to ensure it becomes an integral part of the work
- Integrating the partnership into capacity building and school improvement plans
- Creating an emphasis on generating supports for sustainability as a forward planning mechanism in anticipation of the discontinuation of funding.

While these issues are explored in more depth within the full report and within the recommendations and conclusions, we will be creating additional resources based on these observations as well as the final conclusions and recommendations over the coming months. An additional paper mapping the findings onto our initial model will also be available to support ongoing partnership design, implementation and development.

Recommendations for teachers and leaders to enhance partnership influence

Based on our two years of research, we have developed a robust sense of how international school partnerships work within schools and what school leaders can do to support the development of high momentum partnerships. We would refer anyone interested in the characteristics of high momentum partnerships to our full section on the topic in the report. However, we do have some specific recommendations from the wider sets of data on how schools can make the most of their partnership. We are in the process of preparing several resources on leading partnerships for school leaders. These will provide more specific detail on the design and implementation of partnership and will be available on our website within the next few months.

Based on the evidence from our research, we have identified several core themes for leaders and teachers to consider as they design and implement their partnerships. The themes, presented below, include: **designing for school development and partnership implementation; building leadership for sustainability; promoting learning opportunities; and promoting intercultural dialogue and global awareness.** Within each theme, we draw conclusions from our research and set out recommendations we believe will support the ongoing success of our high momentum school partnerships.

Designing for school development and successful partnership implementation

Nurture exchange visits for school improvement and capacity building. Professional – and often personal – development results from direct contact with overseas colleagues. When teachers travel overseas, they reflect on their role as a teacher, learn new knowledge, skills and understanding. Often, they have life-changing experiences and bring back their learning and transformation into their classrooms. To enhance the value of exchanges, we recommend that school-based partnership leaders and teachers:

- use their partnership as a vehicle for advancing a culture of staff learning and positive attitudes towards personal and professional development
- consider how an individual's experience as participant in an international school partnership can contribute to changes within the school, its strategies and follow through so they can share their experience in a safe and positive way to contribute to the overall learning of all teachers
- encourage staff exchange participation among those who would benefit from developing confidence, and leadership and communication skills
- harness the observations of other schools' strategies and structures to reflect on internal school issues, including behaviour management and teacher–student relationships within their school
- build opportunities for professional development into exchanges by encouraging all travelling members of the partnership to teach in each other's schools as a means of initiating and developing professional capacity and student learning.

Start with meaningful units of partnership. Building sustainable educational change, including partnership, is a challenging endeavour. We also know that all educational changes start with a small group of impassioned supporters. Based on our evidence, as well as the larger body of educational change theory, we believe that partnerships may be stronger when

they are initiated by a small group of individuals. In secondary schools, this could take the form of a linked department – English or Geography, for example – rather than the whole school. This would concentrate resources, ensure suitable teachers from both schools are initially linked and provide a focus for activities within both schools. Thus the objective of the partnership is clear and focused, its scope is narrow, and there is a greater likelihood that it will be linked to the curriculum. The partnership could, over time, grow to include a greater number of staff and possibly become a whole-school endeavour.

Building leadership for sustainability

Develop leaders (and the partnership) by distributing leadership. The role of the Partnership Coordinator(s) within a school is far from straightforward. However, being a Partnership Leader is an excellent opportunity for teachers and leaders to deepen their skills as is leading the partnership by embedding an initiative, incenting school-wide collaboration and generating staff buy-in. Furthermore, visiting an overseas partner enables individuals to observe and learn about school leadership in a different context. In order to foster interest in the partnership and broaden the number of individual champions within the school, we recommend that leaders be encouraged to ensure that there are multiple leaders that can take on responsibility if the initial Partnership Leader moves on to another school.

Promoting learning opportunities

Organise partnership activities within and beyond the curriculum. Partnerships provide an avenue for teachers and students to gain knowledge about their partner countries. They also create opportunities for examination of comparative and local issues related to the countries and regions involved. Issues can be explored through the curriculum and linked to specific national curriculum objectives. Equally importantly, knowledge can be nurtured through informal activities such as assemblies, discussion with visiting teachers and whole-school events. We recommend that schools use the partnership in a variety of forums to facilitate the widest possible access to opportunities for teachers and students to develop their knowledge and awareness of issues related to their partnership and global issues.

Promote interactions to develop skills. Our findings show that teachers and students are more likely to develop skills when they are interacting directly with others from their partner schools or their partner school country. We recommend that schools work at generating multiple opportunities for person-to-person interaction, whether in everyday lessons or through special clubs or events, to support the development of skills such as literacy, interpersonal and ICT.

Promoting intercultural dialogue and global awareness

Encourage visits from partner school to develop student's understanding. Hosting teachers from a partner school has a greater influence on students' understanding of others (in terms of breaking down stereotypes, understanding other cultures and so on) than having their teacher visit a partner school. This is because students have direct contact with the visitors, rather than simply receiving feedback from their own teachers. We recommend that policy and programmes should ensure visits are balanced, with a similar numbers of staff and, in some cases students, going in each direction.

Coordinate opportunities for participants to deliberately engage in challenging stereotypes. When interactions between teachers and students and their colleagues from their partner schools are facilitated to support the sharing of perspectives on global issues and exploring of stereotypes, students develop a richer understanding of the global context and their role in the world. In some cases, stereotypes are challenged which may lead to a deeper level of cultural

sensitivity. By identifying preconceptions among students, teachers may be able to challenge these directly by designing activities that provide them with information about the other country. Pupils should be encouraged to ask partner pupils questions about their culture. Through interest and inquiry, pupils are often able to develop a stronger understanding of the other culture and process new information that will help them challenge stereotypes. There is some evidence that remote communication has supported this learning, but evidence from the case studies indicates that face-to-face meetings have a significantly greater impact. We recommend that leaders and teachers create these opportunities for their students and colleagues at all stages of partnership development.

Foster development of global knowledge and awareness. Partnerships enable both those directly and indirectly involved to develop knowledge about the partner country, its education systems and global issues. Whole-school learning and development is particularly influenced by high profile events. We recommend that UK schools consider how their partnerships can be used to deliver cross-curricular themes with a strong emphasis on developing the Global Dimension.

Facilitate student-to-student collaborations. An international school partnership can be a launch pad for students to develop a greater interest in global issues and other cultures. The key feature of UK partnership schools that motivates students is the opportunity for them to develop a personal connection with their counterparts in other countries. In African and Asian schools, partnership activities mostly take place in the classroom. In these countries, the more socially motivated outcomes such as building relationships with students overseas and communicating with tourists may not be seen to be as important as the traditional academic motivation to achieve higher grades. However, for UK students, the personal connection is an important aspect of their personal growth and development. It appears that students become motivated and enthusiastic about learning based on their friendships with partner pupils. We recommend schools place an emphasis on fostering connections between students as this will likely lead to a greater interest in global issues. However (as we are sure all educators in partnerships currently do) we emphasise that the issue of student protection is given high priority and monitored throughout activities.

Conclusions and recommendations for supporting organisations

Based on our findings, several simple suggestions have emerged. We encourage support organisations to consider carefully those elements of the recommendations for schools above as this could enhance their current work process. We are, as previously stated, developing a resource tool for support organisations based on our findings to provide an evidence-based guide for supporting and nurturing high momentum partnership. We believe that support organisations have a key role to play in ensuring partnerships are meaningful to all participants. The following should be prioritised:

Ensuring programmes are building on current evidence. Across the UK and around the world, there is little research evidence on what makes a successful partnership in terms of meaningful teaching and learning. This research, thanks to the funding from DFID and the support of our Advisory Group partners and international research team, makes a considerable contribution to what is known about high momentum partnerships. However, others in the UK are working on the issues and more evidence will be coming to light in the next year. We recommend that support organisations and policy makers both draw on the evidence when designing and supporting international partnerships, and ensuring that schools have access and the opportunity to read, debate and reflect on the evidence and its implications for their own work.

Supporting multimodal communication and engagement between partners. Our evidence suggests that high momentum partnerships use different forms of communication to engage with their partners. We recommend that support organisations ensure that their schools are encouraged to work in this way and facilitate, where possible, their ability to do so.

Gathering evidence and sharing knowledge. Schools new to partnership want to learn from those with experience. Mid-partnership schools want to learn from those farther along their journey. Partnerships at the end of their funding want to learn from those partnerships that have been successful in generating opportunities and resources that will ensure their partnership is sustainable. We recommend that support organisations create innovative and meaningful ways for their partnerships to develop robust examples and evidence of their partnership. This evidence should be designed to support learning between schools but also to promote open access to knowledge gained and developed by schools. This will create a firm foundation upon which other schools can examine, reflect and act upon the successes and challenges experience by others. This recommendation also holds for all groups.

Providing school-level guidance on leadership and exchanges. Teachers participating in exchange visits report these to be the greatest influence on their knowledge, skills and professional development. We also found that distributing leadership not only builds capacity but also enhances sustainability. To further support distribution of responsibility and experience, exchange opportunities should be shared among teachers and leaders and should not remain the exclusive domain of a few. We recommend that clear guidelines for schools that encourage that different individuals are encouraged to make trips and host visitors as well as other points highlighted throughout the recommendations. Similarly, we recommend that support organisations also provide schools with evidence of the benefits of and strategies for distributing leadership responsibility across several members of the school.

Devolving expectations to schools and leaders for design and exchanges. The activities associated with exchange visits and their anticipated learning outcomes are difficult to predict. Rather than place expectations that schools should do x or y, support organisations should encourage schools to plan their own objectives, examine their processes and disseminate their experiences to other schools. Furthermore, the central focus of partnerships should be on sharing practice with colleagues and students. Many programmes require high levels of monitoring and evaluation to support their own internal accountability regulations. We strongly recommend that schools use these systems where required but also ensure that they are also creating their own strategies for providing meaningful evidence of their learning.

Conclusions and recommendations for policy makers

As above, we would like to suggest strongly that the recommendations and conclusions above for schools and support organisations are also considered during the policy development and analysis process. However, below we present the conclusions and recommendations from our research that we believe are of highest relevance for our colleagues in policy making.

Facilitating learning rather than prescribing content. The range and types of knowledge being formed by UK students varies. Based on our evidence, we believe it would be unwise for policy makers to prescribe the specific knowledge schools should be developing. We recommend policy makers focus on supporting organisations which facilitate partnerships that enable teachers to provide learning opportunities relevant to their school, their students and their international partnership.

Fostering widespread sustainable student involvement. Our findings indicate that students, above all else, benefit from and enjoy direct contact with teachers and students from their partner school. We recommend maximising resources towards supporting exchange visits,

with a focus on wider student involvement. We also recommend that policies promote student involvement at all levels of the partnership both in relation to exchanges and throughout the curriculum and beyond. As mentioned above, opportunities to interact with students overseas are also an important component that should be considered when funding support organisations, and those programmes that support multi-method communication and dialogue between teachers and students should be a priority.

Investigating strategies to support exchange visits. While this research did not set out to compare programmes that provide face-to-face support with those that do not, our findings indicate that opportunities for face-to-face learning have enhanced the development of partnerships within our sample. Partnership programmes should enable direct communication between colleagues, as learning and improvements in practice happen when teachers meet each other. There is limited evidence of learning or change involving teachers who have only a minimal level of contact. We recommend that resources be focused on these visits and, importantly, post-visit activities. Exchanges are the cornerstone of partnerships and the turning point for learning and engagement. We recommend policy makers consider ways to ensure that partnerships are able to take advantage of those opportunities.

Developing a knowledge base of outstanding practice in partnership. We believe there are many valuable resources for schools interested in initiating and enhancing their partnership work. However, at times, accessing and understanding this complex landscape of resources is confusing for those working in schools. We recommend that policy makers continue to support the development of evidence about partnerships and continue to create opportunities for support organisations to share their experience as well as contribute to easily accessible and decipherable resources for schools to support high momentum partnerships across all programmes.

Managing competition and developing outstanding practice among support organisations. As mentioned above, the landscape of support organisations is a complex one with many support organisations receiving funding centrally to support their work. Throughout our data collection process in the UK, it was clear that many schools are confused by the funding sources available and how to best meet their own needs for school development and student learning. While we do not have a specific recommendation to make about the funding of partnerships based on our data, we strongly encourage policy makers to ensure that the competition for central partnership funds for support organisation does not interfere with the development of meaningful partnerships.