

Meeting **ADMINISTRATION COMMITTEE – URGENCY SUB COMMITTEE**

date **12 April 2010**

agenda item number **5**

REPORT OF THE CORPORATE DIRECTOR, CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SERVICES

British Council Connecting Classrooms School Partnership Programme – School and Local Authority Visit to China, 15 to 24 May 2010

Purpose of report

1. To seek approval for one County Council officer to travel outside Europe, enabling them to accompany nine Nottinghamshire head teachers participating in a contact seminar for the British Council Connecting Classrooms Programme for China. The Seminar takes place between 16 and 23 May 2010, in Jinhua (Zhejiang province) and Beijing, China. The delegation would travel to China on 15 May and return by midday on 24 May 2010.

Reason for urgency

2. The Local Authority has recently been informed by the British Council that the application sent to the British Council on behalf of the cluster of nine Nottinghamshire schools who applied for the opportunity to join this programme has been successful. The British Council will hold a pre-briefing meeting for all participants on Friday 23 April 2010 in London with the contact seminar taking place in China between the 16 and 23 May 2010. Formal permission is needed under the travel approval process as soon as possible to enable the British Council to book plane tickets and accommodation.

Reasons for attendance

3. The British Council has invited nine Nottinghamshire head teachers and one Local Authority representative to take part in a contact seminar to establish a new partnership under the Connecting Classrooms China programme. The British Council has stipulated that a Local Authority representative must accompany the head teachers on the visit.

4. Approval is sought for one County Council officer to attend. The officer seeking approval is:

Role at Nottinghamshire County Council	Role in the visit
International Links Coordinator, Children and Young People's Service	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Before the visit, to coordinate and facilitate communication between the nine schools, the British Council and Hanban (the Chinese equivalent of the British Council).• To accompany the group of nine head teachers from Nottinghamshire schools as stipulated in the British Council invitation to the contact seminar in China between 15th and 24th May 2010.• To facilitate the development of the project within the cluster by participating in the contact seminar meetings, planning sessions and school visits in China.• To coordinate the project during the contact seminar in China and to oversee and ensure its practical application in Nottinghamshire schools on their return.• To assist the head teachers in their action planning with partner schools in China to develop the curriculum themes chosen for the project.• To report to the British Council and Nottinghamshire County Council at the end of the contact seminar.

Background to the project

5. British Council Connecting Classrooms is a global programme run by the British Council that creates partnerships between groups of schools in the UK and in other countries. These partnerships bring an international dimension to young people's learning, to improve their knowledge and understanding of other cultures and prepare them for life and work as global citizens.
6. With a population of over 1.3 billion people and the third largest economy in the world, China has a leading role in the global society of the 21st century. A partnership with China offers Nottinghamshire schools an exciting opportunity to engage with this very important country to explore the rich Chinese culture and to discover and improve Mandarin language skills.
7. The British Council Connecting Classrooms China project will offer Nottinghamshire schools:
- The opportunity to work with partner schools on collaborative curriculum projects, which will enable learners to interact across geographical boundaries and enhance their understanding of each other's societies, languages and cultures – so preparing them for life and work in a global society.

- Professional development for teachers and school leaders, which builds capacity to integrate an international dimension in the curriculum, support international partnerships and work in a global society.
 - Eligibility for the DCSF International School Award accreditation, which recognises schools' commitment to forming international partnerships and work in an international environment.
 - Advice and support in the use of ICT tools that develop and sustain partnerships, including a range of online teacher forums.
8. All participating schools are committed to working with Chinese partner schools in the future, and to initiating or increasing the teaching of Chinese language and understanding of Chinese culture in their schools. To help schools fulfil this commitment, one of the participating schools, South Wolds Community School and Language College, has offered the services of their Mandarin Chinese teacher to facilitate the early introduction of Mandarin Chinese into the curriculum.
 9. The schools participating in the project represent a wide variety of locations throughout the county and have differing levels of international experience. For some schools this will be their first international partnership. It was important in the selection process that our cluster was sufficiently varied.
 10. Our application was deemed to be strong and the assessment panel wrote in their feedback.....*The strength of your application was the evident commitment from the local authority and schools to working together in a cluster, and a clear interest in working with China. The panel was impressed with your clear and realistic plans for managing the cluster, resources and time. In particular the panel liked that you were specific here, with evidence of practical plans in place.*
 11. The school partnerships will be supported by funding from the British Council.
 12. The Local Authority International Links Coordinator will support the partnership schools to cascade the learning gained through the project, and to showcase as an example of good practice the work that has taken place. The Local Authority will also support participating schools to apply for the International School Award (ISA).
 13. An additional theme of the partnership work will be Community Cohesion. All schools have a statutory duty to promote Community Cohesion in their school and local community. A school linking project with China will provide an excellent opportunity for Nottinghamshire pupils to engage with children from different cultural, religious, ethnic, and socio-economic backgrounds, and will help them to develop skills for living and working within the 21st century global economy.

14. Supporting this project will help the Local Authority in delivering the DCSF International Strategy which states that “[The Government] *want to instil a strong Global Dimension in the learning experience of all children and young people*’ and enable learners in Nottinghamshire to engage with global issues and explore links between their lives and people, places and issues throughout the world.

Travel and accommodation requirements

15. The British Council will book and pay for all travel and accommodation outside of the UK for this visit. The costs of this visit are therefore not known, and the officer will not require any foreign travel or accommodation to be booked through Members Services. UK travel may be required, depending on local travel arrangements for participants. Costs are estimated as follows:

Description	Amount	To be met from
Visa for China	£30 approx	International Links Budget
UK Travel	£20-50 (Depending on Airport)	International Links Budget

The total estimated cost to Nottinghamshire County Council is £80. This will be met from International Links Budget which for 2010/11 amounts to £26,465.

16. The officer will not be claiming any other subsistence or travel costs for this visit from Nottinghamshire County Council.
17. Single trip insurance will be provided by the British Council for all participants.

Post visit reports

18. In line with the Council’s Travel and Accommodation Policy, a post visit report will be taken to the Administration Committee at the earliest opportunity. A separate report will be taken to the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People’s Services, outlining individual school plans following the visit.

Statutory and policy implications

19. This report is necessary to ensure compliance with the Council’s Travel and Accommodation policy and current arrangements for approving attendance at conferences, seminars and events.

RECOMMENDATION

20. That approval is given for the County Council officer to participate in the contact seminar in China which will involve travel outside Europe between 15 and 23 May 2010.

ANTHONY MAY

Corporate Director, Children & Young People's Services

Legal Services' comments (KMS/23.3.2010)

21. Following a decision of the County Council on 18 June 2009, approval of officer travel outside the UK falls within the terms of reference of Administration Committee.

Finance comments of the Service Director – Finance (NDR)

22. The financial implications are set out in the report.

Background papers available for public inspection

Background information on the Connecting Classrooms Programme

Electoral division(s) affected

Nottinghamshire

M19C2591