



# The Linking Network

Identity Diversity Community Equality

## Welcome to our Summer Newsletter.

We wanted to share with you a little of what we've been up to recently here at The Linking Network. We're so proud of the entire team of facilitators and teachers who have worked so hard to bring our virtual Schools Linking programme to life to ensure that schools have been able to continue to link despite the restrictions the pandemic has placed upon us. It's been great to see how well our new materials have been received by staff and pupils.

Our Schools Linking work is thriving and we're delighted to share with you some of the other strands of activity we're involved in.

Please feel free to share this newsletter with friends and colleagues. Don't hesitate to get in touch with us if you'd like to know more about our work.

Linda Cowie and Meg Henry, Co-Directors, The Linking Network



*A class in Bristol sent a great visual greeting to their link class this Summer Term.*

## Virtual Schools Linking is proving exciting!

Teachers have found so many innovative ways to connect their classes this year. Across the Network we are recruiting for the Autumn Term 2021, as well as delivering training for linking this Summer term. We are grateful for the support and backing for the work from DfE, MHCLG, Dulverton Trust and Pears Foundation.

Here is a film of Schools Linking Facilitators from across the Network, who share their thoughts on the programme [here](#).

*'The Linking Network builds in a curiosity that yearns to connect with the other and that recognises that there is joy to be had out of this connection.... children who go through the Linking Network, without question, will grow up to be adults who reach out more, who are more curious to be part of the conversation... because they'll have had positive encounters as children with other children who are different to them. I think there's something really special about that and not only special, but necessary and urgent in the world that we're in today.'*

Alia Al Zougbi, Head of Global Learning London and Tower Hamlets facilitator.

*'I think if we didn't have linking it would have a negative impact on our communities and on our children because people would be working in isolation. It's when we don't know about one another, that suspicions and misconceptions and even hatred can breed. Linking introduces young people to one another, from a young age and provides that process of broadening their horizons.'* Afrasiab Anwar, Community Team Leader for Lancashire County Council as part of the School Improvement Service – Burnley Schools Linking Facilitator:



Image: Anne and Raymond, two Care Home residents sharing a message with their link class.

## Intergenerational Linking is continuing to grow

Care Home Friends and Neighbours: Intergenerational Linking is an exciting national initiative from My Home Life England and ourselves, The Linking Network, which links young people from schools and youth organisations with older people living in care homes across England. The Linking Network has been piloting Intergenerational Linking here in Bradford since July 2020 along with Alive Activities in Bristol.

The project is now excited to have 9 other organisations on board to develop Intergenerational Linking in other areas in England. Amongst these are organisations who also deliver Schools Linking programmes so this is an exciting time to be supporting an additional strand of linking work.

Despite the pandemic and not being able to meet face to face, children and older people have

connected in many creative ways and been able to share their stories together. For example, residents at one care home shared their winter memories with children who then recreated the memories in artwork. A video of this can be found [here](#). Children at Beckfoot Allerton have sent messages and photos to residents at Willow Bank during lockdown and have enjoyed receiving photo messages back from the older people.

As with Schools Linking, what we learn in Bradford will be shared across England. We are delighted to be working in partnership with My Home Life and are grateful for funding from [The Dunhill Medical Trust](#) and the [#iwill Fund](#) which receives funding from [The National Lottery Community Fund](#) and the [Department of Digital, Culture, Media & Sport](#).



### Schools Linking and CPD goes online! 90 sessions and counting..

We have all learnt so much this year and it has been a privilege to work with so many different teachers, through our live online teacher training sessions. Breakout rooms have been invaluable for pairs of teachers to plan their links together.

*Image - Teachers at Bolton Schools Linking CPD*



## Social Action in Linking

During the new, virtual Primary Schools Linking Phase 2 for the Spring Summer Term, pairs of linking classes explore the things they care about and then both classes pledge to take part in a social action project of their choice - creating shared common ground between the classes. Social Contact Theory tells us that enjoyable, collaborative activity with common goals, facilitates effective contact and builds children's confidence in future

contact.



*Image: Pupils at a Bradford school taking part in a social action activity*

We were struck several years ago by research undertaken by [the Common Cause Foundation](#), which found that 85% of us believe we have great, compassionate values, while believing that 75% of other people do not. This misperception of others holds us back, and we hope that through Schools Linking, children will hold a different story about one another.



## **The excitement of seeing one another on a video call!**

Video calls in the classroom can create amazing opportunities; in December 2019 we began testing new possibilities with two schools in Bradford. As a result we've created primary support documents to help teachers host enjoyable, interactive video calls with games and activities that include every child. Schools are using these with link classes between different schools but also to connect pupils with parallel classes, in their own school. You can read more [here](#).



## Creative Learning Opportunities

We've loved the shared learning experiences that have been created across the network. Here are just a few. If you've now seen it yet, here is the link to ['When we Started Singing'](#), created by M6 Theatre in Rochdale for Schools Linking pupils. The play is set in lockdown and explores community and connection. It is freely available.

M6 have also created an inspiring online drama piece, called 'Bird's Eye View' [here](#) which encourages linking classes to take an imagined journey between their two schools and reflect on the environment.

Kala Sangam South Asian Arts Centre in Bradford have produced a series of short dance and drama videos to encourage creativity and movement with the school day; a Magic Carpet Ride and another: Let's Dance Together, you can view them [here](#).



## Researcher in Residence

Over the past year Dr Lindsey Cameron, Department Psychology, Kent University has created many webinars to explore research insights into social contact.

Intergroup contact in childhood is particularly important. This is because childhood and adolescence is a critical age in the development of intergroup attitudes and behaviours, and the attitudes developed at this age can continue into adulthood. But also, attitudes at this age are more malleable than they are in adulthood – so really childhood and adolescence is the best opportunity we have to encourage positive intergroup attitudes.

Whilst our current linking programmes are focussed on virtual linking, we were pleased to learn that the virtual linking does have many positive benefits for children. The different steps in the virtual Linking process are vital – games to get to know one another, deciding on shared values, sharing actions.

If you'd like to know more about our work and the evidence for linking you can read more [here](#). Dr Lindsey Cameron specialises into reducing prejudice and building confidence in contact.

**The Linking Network**  
Identity Diversity Community Equality

**Schools Linking Programme**  
2020-2021

**29** Local Authority Areas

**924** Classes

**27,720** Children

**Resources Training**

**Pears Foundation**

Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government

Department for Education

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www.TheLinkingNetwork.org.uk

## Recruiting for Schools Linking Autumn 2021-2022 is underway across the Network

All [29 areas across the country](#) are recruiting schools for linking in 2021-2022; interested schools can find contact details [here](#) and check if there is a linking programme near to them.

Alternatively, you can contact us at [info@thelinkingnetwork.org.uk](mailto:info@thelinkingnetwork.org.uk) or via Twitter @Linking\_Network

## Summer Term - Community Connecting Opportunities

June - National Pride Month

29th May - 6th June National Children's Gardening Week

5th - 6th June The Big Lunch

9th June Empathy Day

14th - 20th June Refugee Week

18th - 20th June The Great Get Together

19th - 25th June National School Sports Week

21st June Make Music Day

July Plastic Free July

29th June - 19th July National Children's Art Week

4th July Thank You Day

1st - 7th June Volunteers Week

11th July Srebrenica Memorial Day



## Summer Term - Community Connecting Opportunities

Half-term is just around the corner, we've pulled together a list of events taking place in June and July which your school might want to get involved in. There's lots happening - have fun!

Download a copy with links [here](#).

