

Newsletter – British Council

Shining example

The Observatory School on the Wirral has won the Tes School Award: 'International School of the Year 2019'. The well-deserved win reflects the school's strong commitment to offering international opportunities through eTwinning and Erasmus+ to its pupils, opening up their world and broadening their horizons.

News

The Observatory School on the Wirral has been awarded the prestigious Tes School Award 'International School of the Year 2019.'

The award recognises the school's strong commitment to international work, supporting young people with a range of social, emotional and mental health needs autistic spectrum conditions. The judges noted that, 'The Observatory School is a shining example of how education can open up and widen pupils' perceptions of the world'.

The Tes Schools Awards celebrate the extraordinary commitment, quality and innovation shown by teachers and support staff across the UK. Sarah Gower, Assistant Head and International Co-ordinator and eTwinning and British Council Schools Ambassador, accepted the award on behalf of the school.

The community secondary school is based in a small village near Liverpool, where there is little cultural diversity. However, thanks to eTwinning and Erasmus+, staff have opened up the world to their pupils, giving them opportunities to work with young people from different countries and cultures. Through eTwinning, the free online platform for schools and colleges across Europe, they have worked on projects with schools from over 20 different countries. Their eTwinning experience lead them to run an Erasmus+ project where 24 pupils were able to visit one of their partner schools in France for four face-to-face meetings.

The judges were particularly impressed with another of the school's Erasmus+ projects which involved a trip to Finland for five pupils with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder and autistic spectrum conditions. Initially, the school had some concerns about how pupils would cope with being in the large Finnish school alongside children from another culture. At first the pupils were shy and anxious about the experience, but as the visit progressed, they slowly integrated into the larger groups and, by the end of the experience, they made many friends.

"We are absolutely delighted to have been awarded the International Award at this year's Tes Award Ceremony." Sarah commented. "We couldn't wait to share this extraordinary news with our pupils, they are the real superstars in all of this. They face

many difficulties and challenges on a daily basis and they amaze us every day with their enthusiasm for completing international work. Working on international projects has enabled them to participate in the wider community and experience different cultures first-hand. They have made friends for life with their international peers and memories they will never forget. The experiences and opportunities eTwinning and Erasmus+ have given our pupils is invaluable. We are looking forward to our next Erasmus+ exchange to Spain in September and creating more memories with our pupils."

John Rolfe MBE, British Council, comments, "What an inspiring story, school and educator and a great testament to the impactful and supportive power, inclusive value and benefits of eTwinning and Erasmus+. Many congratulations to the school and many thanks to Sarah!"