# Swansea school forges new links with Ukrainian peers amid war through UK initiative



Sophie Dark, a Year Six teacher at YGG Pontybrenin in Swansea, recently participated in the launch of a UK Government initiative designed to strengthen educational and cultural ties between Britain and Ukraine. This programme, part of the UK-Ukraine 100 Year Partnership, was inaugurated by Prime Minister Keir Starmer in January. It aims to foster connections by pairing schools from both nations, providing students with opportunities to engage with their counterparts in Ukraine.

Ms Dark described her experience at the launch event as "an incredible, surreal experience." She expressed her astonishment at the opportunity presented to her students, stating, "I had to get the kids to pinch me because it was something I hadn’t expected, and to be able to give that opportunity to the students as well is something that I, and certainly they, won’t forget."

YGG Pontybrenin is among more than 750 schools in both the UK and Ukraine that have applied to be part of this initiative. The school has been matched with an educational institution in Kryvyi Rih, a city located in central Ukraine. Despite the ongoing conflict in Ukraine, the students have begun exchanging videos and letters, discovering common interests and fostering friendships across borders.

Ms Dark provided insight into the communications shared between the students, noting, "For us, with the school we’re linked with in Kryvyi Rih, we’ve been exchanging videos and in those videos we’ve seen sirens go off in the background, so our students have got an understanding of what is going on in Ukraine." She highlighted that the students from YGG Pontybrenin are aware that their peers in Kryvyi Rih are safe, and this awareness provides a sense of hope, illustrating that "there is life outside of Ukraine and that there is life outside of the war and the conflict."

The event also included participation from pupils from St Marie's Catholic Primary School & Nursery in Rugby, and English Martyrs Catholic Primary School, as they joined in the celebration of this educational initiative. The occasion featured a special launch of a new commemorative stamp, developed collaboratively by the UK and Ukrainian governments, symbolising the shared commitment to nurturing the relationship between the two nations.

The South Wales Argus reports on this significant initiative, underscoring the importance of dialogue and interaction among the younger generation in fostering understanding and solidarity amidst challenging circumstances.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/uk-and-ukraine-sign-landmark-100-year-partnership-to-deepen-security-ties-and-strengthen-partnership-for-future-generations> - This UK government press release details the signing of the 100 Year Partnership between the UK and Ukraine, emphasizing the initiative's aim to strengthen educational and cultural ties, including pairing schools from both nations.
2. <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/uk-ukraine-enter-schools-partnership-to-drive-education-standards--2> - This announcement highlights the UK-Ukraine School Partnerships programme, which pairs schools from both countries to foster cross-cultural understanding and enhance education standards.
3. <https://www.britishcouncil.org.ua/en/programmes/english/schools/uk-ukraine-school-partnerships> - The British Council's page outlines the UK-Ukraine School Partnerships programme, aiming to build international awareness and cultural understanding among students and teachers by bringing schools together into international partnerships.
4. <https://educationhub.blog.gov.uk/2025/01/the-uk-ukraine-school-partnerships-programme-how-can-i-get-involved/> - This blog post provides details on how UK schools can participate in the UK-Ukraine School Partnerships programme, emphasizing the importance of sharing stories and promoting reading for pleasure.
5. <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/one-hundred-year-partnership-agreement-between-the-united-kingdom-of-great-britain-and-northern-ireland-and-ukraine> - This news release discusses the One Hundred Year Partnership Agreement between the UK and Ukraine, highlighting the commitment to fostering long-term socio-cultural ties through education, sport, media, and the arts.
6. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-ukraine-100-year-partnership-declaration/uk-ukraine-100-year-partnership-declaration> - The UK-Ukraine 100 Year Partnership Declaration outlines the mutual commitments between the two countries, including the promotion of educational and cultural exchanges to strengthen bilateral relations.
7. <https://www.southwalesargus.co.uk/news/25135108.welsh-teacher-invited-10-downing-street-prime-minister/?ref=rss> - Please view link - unable to able to access data