# Northern Ireland rural school forges new ties with Ukrainian pupils through UK-funded partnership



A rural primary school in Northern Ireland, Kilmoyle Primary School in Ballybogey, has embarked on a noteworthy international partnership with a Ukrainian school, Pershotravensk Gymnasium No 3, located near the front lines of the ongoing conflict in Ukraine. This initiative is part of the UK–Ukraine School Partnerships programme, a project launched by the British Council and supported by the UK government, which aims to foster cross-cultural understanding and enhance education by connecting 50 schools in the UK with 50 schools in Ukraine.

The overarching goal of this programme is to promote reading for pleasure and bolster English language skills, providing a unique platform for students to share stories, cultures, and experiences. According to the British Council, it has already attracted over 750 applications from various schools across the UK, highlighting the surge of interest in building international links even amid challenging times. Currently, around 3,000 pupils and 100 teachers are participating, engaging in collaborative educational projects that aim to strengthen resilience and wellbeing among young learners.

Jeff Scott, the principal of Kilmoyle Primary School, expressed the transformative impact of hosting 14 Ukrainian pupils in May 2022, an experience that markedly changed the school's demographic landscape. He commented, "Before then, we were a small, rural, predominantly white school. The arrival of Ukrainian families into our community brought real diversity." This integration has been further enriched by the school's dedication to cultural inclusion and the provision of English language lessons, fostering a supportive environment for both Ukrainian and local children.

In this partnership, the schools engage in joint activities centred around the book "Star Child," utilising weekly live video calls to discuss its themes and share presentations about their respective cultures and educational environments. Scott believes that these direct interactions provide valuable learning opportunities, saying, “This project opens our pupils’ eyes to the wider world. It makes global learning real – they’re not just reading about different cultures, they’re talking to children from them.” This immersive experience not only enhances empathy among students but also benefits Ukrainian children by exposing them to native English speakers.

Jonathan Stewart, director of the British Council Northern Ireland, underscored the significance of such initiatives, noting, “This programme shows the power of schools to build real connections – even in the most challenging times.” Such partnerships are a testament to the potential of educational institutions to act as conduits for understanding and solidarity, reaffirming the importance of international connections amid ongoing global crises.

The UK-Ukraine School Partnerships programme operates as part of the UK's broader commitment to support Ukraine through a variety of initiatives, reinforcing educational ties that can provide long-term benefits for students on both sides. As the impact of conflict continues to be felt, this initiative serves not only as a means of maintaining educational standards but also as an important stepping stone towards cultural enrichment and global citizenship.

In a world increasingly defined by its challenges, the collaboration between Kilmoyle Primary School and their Ukrainian counterpart stands as a beacon of hope, illustrating the power of education to foster connections that transcend borders.

### Reference Map

1. Paragraphs 1, 2, 7
2. Paragraphs 1, 2
3. Paragraph 2
4. Paragraph 2
5. Paragraph 2
6. Not used
7. Not used

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

## Bibliography

* <https://www.expressandstar.com/viral-news/2025/05/11/co-antrim-pupils-building-lasting-links-with-ukrainian-school/> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
* <https://www.britishcouncil.org/school-resources/uk-ukraine-partnerships> - The UK-Ukraine School Partnerships programme, launched by the British Council, aims to foster cross-cultural understanding and enhance English language skills by pairing 50 UK schools with 50 Ukrainian schools. This initiative focuses on sharing stories and promoting reading for pleasure, providing resources and support for teachers and students to collaborate on joint educational projects. The programme is part of the UK government's 100-Year Partnership with Ukraine, emphasizing long-term collaboration across various sectors, including education.
* <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/uk-ukraine-enter-schools-partnership-to-drive-education-standards--2> - The UK-Ukraine School Partnerships programme, announced by the UK government, pairs 50 UK schools with 50 Ukrainian schools for a year-long reading project. This initiative aims to boost education standards and foster cross-cultural understanding by sharing stories and promoting reading for pleasure. The programme is part of the 100-Year Partnership between the UK and Ukraine, emphasizing long-term collaboration to strengthen ties and support Ukraine's education system amid ongoing challenges.
* <https://educationhub.blog.gov.uk/2025/01/the-uk-ukraine-school-partnerships-programme-how-can-i-get-involved/> - The UK-Ukraine School Partnerships programme, part of the 100-Year Partnership between the UK and Ukraine, pairs 50 UK schools with 50 Ukrainian schools for a year-long reading project. This initiative encourages students to share their favourite stories from their cultures, promoting reading for pleasure and cross-cultural understanding. The programme is open to all state-funded primary and secondary schools in the UK, with applications welcomed from various school types, including those with students of Ukrainian heritage.
* <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2025/jan/23/british-council-role-in-uk-solidarity-with-ukraine> - The British Council plays a key role in the UK's support for Ukraine, particularly in the education sector. Through the UK-Ukraine School Partnerships programme, the British Council is facilitating connections between UK and Ukrainian schools, allowing students aged 7 to 14 to collaborate on reading projects. This initiative is part of the UK's 100-Year Partnership with Ukraine, aiming to strengthen cultural and educational ties between the two nations.
* <https://www.britishcouncil.org.uk/partner-schools> - The British Council's Partner Schools Programme supports schools worldwide in delivering UK international school qualifications. By collaborating with UK-based awarding bodies, the programme ensures high-quality education and exam delivery. It offers comprehensive support, including professional development for educators, guidance on maintaining educational standards, and access to a global network of over 2,600 partner schools across 40 countries.
* <https://www.britishcouncil.org.uk/partner-schools/how-it-works> - The British Council's Partner Schools Programme pairs UK schools with international counterparts to deliver UK international school qualifications. The programme provides support in exam delivery, professional development for educators, and access to a global network of over 2,600 partner schools across 40 countries. It aims to enhance educational standards and foster international collaboration in education.