

## Building a strong global learning network in a previously hard-to-reach area

**The Oaks Teaching School Alliance** based in St Helens, Merseyside, became an Expert Centre as part of the Global Learning Programme (GLP)'s last cohort of school-led networks. The area has seen a marked increase in engagement with the GLP with St Helens rising from 7% to 29% and Knowsley from 8% to 20% since January 2017. This is mainly due to effective communication and recruitment by GLP co-ordinator Jacqui French and her team at The Oaks. Through introducing the GLP at headteachers' meetings, curriculum training and NQT events, the team have a large network of 30 schools and regular attendance at every network CPD session.

With the help of GLP Local Advisor Jen Simpson, Jacqui recently delivered a session on poverty and development tailored to her Partner Schools' needs. This tied in with the GLP aims, particularly with **helping teachers move pupils from a charity mentality to a social justice mentality**.



She started by asking them what impact global learning had had on themselves, their class and their schools since they joined the GLP.

Many participants reported that holding whole-school staff meetings had raised the profile of global learning in their schools, and that they had already completed the [GLP Whole School Audit](#). They were encouraged to share ideas on how to embed global learning in their schools.

After this quick feedback, Jacqui explained the objectives of the session, which were to: consider the state of the planet in terms of human well-being; learn more about poverty and development; and begin to consider how these relate to teaching and learning.

To kick-start the session, participants joined an interactive quiz on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)<sup>1</sup> using the Kahoot! website (<https://getkahoot.com/>). This website allows everyone to participate in real time by answering time-limited questions on their phones or tablets. After the quiz, participants were given more information on the SDGs – noting that SDG1: No poverty was related to the CPD session.

Participants were then asked to stand on a 'continuum line' about poverty, asking them to place themselves on the line according to whether they agreed or disagreed with certain statements,<sup>2</sup> such as 'Living in poverty means that you can't afford your basic needs.' or

<sup>1</sup> [Learn more about the SDGs](#) on the GLP website.

<sup>2</sup> Statements taken from ['Just Living' UNICEF resource](#)

'Poverty means different things in different countries'. After starting with a strong agreement or disagreement, teachers often adopted a more balanced view when discussing the statement, as shown in some of their comments:

*'If you didn't have running water in this country, you'd be considered poor, but when you think about those children who've got to walk miles before accessing water...'*

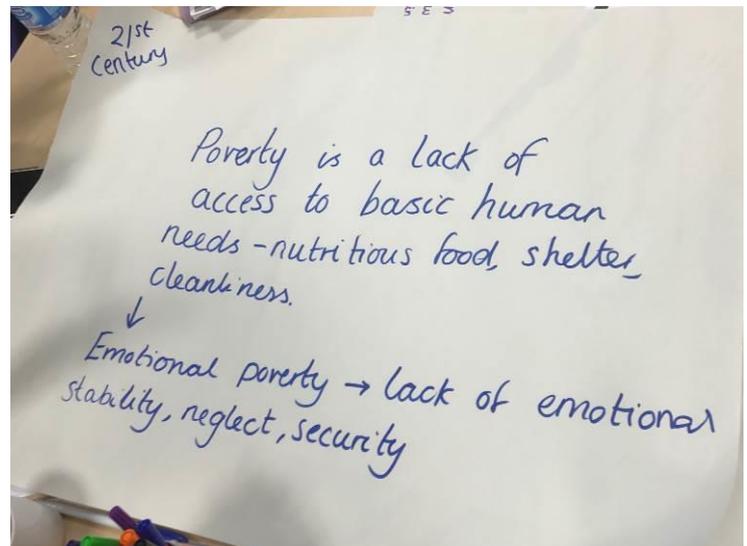
*'It comes down to what your perception is of poverty.'*

*'It depends on where you are in the world.'*

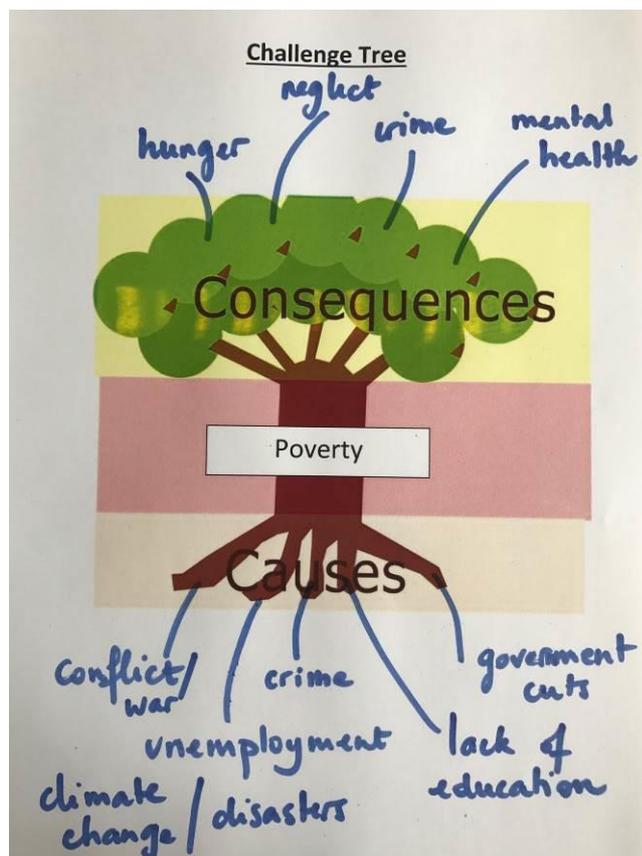
*'There may be disasters that will put a lot of people in poverty depending on their living conditions originally.'*

The continuum line is a very useful tool to give pupils a voice and help them challenge their preconceptions. It can enable them to disagree or change their minds while justifying their choice. The discussion introduced the idea of 'relative poverty'.

After this activity, participants reflected on what poverty means and, in groups, came up with their own definition. They then considered the results of a UNICEF study on child well-being, in which the UK is one of the lowest-ranking countries due to its high income inequality.



One group's definition of 'poverty' (above) and an example of problem tree (left)



All of this led participants to consider problems/causes and consequences of poverty with the help of a 'problem tree' – initially considering the 'root' causes of poverty and their consequences, and recognising that the consequences can also be causes creating a vicious circle. This was followed by a 'solution tree', which can help pupils think of solutions and actions they can take to reduce poverty at individual, local and national levels. This ensures that they reflect on how individual actions can build into local or national actions and recognise who has the power to change what.

A number of suggestions linked to charitable donations, campaigning and fundraising, which led into a reconsideration and exploration of the [charity vs. social justice approaches](#).

Participants were asked to consider how their schools implement initiatives such as Fairtrade, Children in Need, the Global Goals, Red Nose Day, Eco-Schools, etc. This activity demonstrated that approaching these initiatives with a charity angle would have a less sustainable result, and potentially reinforce many stereotypes and prejudices, whereas the social justice approach could empower children to challenge inequality and injustice, and support rights for all, by asking them to reflect critically on, and take responsibility for, their actions.



**Teachers reflecting on the initiatives taking place in their schools**

Some participants' comments on the **social justice approach**:

*'The session has impacted on my personal perspective of charity and how we address this in school.'*

*'Today has helped me to focus on what I need to plan for staff meetings and whole-school approaches to future "charity" days now being more about social justice.'*

*'Some of these initiatives are ongoing and have become embedded in the school, they're not just a one-off. Fairtrade is mentioned throughout the year, not just during Fairtrade Fortnight.'*

*'The social justice approach is quite open-ended, so it broadens things.'*

At the end of the session, all participants were given take-home documentation and activities to prepare for the upcoming Refugee Week. They also watched the 'Magic Washing Machine' TED Talk by Hans Rosling<sup>3</sup> and discussed in groups the key messages that came out of it.

<sup>3</sup> Hans Rosling: The magic washing machine – TED Talk (available on YouTube)

The co-ordinator also shared with them extracts from *Window* by Julian Baker, a resource that helps children reflect on what development looks like and what the impact might be for people.

Feedback on the session included:

*'It has made me question my own understanding of poverty and start to unpick causes and consequences.'*

*'The session has impacted on my teaching and classroom practice as it has allowed me to think about how to address GLP through the curriculum.'*

*'Resources shared – Kahoot and the problem/solution tree – were excellent. I will be using these in my class.'*

### **Next steps**

The group have chosen to focus on pupil participation, controversial issues and 'British values' for their next sessions. In addition, they will be engaging in pooling their [e-credits](#) to book a day conference delivered by CPD providers in the autumn covering curriculum areas including maths, science and writing. Further global learning sessions are being built into The Oaks Alliance training programme for NQTs and SMSC provision for the academic year 2017–18, illustrating that global learning has become a sustainable part of teaching and learning development in St Helens and Knowsley.