

**BBC News School Report**

**An evaluative review of a 10-year project**

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## ***Introduction***

BBC News School Report has reached, in 2016, its 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary. This BBC News project has been remarkable; it has brought forward significant learning opportunities for over two thousand schools, for large numbers of teachers, and very large numbers of pupils. The foresight and dedication that has led to the provision of these learning opportunities should undoubtedly be celebrated; the project has enabled large numbers of pupils aged 11 to 16 years to be involved in producing their own real news reports, to work directly with and to gain from the support of mentors from within the BBC, and to engage with people and stories of significance to their local communities and their longer-term futures, broadcast widely through local, regional and national radio, television and website reports. This form of project does not occur commonly in schools. Preparing our pupils for the future so often means that they are confined to classrooms, focusing on subject content that is deemed important; this project has taken pupils out of their classrooms, and has shown them that their subject knowledge can have real purpose, and be applied both today and tomorrow. This review is intended to present the outcomes of the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration of a project that has impacted schools, teachers, pupils and the BBC itself.

It has been my privilege to produce this review, which I hope illustrates the significant work of those involved, and the impacts that have arisen at so many levels. In doing so, I have drawn on as wide a variety of evidence as possible. Fortunately, the BBC has, as it has so often done in the past, retained and stored a fine record for those who wish to undertake this form of review. The evidence I have drawn on includes:

- Previous reports and evaluations of the project (listed in the reference section).
- Previous BBC News School Report News Day website records, including the lists of live school website reports recorded on the BBC News School Report News Day website each year, from 2007 to 2015.
- Specific stories from previous BBC News School Report News Day website records.
- Internal reports produced by the editor and others about outcomes from the BBC News School Report annual initiatives.
- New survey data collected by the BBC News School Report team, including reports from 37 schools, 22 staff members and 50 project alumni.

In this review I have used existing evidence arising from a number of previous studies, and have supplemented these with examples of practice and evidence of outcomes arising reported by a range of teachers, learners and BBC News School Report personnel 10 years from the beginning of this project. I should emphasise that these reports of outcomes have not been selected on the basis of those that only give a 'positive view'; it will be clear from evidence provided in individuals chapters of this review that negative views do exist, but that they are small in number when compared to the range of positive views that are expressed by all those involved. I believe you will see from this review that BBC News School Report has much to be proud of:

- It has consistently led to positive outcomes, giving learners and teachers unprecedented opportunities.
- It has inspired young people, supporting their learning, and their longer-term aspirations.
- It has offered teachers alternatives, so that learners can apply their classroom-based learning and knowledge in real-life contexts.
- It has positively affected and influenced those that work at the BBC.

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## 1. BBC NEWS SCHOOL REPORT

### *BBC News School Report*

This project, which started with a pilot in 2006, enables groups of students to create and broadcast their own video, audio and text-based news reports. The initiative encourages schools to upload completed news reports onto their school websites to meet a deadline, which is a specified time on a particular day each year (known as News Day). The school reports on their websites are then linked from the BBC News School Report website, and made accessible to local, regional and national radio and television (TV) broadcasting teams, and to a worldwide audience.

### *Aims and intentions*

As a senior manager in the BBC stated in 2014, “[BBC News] School Report is a key partnership initiative for the BBC. 2,000 head teachers have engaged with the project since its inception – they commit their students to making and publishing their news by a real deadline and we commit to giving them an audience across BBC News platforms. The schools are responsible for the educational benefit and we’re responsible for providing the support and tools they need for news production. 30,000 11-16 year olds took part in 2014 – telling their stories and gaining a voice. They are our citizens of the future.”

### *The concept*

The project enables young people mainly 11 to 16 years of age to create news reports about topics of interest to them, in a form that can be broadcast via the internet. The project often begins with groups of students being involved initially in lessons or clubs. Many student groups who develop their news stories and reports are involved in a practice day in their schools (or at a local technology centre). They work in groups (sometimes in school or class groups but sometimes in mixed school groups), each student taking on a specific role or remit (for example, some might focus on research, others might be concerned with interviewing, while yet others are presenters). Practice days are often supported by mentors from the BBC (professionals who work alongside the students and teachers).

### *How it is organised and managed*

The BBC News School Report project has been organised and run through a small central core team, based in London (initially in White City and later in New Broadcasting House). This team (led by an editor, and detailed further in Chapter 3 of this review) co-ordinates involvement of schools, teachers and mentors across the United Kingdom (UK). The team has continued to provide these support functions since the project’s pilot year during the 2006 to 2007 school year. Online resources have been made available by the BBC News School Report team, developed in response to the needs of schools and teachers, and widely used and deemed useful and helpful in a range of ways. In some locations, and at certain times across the period of the initiative, support centres and local technology centres have supported schools in a range of ways, with the running of preparatory lessons, teacher training, loaning of equipment, hosting practice days, hosting the News Day, and hosting resources on websites.

### *Who takes part*

Any school in the UK with students in the 11 to 16 year age range have been able to register to be involved. The BBC News School Report team have taken an inclusive approach to involvement; they have accommodated and encouraged involvement from all types of schools in all Nations and regions. Schools in any locality, as well as those supporting young people with special educational needs, have been particularly encouraged to participate. Many schools have had the opportunity to gain from some time and expertise from a BBC professional mentor, trained for this role. Schools and support centres have welcomed the involvement of BBC mentors, and mentors have reported positively about their experiences of working in schools, being able to help particularly in those areas where teachers have had no prior experience (for example, how to put a news story together, how to use technology to do this, or how to present on camera). Benefits for students have been recognised by mentors as much as

by others who have been involved, and teachers have often taken the important role of facilitators, addressing student queries and offering advice when needed, rather than taking a directional role.

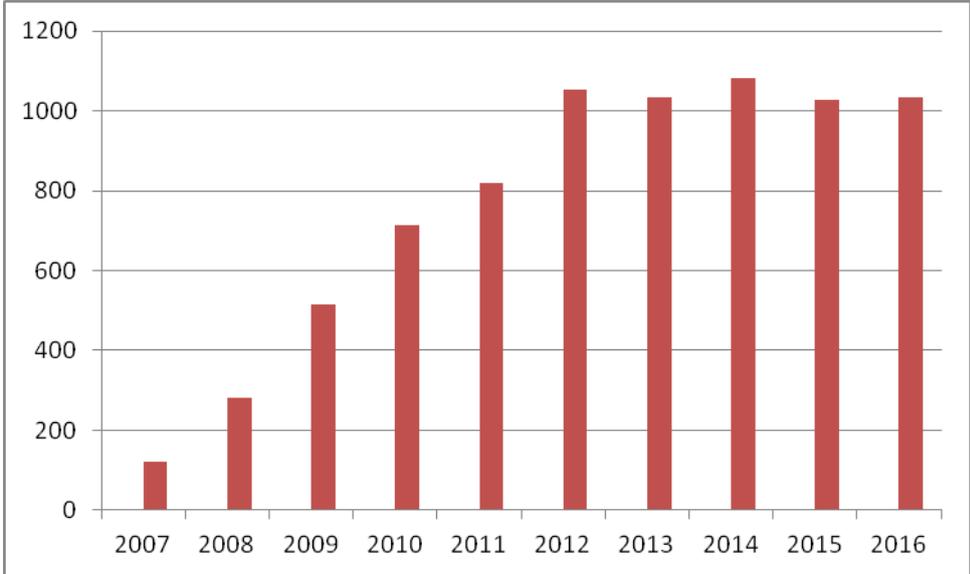
**Numbers of years that schools have participated**

Many schools have participated in the project. Indeed, many have participated for more than one year. Table 1 shows the number of years that schools have participated. It is clear that some schools have been involved for many years.

**Table 1: Numbers of years that schools have participated in the project**

Numbers of years of participation	1 year only	2 years	3 years	4 years	5 years	6 years	7 years	8 years	9 years	10 years (to 28-2-16)
<b>Number of schools</b>	855	527	404	242	201	136	98	60	27	25

The number of schools participating has grown over the years, across the period of the project. This participating number has been stable, at around 1000, since 2012. This is shown by total numbers of participating schools indicated in Figure 1.



**Figure 1: Number of schools participating each year**

**Numbers of schools participating, by Nation, Region and school category**

Prior to 2007, a pilot was conducted that involved 5 schools. Table 2 shows the number of schools participating each year since that time, by the date of the News Day in March each year. The table also shows the numbers of schools participating each year in each Nation, in each Region, and the numbers of special schools, as well as the numbers of schools where the percentage of students in receipt of free school meals (FSM) is 20% or more. This latter group indicates the reach of the project in terms of working with schools supporting students from lower socio-economic areas. It is clear from the data in this table that the project has continued to build, has become stable, and has involved numbers of schools that are distributed according to Nation, Region, and intake.

**Table 2: Numbers of schools participating each year by Nation, Region and intake**

	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016 <sup>1</sup>
<b>All schools</b>	120	280	514	714	819	1052	1034	1082	1029	1033
<b>England</b>	109	241	449	620	711	883	854	912	831	849
<b>Northern Ireland</b>	2	12	12	15	15	37	48	48	66	52
<b>Scotland</b>	6	19	36	61	66	88	90	69	71	80
<b>Wales</b>	3	8	10	18	26	43	39	50	53	50
<b>East</b>	11	24	43	70	82	111	102	115	100	121
<b>East Midlands</b>	4	14	23	30	33	37	43	46	39	42
<b>East Yorkshire and Lincolnshire</b>	5	10	18	20	15	24	19	18	21	15
<b>London</b>	36	66	100	123	134	153	157	169	170	152
<b>North East and Cumbria</b>	6	12	32	40	52	62	55	56	54	47
<b>North West</b>	7	61	75	82	96	105	106	107	92	100
<b>South</b>	10	20	44	68	72	93	100	109	93	95
<b>South East</b>	2	10	13	27	30	54	62	70	58	57
<b>South West</b>	7	8	18	24	28	38	40	42	40	34
<b>West</b>	7	9	14	34	49	56	41	46	48	49
<b>West Midlands</b>	11	15	43	59	73	95	88	86	76	83
<b>Yorkshire</b>	4	13	27	43	47	55	41	48	40	48
<b>Special schools</b>	1	9	17	20	20	36	34	39	40	44
<b>Schools with 20%+ FSM (England only)</b>	NDA	NDA	NDA	120 <sup>2</sup>	233	347	267	251	248	NDA

***Why it has been successful***

The number of schools involved and the number of schools that have participated for a number of years both point to their satisfaction with this project. All the evaluative reviews previously conducted (Collins and Paterson, 2011; English, 2008; Passey, 2008; Passey and Gillen, 2009) report similar levels of outcomes and positive perceptions of gains by students and teachers. Student perceptions of their gains have not only been about specific subject skills, but also with team working, creativity, attitudes towards work, and enhancements of social interactions. From the evaluation by Passey and Gillen (2009), the differences in student responses before and after the News Day indicated positive improvements in their perceptions of their abilities to write an article for an audience, to take pictures using a range of media, to create ideas for news stories, to negotiate a point with others, to work hard in contributing to group endeavour, and in meeting deadlines. Students reported increased attention to news during and following the News Day, with more watching news on TV and many more listening to news on the radio. Students indicated they had learned more about news production and jobs, and there was a big improvement in their understanding of how news is produced and about jobs in news. Teachers reported increases in student skills and abilities. They reported significant improvements in students' abilities to speak to an audience, to write for an audience, to produce images using a range of technologies, to think of creative ideas for stories, to listen to others, to negotiate a point they felt strongly about, to work hard to complete a project, to meet deadlines, to create a news story that reached an audience beyond the school, to contribute their views to a story, and to consider safety when using digital media. English (2008) highlighted in her report how student discussion 'had a

<sup>1</sup> The school numbers for 2016 are based on schools returning at least one element of the participation documents required as of 28<sup>th</sup> February 2016.

<sup>2</sup> Excluding Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales (for which there are no accessible FSM data) and schools in England for which there are no accessible data, this row shows the numbers of schools with 20% or more of pupils eligible to receive FSM (according to government education department data). Percentage of pupils eligible for deprivation pupil premium was used as a measure from 2015, using data from the 2014-2015 school year. In total, 468 schools had 20% or more of their pupils eligible to receive deprivation pupil premium (according to the 2014-2015 allocation data for those schools).

noticeable effect on the quality of written outcomes' (p.6). She reported that: 'Boys and students with English as an additional language [EAL], who underachieve with regard to literacy, benefited in particular from the opportunity to discuss ideas and to utilise their ability to write succinctly and logically as opposed to expressively' (p.6).

The project has also been found to be successful in supporting and involving trainee teachers. Gillespie and Bradshaw (2009) in an initial report stated that 'The project provided opportunities for trainees to work in non-standard environments, increasing their understanding of learning beyond the classroom and in work-related contexts' (p.3) and 'The project had positive impact on pupils' learning in the fields of journalism, media, literacy and use of technology' (p.4). In the second evaluation focusing on trainee teachers, Bradshaw, Cameron and Younie (2010) reported that 'Overall, the project greatly enhanced trainees' experiences of initial teacher education, in terms of collecting robust evidence for particular standards and enhancing employability. The project provided opportunities for accelerated professional development of trainees in terms of enhancing leadership' (p.4). In the third evaluation, Bradshaw, Cameron and Younie (2011) reported that 'Involvement in the project developed trainees' understandings of their own subject knowledge, of cross-curricular ways of working, of project working and of working in non-timetabled informal sessions with pupils' and 'The project allows for trainees to develop different, and more rounded, relationships with pupils. This has a positive impact on their teaching, particularly in respect of behaviour management' (p.5).

The project has been identified as leading to a wide range of successful outcomes. Those outcomes have benefited not just students, but also teachers (directly in terms of skills gained as well as indirectly in terms of enhanced skills and attitude of their students) and trainee teachers.

#### ***Why it has succeeded for 10 years***

The outcomes and impacts reported by evaluative studies, as well as recognised by students, teachers and mentors, have been entirely consistent across the project. The evidence of this is clear; research, teacher, student and mentor reports show this consistency across all the years of the project. This has meant that its success has been sustained for the full 10 years of the project's life. Evidence from the Passey and Gillen (2009) report indicated that the project supported important approaches to learning: authentic learning (it involves students in real-life activities, working with real-life professionals, and creating outcomes for real-life audiences); understanding through discussion (students have needed to work together, not just with their peers, but with their teachers and mentors, where they are working as equals in order to create specific outcomes); internal cognitive aspects (students have needed to gain knowledge from others, to summarise, to analyse important elements, to synthesise using different media, and present in ways so that others can understand their messages); and the transfer of learning (thinking about how in the future, when presenting their findings and reports, they might use ideas and concepts they have learned, at other times and in other contexts). Overall, the findings have shown that this project can be managed by teachers and schools, even though it has offered certain management challenges for schools and teachers across the period of the project. The project has been found to fit with a wide range of curriculum approaches and courses, and complement more traditional lessons that have used in-class teaching and learning approaches. It has been shown to deepen understanding of – and interest in – the news, providing additional and important perspectives and opportunities about news production and media handling for students and teachers. It has been recognised as being worthwhile by teachers and the vast majority of students, and has supported an inclusive agenda and positive elements of student voice.

## 2. BACKGROUND

### *School reports*

Taking BBC News School Report in 2015 as an example, 1,030 schools took part in the News Day in March. They were supported by more than 300 volunteers and mentors, in addition to the core staff and crew involved. School reporters appeared on more than 100 programmes and services, while more than 700 school reporters visited BBC sites on News Day, more than 400 in New Broadcasting House, 200 in local radio stations, 60 in the Mailbox, 50 in Media City, and some 10 in each of the Nation centres. For the first time in 2015, school reporters featured on every English language network, across all national and local radio stations. BBC World TV joined for the first time, commissioning TV reports from schools in Delhi, Nairobi, Rio de Janeiro and Washington DC. Some 30,000 school reporters were involved on News Day. On that day, World TV, BBC America, CBBC, BBC One, and News Channel all covered BBC News School Report stories on TV, while Radio 1, Radio 1 Extra, Radio 2, Radio 3, Radio 4, Radio 4 Extra, Radio 5 Live, Six Music, Asian Network, and World Service all covered stories on radio. Stories were covered on all regional TV networks, including BBC London, Spotlight, South Today, Points West and North West Tonight, and Look North (Hull), and stories were covered on all local radio networks, including London, Leicester, Oxford and Bristol, Gloucester, Solent, Cornwall, Suffolk, and Shropshire. The English Regions Bus was in Cumbria during the whole of the week of News Day, working with schools new to the project. In terms of the BBC News School Report website, on News Day, the entire content received 869,667 page views, with the women's football story receiving 285,315 page views, and interviews with the four national football managers receiving 64,904 page views. Six days later, the total page views for the entire content had reached 1,667,388.

### *The patterns and the contexts of those involved*

Overall, 5 years of development were needed for the scope of the project to expand to a stable number of schools participating annually. This scope and stability can be seen across all Nations – England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales. The pattern is similarly stable after the first 5 years for all of the Regions, as shown in Table 2.

### *The range of backgrounds*

In terms of backgrounds, schools involved are widely geographically located. Reports from the annual websites indicate that schools are located in the extreme north, in the islands of Shetland and Orkney, and in the extreme south, in the island of Jersey. Mainstream state schools as well as independent schools are involved in the project, as are special schools catering for learners with specific (such as visual impairments) or special educational needs (SEN). BBC News School Report has maintained data about the involvement of schools related to the percentage of learners receiving free school meals or pupil premium support. These data show that schools have been involved who support learners across the entire socio-economic spectrum, and across rural to urban localities in which learners reside.

### *How it has accommodated diversity*

BBC News School Report has sought to ensure that involvement with the project has been as inclusive as possible. The core team have not only monitored but have sought to involve the full range of schools across the UK, using in England the percentage of students in receipt of FSM. The report of the project's activities in 2015 indicated a very close relationship between data about schools and their FSM status produced by the government Department for Education and the pattern of schools involved. The match, showing this very close correlation, indicated their success in meeting their concerns for inclusion. The data that demonstrates inclusive concerns are completely supported by reports from schools themselves about the ways the project has supported inclusive practices.

In 2014, the number of special schools involved increased by 50%, from 33 in 2013 to 48 in 2014. A report on the BBC News School Report website indicated clearly that teachers who support learners with special educational needs (SEN) regarded the project as valuable, helping them develop student

confidence and communication skills. The project is concerned that young people of all abilities are supported in making their own reports on stories which matter to them. For some young people, communication is not easy; many of us take the processes involved in communicating with others for granted, but teachers who support young people with special educational needs concerned with communication need to help develop the series of processes that enable communication. As a teacher from The Phoenix School in East London said, “We have found that the tools of broadcasting such as microphones and cameras have helped our pupils deconstruct the elements of communication, such as turn-taking, making eye contact and using facial expression.” To support the development of these processes, feedback to the students is an important part of their learning, and as another teacher from Springfield Academy in Wiltshire said, “The students get immediate feedback on seeing their work published. It really is all about confidence - they know the BBC brand and they feel really good being associated with it.”

SEN schools have been involved widely across the period of the project; young people with epilepsy, autism, hearing and visual impairments have all taken part in the project. So too have alternative educational institutions such as Pupil Referral Units and hospital schools. Students with special educational needs in mainstream schools have also been involved. The project has often been found to support specific needs in these cases. For example, students at Joseph Clarke School for the Visually Impaired and Complex Needs have been helped to develop their speaking and listening and build self-esteem and engagement, as well as support literacy. As a teacher said, “One of the main reasons we participate in [BBC News] School Report is to provide our young people with a means to promote and develop their student voice and self-esteem. The skills that they gain are transferrable across the school curriculum and are also beneficial outside of the school environment.”

The report medium itself has been used by some schools to widen understanding and appreciation of special educational needs. At Sandelford Special School in Coleraine, students and teachers capture interviews with interesting visitors to their school using iPads, but make their video reports more inclusive for their audience by always adding captions. At John Grant School, boccia is a Paralympic sport in which students excel. The students explained this sport through a report, producing their own script and voiceover, with teachers helping to support their filming. In another school, Hastings High School, students reported their ‘passion for wheelchair tennis’. In terms of reasons for teachers supporting learners in special schools to value this project, as a teacher from Dryden School in Gateshead said, “We work hard to give our pupils real-life experiences, the method by which they learn best, across the curriculum and it can be a struggle at times to find a real purpose for some aspects of their work – [BBC News] School Report really supports this.”

The ongoing value of BBC News School Report to a special school is perhaps summed up by the way that Phoenix School, a special school in Tower Hamlets, describes their involvement and experiences. They involve students from Key Stage 3 upwards (from 7 years of age). The school has taken part in BBC News School Report for the past 5 years. They have been involved annually because they find that it is “an invaluable way to develop our students’ communication interaction skills and they have gained self-esteem through the process.” They have found that the project is important to the school as a whole, as it enables them to showcase their students’ learning. Although they have found that “encouraging young people with autism to connect with others through interviews has sometimes been very challenging”, they also recognise that “teachers have had a sense of satisfaction in seeing their students’ achievements and the progress they have made through the process of making reports.” As they say, “all pupils are proud of their work and excited to see their work on the website.”

### ***Socio-economic background and geographical distribution***

The project has involved schools across socio-economic groups and geographical areas. For example, The Corbet School, Shropshire, is located in a rural area. In this school, the project is “delivered as an extra-curricular activity in Year 8 [with 12 to 13 year old pupils]. Pupils are invited to apply to become involved and express what they will be able to offer to the team.” The teacher involved uses “Year 9 and 10 mentors to guide the pupils.” The school has been involved in BBC News School Report for 10 years, since the very beginning. As a teacher there says, “[BBC News] School Report

has given pupils from school the opportunities to gain new skills that can be transferred across the curriculum. They are able to work with pupils they would not normally work with. Pupils are very enthusiastic about [BBC News] School Report. Pupils like having their work produced for an external outlet for everyone to see. [BBC News] School Report has given pupils the opportunity to work with journalists, present on BBC Midlands, visit Television Centre. It really has created excellent opportunities and develops a range of skills.” Benefits for pupils are wide, and span the requirements of 21<sup>st</sup> century skills, “confidence, independence and team work, technical skills (filming and editing), reading and writing for a particular audience and purpose, time-management, learning in a fun and interactive way.” As a teacher says, it also has impact on the way the school can inform its wider community: “it is also a good way for parents, potential parents and the wider community to see what excellent achievements our pupils make.” It is clear that the project is supported by teachers widely: “All teachers and members of staff are always willing to help with anything the pupils want to produce. Staff welcome pupils into lessons on [News] Day (if needed). It creates a positive learning environment and teacher/staff/pupil relationships.” The teacher recognises the challenges facing this rural school, indicating that these are “mainly IT [information technology] issues. We are a rural school with limited technology and due to our Child Protection policy pupils are unable to use their [mobile tele]phones to film. Therefore we rely mainly on Flip Cams which are difficult to edit.” In spite of limitations, community involvement is recognised as a benefit: “as I said earlier it brings staff and pupils together”, “Year 8 [Y8] know about [BBC News] School Report and ask about it from September of Y8,” “it allows past School Reporters to mentor and remain involved.” Managing times to meet are also influenced by the rural location of the school; as the teacher says, “we meet during lunch times (we cannot meet after school because pupils are bussed in). Although we do have the whole day off timetable on [News] Day. The Library becomes our newsroom and hub.”

In another school, pupils from low socio-economic backgrounds are involved and are clearly gaining from a wide range of experiences fuelled by involvement in BBC News School Report. Whitley Academy in Coventry has been involved in the project for the past 9 years. A teacher of literacy who also runs the Learning Resource Centre works with Years 7 to 9 on this project. The teacher says that “the BBC [News] School Report website is updated regularly and I find it interesting and useful to navigate around the site if I need technical support or ideas how to run the BBC [News] School Report lessons with my reporters. I have also become a stronger and more impressive public speaker,” “I have gained an insight into journalism and what is needed to be involved in order to achieve a good and quality article, a photostory or video clip,” “The personal perspective that English is not my mother tongue and I would never be able to be a fluent speaker has ceased to exist in me. I am now a can-do person who has accepted I need to learn from various stake-holders whom I work with or happen to come across in my professional life.” As the teacher says, “my BBC [News School Report] Student Reporters have been recognised in the wider communities; from the BBC [News] School Report team to the Educational Division of the [United States] US Embassy London. I want to prove to them [the students] that their disadvantaged upbringings would not account for their academic achievement (and of course a successful career life later on) as long as they try their best; and failure is normal.” The teacher illustrates a wide range of experiences that the students have gained, “through the various media channels (with the starting point of BBC [News] School Report) the school has been even more highly regarded despite the fact a vast number of students from challenging/disadvantaged backgrounds. Thanks to the involvement with BBC [News] School Report and some other organisations (Speakers for Schools) some highlights of our student reporters’ projects include: interviews with Lord Seb Coe in November 2011, HRH Princess Anne in March 2012, Charles Frank Bolden – NASA Administrator in July 2012, Justin King C.E.O of Sainsbury’s in March 2013, Sir Richard Lambert – Head of Banking Standards Review in February 2014, Michael Gove on BBC School Report BIG Day in March 2014, and Deb McLean – US Embassy Diplomat in September 2015.” The teacher says how involvement has affected communities and individuals, “The school has been seen in more positive ways by all stakeholders: parents, students, the school governors, staff and students of primary schools, local secondary schools and other schools within the RSA Academies. Whitley Academy caters for students coming from various family backgrounds in Coventry. Quite a large number of students are from Willenhall – a deprived area of Coventry. In this 2015-2016 academic year the percentage of students on free-school-meal is extremely high: 42% - much higher

than the national average. A part of the school ethos is to provide a stimulating and caring environment, in which everybody can do their best, and achieve success. With the strong support from the Senior Leadership Group of the school I have been able to invest time and effort in the reporters and give them as many reporting opportunities as I could; without the approval from the school top level I would have ended being surrounded with the daily mundane of a school librarian's life. Over the years we have spread our student reporters' works via: school termly newsletters (school website or hard copies); local newspapers (Coventry Telegraph); BBC Coventry Warwickshire radio station; and other external agencies, e.g. the US Embassy London." The teacher explains how involvement in BBC News School Report has affected one of the students in the school, "one of the highlights of my journey [with] the BBC [News] School Report is the success of a student. Since starting at Whitley Academy she joined the student reporters. With the skill sets she gained from being a BBC [News] School [Report] reporter, she developed to be an independent young person and continued looking for opportunities further afield. In 2013 she was granted the US Embassy London Journalist Exchange Program scholarship and went to three different states in America in July and August 2013. In August 2014, she used the experience and the project profile she had gained from the report team; she applied for the Virgin Atlantic scholarship (run by Free the Children Charity). She was awarded the trip to go to north India to support the locals build up a school wall. In August 2015 she was awarded the Sutton Scholarship to go to the US and visited universities there including Yale, MIT and Harvard. She has had amazing opportunities and is now one of our Year 13 students." The teacher sums up by saying, "I want to support other students using what they have learnt from being the BBC [News] School [Report] Reporters and work harder for their own success."

### ***Involvement across the Nations***

Schools are involved across all Nations within the UK. Tor Bank School in Northern Ireland supports pupils with severe learning difficulties (SLD) aged from 3 to 19 years. They have involved pupils in the project for some 6 years. The pupils are generally aged 14 to 16 years, but sometimes up to 19 years of age, depending on the numbers of pupils in the school and their abilities. In terms of their reasons for involvement, as a teacher says, "it is so professional and well run [it] gives our pupils opportunity to participate in activities [the] same as their mainstream peers." The teachers says the pupils benefit in terms of, "confidence and enjoyment, giving them opportunities and experiences [the] same as mainstream pupils, broadening pupil experience and interest, involving them in current affairs, getting them interested in news in general." The project has supported the school and individual pupils in terms of their wider concerns and commitments, "we are a Right Respecting School and have achieved [a] level 2 award from UNICEF in this. It links well into the concept of rights and responsibilities for our school. One of our pupils used BBC News [School] Report to raise awareness of the UNICEF 'Send all my friends to school campaign'. He even lobbied MPs as part of this and raised awareness within our school, parents and local media/community." The medium is recognised as being important for the pupils in the school, "I have found the use of making videos a transferable skill. It can be linked into topic work, develops pupils' research skills. In our case how we can best support our pupils and give them as much ownership and independence as possible [is important]." The teacher says of the pupils, "they love it!! Love film and seeing themselves. They love the BBC bus particularly; [it] opens a whole world of current affairs and the idea of audience to some; also possible career ideas. Mostly [it is] a greater awareness of news and current events."

A school in Wales, Ysgol Bro Pedr in Lampeter, has been involved in the project for the last 4 years. The teacher leading the project teaches ICT across the school; as he says "the project is so useful for the students and covers many skills that they would not normally be taught in the normal school curriculum," and the school continue to be involved as "the project remains extremely popular and successful to the current day." It has affected the way the school engages with the media, "it has really had an impact on how we deal with the media – in that we are now more proactive in when we distribute news stories, etc." The teacher says that the students involved "are now more confident and this has been evidenced by students coming back year after year to take part in the project. The progress has been quite something to watch," and in particular "this project has helped students across a variety of curriculum areas, especially English and Welsh. They have been able to practice their spelling and grammar for a real audience to see."

### *The content of student reports*

Student report content has varied widely across the years. It is recognised that students can use this platform as way for them to discuss and report on challenging and sensitive issues, which can be an important element of their lifelong learning needs. In 2014, for example, school reporters prepared stories about autism (by students with autism), Alzheimer’s disease, consumer and financial advice.

Each year, the BBC News School Report team create a ‘Live Reports’ page, which provides an update of a selection of the reports coming in from schools on News Day. This page gives details in many instances about the nature of the stories that schools are covering. Table 3 shows the frequency of these stories by category for all years. In cases where multiple stories were reported by a school, only the first one is used in this listing. The categories were originally created by reviewing details from the 2015 ‘Live Reports’ page, then applying this category listing to the other years, with any additional categories not covered being added appropriately. In the table, the four most commonly reported story groups in each year column are highlighted in grey.

**Table 3: Frequency of story reports covered on the annual ‘Live Reports’ webpages on News Day**

Story category	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Animal issues	0	2	8	3	11	4	2	8	2
Business issues	0	2	18	5	16	12	9	4	1
Catastrophes	0	2	1	1	26	0	0	10	1
Community facilities	3	3	2	1	11	5	2	6	4
Design, art and fashion	0	0	4	1	6	3	0	0	2
Environmental issues	0	0	9	4	9	4	5		
Famous personalities	2	4	8	6	20	8	16	6	6
Food and cooking	0	0	0	0	0	0	10	0	0
Health issues	2	2	13	5	7	6	2	5	5
Historical	3	2	3	2	9	7	2	6	0
International	2	1	6	6	11	15	3	1	0
International links	3	1	4	2	6	12	1	4	2
Lifestyle	0	1	6	4	4	6	1	3	0
Local issues and events	2	3	13	9	11	16	12	4	3
Media	0	2	4	3	3	7	3	3	4
Media personalities	1	3	3	8	13	9	2	6	6
Music	0	1	5	4	12	7	12	4	1
National events	0	0	3	1	12	14	4	0	4
Political interviews	12	19	10	7	23	20	11	26	15
School events	3	4	14	5	18	19	12	19	5
School issues	12	15	24	17	32	25	16	23	10
Science	1	4	5	4	2	5	6	2	12
Social issues	5	9	18	12	22	15	11	3	5
Sports	6	8	27	20	45	93	31	19	7
Technology issues	0	3	6	5	13	14	16	7	19
Transport	1	0	4	1	10	6	7	0	2
Travel and tourism	0	0	1	1	1	2	0	0	1
Wellbeing issues	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	2	2
World days	1	0	0	0	2	5	1	0	2

The numbers of reports shown in Table 3 indicate that some story categories are commonly focused on by school reporters each year, while others are more commonly focused on in more specific years. This, of course, concerns how school reporters are able to relate to incidences of international, national and local news around the time of or on the News Day. What is importantly shown here is that learners are clearly being provided with opportunities to explore news stories that offer experiences and opportunities unlikely to be otherwise accessible to them. For example, news items reported on the 2009 ‘Live Reports’ website showed that learners had chance to explore:

- In terms of business items:
  - How school trips are being affected by the credit crunch.
  - How the UK area manager from Ernst & Young views the causes of the credit crunch and what it means for them.
- In terms of local issues and events:
  - Whether a new East London Line underground station is going to benefit the area.
  - The issue of road safety in the local area.
- In terms of political interviews:
  - The views of work minister Tony McNulty, who was stopped in the street by young journalists.
  - Views of a local MP about plans to revive a flagging tourist destination.
- In terms of school issues:
  - Answers from a local council's children's service on plans to close their school.
  - A head teacher's decision to continue with SATs even though they're being widely abolished.
- In terms of social issues:
  - Through a radio interview for BBC London the subject of crime and its effects on young people.
  - The relevance of religion to young people today.
- In terms of sports:
  - The return of manager Joe Royle to Oldham Athletic FC.
  - Views of the former Manchester City player Alex Williams.

It is not easy to see how these experiences to meet key politicians and other people or opportunities to ask questions of a wider public or community would otherwise happen. In this respect, the position of BBC News School Report in a school curriculum is likely to be unique. In order to support this level of experience and opportunity, the BBC lends its ethos, its support and its reputation. Whether these sorts of opportunities could happen without the involvement of the BBC in this way is not clear to see.

### 3. PROCESS

#### *Behind the scenes*

A wide range of key people are involved in running BBC News School Report; they work often 'behind the scenes' from a school perspective. There is a core team of 8 staff employed year round. While the team works flexibly across roles, they have principle responsibilities:

- The editor is responsible for: delivering the BBC News School Report and for future strategy; management and development of internal and external partnerships including those with education stakeholders and key personnel in the four Nations and at all levels of the BBC; aligning with the school audience and links to curricula; ensuring the project is delivered within BBC policies of child protection, fair trading, editorial and brand management; finding resources to deliver content across 100+ BBC outlets and the project's own platforms, live and on demand; setting editorial direction and managing editorially complex production; managing development opportunities for attachés and mentors in line with BBC strategy, marketing and publicity; development of new formats and business opportunities; and line managing all staff.
- The assistant editor leads on content production and placement, on social media, day-to-day team management, planning News Day broadcasts, relationships with the English Regions, managing content producers on attachment, and deputising.
- The web senior broadcast journalist manages the [bbc.co.uk/schoolreport](http://bbc.co.uk/schoolreport) website, plans and delivers web services for News Day, leads on cross promotion of content across [bbc.co.uk/news](http://bbc.co.uk/news), and manages the work experience scheme.
- The planning broadcast journalist leads on the interface between schools and BBC programmes, advises BBC staff and schools on creating content with young people, supports school recruitment, and works with academy networks.
- The schools broadcasting journalist leads on the recruitment and support of 1,000 diverse schools, manages the complex database, oversees work of mentor and school assistants, and compliance documentation required from each school.
- The mentor project associate leads on recruitment, support and placement of hundreds of BBC volunteers, plans BBC visits for 100s of school reporters on News Day, and leads on internal communications.
- The broadcast team assistant leads on technology, asset management and accommodation, creates content, and supports across all areas.
- The project associate assists with schools and mentors, supports the editor on financial, staffing and project planning, and focuses on production management and supports across all areas.

In addition, a member of staff in each of the BBC Learning Departments in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, and in each of the English Regions, connects with the project alongside their other work during the year. The team are then joined at various points in the year (but especially from January to March) by secondees on development placements and freelancers, many of whom have worked with the project for a number of years:

- A project/event manager works directly to the editor on event management and project co-ordination.
- A media manager keeps track of all content for multi-media distribution.
- A map producer and two assistants connect project content on some 1,000 school websites to the [www.bbc.co.uk/schoolreport](http://www.bbc.co.uk/schoolreport) website.
- A web broadcast journalist creates and publishes stories and audio-visual material on the website.
- Three broadcast schools assistants engage with schools, chasing up on paperwork and assisting with all other members of the team.
- A project management assistant assists the project manager with event co-ordination.

- An English Regions producer ensures school reporters appear on all local radio and regional TV networks.
- Three news impact producers ensure school reporters appear on Network radio and TV by working with them on their stories.
- A global world service impact producer ensures school reporters appear on the World Service and World News (TV) by working with them on their stories.
- A specialist producer for working on sensitive subjects, a very experienced ex-member of staff, works with schools on sensitive subjects such as sex education.

Additional staff involved from across the BBC on News Day itself total about 70. In terms of those going into schools as volunteers and mentors, this numbers about 200,

### ***Backgrounds of some of the team***

The project director (who is also the editor of the initiative) has been involved since the outset in 2007. Prior to this, she had been assistant editor of News Outreach and for many years before that a BBC journalist and manager, also having had a secondment as managing director of a media charity working with young people. Having started the project, her original brief in January 2006 was to investigate running a pilot project for one year working with Year 7 students in around 30 schools in which to make news reports in a single News Day. Having successfully managed this pilot, she went on to create the strategy, gain funding for the project, recruit the staff, launch the brand and run the project for its 10 years. Over that time she has had to engage staff across the BBC, and show benefits of the project to the various stakeholders. She has needed to develop a model from the pilot that would allow the project to be scalable, accounting for differences in resource availability. The aims of the project were to engage young people with news and current affairs, and to bring their voices and stories to a wider audience. In doing this, she and her team have clearly succeeded in helping to develop the skills, knowledge and confidence of hundreds of thousands of young people, together with their teachers and also the volunteer staff that work with them.

The project manager has also been involved in the project since it started. She was a member of the founding team, created the brand, managed the budget, set timelines and milestones, managed external partners and managed the event on News Day. A key issue for the project manager has been quality control in terms of output. As she says, the News Day “bulletin is the defining moment of the project and even though editorially it may not have impact, it still remains a crucial part of our reputation. One of the major ways the team have addressed the need for children chosen to be presenters is stressing that the team should go out into schools throughout the year and talent spot key students who would be capable of delivering the bulletin.” She is delighted that the brand and the merchandising, from feedback responses, have been well received in schools and it is reported that this has made a huge difference to enthusiasm by teachers for the project.

A senior broadcasting journalist with the BBC World Service radio has been working on the project only since 2015. Previously, she was senior broadcasting journalist with BBC Business programmes, mostly on the World Service. She has been an impact producer for the project, producing radio pieces with schools for air on BBC radio and online. Her key challenge has been communicating with the teachers and then the pupils in ways to ensure they know clearly what they should be aiming for “in order to produce a good report that would be informative, accurate and entertaining.” She recognises that the experiences have “opened my eyes to how young audiences (especially in the UK) communicate and use media and some of the key issues important to them. It has also increased the value of the BBC in the eyes of the schools, teachers and young people who work with [BBC News] School Report.” As she says, “this sort of outreach project is vital for the BBC, it is not an ‘add on’; working with young people in this way is vital to the future and continuing success of the BBC, especially in the UK.”

Another core team member started on the project on a work experience placement in 2012. Before that she was unemployed and taking on different work experience placements to gain more experience in

the media industry. She has had several roles on the project, from work experience, then a team assistant, a broadcast assistant, but also a researcher and latterly a broadcast journalist. Her role covers a wide range of areas, from administrative support (logging paperwork, matching mentors, IT coordination, seating plans and logistics support for the event on News Day) to production (running workshops in schools and making content with young people). She finds that challenges sometimes arise in terms of how to handle content appropriately. As she says, “I worked with a hospital school which featured students who all suffered from various mental health issues. When I went in and did a story ideas workshop, it became apparent that they were keen to do a story about mental health – which could potentially put them in a vulnerable position. However, it was something that they were passionate about pursuing and a good story idea. In order to try and work this out, I sought out advice from senior colleagues and was given the support of a producer who is experienced in dealing with difficult stories. Together we went in, spoke to the teachers and worked out a way for them to be able to record their story, in a safe way keeping them anonymous. The piece eventually aired on Radio 4’s WATO and it meant a lot to the teacher, the students and the parents who really appreciated it.” The feedback she has received indicates the value of the work she has been doing: “The schools I have directly worked with have given good feedback and say they have benefited from having support from someone from the BBC. I have personally worked with students whom I have seen blossom and really come out of their shells trying to deliver the news. It has been a valuable and practical learning project for them and they seem to thrive off it.”

### ***Background of a school mentor***

A mentor who has been involved in the project since 2010 was at that time a video editor in the news department at Television Centre. In 2010, she went into schools, filmed and edited stories and oversaw the media management and delivery of stories from across the country. Since then, she has gone into schools and held workshops with groups of students, filming and editing stories together with the students. She has provided teachers with extra resources to support their lessons and has taken part on the News Day itself. She finds that “time is at a premium and schools do not want students to miss too many lessons. We tackle this by running the BBC News School Report project as an extra-curricular [activity] and then do extra filming in lunch, break or form tutor group time.” She also finds that schools may “not have many cameras to lend out to students and the editing software is basic, slow and frustrating. We tackle this by just filming one thing at a time and taking it in turns to play the role of camera operator, interviewer or editor. And we just have to live with the poor quality editing equipment, and be thankful that there is actually some equipment at all. Mobility and getting out of school to pursue more exciting stories is a real barrier. It takes a long time and many layers of administration to get out of the building. We tackle this by adjusting our expectations and realising that everything takes weeks to organise. I have had to film events in my own time in the evenings, in order to make things happen and not to miss opportunities.” She has found that: “Schools have gained my expertise, a sense of authenticity and a technical knowledge and insight that has benefited their projects as a whole. Teachers and students I have mentored have been grateful of the support and the validation they get from having training BBC staff on board.” But her involvement in this project has also had a major effect on her long-term aspirations. As she says, BBC News School Report “made me realise that I enjoyed working with young people and empowering them with new skills. Hence why I made a radical career change and have gone from video editor at the BBC to trainee computer science teacher. I am [now] a trainee teacher and am running the project in a school in Bradford as an extra-curricular activity.”

### ***How schools have managed the project***

Not surprisingly, schools have managed this project in rather different ways. A number of examples here will illustrate different ways that have been adopted. Haywood Academy in Stoke-on-Trent has been involved in the project for 10 years. Initially, they were supported by Haywood City Learning Centre, who ran the project as a collaborative project across a number of schools. At that time, “when BBC [News] School Report first started and Haywood City Learning Centre facilitated the project, it was offered to a number of schools across the City; this included a group of students from a special school. On the News Day itself, all the students were expected to work collaboratively to prepare their reports and many of them commented on how much they had enjoyed working with students from

other schools (not just their own) – clearly a quality people experience for them all.” But in 2011 the City Learning Centre became part of Haywood Academy and BBC News School Report was then used as a focus for a small group of Year 7 students. As a teacher from the school says, “students regard this as a high profile project and are very keen to be selected to be part of the reporting team. It has given them an opportunity to work alongside BBC reporters and be featured on BBC Radio Stoke.” The school does face management challenges, however; “for security reasons access to the website with regards to adding new content (our reports) is tight. Only certain staff have this access and their time has to be planned into our schedule on the day itself to ensure they are available to do this in order to meet the BBC deadline.” On the positive side, however, the teacher says that “technology has improved so much in schools over the last 10 years that this is far less of a concern than it was in the early years of the project. Technology can still be a problem for some staff (who may get involved) but certainly not for the students.”

Chigwell Independent School in Essex run the project in a rather different way. The teacher who runs the project is in charge of junior ICT and teaches science. Students from Years 7 and 8 are involved, but also 5 or 6 mentors “from the sixth form and others who have taken part in the past and come in to help.” The school has been involved in the project for seven years. The lead teacher was “a radio journalist for many years in a previous job. The project has proved popular with the children and we usually have many more candidates than we have places for. Usually we take everyone interested from September until December – train them, and then narrow down the list in January to about 22 – those who have been productive and maintained their interest. The whole school – from both the Head of the School and the Head of the Junior School have found this a valuable project. The students learn independence, gain confidence and become actively more aware and interested in the news. We start each session with 15 minutes of reading the newspapers and discussing stories that would make good reports. It builds self-confidence and teaches skills you don’t get in any curriculum – writing for a real purpose, presenting, editing and assembling video stories.” As the teachers says, “it has a high profile in the school calendar and the school finds it a particularly ‘value added’ activity. The children find it exciting and love to go off and interview. The school allows us to take children out of school as we get closer to the live News Day to do interviews. During the London Olympics, we had two reporters who took part in the Seb Coe interview at the Olympic stadium, who subsequently were on several BBC programmes on News Day – this moment of glory hangs over the project still. The school is proud of our participation in the project and includes it in our Open Day talks with prospective parents.” The teacher recognises a range of benefits arising from the project, “students gain confidence. As they begin to interview, even their peers, their confidence grows. They reach beyond our school environment and feel they can go off and talk to MPs and local business people and organisation representatives. They work hard on their writing and seek help to make their stories excellent.” The ways the mentors are involved are also seen as being beneficial, helping “to explain concepts that their extra five or six years have given them experience. The mentors we use participated in the project 5 or 6 years before – so they are really helpful, because they know what it takes to do a news story.”

#### ***Preparation and internal school support***

The lead teacher in Guildford County School, who teaches English, has been involved for the last 10 years. The lead teacher says that “it engages students in current affairs, making them more aware of the world around them and the role they can play in it. Without them realising it, they are working on their verbal and written communication skills too. Over the years my students have been involved in some wonderful opportunities such as interviewing politicians (Ed Miliband, Vince Cable), Olympic athletes, TV and radio presenters, etc., as well as a memorable visit to Broadcasting House in the early days.” The support of senior management is crucial, however; “senior management are supportive of our involvement and will always free me up from my teaching for Practice Day and News Day – it is increasingly difficult to do this, but they like it to happen.” Technological support comes from students within the school: “I have two students who help out with the technological side of things, particularly putting everything up on the school website. They leave school this year, having worked on the last five News Days.” The way the project has been run is now being changed, however: “In the past I have run it as an after-school or lunchtime extra-curricular activity, but find that a more manageable method is to run it with one of my teaching groups, replacing their usual English lessons

during the Spring Term.” The teacher recognises how the project has influenced some students in the long-term: “It is a positive thing they remember from their school days – several have become involved in journalism at their universities because of it.”

Robert Gordon’s College in Aberdeen run the project in similar ways: “All year groups have been involved in the past, but we tend to focus on S2s and have older pupils helping to organise them and run the day.” The school has been involved for 7 years. As the lead teacher says, “it offers an experience unlike any other in that pupils are involved in every stage of the process: they plan the report, research and write the news, record it and then edit it. This means that it draws on and develops a wide number of skills. The pressure of meeting a deadline at the end of the day is also a benefit of this particular project. Pupils often see deadlines as more flexible than they should, and they do tend to get away with submitting work late to their teachers – no serious consequences anyway. However, with this report, it allows them to see that in the real world deadlines have to be met and you can’t just get your parent to write a note asking for an extension!” Benefits are seen in terms of handling management skills; as the lead teacher says, “the main gains are the skills that the pupils learn. In particular, it allows the pupils to develop leadership skills whether they are in charge of writing their own news report, or are in charge of organising the whole day.” Additionally, “it helps pupils to see real life application of the skills that they learn in a variety of their subjects and therefore helps them to value these more.” Technological issues are now being addressed: “Since we started using iPads, these problems have mainly been resolved since we can easily record and edit everything in one place.” Managing the way the project is organised is still a challenge, however: “A lot of our pupils are highly involved in a variety of activities so it can be quite challenging to organise the participants so that they can meet regularly. We have tried to carry out the preparation in lesson time with a full class, but we found this to be less successful as it meant that pupils had not chosen to participate, and were therefore not as enthusiastic as those who actively seek to be involved.” The project has been seen to influence teachers: “When you take a step back and allow pupils to take on responsibility, it helps you to see what they are capable of without you. This encourages you to try to let them take more responsibility on a regular basis.” Different benefits are being seen for different groups involved: “For the younger pupils, the report is probably more about gaining confidence as well as improving literacy skills. It is good for them to know that their work is being consumed by the public and that it therefore must be accurate in both its content and language. For the older pupils, the report gives them more responsibility and an opportunity to develop their leadership skills. Last year, we had two sixth year pupils organise the pupils and I was largely there just to supervise and encourage them to stick to schedule.” Run as an extra-curricular activity, the project is also seen to support major elements of the curriculum: “It does help us to develop skills in all ‘Curriculum for Excellence’ capacities: successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens and effective contributors.”

## 4. SCHOOLS

### *Effects on the workings and ethos of schools*

Lead teachers in schools have reported on how the project has affected their school, as well as individual students. For example, Charlton Park Academy in London is a secondary special school, involving small groups of students in BBC News School Report for the past three years. As the lead teacher says, the project is “great for our students with complex needs to have this kind of profile. It’s a great inclusive project that opens to the wider world. Also gives students opportunity to enhance skills and share their voice.” The lead teacher highlights how the project has affected ethos within the school, saying “it has been very positive for the school. The involvement was really celebrated at the time but also had a lasting impact on the students and families, they are very proud of their involvement as it has such a high profile. I think it is a great way for us to raise the profile of our students also and promote disability awareness.” While the school and teachers involved clearly need to find ways to manage the project, as the lead teacher says: “we have kept it quite small and started to collect and produce work well in advance. The short time frames can be quite challenging for our students, but it is fun to try and have the back up.” The project has also had a positive effect on the curriculum; “it has also helped to encourage and develop the media clubs in the school, journalism and radio.”

Elizabeth Garrett Anderson School in London reports effects at school level also. The school has been involved in the project for five years. An English teacher, who is Head of Media and Film Studies, has led the project, involving students from across Years 7 to 11. The lead teacher says how the project has influenced ethos within the school; “I enjoy working with the girls on topics important to them and the opportunities they have been given during the five years. London life has changed a lot for girls at the school during the time and I feel [BBC News] School Report has mapped and challenged some of the challenges our girls face, as well as celebrating their achievements. It is always fantastic for girls to put on their CVs when they leave that they were part of [BBC News] School Report during their time here.” BBC News School Report “gives our girls confidence; to present and to talk about the issues that impact on their lives. The project has given girls opportunities they would not have had access to without it – they have been given a voice also to challenge stereotypes of what it is being a teenage girl growing up in London from different backgrounds. The school has also been shown in a positive way on the [BBC News] School Report website and we have had the opportunity to work with industry professionals who listen to the girls and work with them on their ideas about where they fit into the busy city.” The lead teacher states how the project has positively supported school directions and ethos: “The reports we have been involved in have been positive for girls and therefore have been very important in building the ethos of the school. Our motto is ‘Without Limits’ and [BBC News] School Report has given students a stage for them to promote the ethos of school in their reports. [BBC News] School Report stories are linked to the school website and are popular with parents and teachers. We have shown reports in assembly to show what students can achieve if they take up the opportunities they are presented with at school.” The lead teacher also says how the project has influenced individual students: “Year 7 students show the enthusiasm to report and interview members of the public; an example is an early film we did about local Chapel Market when the girls were in Year 7. [One] student was also involved in a more serious film about headscarves in Year 11 and by this time she was much more interested in representing young Muslim teenagers in a positive way after considering how she felt the media was portraying people like herself.”

### *Reported benefits to a school*

Harris Academy in Peckham have been involved in the project for the past two years, but participated some years’ ago too. The school involves students across Years 7 to 10. The lead teacher states that it has “made an excellent impact on our students.” BBC News School Report “has made fantastic contributions to our students’ personal development. At Harris Academy we have promoted school report through [religious education] RE in the new scheme of work, which aims to raise philosophical, cultural and religious questions from news stories. This has had many positive impacts on our students. Students have shown an invigorated enthusiasm for religion and philosophy, in exploring its

impact on every day society. Students have become significantly more culturally and politically aware. Students read the news more and a year on I find them coming to speak to me about international and political issues. (For example, a current Year 10 student who did [BBC News School Report] last year, came to discuss a parliamentary debate on euthanasia that she read about, and asked to have this included in a lesson.)” The lead teacher states how school ethos has been impacted too: “This has had an excellent impact on relationships with students. For example, one group of very challenging boys in Year 8 took part in a BBC visit last year. They still look back at the trip with joy and this has had a positive impact on their relationship with pastoral leaders who took them on that. We are also aiming to get students running a ‘Pride in Peckham’ programme this year which will be fantastic for the school and community.”

### ***Strengthened links across their community***

Lilian Baylis Technology School in Vauxhall has been involved in the project since it started. Students across Years 7 to 13 are involved, but the project is led by Year 7 students. The lead teacher believes “it is a great opportunity for a school to be more community focused and action led.” As the lead teacher says, “it is great to see everyone involved and the Year 7s feel more attached to the school.” The lead teacher says that the project has influenced the ethos of the school, as it “helps build a community ethos as students, parents and staff are willing to be interviewed as part of the project. We are all in it together.” Teachers are recognised as being influenced too: “they are willing to help out our students even more, particularly when there is an issue that the students are so passionate about.” Pupils are also seen to be affected, as the project “builds their confidence and shows pupils that they have great communicative and leadership skills. Many students who have taken part in the [BBC News School Report] have gone on to become prefects in the school and taken on extra responsibility.” The project has also influenced the way the school considers and uses news, “we report on local, national and international news more in tutor time” and “we use it more within lessons. Students are able to use video recording and computers to present their ideas.”

## 5. TEACHERS

### *Teacher views of the project*

Marden High School in Northumbria has been involved in the project since it started. They involve Year 8 students, with older year groups taking part as BBC News School Report mentors. As a media arts college, the projects fits well with the school's aims and remit. The lead teacher sees students benefiting, particularly in terms of "independent learning, and giving [students up to 14 years of age] an opportunity to be journalists and experience Media Studies before they study for GCSE examinations. It is an opportunity for students to develop their independence and learn how to work to deadlines in a high pressure environment, problem solving all along. This develops resilience which they can use in other lessons throughout the curriculum." The school has "appeared on BBC Look North twice, and has gained a reputation as a school heavily involved in all aspects of the media." As the lead teacher says, other teachers have been influenced by the project too: "Many different teachers have taken part over the years, and teachers are now prepared and look forward to each practice day, knowing that it is an established part of school life." Older students also support teachers: "Some former [BBC News School Report] reporters have worked as mentors in Years 9, 10 and 11, helping teach and mentor the Year 8 reporters based on their knowledge and experience."

### *What teachers gain balanced with what they have to manage*

Brentside High School in London has been involved in the project since it started in 2006. All Year 8 students are involved in the project – about 225 of them each year. The school has been involved for so long as "the project is a great success and every year creates a big buzz amongst students, parents and the wider community." The lead teacher states the important benefits that they see for their students: "Students learn how to apply many skills they learn in the classroom, e.g. the importance of clarity and conciseness, but also the necessity to work towards a deadline and for a real audience. Students' learning has a real purpose and it is recognised as such." The project fits in with the ethos and aims of the school: "The project reflects the ethos of our school *Learning and Achieving Together*. Every pupil in Year 8 is involved, everyone has a role. This is not something for a small group of students, like a club. Everyone has the opportunity to shine and to contribute." Teachers have been influenced by the project: "The teachers within the English team are very happy with the project because the students are so enthusiastic about it. Moreover, the lessons and resources on the BBC website are of great help." Teachers see how the project fits with the needs of the curriculum: "The project lends itself perfectly to the new curriculum. There is a great emphasis on the ability to write accurately, for example. This is one of the fundamental values, but also a great challenge to teach." The lead teacher also recognises how technology changes are affecting the project: "In recent years, students are more willing to get involved in the technical side of things. They are more ICT savvy than ever before."

## 6. STUDENT PARTICIPANTS

### *Reflections from alumni*

Those who took part in BBC News School Report some years ago can often still remember their experiences, and the influences that the project has had on them. For example, a girl who took part when she was 14 years old, and is now 18 years old, said, “I think that taking part in the BBC [News School Report] in a Director's role challenged me to work with others and make decisions as a group. Although this led to an overall more positive result, the process was more complicated than if I were to be working on my own. Branching from this, I found that in order to complete the project you needed a variety of skills obtained from different people. This meant that you had to trust and rely on other people a lot, which at times could be very stressful.” She found the project “to be very unique in comparison to other clubs available in school. We were given a lot of independence and freedom with how we wanted to manage it. I think this was one of my favourite elements of being involved in the task.” She says the impact the project had on her was “it made me realise I wanted to be involved in a team related profession as well as my enjoyment in co-coordinating large groups of people. Overall it was a really enjoyable experience and I got to know a lot of my peers a lot better because of it.” She is now “a first year medical student at the University of St Andrews. Although I don't think BBC [News] School Report had a direct influence on my choice of course, it made me question whether I wanted to do medicine. I have considered other careers more, such as those that involve being behind the scenes of documentaries/films, as well as being a part of large companies such as the BBC.”

### *Effects on long-term career paths*

For some students, it has had a dramatic effect on their lives and careers. One girl, 12 years old when she took part, and now 19 years old, said, “I was a shy individual before taking part in the project. My involvement in [BBC News School Report] made me more chatty, confident and gave me the ability to use skills I'd gained in the classroom to benefit group work (such as my English lessons, team building and working within a time limit).” She said that BBC News School Report was “very different. [BBC News School Report] had the aspects of school and curriculum but allowed you to think outside the box, work to a time limit and also to work with people that you usually wouldn't. Teachers always tried to make you work with students outside your friendship group but [BBC News School Report] allowed you to do this by exchanging story ideas with people and also sharing skills and creativity with one another.” She said that she “never even bothered with the news until [BBC News School Report]. After News Day I started watching Newsround and reading the local newspaper so I could see what was going on around me.” In terms of her interests and career, she said that she had “always had an interest in writing and creating stories but I didn't know how to put this into action. I took part in [BBC News School Report] and it made me want to become a journalist. I didn't have the grades to get into university. So I applied for the BBC Local Apprenticeship Scheme to become a qualified journalist. Whilst on the apprenticeship I wanted to help out with [BBC News School Report] so I went round a few schools in Cumbria telling students about my experience. Without [BBC News School Report] I would never have even considered my current career.” Now, she is “a broadcast assistant with BBC News School Report. Without a project like this I wouldn't have a career. If I hadn't taken part in [BBC News School Report] my life would be very, very different. I couldn't imagine this project not existing.”

### *The project was different*

Some alumni indicate how different the project was from other things they did in school, but how it connected with the other work they had done. One boy who took part every year from the age of 11 to 16, is now 20 years old, and said, “We faced many general news gathering challenges, as any reporter would - in terms of sourcing news, validating any quotes we had found for particular stories, etc.” He stressed that BBC News School Report “has always been different from other lessons and clubs in schools because it has the backing of the BBC and their resources to ensure school students learn a professional form of news gathering, reporting, and filmmaking. [BBC News] School Report provided excellent opportunities for my peers and I, allowing us the opportunity to visit Television Centre to interview Louisa Lytton, to visit the BBC Box Shipping Container before and after it travelled around the world, and also to be involved with students across the whole school in creating a short news

programme, internal radio show, and create articles for our school website.” He says that he now checks “the BBC News website regularly each day, and this is thanks to the introduction to the site from [BBC News] School Report.” He said that BBC News School Report “was an event I looked forward to every year and was the project that inspired my future. [BBC News] School Report has shaped my future. With the biggest thanks for the influence, guidance, support and inspiration from this project and the team behind it, I am now nearing the end of my studies for a degree in Television and Film Production, I have a part-time job with a local film production company, and I have devoted all my spare time to making films and following the news.”

### ***What students experienced***

Some alumni perceived the project as helping them in specific ways. One boy who took part when he was 13 and 14 years old is now 21 years old. He said, “There weren’t any issues or challenges with this project, all the students and staff were a pleasure to work with and I enjoyed every minute of my time with the BBC News School Report. It was different as it allowed us out of our comfort zone, that being the four walls of a classroom. It was a pleasant change of scenery and gave me a different outlook on life as a pupil.” He stressed that “It had a major impact on me as it gave me the chance to talk in front of a lot of people at one time and that helped me build confidence in myself.” Now, “I work in promotions for a radio company which involves working and talking to a wide range of people on a daily basis. The BBC News School Report has had a major impact on my life as it gave me the required skills and confidence to do the job I do today.”

Another boy took part when he was 13 years old. He is now 18 years old, but he remembers certain challenges, “Writing an interview for the then Deputy Prime Minister, and working as part of a team to put together the most varied yet appropriate questions we could find. Coping with the pressure of being broadcast to a large audience and adjusting my work accordingly.” But, as he says, it was “Vastly different! Being given the opportunity to learn from Martha Kearney, interview Nick Clegg and work with Allen Sinclair were all amazing opportunities that would never be available in a common classroom environment. Being given the opportunity to go outside the classroom, and learn how to actually put into action all of the skills we had been learning was a fantastic and exciting hands-on experience.” He said “My interest in current affairs has increased, and so has my fascination in the workings of a news team, and the behind the scenes operations that pool together to give a finished programme or newspaper.” He feels he gained in certain ways, “My confidence grew, as I shared my ideas and gained others from talking to fellow students. Seeing journalists in action gave an element of reality to the news we see and read every day, and inspired me to work on my own writing and research skills to give myself the opportunity to hopefully put myself in a similar position one day. Seeing a news room in action and appearing on the radio and television showed me that there are careers in the media, if you are willing to work for them and seize your chances. Interviewing Mr Clegg in his own office was also a phenomenally unique opportunity, and meeting him personally and finding him a pleasant, regular man has heightened my interest in politics.” Now, he has “just received 5 offers to study variations of English courses at university. The [BBC News] School Report gave me the belief and assurance that there are careers within writing that fit my skill set, and set me on the way to writing as a form of enjoyment in addition to academic necessity. As I rapidly approach the end of my school career and look back over the years, [BBC News] School Report remains one of the top experiences, in terms of personal influence, enjoyment and unique opportunity, and I am incredibly grateful to have been given that chance at such a young age.”

### ***What they feel they have gained***

Some alumni have indicated how the project has supported and benefited them in general, rather than specific, ways. One boy who took part every year from when he was 12 to when he was 16 years old is now 22 years old. He remembers, “Teachers involved deliberately put me out of my comfort zone - something that was daunting to begin with but I later realised was extremely useful.” As he said, it was “very different in the sense that it was more ‘real world’ and we had the opportunity to learn in a more practical way than just sitting in the classroom.” Subsequently, “After gaining an appreciation of the news gathering processes and the work involved peaked my interest, I now read and take great interest in the news every day.” He felt he benefited in a number of ways: “I think not only did the project give

me opportunities to learn about news writing and gathering in more interesting and practical ways, it also gave me the experience, to an extent, of the 'busy newsroom' - working to deadlines, focusing on accuracy, and the best ways in which to convey information to people in informative but engaging ways. It also made me appreciate the profession - and the biggest impact was likely and admiration of journalism and the value of the BBC." He is now "studying Computer Science at the University of Warwick and heavily involved in media societies. Experiences through [BBC News School Report] peaked my interest in the media in general and are the main reason for my passion and involvement today."

#### ***The real-life element was important***

The real-world nature of the project was also recognised by others as being important to them and their learning. One boy took part when he was 15 and 16 years of age and he is now 23 years old. He said, "The real world deadline involved proved a challenge." He found that the project "was different due to the real world application for what we were doing. No other lessons were similar at that time. The clubs of a similar nature were based more around what we wanted to do, and didn't come with the same time pressures." As he said, the project "increased my interest in working in a technical role, but not specifically for new programs. I enjoyed participating and solving the challenges." He is now in his "final year of studying for a Masters (MEng) degree in Electronic Engineering. The [BBC News School Report] project helped reinforce my idea that I wanted to work in a technical role. I still participate in stage crew work as a hobby, which I greatly enjoy. I was participating in this role before and during the project and got the opportunity to use my skills from this in the project."

#### ***The project offered greater independence in working***

The independence that students were given to work on this project has been commented on by alumni. One girl was involved every year between 13 and 15 years of age, and she is now 18 years old. She remembered a main challenge being "Inspiration with coming up with a story." As she said, "It was completely different as you had more independence to report on what you found most interesting and present in a way you felt was most engaging. You also interacted with people from different year groups, that you were unlikely to do in other clubs." She said the project "improved my confidence in writing and interviewing people. It also made me more interested in reading news articles, and helped me gain a better understanding of them." She is "currently doing A levels and BBC News School Report has influenced my writing style, making sure that I am clear and fluent. It has also meant that I am more likely to take part in discussions and think about both sides of an argument."

#### ***The project encouraged interactivity***

Another girl who was 12 years old when she took part in the project is now 16 years old. She felt she benefited, "Taking on a more independent figure and giving my ideas and thoughts and being more firm." She felt the project was "Different because it was more interactive and we were more independent." She feels it has "added to my experiences and skills. It also prepared me in some ways to take my A-Level Politics. It also gave me the chance to work outside school with opportunities that I wouldn't usually get." Now, she is "finishing up Year 11 and will be starting sixth form in September. I will be studying A-Level Politics and all my skills that I learnt in BBC News School Report will contribute to finishing the course."

#### ***The challenges students faced***

Some alumni are clear about the challenges they faced, and how these have been important and influential in their lives. One girl took part every year from when she 12 years old to when she was 16 years of age; she is now 21 years old. As she said, "When I started this was a new project so for me; the challenge was the teachers were still learning whilst we were. As the years went on my challenge was to get all yours and others deadlines met by the end of the day but it was something we learnt from. Also, my particular issue was writing in a professional manner." In terms of the project, "It was definitely different! It was throwing you into a professional situation with deadlines and expectations. You had to learn as you go but it was exciting. As I got older I got to take on a leadership role which was different [be]cause other clubs the teacher was very much in charge but now as older students we were given responsibility." She says, "I make a point of checking the news every day, having alert

apps and generally being more aware of the world around me.” She feels that certain benefits arose for her, “It made me much more confident as a writer, a leader and as a human. I learned that deadlines were important to stick to and I went on to take subjects such as Media A-Level and English A-Level so as to learn more about being a journalist. I have written blogs for many organisations and in my job now am running my own section in our website for blogging. I also made friends with people at school I would never normally and some of them are still my longest friendships.” Now, she is “a Communications Assistant for an arts organisation in the South East. I also do a bit of blogging from time to time for various arts magazines and organisations. I would definitely say that BBC News School Report influenced part of this journey. It still continues to be a source of inspiration for the projects and work I create in my job. BBC New School Report is one of the things that sticks out most as an awesome opportunity I had at school. I was lucky enough last year to go to the BBC and watch other schools take part as an Alumni and getting to see how much it has progressed is amazing. I felt so jealous of the kids who still get to take part in this wonderful project. Sometimes you don’t see how special something is until you don’t get to do it anymore. I hope it runs for many more years which I am sure it will as I don’t think I saw one child that day who didn’t have a smile on their face, getting to participate in a day which could change their thinking and their lives.”

## 7. SHORT TERM OUTCOMES

### *The short term outcomes that have encouraged schools*

Different reports arising from studies undertaken on the BBC News School Report project have all identified short-term outcomes that arise for learners. The English (2008) report, for example, identifies “a significant impact on literacy. Video footage of students talking together to solve problems before and after the project demonstrates that students experienced a steep learning curve with regard to effective group collaboration and discussion. The emphasis on discussion as the main learning strategy throughout the project also had a noticeable effect on the quality of written outcomes. Boys and students with English as an additional language [EAL], who underachieve with regard to literacy, benefited in particular from the opportunity to discuss ideas and to utilise their ability to write succinctly and logically as opposed to expressively” (p.6). Passey (2008) and Passey and Gillen (2009) identified a range of short-term learning outcomes reported by students and teachers (reported earlier in Chapter 1).

### *Short term outcomes teachers have recognised*

Reports in previous chapters of this report identify a range of short term outcomes for students identified by teachers in different schools and contexts. A further example is offered here, reported by a teacher from Culcheth High School, who discussed how the project had been used and how literacy gains had arisen with her students. Having taken part in BBC News School Report for a number of years, the teacher “needed a tangible project to give real focus for students improving their writing, grammar, punctuation and spelling skills. Throughout the year, these students had completed work related to their specific literacy targets in addition to their usual English lessons but they struggled to see how this extra help would assist them in the ‘real’ world.” So the teacher “embedded many of the skills and lessons from the BBC News School Report website into our literacy time. We were even fortunate enough to have a BBC mentor come in and advise students on news content and how to ‘build a story’. A small group within the class designed and created the website in their lunchtimes and this gave the rest of the students a real targeted focus to work towards. Students worked in small groups, during lesson time, to plan and produce a range of newsworthy content and then write their news stories. I was extremely proud to see students, many of whom had struggled to engage in the literacy lessons, actively seeking out interviews, emailing companies, questioning their responses in a journalistic way and structuring and organising the content of their stories. The literacy aspect was extremely important to us as a class; redrafting and proofreading became second nature, in order to get content, grammar and punctuation accurate. The fact that this project is ‘real’ and students’ work is accessible to a wide varied audience helped enormously in this. These lessons prepared us for the expectations on the actual News Day and the students thrived, working towards a fast approaching 2.00pm deadline.” As she said, “Students enjoyed the freedom of being able to write about issues that were relevant to them and their families. They produced a range of content: most notably accurate written news stories, but often these were complimented with video interviews or pieces to camera. The vast majority of the class participated enormously in this project and the huge array of transferrable skills they gained has had a lasting impact on many of them. These are skills that it is often difficult to cultivate in an ordinary school environment. To witness students interviewing local focus groups and questioning statements from local companies was extremely rewarding for me as a teacher. To then see them use and improve their literacy skills to communicate their voice to a ‘real’ wide audience was especially satisfying. Fourteen-year-olds often feel ignored but this project gave them a voice, a voice they took pride in presenting to a genuine, authentic audience. For a 14-year-old feeling that their voice is being heard is invaluable and it empowered them to create a higher standard of work. This project has had a huge impact on the learning of these students; their confidence and literacy skills have improved greatly.”

## 8. LONG TERM OUTCOMES

### *How the project informed and inspired young people to be life-long learners*

Individuals in Chapter 6 described how the project had influenced them in the long term. Teachers in schools also see this level of influence, but on a wider number of their students. Reading School has been involved in the project since the outset, and the lead teacher teaches English. Year 8 students are involved in this school. The reason for the school being involved every year is, as the lead teacher states, “because it is such a powerful teaching and learning/career tool; it is so efficiently organised by your team; the BBC branding gives it a seal of authority and importance which makes governors as well as students give it respect and interest.” The teacher talks about the long term impact in a range of ways, “Student engagement and confidence in English as a subject; writing as a discipline; journalism as a potential career. Students who have participated have gone on to seek work experience in local newspapers, set up their own blogs, pursue writing courses at university.” The teacher sees the effects not only on the students, however; “The sheer fact of school news being published on the BBC website means that parents and local people can engage with what’s going on with what is important to our students where they previously might not have been interested or aware. The project fits in with the school’s principles of independence, challenge outside of the academic curriculum and resilience on the face of long-term task planning, and has provided material for students on their UCAS [university application] forms and CVs.” The lead teachers sees long term effects on teachers too; “Freedom to engage with students’ development outside of the classroom; develop their own CPD [professional development] in training; experience a little of the world of the media through visits and mentor links, which adds variety to a typical working term at school.”

### *Long term effects on BBC staff too*

But BBC News School Report has not just affected those in school in the long term. It has also affected those in the BBC. One of the broadcast journalists on the team has been involved in the project since 2008. She was a mentor for schools, then the England Regional Coordinator for all BBC outlets for online, radio and TV, an outdoor broadcast producer, a video journalist, producer and editor. She talks about the real challenges of the work she has done with students and schools: “Children being too shy to be involved. I spent extra time building confidence, [and] when we went back to the school to do the broadcast, the pupil who didn’t want to be involved at all, was doing a live!” She talks about the challenges of “talking about controversial subjects like pupils being given nicotine patches. We [dealt] with it like a real news story teaching pupils how the piece had to be balanced and to protect the identity of pupils involved in the scheme”, and “Managing a school of hysterical pupils excited when Olly Murs came to visit. Not easy when you’re just as excited yourself, but [we needed to prepare] the pupils before his arrival to make it clear what the schedule was and what was going to happen.” Yet other challenges were “Dealing with sensitive issues the pupils have on Facebook. The school reporters and their welfare is always the priority, and we managed to still tell important stories within clear boundaries.” Yet, as she says, without BBC News School Report “I would have left journalism and the BBC entirely. I joined the project, it restored my confidence, gave me new skills and the belief that I can help train young people who are also interested in news. I was quite simply broken by the BBC before [BBC News] School Report, but it’s such a great grass roots project and you have first-hand experience of knowing you are making a difference to individuals. Parents, teachers and pupils are always saying afterwards just what an impact the project has had on them, but to me personally, well it saved me. I then went on to work in the national newsroom and came back to the project every year. I have worked on amazing projects with schools dealing with big news stories in floods, to fun elements like at the Olympic Park. It gives pupils the understanding of knowing what news is, why it’s important and to give them a voice to tell a story their way. They also realise how hard work it is to make a very short news piece! Pupils have loved it and put in so much effort. For some, they have never been given such an opportunity.”

## 9. INTERNATIONAL VERSIONS

### *Other countries involved*

BBC School News Report has sought to involve schools from outside the UK, in two main ways. Some schools have registered to be involved in the project that is run annually (mainly schools with children whose parents or guardians are in the armed forces or diplomatic services overseas). Table 4 shows the number of these schools involved since 2007.

**Table 4: Numbers of non-UK schools involved annually**

	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
<b>All schools</b>	120	280	514	714	819	1052	1034	1082	1029	1033
<b>Non-UK schools</b>	0	0	6	30	1	1	3	3	8	9

### *How it has worked in other countries*

A few examples of how BBC News School Report has worked with other countries are offered here. BBC News School Report personnel have, for example, supported collaboration with schools around the world. These activities have resulted from partnerships with a variety of organisations, including the British Council. In 2012, BBC News School Report partnered with the British Council to run a global journalism project through the ‘Connecting Classrooms’ school twinning initiative. This project resulted in 119 schools from 8 countries taking part. The schools made their own news and broadcast on their websites, which were linked to the ‘Connecting Classrooms’ website, in turn linked to the BBC News School Report website. The schools had access to the online resources for BBC News School Report and the BBC provided support for the participating UK schools as part of their existing network. The British Council supported the training of participating teachers in the 8 countries and acted as a point of contact for participating schools internationally. Registered schools were located in India (85 schools), Lebanon (7 schools), Zambia (5 schools), Bulgaria (5 schools), Poland (4 schools), and Senegal (2 schools). In total, 48 of these schools took part in News Day, with stories appearing on BBC websites, on BBC News School Report radio and on Focus on Africa.

During the same year, BBC News School Report worked with the British Council on a project that enabled Ukrainian and Polish pupils to attend Euro 2012 matches as reporters. BBC News School Report created a training resource online and had a video conference briefing with the school reporters and their teachers before they went to the match to guide them through the editorial process of writing reports. Two pupils and one teacher attended each match – two in Poznan, Poland and two in Kiev, Ukraine.

In 2015, BBC News School Report introduced a ‘Global’ initiative. This initiative focused on democratic governance, and involved a school in each of 4 locations – Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, Nairobi, Kenya, Washington DC, USA, and Delhi, India. The school reporters were supported by local BBC personnel within the World Service. They produced a variety of stories, including what girls can and can’t wear in Delhi, sports schools in Rio ahead of the 2016 Olympics, healthy eating in Washington DC, and letter writing in Nairobi.

Reports from students, teachers and mentors indicate similar benefits to those recorded in UK contexts:

- Exploring how to work in a team, how to work together, and to meet deadlines.
- Learning how to find ideas, how to interview, and how to script stories.
- Finding out about different attitudes and perceptions, and how to present these to a wider audience.
- Considering how to be objective, and how to develop confidence in speaking.
- Learning how to use a camera, how to speak to camera, and the qualities of being a journalist.
- Finding out about the processes and activities involved in journalism.

## 10. CONCLUSIONS

### *Forms of learning arising*

Learners involved have clearly benefited in a wide range of ways. Their learning through this project has been enhanced; they have been required through their endeavours to apply or meet the needs of a number of different and complementary learning approaches, all identified within the educational literature as important ways to enhance positive learning outcomes:

- Understanding through socialisation and discussion, described, for example, by Vygotsky (1962), Pask (1975), and Mercer and Littleton (2007). As Vygotsky (1978) stated, 'every function in the child's cultural development appears twice: first, on the social level, and later, on the individual level; first, between people (interpsychological) and then inside the child (intrapsychological)'. In this project, learners have been involved in discussion, sharing and negotiation, and then enacting their roles and fulfilling a range of needs through specific activities.
- The transfer of learning, described by Bransford et al. (2000) as 'A major goal of schooling is to prepare students for flexible adaptation to new problems and settings. Students' abilities to transfer what they have learned to new situations provides an important index of adaptive, flexible learning; seeing how well they do this can help educators evaluate and improve their instruction' (p.235). In this project, learners and teachers have stated how they have transferred learning from classroom lessons and from discussions with others into actions to fulfil specific needs.
- Problem-based learning, described by Barrows (1996) as 'student-centred, done in small groups ideally of 6-10 people, where facilitators or tutors guide students rather than teach, with a problem forming the basis for the focus of the group to stimulate their learning, with new knowledge obtained through self-directed learning'. In this project, learners have encountered problems, and they have individually and collectively needed to find ways to solve those problems.
- Authentic learning discussed by McFarlane (1997) and described by Donovan, Bransford and Pellegrino (1999) in terms of 'an approach allowing learners to explore, discuss, and meaningfully construct concepts and relationships in contexts that include real-world problems and projects relevant to the learner'. In this project, the real-world context, real-world problems and audiences of their products have been focal elements that have framed their approaches and attitudes to learning.
- Dialogic learning described by Alexander (2008) in terms of 'learning that takes place through dialogue'. In this project, communication and negotiation through dialogue have been focal to their approaches.
- Situated learning described by Lave and Wenger (1991) in terms of 'acquiring professional skills in a situation where there is a close relationship between learning and the social situation in which it occurs'. In this project, the real-world context has been supported by some students working as 'apprentices' and gaining from the experience of mentors and advisers from the BBC.
- Collaborative learning described by Stahl, Koschmann and Suthers (2006) in terms of 'an approach where learning takes place through social interaction using a computer or through the Internet, by a sharing and construction of knowledge among participants'. It is the processes afforded by both collaboration and communication through technologies that are focal to this form of learning, defined by some researchers (see Dillenbourg, 1999, for example) as leading to outcomes where the roles and specific contributions of individuals cannot easily be identified. In this project, the end product has been a clear collaborative effort, where individuals have contributed for the benefit of the team.

### ***Overall lessons that have been learned***

While learners have been involved in approaches to learning that are recognised as being important, overall there are key lessons that have been learned too:

- The reputation and ethos of the BBC has had a profound effect on the ability of schools, teachers and learners to work in the ways they have, and to make contact with the range of individuals interviewed, for example.
- Access to these forms of opportunities, both to mentors from the BBC and interviewees, for example, which have become available to learners across the 10-year period, would be unlikely to have been accessible through any other means.
- The BBC News School Report team has provided invaluable opportunities that have led to important and significant outcomes (for learners, teachers, mentors, in the short term and the long term).
- Discussion and dialogue have been promoted, and literacy has been seen and shown to be enhanced in many instances.
- Learners have been able to apply problem-solving approaches.
- The activities they have undertaken have been in totally authentic contexts, and have led to authentic outcomes. For much school work, the audience is teachers or examination markers; in this project the audience is the school, the community, the BBC, and the wider global public.
- Learning from classroom-based lessons has been able to be applied in practice. The learning has been situated in a wider audience context, so that endeavour of students in class lessons in English, for example, has been more clearly understood and enhanced.
- Collaboration has been actively encouraged, not only with peers, but with teachers, BBC mentors, and other advisers, so that positive outcomes can result.
- Learners in different schools, including those supporting students with special educational needs, have been actively involved in the project, and have been seen to benefit in specific and important ways.
- Long-term outcomes, of significance to students involved and to some BBC personnel involved have arisen. At the same time, the project has alerted young people to possible career options and the significance and challenges of the news and journalism.
- Individuals within the BBC have been positively influenced by this project.

### ***What makes this project viable and important***

In this review, I will leave the last words on viability and importance to a teacher involved in a school. Longsands Academy in Cambridgeshire has been involved in the project since it began. The lead teacher teaches English, and Year 8 students are involved. As the lead teacher says, the school has been involved every year for a number of reasons; “Practice and ‘live’ days have quite a buzz around the school and it allows the students to put the learning in the lesson into practice. [It] gives the students a chance to discuss, interview and write about key issues that are of particular concern to them. [It] allows us the opportunity to give some students key responsibility on the day.” Benefits are seen widely, “it does add to a sense of ‘openness’ in the school. The head is always available for an interview so students ask and get a frank response to a range of questions. They also interview other members of staff about key concerns. In the surveys and interviews with peers students get the chance to see what people’s views are on a range of subjects and debate. The fact that they can move around the school gives them a sense of freedom while having to keep to a task.” The lead teacher goes on to say that “I think it allows students to shine, regardless of their ability. It also gives them a sense of excitement about the process of news gathering and focuses their minds on also coming up with a product in the time available. It gives some a sense of joy in putting in effort which they don’t always feel in the daily grind of lessons and being confined to the classroom.” The lead teacher states clearly how the project is supporting short term as well as long term gains for students: “It suits our purposes in working on improved communication skills in general, but in particular helping our students to understand the structure and key features of news items, whether written or spoken.”

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