

Helping others thrive: The British Inter-

“The total corporate social responsibility of business entails the simultaneous fulfilment of the firm’s economic, legal, ethical and philanthropic responsibilities. Stated in more pragmatic and managerial terms, the CSR firm should strive to make a profit, obey the law, be ethical, and be a good corporate citizen.” Carroll, A.B. (1991) ‘The pyramid of corporate social responsibility: towards the moral management of organizational stakeholders’, Business Horizons, July-August: 39-48

Nord Anglia Education, the company behind The British International School, Bratislava, along with 12 other highly regarded premium schools across Europe, Asia and the Middle East, has a commitment to leading positive change through education and follows the ethos of global responsibility as espoused by its schools. Whilst its schools operate on a ‘for profit’ basis, the company both invests significant capital in its schools and allocates considerable resources to seeking out and retaining the best teachers, offering competitive salaries and continued professional development through its staff college. But the Nord Anglia also applies its mission, “Helping Others Thrive” beyond

its fee-paying customers and employees. The company recognizes that there are many more less fortunate students and communities than it can reach. It wants to reach them because it believes all children have the right to fulfill their potential, and because the more deprived children are helped to access education, the better the future will be for all of us. Not only that, it’s an enriching experience for the students and staff of the schools to be involved, opening their minds to possibility and helping them to fulfill their own potential with opportunities for initiative, leadership and independence.

All Nord Anglia schools have a long history of charitable involvement with work in their

communities and two full scholarships are offered to local students from low income families each year. However, at the company level, action really started in 2008 when it rebuilt the ramshackle Spring Bud School in Tianshui, Gansu Province in China following its destruction by the earthquake that so badly affected Sichuan. This school for 180 disadvantaged children, located in one of China’s most inaccessible areas, is now housed in a permanent brick building with seven classrooms, and has already made a significant difference to the community there. In 2010 Nord Anglia supported an educational project in Rwanda and a refugee education project in Karak, Jordan. The response to this made it clear to the Nord Anglia that this was the sort of activity its stakeholders, students, teachers and school principals, thought was a vital part of the educational process in their schools— learning through service to the local and global community. So at the beginning of 2011, a new charitable arm of Nord Anglia Education was launched called “NordStar”.

The start of an exciting journey.... This process started with an “Ideas Day” in February 20, which joined a group of parents, teachers and students from all

our schools with staff from the company’s Learning Services division, which works with national governments across the world to develop national education systems, and helped us shape the direction of NordStar. www.nordanglia.com/nordstar

The work developed the guiding principles to allow the Nord Anglia to deliver long-term support through fundraising, sponsorship and practical ‘hands on’ help for less fortunate communities and children around the world. This support comes in the form of expertise as well as cash. Each Nord Anglia school has a Local Board of teachers, pupils and parents who oversee its charitable and community service work. This group is in charge of administering the ‘Spark’ fund, a generous annual allowance allocated by the company to support a school’s local activities. Larger projects will attract more significant funding from a ‘Shine’ fund provided that children and education are at the heart of the community service and that any input has a lasting benefit to the people involved.

This has been fantastic news for the British International School, Bratislava where global awareness and service is an integral part of the curriculum. Younger children are involved in residential Eco weekends and filling ‘Santas shoeboxes’ with Christmas treats and distributing them to orphanages throughout Slovakia. As students progress through the school the requirement to give their time increases. Service ‘hours’ are recorded when students work individually or in groups. One 14 year old boy is reconstructing broken computers and giving



national School Bratislava, Nord Anglia Education


**THE BRITISH
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 Bratislava, Slovakia



them to children's homes; there is a regular 'litter pick' by a group of students in the vicinity close to the school. The school has an ongoing community support program with Hrinova Children's Home. This September, 40 students were involved in building a new garden area with stone steps for the children. Another large group worked at Polana on a continuing environmental support program started 4 years ago, supporting the work of the guardians of the UNESCO protected woodland. Students clear paths to allow foresters to work in the forest with minimal impact on fauna. During the winter months, students visit the Children's Hospital at Petržalka to provide support and English classes to children who are long-term patients. This term, three students have supported a homeless shelter by collecting, sorting, cleaning, and distributing secondhand clothing. Small groups of students spend time working in local children's homes with children, working on maintenance projects, collecting toys for donation and making decorations for Christmas.

Our middle school students (11 to 13 year olds) have a long standing commitment to the Alzbeta crisis center in Spišská Nová Ves, working on maintenance projects, arts and craft projects, and taking

the children on trips including bringing them to Bratislava for a weekend each year. Large groups of students have spent two weekends this term at Kravany nad Dunajom painting walls and fences to improve the site for the arts and crafts summer camps for children from lower income families and preparing a development plan for starting up a camp for disabled children.

One disappointment for the school has been the ending of a project in collaboration with the American Embassy. Up until 2009, a former parent working at the Embassy partnered with us to support the Roma village in Plavecky Stvrtok, providing English lessons for children and adults, as well as games and learning activities. Due to the inaccessibility of the village by public transport and the high cost of minibus hire in Bratislava the project became increasingly problematic. Fortunately from 2012 BISB will have its own minibus to support such service activities which means that some older students can take on more challenging and less accessible projects.

Service learning undoubtedly benefits numerous parties, including schools, communities and individuals, but we have no doubt that it is our students

who need this experience and probably receive the most gain, since "Community service provides the critical missing link for many students, an opportunity to apply academic learning to real human needs and to make the knowledge gained usable in one's thinking beyond the situation in which the learning occurred." (Hedin 1989). This is never more pertinent than in a school where its students, staff and parents run the risk of living in a 'bubble' by virtue of their wealth or transient lifestyle as expats. The 'global citizen' we talk about can easily live in the world of international brands, iPads and iPhones, air miles and designer coffee without actually engaging in his or her local community or having any real awareness of global issues. A major benefit of community service is the feeling of social connectedness that appears to be diminishing in our increasingly segmented society. Many students report an increased sense of social responsibility, and a subsequent desire to "give back" to the communities in which they live and to explore 'local' ways of doing things that could have a global impact. Students benefit intellectually too; exposure to diversity, other cultures and different ways of thinking helps them to develop perspective.

Frequently they learn from the people they are helping or working with and encounter new points of view. For some, it can be life-changing or introduce a career path they want to follow. So what is next for BISB and NordStar? We are currently working on a project that will be launched in 2012, 'BISB Tigers'. This is a collaborative project with a very remarkable school in Vryburg, South Africa which is making a difference to the children and community it serves. A group of our teachers will be working alongside their teachers to introduce new ways of teaching and learning and to provide opportunities in music and art which currently do not exist. We hope that they will be accompanied by a group of our students who will work with their students in building a new Library, will work with children in the local township and will help the school with its farm project to educate local farmers about sustainable farming methods. We will certainly be putting in a bid to NordStar's Shine fund to support this work. Meanwhile, our primary children will be raising money to buy cattle for the school's Nguni herd!



Wendy Ellis
Principal

