



The Bewdley School join Schools of Tomorrow (SoTo) heads and school leaders to forge educational partnerships with China

During October half-term, I along with other school leaders from Schools of Tomorrow (SoTo) visited China as part of the first SoTo international delegation. SoTo is a member-owned social enterprise that brings schools together through a shared commitment to the four quadrants of educational delivery; highest levels of achievement, highest levels of well-being, highly effective preparation for the future and highly effective family and community engagement.

The objective of the China Delegation was to form long-standing partnerships with primary and secondary schools in Qingdao (Shandong Province), with a view to sharing best practice and providing meaningful two-way learning opportunities for students and staff.



During the visit, the delegation explored the city of Qingdao, which has a population of 10 million and a total of 1,897 educational settings. The city is made up of a several districts, with the most notable being the west coast and east coast areas, which were home to the schools identified as suitable partners for the SoTo schools. Qingdao borders the Yellow Sea, is a major seaport, naval base, and industrial centre. The world's longest sea bridge, the Jiaozhou Bay Bridge, links the main urban area of Qingdao with Huangdao district, straddling the Jiaozhou Bay sea areas. It is also the site of the Tsingtao Brewery, the second largest brewery in China.

Each SoTo school was partnered with a comparable local school and, following the official signing of the Memorandum of Understanding, the respective school leaders spent an afternoon with their partner school leaders to discuss and share ideas about their vision, values and education system. The Bewdley School's partner school in China is the Qingdao Economic and Technological Development Zone No.4 Junior Middle School.

The No.4 Qingdao Middle School has approximately 4,500 students with class sizes that average 60 students.



Meeting the Principal of our Partner School, Mr Bingjian Zhuang



Tour of the school – 4,500 students!



Visiting a maths lesson in action – 60 students per class!



Delegation at the 400m running track and 4G Astro Turf



Meeting an award winning student of the school



Both schools exchanging gifts



Mr Chauhan giving a talk on British and Bewdley Values



Learning to play the Ocarina – Traditional Chinese instrument



The Bewdley School & The No.4 Qingdao Middle School undertaking a “Memorandum of Understanding” signing for closer working relationships between the two schools

The Chinese Education system is significantly different to the British system. China has the largest education system in the world. With almost 260 million students and over 15 million teachers in about 514 000 schools. In China, students must complete nine years of compulsory education. Most students spend six years in primary school (ages 6-11), though a few school systems use a five year cycle for primary school. This is followed by three to four years of junior secondary education (ages 12-14). To emphasise the compulsory nature of junior secondary schools, and as a part of the effort to orient education away from examination performance and towards a more holistic approach to learning, the government has replaced the entrance examination with a policy of mandatory enrolment based on area of residence.

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After finishing compulsory education, students can choose whether to continue with senior secondary education (ages 15-18). Senior secondary education takes three years. There are five types of senior secondary schools in China: general senior secondary, technical or specialised secondary, adult secondary, vocational secondary and crafts schools. The last four are referred to as secondary vocational schools. Students undergo a public examination called Zhongkao before entering senior secondary schools, and admission depends on one's score on this examination. The government uses examination results from Zhongkao to assign students to different senior secondary schools.

The Chinese government assigns a high value to education. It holds the belief that education is the basis of national development and modernisation. This was clearly evident in all the schools that we visited. The students have extremely high expectations of themselves and this is matched by their own global aspirations as individuals and as a country. Funding for Education in China has grown exponentially. In 2005, 8 billion Chinese Yuan (approximately £900 million) was allocated to education compared to 35 billion Chinese Yuan in 2014 (approximately £3.85 trillion). This works out to approximately £14,800 of funding allocated to every child in China that attends state education! Every student I spoke to thrived on education, and both parents and students valued education as a means to become the best country in the world!

A typical school day at The No.4 Qingdao Middle School starts at 7.00am and finishes at



5.00pm. Many breaks are allocated during the day.

A typical school morning starts with a warm-up, then goes to the line-up where students learn the main news and see the school and state flag raised. All children do eye exercises after the third lesson — they press special points on their bodies to relaxing music and an instructor's recorded voice.

In addition to the morning exercise, there is also an afternoon one at about 2.00pm. Music starts playing, 4,500 students pour out of their classrooms onto the huge leisure facilities and begin a synchronised element of physical activity whether it be ballroom dancing, jogging, Tai-Chi or warm-up stretching. Formal lessons finish at 4.00pm and compulsory enrichment activities take place up until 5.00pm ranging from extra English, sewing, range of sports activities, music, drama, art and chess to name a few.



A maths lesson at The No.4 Qingdao Middle School

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In addition to visiting the partner schools, the SoTo school leaders spent time exploring the newly established Yew Chung International School of Qingdao and the China-Britain Innovation Industry Park to explore opportunities for the mutual Continual Professional Development of staff and the subsequent benefits to the children. As a result of the visit, Schools of Tomorrow are committed to exploring a new joint venture, China - SoTo Teacher Development Programme and will now enter into communications to develop the venture over the coming years.

Clive Corbett, SoTo Director said, 'I came to Qingdao committed to developing links between children in England and China, something that I believe to be of particular importance during a time when the UK is seen by some as turning inwards. Establishing international connections between children and families is central to enhancing international understanding and mutually advantageous development, and essential to the future well-being of our countries'.

The next stage of this exciting partnership is to organise reciprocal student visits at both schools. Our partner school has already started the planning for their visit in July 2019 and we look forward to them visiting our school.

The visit proved to be extremely beneficial to all parties and The Bewdley School is delighted to be formally partnered with Qingdao Economic and Technological Development Zone No.4 Junior Middle School, China.

I hope you enjoyed reading about our school's exciting partnership with The No.4 Junior Middle School.

Best wishes,



Mr Chauhan
Deputy Head Teacher