

# Opportunities in global education



Daniel Emmerson celebrates the  
IDEALS of Round Square

In January 2018, Felsted School hosted the Round Square regional conference for Europe and the Mediterranean. As a global member school, this was an incredible honour in that we were able to host 180 participants from 27 schools while we focussed on one of the organisation's core values, Democracy.

The conference allowed for our pupil delegation to challenge themselves through conversations regarding the concepts of Democracy, as they explored differing viewpoints, listened to keynote speakers, participated in workshops, presented to the adult delegation and contributed to our themed performing arts session. In spite of its success, however, the conference had much broader implications for us as a school. We wanted to engage our young delegates on the subject of Democracy and to forge ties and connections with peers from different countries,

so that their friendships and potential future partnerships were instigated on the basis of a value that is becoming increasingly threatened and challenged around the world.

The Round Square values are encapsulated by the IDEALS, a fitting acronym that stands for Internationalism, Democracy, Environmentalism, Adventure, Leadership and Service. Each Round Square conference that is held at schools around the world, is themed according to one of the IDEALS, so that a focus is retained on the principles of the organisation and the benefits of creating an awareness and engagement with them. Indeed, the adult delegates (typically a Round Square Representative and the Head of each school) are invited to take part in collaborative activities and sessions that are similarly themed, with the intention of inspiring them to develop their







own curriculums, initiatives and ideas once they return home.

Our students decided that Democracy would be the most suitable theme for our conference, particularly after the BREXIT referendum in the UK and also the swearing in of Donald Trump as President of the United States of America. Although neither of these things is essentially a threat to Democracy, or indeed international opportunities, the rhetoric seen in the press and on social media highlights the importance of engaging with these subjects through the lens of a conversation on democratic voice and free will. What better place to do that than at an international conference, where the students attending will inevitably be working with people from different countries and cultures.

The future of our pupils is at the forefront of everything we do at Felsted. Providing opportunities for each child so that they are not solely capable of passing exams but that they also have a desire to solve problems creatively and to collaborate with each other is becoming increasingly crucial. Never before have we seen the world as globalised and as fluid in cultural identity as we do today, and this poses a myriad of benefits. It also presents a number of challenges, in that the options available to our pupils are both wider and more competitively sought. Preparing them in a way that encourages cross cultural collaboration along with the motivation to uncover the benefits of diversity therefore remains a priority.

Our conference worked as a springboard for exploring these topics within our student body, and the Round Square IDEALS helped to facilitate the dialogue, while simultaneously allowing for discussions concerning other opportunities within the organisation. Exchanges to the USA, Spain, China, Germany and many other countries are on the increase at Felsted; the intrinsic value of experiential education is becoming more broadly recognised; and participation at conferences around the world is on the increase. As the Director of Global Education, I can only re-emphasise my opinion that these opportunities, alongside their essential classroom lessons, are what children need, regardless of where they might study or which country they are from.

When it comes to creating such opportunities for pupils, it is the notion of themed collaboration with a specific end goal that is most important. In order to ensure that this happened at our

conference, our delegation was split by nationality into 5 separate, pupil-led workshops. Each workshop focussed on a number of questions concerning democracy and free will, and underpinning those questions were real live examples from contemporary media sources. The pupils discussed each of these questions in groups, knowing that their results would be presented to their Heads and Round Square Reps at the end of the conference. The resulting presentation involved a two-hour discussion that was chaired by two Felsted pupils, and engagement from the entire delegation was absolutely superb. The comments and the feedback that came from each participating school cast hope on the next generation and their involvement in shaping the world of tomorrow.

Although the conference was a key area where our school was able to uncover a deeper layer within the IDEALS, we are continually looking to achieve this in as many areas of the school as possible, through the International Baccalaureate, MUN (Model United Nations) or the International Summer School. Indeed, the Summer School offers an entire Global Studies programme, hinged on Global Citizenship, Leadership, Politics and the Art of Negotiation. Although the experience of that programme is different from the conferences, in that students live and work together for up to six weeks throughout July and August, the premise is very much the same: students overcome the potential barriers of nationality, culture and language to engage with each other on some of the most important political subjects of the globalised landscape around them.

The future is in our pupils' hands. They will be responsible for making the decisions and for taking the initiatives that will shape the future of our society. The key is to connect our pupils so that they are able to work productively alongside each other, regardless of where they might be from. This often amounts to an experience that they relish and it is my deepest hope that their memories of each opportunity will last a lifetime. Utilising cultural differences is essential for innovation and best practice in the modern age, and at Felsted we do all that we can to allow for as many opportunities as possible, so that the next generation can truly make a positive impact.

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