One of SSAT’s main roles is to share and celebrate excellent practice from teachers and students in member schools. Case studies are published across our broad range of channels – which can include email communications to headteachers, SLT, subject networks, our website and our blog.

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| **Case study title** | **“East meets West”** British Council Connecting Classrooms ME-UK Partnership between Upton-by-Chester High School and Al Khansa School 2008 - 2015 |
| **Case study**Case studies should be between 300-800 words (unless a certain length has been specially requested.Your SSAT contact may give you a specific brief or focus. As a guide, to make sure your story is as useful as possible to readers, try to address:  1. What you did
2. Why you did it
3. How you did it
4. What the impact was
5. Reflections: what you did not do but wish you had; what you did but wish you had not
 | The partnership with Al Khansa School started in March 2008 during a Connecting Classrooms contact seminar in Sana'a, Yemen. Old Sana'a is an amazingly beautiful walled city situated in a mountain valley at an altitude of 2,200 m. and its tower-houses, all built before the 11th century are stunning. This is where our partner school is situated and this is where the current conflict is taking place.At Upton, we are very proud of our Connecting Classrooms partnership with Al Khansa in the Yemen, it has opened up opportunities for students and staff and has promoted intercultural dialogue. Over the past 8 years, staff and students from both schools have worked together on global citizenship projects across the age range and jointly produced a film in Istanbul around the theme of friendship. In addition, students also took part in a Textiles project using photographs from Chester and Sana’a. Half the work produced in each school was exchanged and students were able to enjoy their counterparts’ work whilst also appreciating each other’s cultures. In each school, the spectacular displays serve as a reminder of our link and strong friendship.The opportunity to welcome Miss Jamila Rajeh in our school last June for the third time has had a profound impact on the whole school community and has enabled us to plan exciting new projects embedded in the curriculum. Year 9 students are currently working on an environmental project developing an Eco code and discussing environmental issues affecting their country and the world whilst Year 7s are producing a Family factfile for students at Al Khansa. These activities encourage students to pay particular attention to their writing skills as they are communicating with pupils for whom English is not a first language. This in turn develops their literacy skills as they draft and redraft for a real purpose. During her last visit, Miss Jamila Rajeh also attended Religious Studies lessons with Year 7 students studying 'Islam' and spoke very warmly of her country and educational system with Year 10 English students. Speaking for the Religious Studies' department, Miss Hannah Clarkson said: "It was amazing to see students' reaction to Jamila's first-hand experience. Her visit was a wonderful enrichment to our curriculum. As a teacher, it was wonderful to have the opportunity to view education through a global lens, to see how we can link students to another school community in Yemen and how it impacts the way students think and respond. This enabled them to compare and contrast religious customs and practices. It broke down barriers and helped in the understanding of cultural differences.” Students’ evaluations show the impact of this international work on Teaching and Learning:* I gained an insight into education in the Yemen and I enjoyed learning about similarities and differences.
* Everyone in our class was very interested to learn about a different culture and it made us realise how important school is.
* I like learning about the world outside of the UK. I have created a PowerPoint for the pupils at Al Khansa. I like the idea of people miles away seeing my work."
* I enjoyed writing about my house and area…I learnt what their country and houses were like. Before I didn't know anything about the Yemen. We also got taught how to say hello in Arabic."
* I think the project has taught me about cultural understanding. It has been a great opportunity for me and my group to be involved in such a successful programme. It has really opened our minds towards the people of the Yemen. Our assemblies and displays have had a big impact on our education!"

Over the years, projects with the Yemen have become more ambitious and technology has enabled us to stay in touch. The projects have provided us with the opportunity to explore differences and similarities whilst enabling students to find out about each other’s' countries and cultures. The quality of work has been excellent as pupils have embraced the projects with enthusiasm. This is a highly successful partnership because we have managed to embed the project plans in the curriculum. The Connecting Classrooms project is written in the SEF and the whole school development plan. The conflict in Yemen has thrown the whole country in turmoil but this has not stopped us working together. The parcel, containing project work, chocolates and presents took 2 months to get to Sana’a and when the internet works and Jamila gets a connection, we are delighted to hear from her. We are all hoping that she is safe and the times when we don’t hear from her are the most worrying and then we get some fantastic project work contributions from Al Khansa. Her dedication to our partnership, at all times and despite worsening circumstances, is inspiring.  |