



INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL AWARD

Press and media toolkit for schools

International activity, particularly involving young people, can provide interesting stories for the media and your involvement in the British Council's International School Award may be of real interest.

The Marketing and Communications Manager at the British Council manages national media activity for the British Council International School Award, including educational trade media, like the TES and SecEd. However, there is plenty of scope for you to secure coverage in local and regional media and this toolkit helps you to do just that.

Coverage in your local paper, or on a local radio or TV station, allows you to share and celebrate your successes with a wider audience and can provide good publicity for your school. Promoting the British Council International School Award in the media raises awareness of the award amongst other schools so that they can also reap its benefits.

I. Writing a press release

The best way to let the media know about your involvement in the British Council International School Award is to use a press release.

We have created a template press release which you can personalise to use with your local media. You can use the structure and key messages of the template, adapted with different activity or announcements, to publicise your achievements in international learning or interesting project activity and events.

Journalists are just like you – they've always got too much to do in too little time! If you can send them a press release that they can reproduce with minimum effort, and that gives

them all the facts they need in an accessible way, they will be really helpful. It also means the coverage you get is more likely to include the information that you want it to.

In order to make your press release appropriate it needs to be written in the right way, so it's useful to consider these points when you are writing:

1. Facts, facts, facts

Your press release needs to summarise all the important information. It should answer the following 5 Ws:

- What?
- When?
- Where?
- Who?
- Why?

When you read your release through, a good test is to ask yourself – “So what?” Be clear about why this activity is of interest to other people and what is different, exciting and interesting about your project.

2. Short and snappy

If you read a news article in your local paper or listen to news bulletins on the radio or TV, you will notice how short and to the point they are. You need to keep your press release in the same style, focusing on the **key messages** that you want to convey.

Keep your release to one page of A4 if possible, two at most. Background information for the journalist can go in the ‘Notes to Editors’ section at the end of the release.

3. Bring it to life

The template press release in the toolkit gives you the correct structure of a press release and key messages about the British Council International School Award. Now you need to bring it to life with your story!

The media are interested in personal stories, so make sure you include quotes from individuals involved. Include a quote from a pupil and / or parent if relevant. Quotes should explain how people feel about the project and what the benefits are.

4. Getting in touch

The journalist might simply use your press release to write a story, but hopefully they will want to follow up with you to find out more. Make sure you put contact

details at the end of the release so that they can get in touch to arrange an interview or a visit to the school. Include an email address and a contact numbers, preferably with a mobile number.

II. Contacting the media

Once you've written your release, you need to get it to the relevant journalists. When you call your local newspaper, ask to speak to the News Desk, and for TV or radio ask for the Planning Desk. Remember, TV will only be interested in the story if there is colourful, visually-stimulating activity they can capture.

You need to be able to summarise your story in 30 seconds so prepare a brief outline before you call. Ask for an email address to send them some more information and send across your release. Call back next day (or later that day) to check they've received it. Find out if they need any more info or are able to attend / send a photographer to your event.

Journalists need news while it's still new! If you want to publicise an event or visit make sure that you give them plenty of notice. If you want local media to attend an event you need to let them know about it well in advance - send them your press release *at least* a week before.

If you are sending a press release and photos after an event, make sure you send it as soon as possible while it's still current, that day if possible. Find out when your local newspaper's deadline is for submissions so you can make sure you get it to them in time for it to be relevant.

III. What next?

1. On the day

If you are inviting journalists to an event, make sure someone is dedicated to looking after them who can answer their questions and ensure they speak to enthusiastic participants that are prepared to answer questions (see 'Interviews' below).

2. Photography

Good quality, high resolution photographs of interesting and colourful activity can make all the difference to securing press coverage. Make sure that you've got someone assigned to take pictures at any publicity-worthy events so you can send them to the local press (if they are not able to send their own photographer along). Brief your photographer to get interesting shots of activity, not just a line-up of people in suits! Here are a couple of examples:



Make sure that you have the relevant **permission and parental consent** for those involved to use their photographs and quotes for the media.

3. Interviews

Prepare spokespeople to do interviews, which might take place either on the day if journalists attend your event, or on the phone.

If you are doing an interview, think about what you want to say and how you can best get your key messages across. Think about the audience – they won't all be teachers so try not to use lots of curriculum-speak. Always try to:

- a. make a reference to the name: British Council International School Award
- b. plug the website so people can find out more about the programme:
www.britishcouncil.org/isa

Pinpoint other spokespeople - students, teachers and parents that have been involved - and make sure they are prepared to answer questions about their experience and are clear on the key messages.

4. Crisis Communications

If something happens as part of your involvement in the British Council International School Award that has the potential to attract negative media attention, you must inform us as soon as possible at schools@britishcouncil.org .

IV. Summary – Five Top Tips for Media Coverage

1. **So what?!** Make sure you are clear about why your activity is interesting, different and newsworthy.

2. **Build relationships** – find out who writes about schools / education at your local paper and invite them to relevant events at the school. Keep them updated on future plans that might be of interest.
3. Make sure you always get **media consent** for those involved, particularly parental consent for students.
4. Don't be put off if your local press don't seem that interested! Journalists are under constant pressure of deadlines and local media have seen big cuts, so staff are extremely busy. **Keep at it** - follow up with a phone call and even if a journalist can't come to an event, send a follow up release and photos.
5. **If you get media coverage for your partnership activity, please let us know about it.** Email us with details at: schools@britishcouncil.org

If you have any questions, or would like advice or support to engage your local media, email us at: schools@britishcouncil.org

V. Visits by your Member of Parliament

MPs are often interested in the international learning and promotion of global citizenship in schools.

You might be invited to host a visit from your MP or you might want to invite your MP to a special event or during a visit from your partner school. The press and/or media will probably be interested in covering the visit.

We can provide advice – just get in touch with us at schools@britishcouncil.org