

SHPRESA PROGRAMME

Evaluation of the Albanian School Project

May 2008

Introduction	p. 2
Summary	p. 4
I. The Albanian School Project (ASP)	p. 6
A) Leadership and management	p. 7
1) Management structure and staff	
2) Funding	
B) Teaching Staff	p. 8
C) The Schools	p. 9
D) School partnerships	p.11
E) Curriculum and teaching resources	p. 13
F) Teaching and Learning	p. 15
II. Impact of Shpresa ASP	p. 18
A) Shpresa's evaluation procedures	p. 18
B) Language and Literacy in Albanian	p. 18
1) Research evidence	
2) Evaluation evidence	
C) Children's attainment in mainstream school	p. 20
D) Family Communication	p. 20
E) Awareness of Albanian culture	p. 20
F) Children's voices	p. 21
G) Parents' voices	p. 23
III. Conclusion and recommendations	p. 24
IV. Appendices	p. 26
A) Policies, Management and Procedures	p. 26
B) Testimonials	p. 28

INTRODUCTION

Shpresa (meaning *hope* in Albanian) was set up in 2003 to meet the needs of the community of Albanian speakers, from Albania and from Kosovo living in the area of east London, many of whom arrived around the year 2000 as refugees.

The organisation runs four main projects: a children's project, a youth project, a women's project and a resettlement project which works to develop the skills of volunteers and deploy them in the community. It currently has 900 paid up members, over 2000 people use its services over a year and 350 people use them every week. Weekly registers are kept for all activities and the information is transferred to a database.

The present evaluation focuses on the work of the children's project. However, all the projects within the organisation inter-connect in various ways and points are made regarding these other projects where they are relevant.

In his introduction to the Positively Plurilingual report (1) Sir Trevor McDonald notes the importance of valuing and developing the language skills that many children have acquired from their country of origin or their family home. He writes

"Yet, in our haste to ensure that they acquire good English, we frequently miss the opportunity to ensure they maintain and develop their skills in their other languages too. Rather than thinking in terms of an 'English-only' culture, we should be promoting 'English plus'. We know that children are capable of acquiring more than one language and that doing so brings a range of educational benefits, including cognitive advantages, enhanced communication skills and an openness to different cultural perspectives."

The understanding of the value of bilingualism and plurilingualism to both the individual and to society has been informed and enhanced by the research carried out by Jim Cummins from the late 1970s to the present time. While applicable to all forms of bilingualism, much of his research has focused on the bilingualism of minority ethnic communities and the educational settings in which they acquire their additional languages. With a particular concern for social justice he has studied the factors that can empower students from minority communities (2, 3). Educational success within a generally submersive environment is most likely to be achieved where the following issues are addressed:

- Incorporating the language and culture of the community in the school
- Involving families and the community in the education of their children
- Interactive and reciprocal teaching style
- Fair assessment.

Valuing and supporting the language and culture of the home enhances pupils' self-esteem and positive identity formation and contributes to social cohesion. Recent and current research into multilingual literacies, identity and parent partnership with schools provides some evidence into how the first two elements of this model can be implemented in schools.

The work of Shpresa in setting up the Albanian School Project indicates a sound understanding of these principles. The third and fourth points are incorporated into Shpresa's children's workshops and classes. By working in collaboration with mainstream schools Shpresa provides the language and cultural input that is essential to help a school address the first two elements of the model. Shpresa enables the school to better represent its community as well as acting as a bridge between families and the school: supporting the school to better understand the children's needs and supporting the families to get more involved in the education of their children.



Dr Raymonde Sneddon
May 2008

Cass School of Education
University of East London
Romford Road,
Stratford E15 4LZ

3

³ Positively Plurilingual. The contribution of community languages to UK education and society. CILT. 2006

2. Jim Cummins, 1986. Empowering Minority Students, a Framework for Intervention. Harvard Educational review, 56,1. pp 18-36.

3. Jim Cummins, 2006. Language Power and Pedagogy. Bilingual Children in the Crossfire. Multilingual Matters.

SUMMARY

The present evaluation, focusing on the children's project, was carried out between 2007 and May 2008. The following procedure was carried out by an experienced teacher educator and researcher into bilingualism:

- An examination of documentation relating to management procedures, policies, staff training and formal and informal evaluations at the Shpresa office and of teaching materials and teachers' records in two partnership schools.
- Observations of teaching activities in three schools and of a public dance performance by primary school children.
- Interviews with the director of Shpresa and the School Development Worker, with a sample of pupils and parents, with one headteacher of a mainstream school, two school-based Ethnic Minority Achievement co-ordinators and one member of the Shpresa Management Board.

The evidence collected indicates that the Albanian School Programme (ASP) is highly popular with the pupils who participate, their parents and the schools involved in partnership with the project. Evaluations, testimonials and interviews all indicate that the project has provided a lifeline for families who struggled to establish themselves in London. The various projects within Shpresa are well integrated so that support for families, training, as well as volunteering opportunities are linked to the school programme.

The Shpresa Programme is well organised, managed and resourced. The school project has deployed strategies that have been highly effective in helping it meet its key objectives, for example:

- Providing Albanian language classes alongside enjoyable, culturally appropriate and physical activities is highly motivating for pupils. It leads to high levels of attendance, and provides a social environment in which children can use Albanian alongside English in leisure activities as well as in formal classes.
- The partnership model developed with schools ensures that the latter play an active role in the project. In return for providing free accommodation and access to equipment, they benefit from closer relationships with pupils and their families, a better understanding of the children's needs and the cultural input provided by children's performances. In a number of schools non-Albanian children join in the ASP's activities. There is evidence of a close relationship between Shpresa and mainstream schools and of joint evaluation and development.
- Shpresa's strategy for integrating Albanian speakers into British society includes encouraging volunteering and providing volunteers with training and support. A number of these are deployed in schools, leading to improved English language skills, effective support for pupils in school and, in some cases, to training for career opportunities in education.

With respect to the aims of the ASP, the evidence indicates that the programme has been successful in improving the children's language and literacy skills and in

motivating them to become additive bilinguals in situations where they could otherwise rapidly lose the use of the family language.

The evidence of children's attainment in school comes primarily from the children's own evaluation of their progress. A headteacher interviewed is convinced that the programme has had a significant impact on children's achievement and a formal evaluation of this partnership will be completed in the Autumn of 2008.

Communication with family was mentioned by a number of children and parents interviewed. The Shpresa programme, by supporting both parents' learning of English and children's learning of Albanian, is working towards ensuring effective bilingual communication within families.

Evidence from teachers and from parents demonstrates that communication between them has been much improved through Shpresa's intervention. By supporting parents both formally and informally and working closely with teaching staff in schools the ASP has ensured that parents are well informed and play a full part in the life of the school as well as being better equipped to help their children with homework.

There is excellent evidence of creating awareness of Albanian culture in schools and in the community. The popularity of Albanian clubs and the high standard of public performances have greatly raised the status of Albanian culture and children's pride in their heritage.

The Shpresa organisation benefits from high quality and dedicated management and a high level of commitment from its paid and volunteer staff. It networks effectively with community and educational organisations with a view to improving the service it offers to the Albanian speaking community and to schools; it is committed to developing new projects that will improve community cohesion and support the successful integration of the Albanian speaking community into British society.

I. ALBANIAN SCHOOL PROJECT

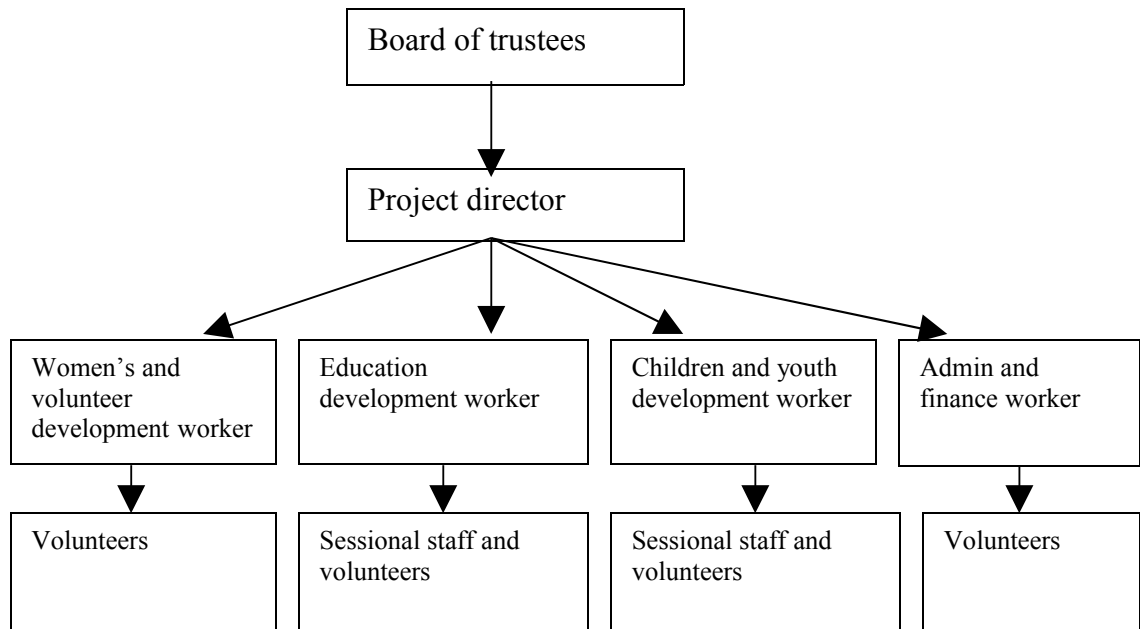
The Albanian School Project (ASP) was first started in 2002 in recognition of the very high value Albanian families place on education. It organises Albanian classes and a range of dance, drama and sporting and cultural activities for children and young people aged 5 to 14 in after-school, week-end and holiday programmes. In addition it provides opportunities for young people to perform in public at cultural events to a range of audiences. It carries out these activities not only on its own premises but, significantly, in close partnership with mainstream schools. These partnerships enable schools to create, with respect to the Albanian-speaking children who attend them, two of the key conditions that Cummins' research indicates are favourable to their educational achievement: the incorporation of their language and culture within the school and a close relationship between families, community organisations and the school. As a result of these factors, the positive value given to their language and culture helps the children achieve the benefits described above by Sir Trevor MacDonald.

The Project aims to:

- Improve children's language and literacy skills in Albanian
- Improve children's attainment in their mainstream school
- Improve parent/child communication within the family
- Improve parent/teacher communication
- Raise awareness of Albanian culture in the community

A. Leadership and Management

1) Management structure and staff:



Shpresa has a **Board of Trustees** of 8 members with a range of expertise. This includes an accountant, housing advisers, a consultant on refugee issues, a representative of current users, a representative of the volunteers.

The full-time **Director** is **Luljeta Nuzi** who has been with the organisation since its beginning, initially as a volunteer then as a part-time development worker and since 2004 as a full time worker.

Currently the full-time **Albanian School Development Worker** is **Flutra Shega**, who set up the Albanian school project in 2002. She started working on the project in a voluntary capacity and experimented with different ways of best running the service. Since November 2004 she has been responsible for the running of the children's project as a paid employee of Shpresa Programme. She has developed partnerships with schools and personally runs two projects in Newham. In addition she has a cross-London role managing projects in Barking and Dagenham, Redbridge, Haringey and Islington. Projects are run in seven schools and 2 community centres.

Ermir Disha took on the role of full-time Youth and Children's Development Worker in November 2004, and works alongside Flutra Shega.

Evis Bodlli took on the role of the full time worker in 2003 as the development worker for the women and volunteer project.

Information on policies and management procedures is to be found in Appendix A

2) Funding

The organisation makes use of the services of a professional fund-raiser. Shpresa as a whole is currently funded by the following:

- The Tudor trust
- Connecting Community Plus
- Big Lottery fund
- City Parochial
- Lloyds TSB
- Manor Park Early Start
- Newham Local network fund
- London Borough of Newham

The Albanian School Project is currently in year 2 of a 3 year grant from Connecting Communities and in the final year of a Big Lottery grant.

Previous funders of Shpresa are:

- A Glimmer of Hope
- Newham community Chest
- Trust for London
- London Borough of Newham
- Stratford Partnership for Regeneration
- Volunteering England

B. Teaching staff

Flutra Shega. Albanian School Development Worker November 2004. Sets up partnerships and teaches classes. Flutra Shega completed a four year university-based primary school teacher degree in Kosovo, with additional qualifications in I.T. and taught in the country for four years before coming to the U.K.

Vera Pulaj is a volunteer teacher in schools in Redbridge and East Ham. She has taught in Albania, completed a teaching assistant's course at Empowering Learning in London and is currently working as a part-time teaching assistant in a primary school.

Ermir Disha is a paid youth development worker. He is responsible for developing and tutoring a range of activities such as dancing, kickboxing, football and basketball and organises performances and running the dancing session.

Saime Dushku is a paid teacher working in Newham. She is a qualified teacher of Albanian language and literature with 20 years experience.

Emma Krasniqi is a volunteer teacher working in the projects schools in Finsbury Park.

Evis Sukaj started as a volunteer teacher and is now in a paid capacity. She works in Haringey and Tottenham.

Entela Haderaj, Lola and Besarta are volunteer classroom assistants who also work with parents.

C. The schools

Approximately 300 children are enrolled in classes in the following schools:

London Borough of Newham

Vicarage Primary School

This was the school with which Shpresa piloted its model of partnership. Starting in September 2004 the project grew from one class of 23 children to two classes with 35 children each within two months of starting. Classes take place on Tuesdays after school.

Lister Secondary School

In this school Shpresa runs a programme of traditional dancing attended by 16 to 20 young people on a Monday after school.

Little Ilford Youth Centre

Shpresa runs a major programme in this large venue on Saturdays from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. 60 pupils attend language classes, dancing, traditional games and football coaching as well as having access to a supervised gym. A range of training sessions is available to parents on the site at the same time and there is a crèche for younger children.

London Borough of Redbridge

Christchurch Primary School, Ilford

Shpresa has been running a lunchtime club for children aged 5 to 9 since September 2007. Approximately 16 children attend, with 6 being from non-Albanian groups. The activities are carried out through play and include language teaching and dancing. Shpresa has organised events and performances with the school for refugee week.

Mayfield Secondary school

Shpresa runs a whole day programme in this school on Sundays. This includes language classes, dancing for both pupils and parents, football coaching and training sessions for parents. Shpresa volunteers run a small crèche. Supplementary coaching in maths and French by experienced secondary school teachers is organised for small groups of pupils as a pilot project.

Barking and Dagenham

Gascoigne Primary School, Barking.

The school has approximately 100 children who are Albanian speaking. Shpresa have been running a club there from September 2007, from 4p.m. to 7p.m. with 54 children attending. This includes Albanian language teaching, dance and youth club activities. A women's support group started in January 2008. A formal evaluation of the programme in this school will be completed in the Autumn of 2008. The partnership features as a case study in a DCSF funded research project (www.cilt.org.uk/commlangs/our_langs/partnerships/shpresa_and_gascoigne.doc).

**London Borough of Haringey
Gladesmore Secondary School**

Shpresa have been running an Albanian club in this school since September 2006. This takes place on Saturdays from 10 a.m. to 1p.m. and is attended by 40 to 45 pupils. The programme includes language teaching and traditional dancing. The pupils in this project have taken part in a number of events and public performances.

South Haringey Junior School

Shpresa have run an Albanian club since September 2006 on Wednesdays after school. This includes language classes and traditional dancing and is attended by 30 to 35 children. A women's support group runs at the same time.

**London Borough of Islington
Duncomb Primary School**

21 out of the 24 Albanian speaking children in this school attend the Shpresa club on Tuesdays from 4 to 6 p.m. Language classes and traditional dancing are available and the club is attended by children from other schools (34 children in total).

D. School partnerships

Partner schools have been identified in different ways. Shpresa may become aware of schools with numbers of Albanian speaking children through discussion with people who attend centre-based activities. This, for example, led to Shpresa approaching Gascoigne School in Barking which has around 100 Albanian speaking children. In some cases, such as Christchurch School in Ilford, the school has heard of Shpresa and approached them. The partnership involves an arrangement between Shpresa and the school, with a written agreement of terms and conditions for use of school premises, but not generally a formal contract.

A file is maintained in the Shpresa office for each school. This includes a Health and Safety General Risk Assessment for use of the premises, a record of the school's conditions of hire and/or use, any relevant documents or correspondence and membership/information forms for all children who attend classes in that particular school.

All schools currently in partnership provide the use of their premises and facilities free in exchange for which Shpresa provides teaching and cultural activities in Albanian for children, young people and women according to the need identified from within the Albanian community. It will also provide an input into assemblies, free performances in the school for festivals or for Refugee Week and other special events. Schools may offer the use of premises at week-ends, on week-day evenings, or for lunch-time clubs. It will also provide the school with information about the Albanian community and support it to build relationships with parents.

An example is Mayfield Secondary School in Redbridge which provides the use of 4 classrooms, computers, the gym and the school football pitch. Shpresa will not offer partnership if the school charge for use of facilities. Shpresa undertake to ensure the security of all school property and are meticulous about leaving premises used in perfect order as found.

A good example of a working partnership is at Gascoigne Primary School in Barking. Shpresa was aware that large numbers of Albanian speaking children attended the school and approached the headteacher with a proposal to run a club after school hours. The headteacher agreed on a trial basis for three months. At the end of that period the headteacher was impressed by the quality of management and organisation of Shpresa and by the fact that the organisation left no footprint in the school and that no difficulties were experienced in sharing premises. He has also been impressed with the positive effect on the children who attend and is recommending the organisation to other schools (see testimonial in Appendices).

Another good example is provided by the partnership with Little Ilford School in Newham where Shpresa uses the Youth Centre premises. The facilities include the use of a modern and well equipped crèche which is part of the F.E. College. This comes fully staffed for the use of the younger children of the women who attend classes. Use of the gym also includes the services of an instructor. In other premises where a crèche is not available, Shpresa provide their own crèche worker and some basic activities and resources for younger children.

A new venture is the lunch-time club opened at Christchurch School in Redbridge on a Tuesday. Sixteen children, aged 5 to 9, attend as soon as they have had lunch. The group includes 6 non-Albanian speakers. At the request of the school the focus of the group is on activities, dancing and learning through games. The session is taught by Flutra Shega and occasionally by Ermir Disha, the dance coach, assisted by two of the children's mothers.

E. Curriculum and teaching resources

The general pattern of classes is for a session to last for two hours: the first consists of language and literacy teaching, the second of traditional dance. This balance is considered important as it keeps children and young people interested and motivated. The classes are open to non-Albanians.

The curriculum is based on an imported Albanian programme ABETARE. This consists of a teacher's manual, textbooks for use by children and tapes. In addition children have activity books and exercise books that include handwriting practice. Children also have their own set of tapes that they can use at home. The programme starts with a phonics approach, introducing the children to the 36 phonemes of Albanian through a range of activities and rhymes and provides materials to support a full literacy programme in Albanian.

The majority of children in the classes are English born from families who originate mainly from Kosovo and Albania, with a few Serbians and Macedonians. They have become dominant in English since starting mainstream school. One teacher explains that for some children Albanian has become almost a foreign language. All children's knowledge of Albanian is assessed at the beginning of the school year. While teachers follow the ABETARE programme, they adapt it and plan lessons to meet the assessed needs of the group of children they teach. Teachers have a teaching file which includes their differentiated lesson plans, week by week.

Shpresa does not have a library as such but it imports children's books from Albania and purchases dual language books in English and Albanian for parents to borrow for their children. Dual language books are popular because they provide the support of English which is helpful to both children and the parents who are helping them to read them. Shpresa has made collections of books available on loan to selected schools.

Well equipped classrooms are made available to Shpresa and they are able to use whiteboards, flip-chards, audio-visual equipment and computers.

The dancing is taught by qualified and experienced dance teachers and leads to regular opportunities for performances: on the occasion of the national flag day (in November), during Refugee Week and for an annual summer festival. In 2007 the schools participated in a refugee festival on the South Bank organised by the Mayor of London's department and also supported performances in Redbridge, including at Christchurch School.

A small tutoring project is being piloted at Mayfield School, using the children of Shpresa staff as subjects and funded by the parents. Five children of secondary school were being tutored privately, three in mathematics and two in French, both groups being taught by experience secondary school teachers. The tutors explained that children attending were not necessarily weak in the subject, but felt the need to improve. If the project is successful and there is a proven need for it, Shpresa will bid for funding to run homework and curriculum support. The mathematics teacher is himself a refugee but eventually had his qualifications recognised and is teaching

maths in a mainstream secondary school. To achieve this he studied psychology at UEL, then worked as a teaching assistant before gaining QTS.

F. Teaching and learning

As mentioned above, all children are assessed at the beginning of the school year. Formative assessments are carried out every term to provide feedback to the children on their progress and there is a final assessment of progress at the end of the school year.

Teaching was observed in two schools on a Saturday and a Sunday morning. Teaching observed was lively and interactive and allowed for a wide differentiation of response, sensitive feedback, praise and the development of more advanced learners. In both of the classes observed children were in the fairly early stages of learning the written language.

The teaching style in the lunch-time club is quite different. Because it takes place during the children's break, the school have asked Shpresa to ensure that activities are lively and fun and that learning occurs through games so that the children may have an active break between morning and afternoon lessons. Because the class is mixed the teacher speaks mainly in English but introduces an increasing number of Albanian words and phrases. The children work in pairs, in groups and in a circle. Games have instructions in Albanian. Key phrases are written on the whiteboard and flashcards are also used. These are available to children as a handout to take home. The second part of the lesson is traditional dance.

Example:

A Sunday morning class based at Mayfield Secondary School in Redbridge.

The classroom is spacious, bright and well equipped with a whiteboard, a flip-chart and a tape-recorder with clear sound. 20 children aged 6 to 8 are sitting in pairs at rows of desks. The class is led by Vera, a volunteer teacher. The children are following a phonics programme, learning the sounds of 3 letters and learning to blend syllables and full words. The lesson is conducted from the front, with a lot of questioning and participation. Most children seem attentive and many have their hands up. Children are invited to the front of the class to demonstrate their understanding of the point just taught and have the option to "phone a friend" who can come out to the board to help, or to "ask the class" if they are unsure of an answer. Vera uses regular praise ("bravo!").

Children move on to choral chanting and then to listen and then participate in lively rhymes and songs with actions, first with the teacher and then to the accompaniment of a tape. The song they are working focuses on teaching syllable stress. The children are engaged and it is obvious that they love the singing. Vera reports that English is used with the children when necessary to support meaning, but the teacher did not need to do this in the time I was observing.

At the end of the lesson I was invited to examine the records kept: attendance, assessment and the teacher's planning file, all of which were detailed and meticulously well kept.

After the mid-morning break the children move on to the dance class. They are taught by a young volunteer teacher. The steps are complex, the pace lively, the music loud. The children are focused and intent on getting it right and very much enjoying the session. The children will get the opportunity to perform in public 5 or 6 times a year and they look forward to that.

A Saturday morning class at Little Ilford Secondary School in Newham.

Sixteen children, half boys, half girls, are sitting at tables arranged in a semi-circle facing Saime, the teacher, who is using a flip-chart. The class are learning months of the year, with questions and choral repetition. Saime is modelling pronunciation and conducts the whole class in Albanian. The teaching style is more traditional than in the lesson observed at Mayfield and, in the period I observe, there are fewer teaching strategies in evidence. However, most children are engaged and responding. The teacher then switches to preparing the children for National Day (28th November), when they will take part in celebrations. She asks questions and provides some background about the history of the event, talking about Skenderbey, the national hero who fought against the Ottoman Empire. Several girls sing a song solo, and this is then taken up by the whole class. Not all children are yet familiar with the words. At this point, only half are singing with confidence.

In the next part of the lesson the teacher uses alphabet cards with pictures and teaches both lower and uppercase letters and the different letter combinations that produce the 36 phonemes of the Albanian language. The children are enjoying practising some of the more challenging sounds, such as the rolled R represented by "rr". The children have their own exercise books in front of them and some are making notes.

Thursday lunch-time club at Christchurch School:

The teacher plays a counting game and then a variation on a "Simon says" game with Albanian instructions. The children sit in a circle and practice some Albanian phrases. The teaching is supported by flash cards and words are written on the board.

The children then stand in 2 rows and practice dance steps. Then they dance to music. The two parents and the EMA teacher join in. Just before returning to class they sit again in a circle. The handing round and eating of pineapple provides another opportunity to speak Albanian.

The session is very lively and enjoyable. Children are very excited but they are well managed by the teacher and are attentive. All children seem to be really enjoying the session and the non-Albanians are participating fully. Three of the more experienced children, are invited to recite a poem to the group. The teacher then gets the whole group to recite part of this in chorus.

II. IMPACT OF SHPRESA

A. Shpresa's evaluation procedures.

A questionnaire is given to **children** and to **parents** at the start of a project and then again at yearly intervals, which records their personal view of their progress in Albanian, their progress in their mainstream school, their parents' involvement with school work support and their social life in and after school (friends and activities) (see sample in Appendix). Shpresa has collected evidence from children of the impact of the project on their lives and education. As well as being invited to fill in questionnaires and write about their experiences, they are filmed and photographed.

The project only started in the year 2007/08 to keep child-by-child evaluative assessments carried out in September and in June that enable the measurement of the satisfaction and progress of individual children. Prior to that the assessments mentioned above, while individual, were anonymous. While they could track changes over an academic year in a group of pupils as a whole, these could not be attributed to individuals so are of more limited value.

There is a **parents' forum** that meets termly which is split between north and east London to which representatives of each school project are invited. The views of parents, children and teachers are discussed. In addition parents have the opportunity to meet individually with their child's teacher.

Evaluation meetings are also held at which parents are requested to make their views known in a formal evaluation. The minutes of these minutes are on file. They suggest that parents are happy with the service provided.

In each school where the project operates a **mainstream teacher** who is involved is asked to complete an evaluation form. Questions include how the school heard of Shpresa, how responsive they found the organisation, how useful they found the partnership in supporting the school's work, questions about children's pride in their identity and the raising of awareness of Albanian culture, improving community cohesion and the continuing need for partnership.

B. Language and literacy in Albanian

1) Research evidence

There is considerable research evidence to show the benefits to children of becoming fully bilingual. A detailed case study of two girls learning Albanian with their mothers using dual language Albanian/English books has demonstrated the impact that learning the home language can have both on the children's personal development and on their achievement in mainstream school.⁴

The study reports on how the mothers and their children used both texts to transfer skills from one language to another, to negotiate meaning in both languages and to compare reading strategies. As well as becoming literate in Albanian and using the

⁴ Sneddon,R. 2008. Magda and Albana: Learning to Read with Dual Language Books. Language and Education Vol.22:2. pp.137-154.

language more in the home, by the end of the school year the girls were reading in English with the best in their class. In a situation in which they were beginning to lose the active use of their first language, studying the home language led the children to develop a strong bilingual and bicultural identity and become balanced bilinguals, proud of their Albanian heritage. Their mothers had become closely involved in their daughters' schooling, reported improvements in their own English literacy skills and were enrolled in programmes for teaching assistants.

Encountering Shpresa provided the girls with opportunities to join an Albanian club, further develop their skills and perform poetry and dance in a range of events for schools. Shpresa provides many children with the opportunity to learn the language of the home as these two girls did, with similarly positive outcomes in most cases.

2. Evaluation evidence

The evidence from the questionnaires given to children suggests the majority of the children have limited skills in Albanian at the start of the programme and that most consider they have made steady progress, in all areas of speaking, reading and writing. There is generally a very substantial reduction in the number of children who have moved from speaking 'not at all' to 'good', although fewer have moved from 'good' to 'very good'.

One child commented: *"I would like to learn the Albanian language quick because I can't talk to my grandparents back home and sometimes I can't understand what my dad is trying to say to me. Mum could help me with my school work if I know a bit better the Albanian language."*

The teachers' records of tests carried out at the start and the end of the academic year provide more robust evidence of progress in classroom based tasks.

Comments from parents in an evaluation meeting in Haringey on 12th September 2007 indicate that while parents are happy with progress *"they would like to see more hard work for older children, which includes writing stories, more home work to be given with more difficult reading and writing."* These suggestions were included in the scheme of work for the year.

C. Children's attainment in mainstream school

Evidence from the evaluation questionnaires in this respect indicates that, after a year in the programme, almost twice as many children report that they are doing well at school, although fewer report doing "very well".

Most children report having friends at school and the increase throughout the programme is modest. With respect to after school activities, children who attend Shpresa's programme report a substantial increase in involvement in other school based schemes.

D) Family communication

Evidence from internal evaluations suggests that there is a considerable increase in the number of parents supporting their children with homework. For evidence see mothers' voices below.

For example the minutes of the meeting held at Little Ilford School on 21st October 2007 record that:

All parents think that this is still a project that is very helpful to their children. It has helped them a great deal to improve the communication with their children, and has helped them to better support their children at their homework. It has helped them to improve their confidence on talking to school teachers. They have had the chance to share with other parents their problems and success and learn from each other."

At a Haringey school evaluation meeting on 12th September 2007, with ten parents in attendance. All parents reported being satisfied with the existence and location of the group. On the specific issue of the teaching of Albanian language, the following comment indicates the value of this for family communication and cohesion.

"They all thought it is very important to improve communication between children and parents, for children's identity, parents see it as a must and all the children agreed to it. Children expressed their opinions, saying how much better they were able to talk with their grandparents when they were on holiday back home. They felt proud of themselves and enjoyed it very much when their cousins were asking them to say the poems they have learnt in Albanian."

E) Awareness of Albanian culture

Questionnaires completed by teachers in mainstream schools who liaise with Shpresa provide evidence of the impact of the partnership on the school's curriculum, on the children's cultural confidence, on awareness of Albanian culture and refugee issues and on social cohesion (see example from EGA). Comments from mainstream teachers' evaluations indicate that activities and performances in refugee week, for example, have been particularly popular. Other children in school are "keen to learn about their classmates' background". The projects "have brought together parents and children". "Islington area lacked the presence of this partnership and its continuance will guarantee confidence and culture strength."

Evidence from internal evaluations, testimonials from children, parents and teachers. A child reports on her experiences of Albanian dancing: *“I am so happy that my Mum can bring me to the dancing. I have made lots of friends and my Mum let me go to their houses. One day I sent to my teacher in school on photo of me dancing. I had costumes on. I really liked it and showed it to all the class. I felt so special.”*

Another reports on taking part in drama for the first time: *“At first I was scared that I will forget the parts of the role, but I didn’t. I was so happy when the headteacher gave us a hug. She was on tears.”*

Comments from a parents’ evaluation session indicate, with respect to dancing, that they see it as *“a very pleasant activity, it’s good exercise and at the same time children learnt our cultural traditions and dance.”*

Another parent is more enthusiastic: *“My daughter loves music and clapping her hands along with it. Being with other kids make her so happy and playful. She has learn a simple dance too. I sent a video film to my Mum back home. She phoned me after watching it and was crying on the phone. She could not believe that my daughter could dance traditional dancing. I was very proud. Thank you for giving us this opportunity.”*

See Appendix for testimonials from teachers on the impact of Shpresa on school culture and children’s personal and cultural confidence.

F. Children’s voices:

Young children interviewed in the interval between their dances (at Mayfield School) talk about learning the language, playing games together, the range of activities and the traditional dancing and football.

“We come to learn our language”, “And we like playing games”. “I like the dancing”, “We do lots of activities with the teacher, “We do things outside and inside”, “We do homework from our class”, “We like the dancing”, “I like it when we are dancing and we learn songs and poems”.

When asked about the poems, one girl volunteers to recite one, then another girl comes forward and all the children applaud.

Most children, when asked, assure me that they speak Albanian with their families at home, but Luljeta is sceptical and they laugh. They are proud to tell me they can speak Albanian, but are definitely exaggerating their commitment to doing it on regular basis in the home. However they are all adamant that they understand well when their parents are speaking in Albanian.

At Little Ilford School one girl tells me: *“I come to learn Albanian. Because, if, like, you don’t know your own language, they can help you speak your own language. And you can speak it very well.”* She reports that she speaks both Albanian and English at home and considers she speaks English very well. *“I can read very well in Albanian and write as well. I’m getting on very well at my (mainstream) school. I am playing football and exercising”.*

A boy tells me excitedly: “We play football here and then we pass together and you get some goals. You saw me playing this morning and somebody else. I have been in a big space where there’s loads of people and all the boys pass the ball and do goals.”

Another girl tells proudly: “We did a play about the Three Billy Goats Gruff in Albanian in the library. When you do the performance, everybody watches you and, at the library they don’t watch you, but at the performance they do. All the children that go to Albanian classes come, and parents and visitors.”

Landi, the young youth worker remembers taking part in Shpresa events: “Before I came to work for Shpresa I used to be a performer as well. We used to perform all around, Albanian dances. We used to have a teacher there who used to show us all the traditional Albanian dances. It’s quite exciting, so I used to be involved. Then I learned football coaching and then I came to work for Shpresa. I’ve been here over nine years. This is a part time job, I am a student. I am at London South Bank studying media.”

Older pupils working out in the gym describe what involvement with Shpresa means to them:

One tells me: “I like coming here because I meet my friends and get fit. And it’s fun. On Saturdays I come here to play football and now I am going to do gym as well. On Sundays I go kick-boxing with another group, that’s somewhere in Forest Gate station and there’s a lot of Kosovans and Albanians there. I was born in Kosovo. I’ve been here, I think it’s nine years. I can speak Albanian and I speak it with my Mum and Dad and sometimes with these lot. We’ve had education, classes in it, I’ve done those before. I go to Lister school. There are about 3 Kosovans there, they are very spread out.”

And another adds: “I’ve been in the Shpresa programme here (Little Ilford) for one month. My Mum was involved and we got involved as well in activities after school and week-ends. One of the activities which I started was kick-boxing. It’s quite enjoyable. It keeps you in good shape. I’ve been helping here for a couple of years.”

He then goes on to tell me about his education and his ambitions for his future in England and his substantial commitment to and involvement with local issues: “I am in Year 10 doing my GCSEs. I do geography, business studies and drama... I’m not really sure what I want to do, I have a couple of things, politics. I enjoy politics a lot... I was voted deputy head of my school and I’m a school councillor and things and a good speaker. I go to this local school, just next to this (Little Ilford) ... I like Conservatives and I want to get into the party, but I will go to University and get my degrees and things ... now we are ... have you heard of TELCO? It’s a campaign on the living wage. We are doing it... I have joined the, four of us have joined this group and I’m one of them it’s all about politics as well. I went on a course and they were talking about politics and how it works and that, how to run everything, which was great education. We learned a lot from it. I’m probably the only one in my year who is so fanatic about politics. I love politics. A lot of people don’t know how politics can change, you know, a life. Because, in PHSE, Citizenship, which we do once a week, we don’t really study a lot on politics, if we did politics more, I think people would be more interested.”

G. Parents' voices

As part of the external evaluation process, women attending classes on the same premises as the children were invited to comment about their value to the children and family communication.

Women at Mayfield School explained that, coming to Britain as refugees from Kosovo, learning English was a top priority for themselves and for their children. While they are following courses, and engaging in a range of activities including volunteering to improve their employability, they also greatly value the opportunities offered by Shpresa to meet and socialise with each other. All are passionate about their wish for their children to retain or learn Albanian and the culture of the home country and have enrolled their children in Shpresa's classes. Like many bilingual children who have become dominant in English, the children are prone to speaking English among themselves and to answering in English when addressed by parents in Albanian. Most mothers persist in speaking in Albanian, tell stories to their children, teach them poems and rhymes and interest them in music and dance. The classes provide opportunities for children to meet and speak in Albanian both formally in class and informally in social events.

D. explains *"I speak Albanian at home but, for the kids, it's more easy English. I speak both languages. They answer same, both."* The family also code-switch *"I don't know why, but some words come more easy"*. D. is teaching her children to read a little in Albanian and has a few children's books.

A young woman whose five year old daughter is attending the Albanian Lunch club at Christchurch school is very keen that her children should be fluent and literate in Albanian. She is a regular volunteer helper at the club. Her spoken English is very good and she maintains the use of Albanian in the home. She explains that the club gives her younger daughter a lot of confidence in using her language and she is very appreciative of the way in which Christchurch school supports the use of home languages. She enjoys working with the children and hopes eventually to become a teacher in England.

III. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Albanian School Project is well conceived and grounded in research and good practice. By developing innovative ways of supporting the Albanian speaking community and its children, both to integrate into British society and to maintain their cultural heritage and language, Shpresa makes an important contribution to community cohesion. The project has high academic expectations of children. The community greatly value the educational opportunities offered by the ASP and appreciate the way in which the partnerships developed with mainstream schools enable them to get more involved in all aspects of their children's education.

The project benefits from the dedicated and inspired leadership of the director of Shpresa and the co-ordinator of the school project as well as the commitment of part time paid and volunteer staff. It is well organised, well run and supported by an experienced management board. A particular strength is the quality of the monitoring and evaluation of its work and the collection of testimonials and photographic evidence of successful practice.

The organisation has focused on working towards its core aims and has been successful in doing so. The following recommendations, some of which are under consideration by the ASP, are made with a view to developing the organisation further by building on its considerable strengths.

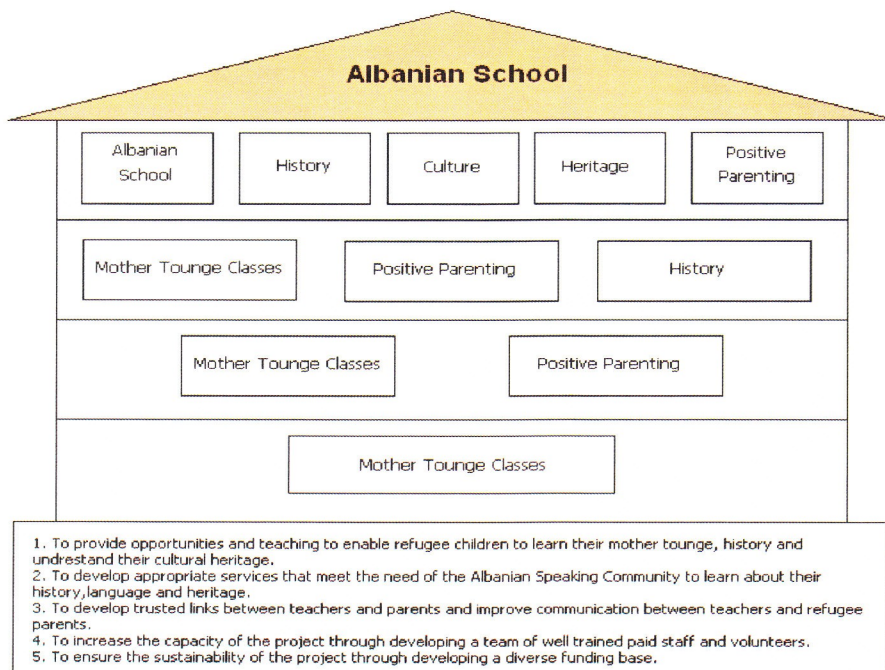
1. Language teaching: ensuring that the best practice is shared among teachers within the organisation and making use of school partnerships to provide further experience for teachers - working with other Albanian organisations to develop a curriculum and teaching schemes that fit with the European Languages Ladder and can prepare pupils for Asset language qualifications and GCSEs if and when these become available – campaigning for the availability of recognised UK qualifications in Albanian – ensuring the needs of advanced learners of Albanian are met, in particular through ensuring the availability of suitable reading material.
2. Improving children's attainment in mainstream school: it is recommended that ASP encourage parents to provide records of children's attainment in selected mainstream schools. This would enable ASP to monitor and evaluate children's performance jointly with schools to ensure that the needs of children from the Albanian speaking community are met.
3. Communication within the family: the development of family learning opportunities would benefit both parents and children. Careful monitoring and evaluation would enable an action research model to develop.
4. Sharing expertise: the ASP has developed innovative strategies that have ensured its impact on the community. It would be beneficial to community organisations which have similar aims for Shpresa to share both its management and educational expertise. Where appropriate this could be a source of income generation.

5. Networking: this is already a strength of Shpresa and the organisation would benefit from creating further links with similar organisations, with Children's Services (especially Ethnic Minority Achievement teams), schools and further and higher education institutions.
6. In a difficult funding climate, explore new options and innovative practices as well as continuing to provide the high quality monitoring, feedback and accountability that funders expect.

IV. APPENDICES

Appendix A: Policies, Management and Procedures

Albanian School Project



Mission

To develop the confidence and self esteem of enable children from Albania backgrounds enabling them to reach their full potential speaking people to learn their mother toungue, history and about their heritage.

Ethos

- Enable children and parents to reach their people to grow into their full potential.
- To work anticipatively -Working with the Albaian speaking community.
- Accepting Albanian speaking women and men of all faiths, cultures and race.

Core Values

- Be well informed about the Albanian language, history and heritage.
- Ensure everyone in contact with us feels Feel valued and respected.
- Improve their quality of life of families and individuals who are in contact with us.
- Be responsible for running the project and developing services.
- Develop skills and training of volunteers and staff users.

Values of the Prtoject

- Provide a welcoming and dignified environment
- be flexible and proactive in the way we provide services and work with other agencies.
- Be reliable, friendly and professional.
- work collectively and be accessible and open.
- Be flexible and supportive in the way we work.
- Partnership work with other agencies.
- Ensure anti-discrimination practise.

The vision for ASP at the start of the project.

Staff records

There is a file for each teacher than includes their job specification, job description, CV, the interview schedule and notes from the interview, a time sheet and signed record of hours worked with invoices (for paid staff). It also includes Home Office evidence of immigration status. Supervision notes are held in a separate file. CRB checks are carried out on all staff and volunteers and are currently renewed annually. | There is a probationary period of three months for all paid staff and volunteers.

Job descriptions.

Job specifications and descriptions outline the teacher's role. There is a separate Person Specification for volunteers with an application form that clearly outlines the responsibilities of the school project and the volunteer workers. Paid staff received £15 per hour for sessions that last a minimum of two hours. Volunteers are paid travel expenses for the cheapest fare and are provided with lunch if they work for longer than four hours. The responsibilities of teachers include Albanian language teaching, cultural activities, management of and practical and emotional support to young refugee children, meetings, supervision, school holiday activities and care of school premises.

The job description of the Education Development Worker involves a major responsibility with respect to children's parents: to support them to access relevant family services and to encourage positive parenting and support parental involvement in children's education in mainstream schools as well. She is responsible for the smooth running of the project. She is currently paid £25,555 per annum for a formal 36 hour week.

Staff training and supervision

All teachers, paid staff and volunteers undertake an induction course which covers the organisation's policies and procedures, in particular the child protection, health and safety and volunteer policies, the curriculum, the information they are required to keep about children, monitoring and evaluation procedures as well as tasks intended to make the new teacher familiar with the children they will be working with and their families and the school with which they are in partnership. All staff have a confidential induction file which includes abbreviated copies of relevant policies and basic information about the organisation and "what to do ... where to find..." its aims and objectives, a synopsis of the business plan, the structure of the organisation, and the roles and responsibilities of all staff. Procedures for accident and first aid, an extensive section on safeguarding children.

Flutra Shega and Evis Boddli have attended the "Step by Step" education programme and Community Education training offered by the Borough of Newham, for which they attend refresher courses every six months. Staff are also trained in the Safeguarding Children procedures. These programmes inform the training they offer to all Shpresa staff and volunteers. An experienced teacher from Albania trains all staff in the ABETARE programme and organises a scheme of work for all schools which is then adapted by individual teachers to meet the needs of their pupils.

All teachers, both paid and voluntary, attend a termly supervision session with Flutra Shega, who is in turn supervised by the director. The session reviews progress,

addresses any concerns or difficulties, identifies training needs and opportunities and appropriate targets are agreed.

Staff meetings are held termly in two teams, based in north and in east London. A range of issues are considered. One issue that emerges is the fact that, for many children born in the UK, English is the main language. Unless parents support and develop the use of the language it is not possible for children to become fluent in Albanian on the basis of a weekly lesson. This is an issue that the project shares with most mother tongue teaching schools in the U.K. Attendance and care of teaching resources are other issues such classes have concern about. The Shpresa teachers keep a register and analyse absence data. The level of attendance at classes is generally high. The teachers contact families in cases of unexplained absence. Teachers also act to ensure that children take care of teaching materials and bring them regularly to sessions. A Home-Project agreement outlines the responsibilities of the Albanian School, of parents and of children and sets down clear expectations for the partnership.

Policies

All are written in clear language. Dates when policies have been agreed and reviewed are included.

Health and Safety: covers all essential issues including staff wellbeing and sets out clear lines of responsibility.

Child Protection: policy and procedures and information for the child protection co-ordinator.

Equal opportunities: covers issues as a service provider, as an employer, and as an organisation.

Volunteer Policies: the encouragement and support of volunteering is a key element in the Shpresa Programme. Rights and responsibilities are clearly spelt out.

Vulnerable people policy: the nominated person is the project director.

Complaints procedure: clearly set out.

Financial management and procedures: these are outlined in dedicated document that covers the detail of the financial management of the organisation which is operated by a qualified administrator/accountant. The day-to-day financial management is carried out by the accountant, following the budgets prepared for funding applications. Flutra Shega has the responsibility, jointly with the administrator to check time sheets and expenses.

APPENDIX B: Testimonials

a) Written testimonial from Catherine Coop

Catherine Coop, the EMA co-ordinator at Christchurch School in Ilford, explained that, as numbers of Albanian children rose in the school, she had employed a bilingual Albanian classroom assistant to support the children. However when this person left, the mother of one of the girls started voluntary work in the school and worked with the Catherine to organise an Albanian club and prepare a small performance for refugee week. When the mother found out about Shpresa, Catherine contacted the organisation for help and they responded immediately. As a result, Catherine reports: *“They agreed to send a dance tutor to help us, and lend us costumes. We performed a*

dance, poems written by the children, and songs to Hatton School, to our own school, and to a group of teachers on a Refugee week course at the Teachers' Centre." Shpresa then took on the organisation and running of the Albanian club jointly with the mothers.

Catherine sums up the impact of this work on the children and the school:

"I felt a great sense of achievement working with the group- they were so proud to put on the traditional costumes and perform. The children in school who watched the performance were also very impressed, and had more respect for those pupils after the event. I'm not sure about the effect it had on the children's work in class as I do not teach any of the older ones, but it has had a big impact on self esteem and pride in cultural heritage. This year in Yr 1 several friends of the Albanian pupils have asked to join the club- it now has a higher status. The children are proud to be able to speak Albanian, which is great. So often peer pressure takes over and so many parents say their children will only speak to them in English once they start school. I was also delighted when so many parents, aunts, baby brothers etc turned up laden with food for the end of term party- it felt like a real community event, and the parents were so pleased with what had taken place. It has given the parents an opportunity to get to know each other better too."

b) Testimonial from Gascoigne School (interview)

This testimonial was obtained through an interviews with Bob Garton the Headteacher and Sonia Walker, the Ethnic Minority Achievement Co-ordinator.

The partnership model:

When Bob Garton, headteacher was initially approached by Shpresa he was wary because of past experiences with parent-run organisations:

"I was very wary in the beginning because I had lots of parents' groups in the past. The idea is always very good, I am very positive, but it can mean an awful lot of work for the school. Parent groups often come with good ideas but they want the school to do an awful lot, which is rather hard after a day's teaching".

However Shpresa came with good references from other schools. A verbal agreement was reached with the school. The headteacher felt confident about Shpresa's competence:

"I understood straight away that they knew what they were doing, they had all the CRB checks. I knew straight away it was an organisation that had done this before, that knew exactly what to do and that I wouldn't have to spend a lot of time going through that sort of thing with them. I wouldn't have parents coming and telling me that 'this is not a well run organisation, what are you doing having it in your school'."

"They are a very organised group. We did a trial period to begin with and that went very successfully. We are looking to expand in January. It's gone very, very well."

The impact on the school:

The head teacher reports that the partnership with Shpresa has been very beneficial to the school in a number of different ways:

"All I get is really good pay-back for it, in community relations, parental relations and during an Ofsted inspection for example. It went very well when we had the joint area review, they came along and spoke as well. All those

things for me tick so many boxes. I am more than happy. There are no disadvantages.”

The EMA co-ordinator in the school, Sonia Watson, finds that the presence of Shpresa encourages parents to become more involved in the life of the school and helps them to help their children.

The activities run by Shpresa have raised the profile of Albanian culture and created a positive response. The headteacher reports a noticeable effect on Albanian children:

“In terms of cultural identity, they are proud of that. They talk about the club and the things that they have done and they really love going out to perform in other schools. The children talk about Albania, dancing and their culture and wanting to fit in to the community here, that is the change”. “It’s self-esteem. If you see your own culture valued, if it’s valued in school, it makes a big difference.”

An issue for the school is the very high mobility of its pupils. He hopes that the presence of Shpresa may have some impact in stabilising the Albanian population:

“One of the things that I was hoping was that, if parents were happy with the group, and the school, they would stay.” “It would be interesting to know if more Albanian people would come.”

Research plans

While they can offer evidence of the positive effect of the partnership with Shpresa on children’s self-esteem and cultural confidence and the increased involvement of parents in school, Bob Garton and Sonia Watson note *“we have to prove the children are progressing as well”*. They are planning to carry out a formal study to explore the impact of participating in Shpresa classes on the Albanian children’s achievement in school.

A model of good practice

In the course of the interview the headteacher repeatedly commented on the positive aspects of the partnership. While the school fund an extra hour of the caretaker’s time as well as the additional heating and lighting costs, they are happy to do so because they feel the partnership is highly beneficial to the school and makes minimal demands on staff time and he never receives any complaints.

“It’s not stressful because we have good communication channels and I have had no problems... I actually tend to forget that they are here. I come into school on Friday and no one says anything. It’s all left as it should be.”

The headteacher feels the partnership with Shpresa offers a model of good practice. He would like other cultural groups to offer similar programmes but only if they have similarly high standards. He suggested the possibility of Shpresa offering some training or mentoring to other organisations. He is very willing to recommend Shpresa and their programme to other schools and is supporting Shpresa’s campaign to obtain a GCSE qualification in Albanian.

(Interview with Bob Garton and Sonia Watson on 11th December 2007)