

For Immediate Release

Sierra Leone's Minister of Education to visit Queensmill School to highlight unique educational partnership for autistic children

The education minister of Sierra Leone will visit Queensmill School on Wednesday, a specialist school for autistic children, which is supporting the development of the first ever autism-specific school in Sierra Leone. The two schools have developed a successful partnership as part of the Connecting Classrooms through Global Learning scheme, run by the British Council and the Department for International Development (DFID).

Queensmill School and Browne-Penn School have been working together for the past year, to raise autism awareness across Sierra Leone and improve knowledge and practice for autism teachers and advocates.

Both schools support autistic young people and have a shared ethos to raise autism awareness and provision and work towards positive outcomes for some of society's most vulnerable.

During the visit the Minister will have the opportunity to meet with school's head-teacher, Freddie Adu, to discuss UK approaches to disability education and will have a tour of the school to observe autism specific facilities and education.

At the end of the visit representatives from Queensmill School, Browne-Penn School, Sierra Leone Autistic Society, British Council and the Minister will discuss what has been learnt and how they can collaborate in the future to ensure successful outcomes for autistic people.

Andrew Novak, Deputy Head, Queensmill School, said, 'We are delighted that the Minister is able to visit Queensmill and hope that his visit will inform policy and government decision making for special needs education in Sierra Leone. As a school we are focused on providing outcomes for some of the most marginalised in the developed world, where many still face stigma, discrimination and limited opportunity. Our work in Freetown has been supporting the empowerment of local champions to address these barriers and work towards removing them.'

Tony Reilly, Country Director Sierra Leone, British Council, said, 'The links between Queensmill and Browne-Penn are very strong and the team at Queensmill, led by Deputy Head Andy Nowak, have made a huge difference. It'll be a great opportunity for the Minister of Education to visit a purpose-built specialist school. He has taken a keen interest in Special Needs since taking office. We will also be joined by Mary Sahyoun, Principal and Co-Founder of Browne-Penn. '

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