The Royal Commonwealth Society is a network of individuals and organisations committed to improving the lives and prospects of Commonwealth citizens across the world. Through youth empowerment, education and advocacy, the Royal Commonwealth Society promotes the value and the values of the Commonwealth, championing human rights, democracy and sustainable development across its 52 member states. Founded in 1868, the Society is constituted by Royal Charter and as a charity.

For more information regarding The Royal Commonwealth Society and Commonwealth Day, please visit email education@thercs.org, phone +44 (0) 20 3727 4300, or visit www.thercs.org.
I. Commonwealth Day: An Introduction

Dear Colleague,

Thank you for your interest in celebrating Commonwealth Day with the Royal Commonwealth Society. Since 1976, the second Monday of March has been set aside as the day citizens of the Commonwealth join together and observe the importance of the Commonwealth and all it has to offer.

The Commonwealth is an association of 52 independent countries encompassing many races and faiths. Each is committed to upholding shared values and principles and working together to promote democracy, human rights, the rule of law and equality for all citizens, in accordance with the Commonwealth Charter. The total population is 2.3 billion, one third of the world, of which 60% is under 30 years of age. The Commonwealth spans the five regions of Africa, the Americas, Asia, Europe and the Pacific.

Every year, a Commonwealth theme is chosen and launched on Commonwealth Day, and this year, we celebrate A Peace-building Commonwealth. Building upon the 2016 theme of An Inclusive Commonwealth, the 2017 theme explores the meaning of peace and the role of the Commonwealth as a network of and for democracy, human rights and consensus. Peace is a key part of the foundation of the Commonwealth, built into the network’s guiding Charter. Indeed, the Commonwealth Charter declares that ‘international peace and security, sustainable economic growth and development and the rule of law are essential to the progress and prosperity of all.’ Peace is also an important but challenging issue for today’s youth and society.

Commonwealth Day is an opportunity to not only launch a year dedicated to A Peace-building Commonwealth, but also a chance to teach young people about the modern Commonwealth and its continued importance in our current society. Included in this pack are a number of ways you can work with your students on this and other days throughout the year to learn about this important global network.

Thank you again for your interest in the Royal Commonwealth Society, and I wish you the best of luck in all your future Commonwealth endeavours.

Sincerely,

Helen Jones MBE
Director of Youth Affairs and Education Programmes
The Royal Commonwealth Society
II. The Commonwealth Service

Commonwealth Day is observed through a number of celebrations across nations. In London, this takes the form of a multi-faith service at Westminster Abbey attended by HM The Queen as Head of the Commonwealth, High Commissioners, and specially invited guests. This event is called the Commonwealth Service.

The aim of The Commonwealth Service is to celebrate the unity, diversity and linkages of the modern Commonwealth and foster greater understanding of the Commonwealth’s achievements and role, particularly among young people. The Service is the largest multi-faith celebration in the United Kingdom and takes the form of a 45-minute long service at Westminster Abbey featuring a mixture of testimonies, readings, songs and musical performances. Each year, the Service is centred on the annual Commonwealth theme. In 2017, the theme will be ‘A Peace-building Commonwealth’, referring to the Commonwealth Charter declaration that states ‘international peace and security...are essential to the progress and prosperity of all.’
III. Activities

Commonwealth Day is a chance to celebrate everything that is wonderful and unique about the Commonwealth, and an opportunity to teach young and old alike about its continuing importance for our global society. The Royal Commonwealth Society has developed a number of activities which can be facilitated by schools and classes in order to celebrate and teach about the Commonwealth, before and after the day.

Country Music
1 Hour Activity
Ask your students to divide themselves into small groups and select a Commonwealth country. Then ask them to write a song about this country (extra points if it’s to the tune of a song by an artist from that country!) that includes information about: Gross National Income, population, the current leader, three major exports, the national dish and one fun fact. At the end of the preparation time, the students perform their song as a group back to the class.

Skills: presentation, creativity, teamwork, research

Dish it Out!
Homework and 1 Hour Activity
Ask your students to select a Commonwealth country and identify the national dish of that country (if this is not available online, a popular dish from the country will suffice). Then ask students to research the history of the dish and its relationship to the country – why is it so popular? Is the country an island, so the dish is seafood-based? Is most of the population vegetarian, so the dish is vegetable-based? The students are asked to make a short menu card with the ingredients, recipe, and information about the dish and present this, along with the finished product, at an hour-long ‘banquet’ at school.

Skills: home economics, research, presentation

Funny Money
1 Hour Activity and Homework
Ask your students to select a Commonwealth country and identify what the five smallest denominations of currency are and what they look like. For example, if the student chose the UK, they would say 1p, 5p, 10p, 20p and 50p. Then ask them to research at home what they could buy with the total sum and draw three of these items. They may or may not wish to present this back to the class the following day.

Skills: creativity, economics, maths, research

Commonwealth on a Rope
30 Minute Activity
Give out or ask students to create name tags with a Commonwealth country. (NOTE: You may wish to join classes in order to cover all 52 countries, or ask students to act as more than one country.) Students then wear these badges and pass around a rope in the order that their country joined the Commonwealth, holding the rope twice if they represent more than one country. Once the final
countries, Rwanda and Mozambique, have ‘joined’, you can work with students to evaluate what the web means and emphasise how connected we all are.

Skills: critical thinking, geography, research

Map the Modern Commonwealth

1 Hour Activity

Pass out an outline of the world map (with country borders) to students, along with some coloured pencils or crayons. Ask students to shade every country in the UN in light blue, add stripes to every country in your regional bloc (EU, ASEAN, etc.) and outline every country in the Commonwealth. Students are then able to see how many different connections various countries have and the interconnected nature of our world.

Skills: creativity, geography, analysis

Commonwealth Assembly

1 Hour Whole School Activity

Join all classes (or as many as possible) together for a celebration of the Commonwealth. You may wish to have the Headteacher speak about the Commonwealth and its continuing importance, and have classes present about various countries. See the case studies opposite for other ideas of how to celebrate the Commonwealth through an assembly!

Commonwealth Quiz

15 Minute Activity

See the back of this pack for a series of fun questions that you can photocopy and give out to your class. Answers are on the final page of this pack.
Awsworth Primary School

Awsworth Primary School in Nottinghamshire, UK prides itself on the work it undertakes for its students to ensure an atmosphere of global learning. As an expert centre for the Global Learning Programme, an active participant in UNICEF’s Rights Respecting Schools Award, and a part of the Commonwealth Class project at the British Council, Awsworth exemplifies a diversified portfolio for international education.

With reference to the Commonwealth specifically, the school undertakes a number of initiatives that utilise this ‘built-in, easily overlooked connection,’ Deputy Head Teacher Dr Ian Baxter notes. As part of the Commonwealth Class project, Awsworth connected with a number of other schools from across the Commonwealth in ‘Team 15’. This six month endeavour saw the school create an introductory video of their facilities and students, a PowerPoint guide to the school, share traditional recipes and stories, and created a unified flag design for the team. This connection was all conducted virtually via an online platform, easing communication and unifying the schools across the globe.

In addition to this project, the school attended the Commonwealth Service in 2015 and maintains strong connections with a partner school in India. This latter element sees regular Deputy and Head Teacher exchanges, acknowledging Commonwealth linkages. Dr Baxter emphasises the use of the Commonwealth to celebrate differences but also easily identify similarities across cultures, recognising the way all countries are brought together.

Awsworth Primary School does exemplary work in ensuring an international and pan-Commonwealth learning environment for students, but importantly their message is clear: ‘start with where you are at and use what you have got’ is the approach they take. Projects that schools can join and existing resources are excellent places to begin introducing Commonwealth work into the classroom.

With thanks to Dr Ian Baxter, Deputy Head Teacher, Awsworth Primary School, UK

Kingswood Prep School

Every year at Kingswood Prep School in Bath, England, children take part in an International Day where differences of cultures and religions are celebrated in a fun and educational way. The aim of the day is to help develop an understanding and appreciation of other peoples and beliefs. Delivered through exciting activities ranging from cooking to drama to music to jewellery and mask-making, children gain awareness of the diversity of global culture.

Each classroom is transformed into a different country, with its sights, smells, music and culture transporting children from their normal school day to a faraway land. These workshops are run by staff, parents or volunteer contacts, all of whom receive guidance in order to ensure that their plans meet the aims of the day. Over the course of the day, children travel with their handmade passport to each country in turn, gaining a stamp at each ‘country’ and thereby creating a memento of the day and a talking point to share with their parents. The various experiences that the children have previously had include a drama activity led by a teacher from Sierra Leone, a West African drummer leading a traditional music making class and an introduction to Malaysian food and cooking.

Each year the school adopts a theme for International Day, which in 2015 was ‘The Commonwealth’. This was chosen as many of the school’s values, as well as the aims of International Day, are in line with the Commonwealth values. Not only is this popular day a brilliant way to introduce students to various Commonwealth countries through fun, interactive and memorable activities, it also gives parents an opportunity to take part in the life of the school and to celebrate their family’s heritage and culture. In addition, it can be used to evidence the teaching of national values, inclusivity and multiculturalism, in England a part of the state education inspectorate’s (Ofsted) requirements for a school.

In summary, International Day offers a catalyst to changing the culture and shaping the attitudes of children, encouraging understanding, inclusivity and respect for diversity in a fun and interactive environment.

With thanks to Mr Philip Dixon, Deputy Headmaster, Kingswood Prep School, UK
The Commonwealth theme for 2017 is *A Peace-building Commonwealth*, reaffirming that ‘international peace and security, sustainable economic growth and development and the rule of law are essential to the progress and prosperity of all,’ as highlighted in the *Commonwealth Charter*. There are lots of ways to get involved with this theme – here are just a few of our ideas:

**Join hands for peace**

Connect with other people around the Commonwealth through our *Join hands for peace* campaign, organised in partnership with the Commonwealth Secretariat.

Take a photo of your students holding their hands to the side (making sure you have all necessary permissions in place first!). Then tweet or post your image on social media using #Commonwealth4Peace or send your images to communications@thercs.org. We’ll create a chain of photos to link us all together.

![Image of people holding hands]

**Thunderclap**

If your school has Twitter, Facebook and/or Tumblr, ask the account manager to sign up to the *Commonwealth Day Thunderclap* and play a vital role in sharing a message of peace across the globe.

**Toolbox for Peace**

What would your students have in their Toolbox for Peace? Ask your students to fill a shoebox with items or ideas that represent their vision for peace. This might include:

- a photo of them and/or their friends with symbols of peace
- a collage or flag with words and phrases that they associate with peace
- a peace-themed dream catcher
- a ‘peace pledge’, something you can do to practice peace on your own and with friends

**Creative Resources**

Get creative with your class! We have the Commonwealth logo outline, a jigsaw template and a hand template for you to print and distribute to your students for a fun activity. Email education@thercs.org for details.

In partnership with
V. Commonwealth All Year Round

The Commonwealth is not just to be acknowledged and celebrated on the second Monday of March – it is a network that bears relevance for young people all year round. The RCS implements a number of programmes to ensure that this is as simple as possible for schools, youth groups, and individuals alike.

The Queen’s Commonwealth Essay Competition

Open to all Commonwealth citizens aged under 18, The Queen’s Commonwealth Essay Competition offers young people from diverse backgrounds the opportunity to make their voices heard on a global platform, to engage with issues important to them and to express their aspirations for the future. Each year, participants demonstrate their ability to stimulate and provoke discussions about important Commonwealth and global issues from a young person’s perspective and to showcase their critical and creative skills. In 2015, the contest was renamed ‘The Queen’s Commonwealth Essay Competition’, in honour of HM Queen Elizabeth II’s role as both Head of the Commonwealth and Patron of the Royal Commonwealth Society.

Building upon the 2016 theme of An Inclusive Commonwealth, the 2017 topics explore A Commonwealth for Peace and ask young writers to consider the meaning of peace and the role of the Commonwealth as a network of and for democracy, human rights and consensus-making. Peace is a key part of the foundation of the Commonwealth, built into the network’s guiding Charter. The topics are a chance to develop critical thinking and to express views in a creative manner.

The deadline for submissions is 1st May 2017 and entries are split into two categories; Senior (14-18) and Junior (under 14).

This is a fantastic opportunity for young people to have their work judged against their pan-Commonwealth peers and develop their creative writing skills. Further details can be found on the RCS website at: https://thercs.org/youth-and-education/the-queens-commonwealth-essay-competition/.

Youth Summits (Model CHOGMs)

Every two years, leaders of the Commonwealth meet to discuss current issues affecting the Commonwealth and its many diverse citizens. The meeting, known as the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM), was last held in Malta in November 2015, and included People’s, Women’s, Youth and Business Fora. It is this important international event that we hope to emulate through Model Commonwealth Summits, or model CHOGMs.

The RCS has a historical track record in organising youth CHGOMs, which was re-established in October 2015 with the Tower Hamlets Youth Council and the Daneford Trust. The event was based on the comprehensive chapter ‘Running a Commonwealth Youth Summit’ in the RCS Education
Resource Pack Antigua to Zambia: Getting to Know Your Commonwealth, digital copies of which are available by emailing education@thercs.org. This provides step-by-step guidance on the entire process of organising a model CHOGM.

Model CHOGMs operate much like a model UN scenario, with individuals acting as the Heads of various Commonwealth countries and engaging in discussions as their country would. This is a fun, active way of demonstrating how the Commonwealth works, and allowing students to actively participate in the learning process. It teaches presentation, research and critical thinking skills, as well as global awareness and cultural understanding. Some students are chosen for roles outside of country representation (including media, communiqué, and others), offering a diverse range of skill-building and appealing to a wide range of students.

For more information on hosting a Model Commonwealth Summit, please visit: https://thercs.org/youth-and-education/model-commonwealth-summits/ or email education@thercs.org.

Commonwealth Teacher Exchange Programme

The Commonwealth Teacher Exchange Programme (CTEP) has been running for 100 years, initiated by the League for the Exchange of Commonwealth Teachers (LECT). For the academic year 2017-2018, the three countries participating in the exchange are the UK, Canada and Australia.

CTEP is a great opportunity for teachers to develop professionally and personally, by experiencing life in another education system and culture for one academic year. It allows teachers the chance to experience another school, student body, and educational environment, all of which they can bring back to their schools after the year is complete.

CTEP, administered by the RCS and its subsidiary charity the Commonwealth Youth Exchange Council (CYEC), is recognised by the UK Government for allocation of Tier 5 visas to enable exchange counterparts to work in UK, and similar arrangements exist for UK teachers to obtain visas to work in Canada and Australia on a reciprocal post-to-post exchange basis.

For more information regarding CTEP, please visit: https://thercs.org/youth-and-education/teachers/.
The Commonwealth Quiz!

1. How many member countries are there in the Commonwealth?

2. Which Commonwealth country has the longest coastline in the world?

3. Name two Commonwealth countries beginning with ‘B’.

4. What Commonwealth country was former leader Nelson Mandela from?

5. The Lord of the Rings series of movies was very popular all over the world. In which Commonwealth country were they filmed?

6. Which European countries are members of the Commonwealth?

7. The athlete Usain Bolt is from which Commonwealth country?

8. Where and when were the last Commonwealth Games?

9. What kind of leaf is on the national flag of Canada?

10. Who is the Head of the Commonwealth?
Commonwealth Quiz Answers

1. 52
2. Canada
3. Bangladesh, Barbados, Belize, Bahamas and Botswana
4. South Africa
5. New Zealand
6. The UK, Cyprus, Malta
7. Jamaica
8. Glasgow, Scotland (2014)
9. A maple leaf
10. HM The Queen