

15 years of Czech School Without Borders London

When the Czech School Without Borders, London, was founded in 2007, none of its founders could have imagined the significant and lasting role this initiative would play in the life of the Czech community in the United Kingdom. What began as the modest effort of a few enthusiasts to preserve the Czech language and cultural heritage has grown into a trusted and respected educational institution. In 2010, the school was granted charitable status – and today, we proudly, gratefully, and humbly celebrate the 15th anniversary of this milestone.

Beginnings filled with enthusiasm and faith in the future

The idea of the school came from Zuzana Jungmanová MA, inspired by her experience with the sister school in France, Czech School Without Borders Paris and her close friendship with Lucie Slavíková Boucher. In London, she was joined by Renata Clark and Lucie Wenigerová, and together they opened the first Saturday class in 2007 for just ten children. Rather than offering a traditional curriculum, they created a space where learning Czech was not a duty but a joy. This atmosphere continues to this day and remains a cornerstone of our school. From the very beginning, the Czech Centre in London has been closely connected with the school, playing a key role in shaping its cultural dimension. Both institutions share a common mission: to maintain a lively connection with the Czech language and culture, while fostering community spirit and intercultural dialogue.

Growing with the community – and for the community

Gaining charitable status in 2010 brought not only formal recognition but also new opportunities for growth. Thanks to partnerships with the Czech Ministry of Education, the Czech Embassy in London, the Czech Centre, and other institutions, the school was able to expand both its educational and cultural programmes. Every step forward has been guided by collaboration, support, and the sharing of values across generations.

Creative teachers

Our school would not be what it is today without its dedicated team of teachers, interns, and parents. Every Saturday, educators, artists, linguists, and volunteers bring language, literature, culture, and the joy of discovery into the classroom. Their commitment underpins the quality of teaching and the trust the school has earned over the years.

Projects that connect generations

In addition to regular classes, we run long-term projects such as *Older Children Read to Younger Ones*, the Czech Language Olympiad, literary and translation workshops, bilingualism seminars, parent debate sessions, and cultural celebrations. Each of these projects responds to the needs of our community and supports the preservation of Czech language and identity in an international environment.

Partnerships with cultural institutions

Our activities are closely linked with the Czech Centre in London – a long-standing partner and cultural grounding for many of our events and for showcasing students' work. Since 2022, we have also worked with the British Museum, where children explore connections between cultures and languages. Another highlight was our collaboration with British author Sam Gayton, who inspired students to create stories across different languages.

15 years shaping a generation

Today, the Czech School Without Borders, London, is more than just a place where children learn Czech. It is a space for meeting, sharing, and building connections. Many of our students have now grown up – and yet remain part of our community.

Timeline of key milestones

- 2007 – Founding of the Czech School Without Borders, London
- 2008 – First Saturday class, 10 children
- 2010 – Registration as a charity
- 2012 – Partnership with the Czech Ministry of Education and Ministry of Foreign Affairs
- 2012 – London Olympics project *Let's Draw the Olympics!* – a children's film and art project
- 2015 – First participation in the Czech Language Olympiad, organised by the CSWB Prague
- 2017 – Opening of classes in Harpenden
- 2019 – First agreement with the Czech Ministry of Education and issuing of certificates
- 2020 – Online teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic
- 2022 – Partnerships with the British Library and UCL
- 2024 – Trial of new Czech textbooks at the Warwick branch
- 2024 – Second agreement with the Czech Ministry of Education and issuing of certificates
- 2025 – Celebration of the 15th anniversary of the school's charitable status

Natural partnership with the Czech Centre in London

From its earliest days, the Czech School Without Borders, London, has been closely linked with the Czech Centre, which played a crucial role in shaping the cultural dimension of the

school. Both institutions share the same goal: to sustain a vibrant connection with the Czech language and culture abroad, while fostering community spirit and intercultural dialogue.

In the school's first years, the Czech Centre was not only an important partner in organising cultural and community events but also provided a venue for students to present their projects – from art exhibitions and public readings to concerts and workshops. Shared events such as St. Nicholas celebrations, Children's Day, or evenings of author readings helped build trust and strengthen the ties among parents, children, and the wider community.

Key projects since 2007

- *Older Children Read to Younger Ones* – an intergenerational reading programme promoting literacy
- *Lilacs for Peace* – a community art project marking the 70th anniversary of the end of WWII
- *Let's Draw the Olympic!* – animated film project with the themes of the Olympics
- Czech Language Olympiad – student participation with excellent results
- Literary and translation workshops – with professional writers and translators
- Cultural Festivals and Czech Culture Days – in partnership with the Czech Centre and Czech Embassy
- Online teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic (2020–2021) – remote teaching and digital resource development
- Parent workshops on bilingualism – in partnership with UCL
- Partnerships with the British Museum (2014 and 2015) – Czech language in dialogue with world cultures

Partnership with the British Museum 2014 and 2015 – Czech language among global cultures

Since 2014, the Czech School Without Borders, London, has collaborated with one of the world's leading cultural institutions, the British Museum. The aim was to bring world history and art closer to children while showing them that Czech language and culture have their place in international cultural dialogue.

Students participated in themed workshops and interactive educational programmes in the museum, connecting classroom learning with authentic exhibits and stories. Highlights included programmes on ancient civilizations, the symbolism of scripts and languages, and translation and interpretation of artefacts in a bilingual environment.

A particularly inspiring partner has been British author **Sam Gayton**, who led creative writing workshops and encouraged children to craft stories across languages. His playful approach to literature enriched our teaching, helping children develop in both English and Czech. This collaboration demonstrated how important creativity is in language and cultural education.

Over the past fifteen years, our journey would not have been possible without the support of our community, parents, partners, and the dedication of our teachers. Today, the Czech School Without Borders, London, is not only a place of learning but also a home of Czech culture, linguistic identity, and shared future in a multicultural environment.

“Lilacs for Peace” (2015, Museum of Islington, Czech Embassy, MTSSP)

The *Lilacs for Peace* project was launched in 2015 as a joint initiative of the Czech School Without Borders, London and the Museum of Islington to mark the 70th anniversary of the end of World War II. The project, held under the patronage of Czech Ambassador to the UK Michael Žantovský and funded by the Mother Tongue Supplementary School Partnership (MTSSP), was aimed at primary school children. Its goal was to introduce key events of the 20th century through artistic and literary activities that were both educational and engaging. The focus was on the peace achieved in 1945 and its meaning in today’s world.

RAF Project 2023/2024, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, London

HistoryRAF is a project that offers a new perspective through which to explore history. With the aim of connecting the past with the present, it provides original content that goes beyond textbook learning. Its ambition is to make history accessible to a wide audience not only through facts but also through stories, visual reconstructions, and personal reflections on historical events. It is a place for all, who are interested in how the past has shaped the present and its influence on our future decisions

Why do we focus on history?

History is the key to understanding the present. By knowing stories of the past, we better understand how today’s social structures, cultural values, economic systems, and political ideologies were formed. *HistoryRAF* shows that history is not just a series of dry facts but a living, fascinating world of stories that deserve to be told. Its aim is not only to educate but also to inspire reflection on how history shapes everyday life and how our choices can influence the future.

Our approach to history

At *HistoryRAF*, we approach history in a comprehensive way, acknowledging its many layers and interpretations. We seek to present it in a manner that is objective, yet engaging and accessible to all. This is why the platform combines traditional research with modern technology – interactive visualisations, multimedia elements, and creative storytelling.

Future projects

One of our goals is to further connect Czech and British history. A current project is the

installation of a *blue plaque* commemorating Jan Amos Komenský as part of the City of London Blue Plaques Scheme.

Four years ago, together with Štěpán Weinzettl, we reached out to two British scholars – experts on the work of Jan Amos Komenský – to confirm the location of his stay in London during 1641–1642. Based on their research and historical records, it was determined with high probability that he lived in the area of today’s Mitre Street, St. James’s Passage, and Dukes Place. The Czech School Without Borders, London, is now working to secure the necessary funding and ensure the implementation of this exceptional opportunity – to install a blue plaque that symbolically links Czech and British history through the City of London Blue Plaques scheme.

This project represents not only a dignified commemoration of an important historical figure but also an inspiration for today’s teachers and students, who can continue learning from Komenský’s legacy and explore connections between national histories.

Textbooks and educational materials

We continue to improve our textbooks, workbooks, and other teaching aids – such as memory games or board games – that creatively support Czech language learning. Our materials cover a wide age range, from preparatory courses for five-year-olds (the “zero year”) through to Year 9. For the oldest students, we have also developed specialised textbooks preparing them for the international Czech Language Certificate Exam (CCE) at levels B1, B2, and C1, in close cooperation with the Czech Centre in London.

A clear goal

The long-term aim of CSWBL is to further enhance our structured curriculum, ensuring that children are guided through the educational process as naturally and effectively as possible. Our mission is to help them master Czech language skills as well as – if not better than – their peers in the Czech Republic, in ways that reflect their age and multilingual environment.