

# George and Emily

## 2015 Young Ambassadors for the Send My Friend to School campaign

George Watts & Emily Pemberton, both 15 from Ysgol Plasmawr in Cardiff, won a national competition to be the Young Ambassadors for the 2015 Send My Friend to School campaign.

2015 was the target year for the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which included the education goals for universal primary education and gender parity.

Throughout the year George & Emily worked tirelessly to get the campaign message to decision makers at the highest levels and inspire thousands of other young people to take part and speak out for the basic right to education.



### Getting involved

**Emily:** I've always been interested in global issues and I wanted to know exactly why some children miss out on school. I had a thirst for knowledge and I wanted to know everything! Being a Young Ambassador supported my dedication to the subject and has sparked the lifelong interest I'll now have in campaigns such as Send My Friend to School.

**George:** I got involved because I felt that I hadn't given back to society what my privilege of an education had given to me. I wanted to make sure everyone on this planet has the same opportunities as me. And to

show others that by making a small change to one person's education can spark other small changes, growing exponentially to change people's lives for the better.

## First hand experience



George & Emily travelled to a very remote and rural corner of Ghana to investigate the barriers to education and chart the countries progress towards meeting the target of MDG2. They visited children in and out of school, met with campaigners, politicians and charity workers.

**Emily:** I was particularly impressed to meet with the Girls Club - a project set up by ActionAid. There were an inspiring group of 75 girls who meet to discuss various issues affecting their education and actively go out into their community and persuade parents to let their daughters go to school. Our visit to was so uplifting and enlightening, I can only hope more Young Ambassadors get to experience similar trips. I will forever remember Lariba the girl I met who has never been to school, as well the children at Ninkogo

primary school. It's because of them that I was determined to work at my role as Young Ambassador and for every other child who hopes for a better education and a better future."

## Taking action locally



**George:** As Young Ambassadors, we organised many activities to help the campaign. We led lessons to year 7 pupils, held school-wide assemblies, met with our local MP on many occasions, and introduced the campaign to some feeder primary schools. We also had the opportunity to make a documentary for Channel 4 Wales, which our friends were able to contribute to! Despite no longer being Young Ambassadors, we continue to do these lessons so that every new batch of pupils from year 7 onwards is familiar and equipped with the campaign message!

I felt that we were able to make our fellow pupils more aware of their role as global citizens and make them feel part of a national Send My Friend to School campaign. We have sparked discussions in corridors and classrooms, and generally moved the third world from a remote topic to something that has ignited a passion inside our student body's core.



## Working nationally and internationally

During the year George & Emily spoke to politicians and the media and also took part in national actions to campaign for universal primary education in the target year for the Millennium Development Goals.

They helped to launch Action2015 in London on 15 January 2015, representing the goal of education as part of a group of 15 x15 year-olds all representing the different development MDGs. In the run up to the UN Summit in September, when the new Global Goals were agreed, they raised a flag above 10 Downing Street and joined the Light the Way event – part of a national moment to put final pressure on world leaders to make the right decisions in New York.

**Emily:** I'd like to think that some of the important people we met will remember our message to them, such as Ed Miliband and Nick Clegg, even though they're not strictly in office they've still been an important part of our politics and our 2015 campaign.



**George:** Nationally, I feel that the films we've made, and the diaries and blogs we wrote meant that the effect we had in our school could have the same effect, but in over 4,500 schools across the country! Rather than sparking a conversation in one corridor we sparked conversations in 4,500 corridors and cafeterias and classrooms.

My personal highlight was the chance to give a speech at the NUT Conference. Sure, visiting Ghana was a brilliant experience and a real eye opener, but the chance to actually share that experience with others was what was most important. And, the chance to share it with teachers and officials, from all corners of the UK and beyond, was when I first realised that all the work we'd done may truly have an impact on someone's life.

## Learning for the future

**Emily:** I learned that even though there are some very bleak parts to life, sad things and traumatizing things, in terms of poor or no education, conflict and poverty, there is hope and there is always progress to be made. We must continue our quest for global education, and in general, global equality!

I've been writing a number of blogs for ActionAid's youth website about my trip to Ghana and my lobbying, and after my GCSEs I hope to write even more and share my experiences about what I was lucky enough to see. The importance of the cause is not something to write off or to think that other people are doing the work for you. Who knows, there's a possibility of ICS volunteering in my future. I'm lucky enough to sit in school everyday, so I feel as though it's my duty to take advantage of that; to give a voice to those who can't.

**George:** Later this year, I'll be joining a United World College for sixth form, where I'll be studying with over 200 students from 80 different countries who all believe in its mission statement: *"to make education a force to unite nations, peoples and cultures for peace and a sustainable future"*. It is here that I hope to continue in my work to share the campaign message with people from all corners of the world! Eventually, I wish to work in either human rights law or politics. Perhaps even one day being a Minister for International Development or Education, where I'd hopefully be able to help the Global Campaign for Education even more!





## Find out more

- Watch the film of George and Emily's trip to Ghana:  
<http://www.sendmyfriend.org/resource/young-ambassadors-ghana-film/>
- Read Emily's blog from September 2015: <http://www.sendmyfriend.org/2015/09/taking-part-in-the-light-the-way-event-to-a-brighter-future/>
- Watch the 2016 campaign film with George and Emily as presenters:  
<http://www.sendmyfriend.org/resource/2016-campaign-film/>