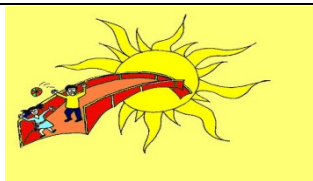


Grundschule  
HARMONIE



**European Partners:**

Lark Rise Lower School, UK  
Caddington Village School, UK  
Hämeenlinnan Normaalkoulu, FI  
Europaschule Harmonie, GE  
Gemeinschaftsgrundschule Eitorf, GE  
Pädagogische Hochschule Kärnten - Viktor  
Frankl Hochschule, AU



**Einladung/Invitation/Kutsu - Teachers' Visit Two - Germany  
Learning, Language and Diversity through European networking  
'Europe4you'**

<b>Host:</b>	Headteacher: Uschi Resch: uschi.resch@web.de Comenius Coordinator: Angela Conrad: cancon@t-online.de	Head: Walter Hoevel ( <a href="mailto:grundschule.harmonie@web.de">grundschule.harmonie@web.de</a> ) Comenius Coordination: Christine Schaumann
<b>Time:</b>	7 December 2010 (program starts 10:00 am) - 9 March 2010 excluding traveling days.	
<b>Location:</b>	Brückenstraße 18, 53783 Eitorf, Germany Tel: 0049 2243 92 12 10 E-mail: <a href="mailto:ggs-eitorf@ggs-eitorf">ggs-eitorf@ggs-eitorf</a>	Europaschule Harmonie, D53783 Eitorf, Sankt-Martins-Weg 5 Tel: 0049(0)2243912620, <a href="http://www.grundschule-harmonie.de">www.grundschule-harmonie.de</a>

**Preliminary program of the Teachers' visit**

This program is a basic structure for the visit and it's adjustable to your personal interests.

**Before the meeting:**

1. Filling in the form List of Attendees: expectations on the visit, information of diets etc
2. Introduction on etwinning Teacher visit forum and contacts/discussions with other visitors and host teachers

**1st Day Tuesday (7.12.2010):**

07.45	Arrival at school
07.55 - 09.35	Lessons
09:35 - 09:55	Coffee break
09:55 - 11:25	Lessons
11.30 - 12.30	Headteacher (Boris, Uschi, Angela) - Questions about school
12.30 - 13.30	Lunch with host teacher and End of the Day Chat
13.30 - 15.00	Lessons
15:00 - 16:00	Break (Hotel)
16.00 - 17.30	In Harmonie Meeting- German school system with coffee and cake
17.30 - 19.00	Mediaevil Xmas Market Siegburg (by car)
20.00 - 21.00	Reibekuchenessen"(Potato pancakes) in Harmonie
21.00 - open end	Evening program - international dances

**2nd Day Wednesday (8.12.2010):**

07.45	Arrival at school
07:55 - 09:35	Lessons
09:35 - 09:55	Coffee break
09:55 - 11:25	Lessons
11:25 - 11:40	Coffee break

11:40 - 12:25	Lessons
12.30 - 13.30	Lunch with host teacher and End of the Day Chat
13:30 - 14:30	Break(Hotel)
14.30 - 15.30	Meeting for all in Eitorf with coffee and cake
15.58 - 16.40	Departure for Cologne by train
17.00 - 20.00	Dom/Cologen City/Christmas market
20.00 - 22.00	Dinner at the „Malzmühle“
22.23	Return to Eitorf
23.00	Arrival in Eitorf
<b>3rd Day Thursday (9.12.2010):</b>	
07.45	Arrival at school
07:55 - 09:35	Lessons
09:35 - 09:55	Coffee break
09:55 - 11:00	Lessons
11.30 - 13.00	Final meeting for all in Harmonie
13.00 -14.00	Lunch with host teacher and End of the Day Chat
14.00	Coffee and cake in Eitorf
Closing up the meeting	

## Question 1

<p><b>English - Please comment on the philosophy and ethos of the school.</b></p> <p><b>German - Beschreiben Sie die Philosophie der Schule.</b></p> <p><b>Finish - Kuvaile koulun filosofiaa ja eetosta.</b></p>
<p>The school is there for the child. In the school they are after an inner motivation for learning. Everything (teaching, physical environment) has been thought out from the child's perspective, what is best for his/her growing and learning. One great example of this is the healthy snack given to the children during the morning break, another one is the outdoor tepee and hut made of tree branches, both lovely ideas. By providing children with a good feeling they can then expect each child to find his/her own inner wish to learn.</p>
<p>Encouraging children to become free thinkers and autonomous learners plays an important part in the philosophy and ethos of the school. Children are encouraged to become responsible for their own learning in an environment where they learn because they want too and choose too. Children make decisions about the activities they take part in and are rarely made to perform any task they do not wish to do. The school and classroom environment is conducive to learning in an informal, relaxed way. The classrooms are large, spacious and well resourced, the children wear clothes and footwear that are casual and comfortable and teachers too are allowed to dress for comfort. Parents play an important role in the life of the school. They are seen as partners in their children's education and are allowed to enter the classrooms whenever they wish. They play an important role in imparting the ethos of the school to the child. The entire school is built on an ethos of trust where children are cared for and nurtured and where important life skills are learnt. Children are taught to become independent, to develop the skills to use equipment and tools with minimal supervision, to care for their possessions and to look after their school environment and one another.</p>
<p>Every pupil is individual and learns independent. The pupils decide what they want to learn and when to learn. The teachers use their skills and expertise in school and are "helpers" on the learning process.</p>
<p>My initial impression of the school was that it was large and spacious, with some fun looking outside equipment! The school looked child friendly with lots of lovely name signs on the doors and many examples of children's art work hanging on the walls; which immediately created the feeling that children's work was valued. The art work was of a good standard but dominated most displays. The adults and the children in the school seem to work together to create an ethos and philosophy of mutual respect and openness. It felt that the school had successfully managed to create an atmosphere of equality between all pupils and staff. Both adults and children seemed to show a sense of pride in their school without any verbal communication. The children seemed to enjoy freedoms within a structured setting and definitely showed a respect for their environment. The majority of the children I saw helped to prepare resources and put them away correctly without being prompted, and even vacuumed the carpet when it had become dirty. The children were treated with respect and trust and this is emulated throughout the school by all adults, during lunchtimes the children are given proper cutlery and plates as well as glasses and jugs of water which they can serve themselves with, the children are then expected to clear away including wiping the table down and sweeping the immediate area so that it ready for the next group of children to use. The headteacher seems to have high standards for her staff, and the structure for procedures and paperwork seems tight, I believe this helps the school to maintain standards.</p>

<p>The school I visited placed a strong emphasis on the choice given to the pupils. The children are responsible for their own learning and are given a choice as to what they want to learn each day. They are therefore motivated to learn as it is a topic or area that interests them. Their own desire to succeed motivates them to learn. This promotes creative and independent thinkers. The school itself is very welcoming and the children learn in a relaxed, informal environment, being allowed to access all rooms and areas of the school as they wish. The parents of the pupils also play a large part in their child's education, and are welcomed in the classroom. Discussions are held with the parent to discuss how their child is progressing and what the next steps in their learning should be. Overall I found the school to be a warm and creative place to learn and the staff approachable and friendly.</p>
<p>The school's ethos seemed very relaxed and cosy. The school's philosophy is different from many other school's philosophy and it was evident. The philosophy of the school is very interesting and it's something that creates a lot of discussion. I found myself pleasantly surprised and consider the visit very eye opening.</p>
<p>"Teacher's are not responsible for children's learning, the children are." This was said to me on my first morning visiting Harmonie, and this was clear from the moment I first entered the classroom. I love the idea of giving children the freedom and independence to learn for themselves, I was not sure how well it would work but have found it eye opening how much it does and to quite a high level. The concept of no structure and no formal way of learning in order to force children to find their own structure for their own learning is one that ensures each child become strong learners in their own styles. From what I have seen within the classrooms the children are well on their way to finding their own styles or are prompted and guided to move on with their work. I was surprised that even the boys enjoyed picking up a book to read and would even take themselves off to a quiet place outside the classroom to read in peace. This level of freedom gives the children a significant degree of personalised learning and autonomy, something which a lot of teachers strive for, for their children. Though I believe with our parents and our health and safety culture, it would not work as well for us. Although I am sure some elements would work successfully especially in the foundation stage in child initiated learning. The relationships between teachers and children are amazing and clearly a great deal of care is felt on both sides and this is a key strategy in getting the children to learn and more importantly to want to learn. The fact that children and their parents have a great deal of choice in who they would like their classroom teacher to be, helps reinforce those relationships. A great level of trust in the children is clear to see, the belief that they will want to learn and that they are in control of their own learning works well. Where I was worried about how children are taught to read and write and how the children are able to cope with doing this independently, I was quickly assured by a girl in her first year that it was not difficult to do and was evident that she enjoyed these literacy activities.</p>

## Question 2

<p><b>English - In what ways do the pupils and adults communicate within the school?</b>  <b>German - Beschreiben Sie die Kommunikation aller am Schulleben Beteiligten?</b>  <b>Finish - Millä tavoin lapset ja aikuiset kommunikoivat koulussa?</b></p>
<p>Adults are friendly, easily approachable. I didn't hear any teacher raising his/her voice, but calmly and patiently restore order and working peace in the classroom. Children seem to talk to each other nicely, some teasing takes place, but doesn't it always. With the circle of seats and discussion at the beginning of every learning session there is a feeling of mutual respect. Children can express their ideas freely and orderly, taking turns. There's no shouting on top of each other. I didn't notice any disciplinary problems. Children behave well.</p>
<p>Teachers are called by their first names and the relationship between adult and child seems to be one of equality and care. This results in the adults being very approachable to the children. Due to the learning ethos of the school, there is a great deal of trust placed in the children, as they are responsible for their own learning. The discussion in the classroom seems to involve the children as much as the teacher, with ideas about what should be covered that day coming from the children not the adult. The role of the teachers is to enthuse the children to learn on their own rather than to instruct them on what to do. The children are consulted in how they believe they are progressing with discussions being held regularly about their learning. They are also asked to self-assess their learning, ticking off on a sheet what they feel they have learnt and what they still need to work on. A discussion is then had with the child on what they now need to concentrate on. The communication between adults within the school also seems to have an emphasis on equality, with the staff conferences in the morning being more like a discussion or a debate than a meeting. The adults in the school appear to care greatly for the children in their classes offering additional care and support to them that goes beyond teaching.</p>
<p>The children can (and mostly) spend their entire time during their school career with the same teacher. The teacher 'moves' with the child to each new year group/grade enabling them to develop a close relationship. The children and adults in the school appear to have an informal friendly relationship, with pupils calling the adults by their first name. Having said this with the adults that I observed boundaries were set into place so that within these open relationships the children still respected the adults and their authority. The majority of communication that I observed was friendly, calm and positive and a raised voice was rare, from either pupils or adults. The pupils that I spent the majority of my time with were confident in their communication with all adults, including myself, and enjoyed open discussions, they were also very tactile, more so with adults than with each other. The children also used written forms of communication to express themselves, I received many letters and pictures from the children, making me feel most welcome. The adults also seemed to be friendly and calm with each other and the staffroom felt stress free!</p>
<p>The communication between the pupils and adults seemed very relaxed, friendly and open. It seemed that all the adults know every pupil and the pupils came to anyone of the staff members with their questions/problems. Even though the communication seemed relaxed, the adults were respected and they were the authorities in the school.</p>

The communication is on one level. Teachers and pupils talk about a lot of things, discussions are welcome and decisions are made together. Statements are clear and the way communication is lived is warm.
The German children communicate very well with adults. Even with adult visitors to the school the children speak with confidence, clarity and inquisitiveness and readily share their thoughts and questions. Children refer to their teachers by their first names, which immediately creates a friendly, informal atmosphere at the school. Teachers use calm, sometimes authoritative voices but were not seen to shout at the children. They do not appear to frequently reprimand children but instead ask them when necessary to explain reasons for their actions. If a child needs care, support or time to talk then the teachers will readily make that time available to the child there and then. Children are allowed to enter the staff room to collect items and to give messages to teachers. They are never told to wait outside or to knock at the door! The teachers genuinely care for the children and always put the needs of the children before their own. Much conversation is shared in the classroom, with children continually encouraged to share experiences, ideas and opinions.
There is a lot of respect between the adults and the children and this comes across in the way that they speak to one another, even when the language is not understood by the observer. I absolutely love the circle time at the beginning of the sessions where everyone sits on a bench together to start their learning in that way and will then come together at the end to discuss their learning, sharing success and I am assuming (due to a language barrier) that some reflection time may also take place here. Where behavioural management comes into place, which to be honest I did not see many issues in this regard, the teachers did not seem to worry about what in the UK is quite often a suing culture but rather after repeated warnings to a child to get off the table was pulled off.

## Question 3

<p><b>English - How well do pupils communicate (verbal and non-verbal) with each other and in what forms?</b></p> <p><b>German - Wie und in welcher Form kommunizieren die Schülerinnen und Schüler untereinander?</b></p> <p><b>Finish - Miten hyvin ja millä tavoin oppilaat kommunikoivat (verbaalisesti ja nonverbaalisesti) keskenään?</b></p>
Children at the school have excellent communication skills. They are encouraged to share their learning with each other and readily talk about their work. They both expect and enjoy verbal feedback to be given by the other children in the class. Although talk plays an important role in lessons and the teacher never insists on silent working, the classrooms are not overly noisy. It seems that because children are allowed to talk they do not feel the need to shout or become overly excitable during lessons. It was very interesting how if a child wants to work in silence then they will choose to wear headphones to eliminate peripheral noise. It is very much down to the individual to take responsibility for their own needs, even where talk is concerned. Children do not need to ask if they want to do something e.g. go to the toilet or use a pair of scissors. They know what their needs are and are encouraged to take independent action. Children readily work together and offer each other help, advice and encouragement. It was interesting that the children do not appear to 'tell tales'. They try to sort out their own problems and are not easily upset or distressed. I observed many children helping and supporting one another and choosing to work together on tasks. I particularly enjoyed the way in which the children and teacher often sit around a small table in the classroom together. This is when the children talk freely to one another, sing songs and share work they have completed and are proud of. The children always appear to enjoy these times together. I found it interesting to see how 'listening' did not mean having to sit still with eye-contact being given to the speaker. When listening to a story for example the children were allowed to sit, lie down, draw etc.
In their circles pupils can see each other, so they talk to each other nicely, waiting for their turn. Teacher is like one of them and asks their opinions about what's to be done. When the pupils can see each others' faces it helps them to understand and take part in the conversation.
Pupil's interactions towards each other were generally very positive, on occasions the children's non verbal communication could be boisterous but this did not mean unpleasant, on the few occasions that it did become unpleasant an adult took control of the situation. I saw many examples of the children being friendly and helpful towards each other, helping each other correspond with me, helping each other to complete given work sheets and one child showing another one how to tie his shoe laces, being just a few examples of these unprompted acts of kindness.
The children appeared to communicate well with each other in the school and it was nice to see how well the older children supported and helped those younger than them in their own learning. The children all seemed to have good and easy going relationships with each other. During the time spent on the benches sharing what the children had done throughout the morning, their appeared to be a good deal of respect toward the child who was speaking and most children listened well to what was being said. A couple of boys I saw seemed to be a bit boisterous towards each other but this was just a part of rough and tumble play.
The most prevalent thing I saw when visiting the school was how the younger children in the school were supported by and learnt from the older members of class. This was a result of the classes being of mixed ages. The younger children would see how the older children chose what they wanted to learn and how they went about organising their learning. On occasions I saw the older children offering help and support to their peers. The timetable for the day was decided on as a group and often groups of children would choose to do an activity together. As a whole there seemed to be little conflict within the school and teachers were not often approached with children's friendship problems as these seemed to be solved independently.
The pupils communicated with each other well. They seemed to get along well and there were no big problems with the communication. The children co-operated well and almost everyone took part in joined tasks. There were no quarrels, only a random not-so-polite word here and there. Every now and then communication got louder when everyone needed to have their word heard. The pupils also took care that others did what they were supposed to be doing.

They communicate very diplomatic and nice with each other, but they also have their moments talking just like children often are: honest, loud and sometimes not so nice:-)!

## Question 4

**English - How is the voice of the child heard in decisions about their learning and the leadership of the school? Give examples of democracy in action.**

**German - In welchen Situationen haben Sie demokratisches Miteinander und demokratisches Lernen beobachten können?**

**Finish - Millä tavoin oppilaan ääni kuuluu hänen oppimisessaan ja koulun päätöksenteossa? Anna esimerkkejä siitä, miten oppilaan vaikutusmahdollisuudet näkyvät käytännössä.**

Children seem to be experts in their own learning. They progress in their own space and time. When they have learned, they move on to the next task. There doesn't seem to be any pressure timewise. There is a pupils' council, where children's voice is heard.

Everything new is presented in the morning circle, pupils and teachers discuss and decide with democratic voting. Pupils manage the morning-circle (every week a new pupil). Another important democracy in action is that every pupil decides what to learn and how to learn in the circle and tells the teacher. Sometimes teachers have to give a little help or try to limit the scope or even try to make some pupils not always do math for example but to learn something different. And the school has a school parliament where all big things or problems are discussed, things can be changed or new ideas can be brought into school.

One of the more noticeable elements of pupil voice in the school is the children's freedom to complete given tasks at their own rate, and in some cases in a format of their choice. However not all lessons come with such freedoms, an example of this is R.E. where the children are split into groups according to their faith and learn at the timetabled slot. Some of the lessons that I saw followed a similar structure used for the majority of lessons in my classroom, the children are modeled some work, often on the carpet area using a range of resources and are then set the task of completing an activity that demonstrates their understanding. Often the work that can be completed at the child's own pace is in the format of work sheets, however this is not always the case and in the classroom I was in tasks also included painting and free writing. In the examples that I saw the children had the freedom to choose at what pace and in which order they would like to complete work, but they did not have the freedom to choose what activities they did (have overall say on what they learnt). It is my understanding that the children do however often have the freedoms to write about any subject that they like within their German lesson, and I believe this motivates the children, particularly the boys. The school has a school council. Each class has representatives that are elected in by their peers, these children then attend meetings and discuss school issues. The children on the school council are given opportunities to talk to their class before meetings so that the class can put forward any ideas, complaints etc, and are also given opportunities after the meeting to discuss any outcomes. During my visit at the school I was unable to see this in action due to Christmas. The children are allowed to eat when they are hungry, and often roam around the classroom if they need a 'brain break' and do not ask permission for this; the children do not leave the classroom during this time. All of the children at the school have a hot meal provided by the school and eat at a designated time. The children also have a designated time for morning break. As the children move around the school they do so freely and vary rarely by lining up!

School councils play an important role in German schools. Teachers and children will sit and talk together about the children's needs and wishes. In one of the German schools I observed the teachers and children of the school council sitting, enjoying a hot meal together after having one of their council meetings. Through this the children learn that their opinions and ideas matter and are valued by their teachers. In lessons, children are directed as to the learning they should do e.g. maths, handwriting but it is up to the children whether they choose to do this, how much they do and to what level of quality. Sometimes it is noticed that a child never chooses to partake in a particular lesson. This is then discussed with the child with a view to hopefully overcoming any barriers or misconceptions that the child may have about that particular subject.

The children in the school are responsible for their own learning. They decide daily what they wish to learn in each period and decide their learning timetable for the day. They are able to choose if they want to engage in maths activities, writing, spelling, handwriting or to research a topic. I feel this made them more motivated as they themselves had chosen to learn about something or chosen a topic to research and therefore it was something that they were interested in. There was however maths input given by the teacher on a regular basis. The children were consulted on ideas and activities for the day and whilst there I saw examples of this. The children had expressed an interest in learning a dance, as there was a child in the class who had been taking dance lessons. The children thoroughly enjoyed being taught by a peer and learning a dance together. As it had been snowing heavily they also chose to go and build snow castles and snowmen, which they then chose to paint in watercolours. The children are encouraged to use all the areas within school and access these when they wish. The role of the school council in making decisions about the school is given a high status. The School Council had made the decision to extend break time and finish school later in the day. They were also given the job of deciding upon a behaviour management system and had chosen to train helpers to watch over behaviour and to know what to do if an incident of behaviour occurred. I feel this further shows the responsibility the children at this school were given. Children are also allowed to choose which class they would like to enter when they join the school.

The pupils get to influence their own learning a lot in the school I visited. I think one could say that they are the ones in charge of their own learning and progressing. The teacher of the classroom I was in said that every Monday they decide together on the weeks timetable. The pupils also do Math for example at their own pace and it's up to them what they do during each day. In Science the pupils decide themselves on what topic they want to concentrate.

While we did not get the chance to see it, the children have a council, who have all been elected. Though they have a member of staff present during meetings who might guide them back onto the right track when things stray and they need to push on, the children make the decisions and very much lead proceedings. For example, the children recently came up with the idea of having some undercover angels who are kept secret but who are able to guide and help children when they are needed. The idea is to let them find their own ways but to help them when they lose track. I like the idea of undercover angels as no one knows who they are, who with training are able to assist their peers in finding their own solutions to a problem they may face.

## Question 5

**English - What is the meaning of inclusion in the school? Give examples of what you see.**

**German - Welchen Stellenwert hat Inklusion an Ihrer Schule? Geben Sie Beispiele.**

**Finish - Millä tavoin inklusio käsitetään tässä koulussa? Anna esimerkkejä siitä, mitä näet.**

Due to the set up of the school and their structure of having mixed age classes, inclusion at this level within the school is almost invisible. Due to the very different levels of ability within each classroom and the idea of children working at their own pace, choosing what it is they want to learn in that particular instance, no child stands out for negative reasons. Although, I did not meet any children who had special educational needs, I did hear about one child who used a wheelchair and had a special bed in the classroom in order to include them in the normal day to day business within the classroom. I was also made aware that there is a teacher at the school who is a special needs specialist, though she is currently working in the role of class teacher, I would assume that should advice be required that teacher would be able to provide assistance and advice.

Everyone is welcome to the school. Everyone is as precious as the other and everyone no matter what they are like are entitled to be in this school. That is what I saw. There are pupils with special needs and the experiences with them seem to have been good. One class teacher told me about one boy who had a lot of problems in his old school but in their school he had done very well. Since everyone moves at their own speed it is an everyday thing to the children that they are different and doing different things. I think this makes it easier to the pupils with special needs, they blend in.

In Germany 'inclusion' means that all children follow the ethos of the school and have access to the resources, rooms and activities that the school has to offer. If a child has special needs they are taught together in the same class with an extra teacher there to support their learning. Children whose first language is not German are supported within school as resources allow. I saw children from Turkey receiving language tuition in their mother tongue in addition to the German and English taught at the school. Children are given three years to complete the first two years of school. They are kept back a year if necessary and if they have still not reached the required level they are then considered to be special needs. Children who achieve the required level early are sometimes moved up a year so that their needs can be catered for in a more advanced class. In lessons, children work to their own ability and in most cases differentiation is by the level of activity the child chooses to do or by outcome. There are however, worksheets of varying ability for maths and workbooks for maths and handwriting that children work through at their own pace.

It seems that in all classes there are children with special needs. In this school they don't want to get children a diagnosis, which would then send them to another school for special needs, but rather want to support them in their school to give them better chances for their future. The special needs teacher stays in every classroom for a certain time in a day/week and helps those who need it.

Pupils with different disabilities are taking part in class without being stamped as a "special pupil". Everybody is different and has the right to take part in class.

The learning that takes place within school is individualised as the children are able to learn at their own pace, at a time they choose, on something that interests them and at their own level. The adults in the room are then able to work with particular children who need support or moving on to the next level. I also witnessed maths groups taking place with two different members of staff that were being targeted at two different abilities. During the English lessons there were also different groups taking place of varying ability and the children visited the group that most suited their needs. It is a very democratic environment as the decisions about the learning day are made together sitting in a circle and everyone's ones ideas are heard. I witnessed extra lessons being given to the Turkish children in the school and opportunity was given to them to speak their own language in the Eitorf school. A special bed that vibrates to music had also been bought for a child with physical disabilities in one class to make her learning experience easier and more enjoyable.

The school promotes the fact that it is an inclusive school. A wide variety of children from within the immediate catchment area are welcomed into the school, with around 30% of those children coming from immigrant families, some of whom have German as an additional language. The school children are placed in year groups, but the schools ethos does not agree with the setting of children for ability; however it is possible that if a child is not meeting the same standards as their peers they can be moved up or down a year group. If a child is moved down a year group then this does not mean that they are automatically put on the SEN register as it is my understanding that the children in Germany (or certainly in this school) have three years to fulfil required standards usually done in two years. The school does have a specialised SEN teacher, who has trained for the job, and works with the children in school. The children that are recognised by this adult as needing extra support are given the equivalent of an IEP (currently the school has 22 of such children) but they are rarely diagnosed or labelled; this is due in part to the fact that the children with 'labels' would find it nearly impossible to get into their hierarchical school of choice when they move onto the next stage of their education. To help the children with German as an additional language there are small groups sessions, this is discussed further in the promotion of language question.



## Question 6

**English - How does the school promote the learning of languages?**

**German - Was tut die Schule zur Förderung von Sprache und Sprachen?**

**Finish - Millä tavoin koulu kannustaa kielten oppimiseen (eri äidinkielet, vieraat kielet jne)?**

I was very impressed with the level of language skill that I saw the children learning and using from a young age. Most of the children learnt English and had English lessons in addition to daily routines that take place in English. For example in the class that I was in the children always did the register in English, discussed the weather and what day it was, they also counted up to 20. This regular practice gave all of the children some basic skills. The class in which I was based were very proficient with their use of English and keen to show off their skills! They also wanted to teach me how to speak German and wanted to gain more English words from me. In their library session the children were encouraged to read English books and again many of the children used this opportunity to learn more from me, requesting me to read *The Hungry Caterpillar* in English so that they could follow it and understand by reading the German version of the same book. The children who were not as confident with speaking English seemed to be able to understand what was being said and when they didn't they were supported by their peers. The resources that the school had for the learning of English were plentiful, including books, CD's with fun songs and tactile resources, and it appeared to me that these resources were used regularly! English was the only language that I saw being taught as a lesson, some of the children who have German as an additional language were given lessons in their mother tongue and German, I saw this particularly for the Turkish pupils, but these were done in small groups and not usually with the teacher. In England some of the barriers that we have in teaching languages are the fact that English is a worldwide language if we are to choose an additional language for our children what should we choose, maybe not a European language at all but something like Mandarin which they may need in future business; also most of the staff in the school spoke good English therefore they can pass this knowledge to the children, the majority of staff in English schools do not have a second language as they were not taught it as children therefore they need to learn the language before they can pass these skills on to the children.

Individual materials, language-games, reading time, speaking time.

It seems that in all classes there are children with special needs. In this school they don't want to get children a diagnosis, which would then send them to another school for special needs, but rather want to support them in their school to give them better chances for their future. The special needs teacher stays in every classroom for a certain time in a day/week and helps those who need it.

The children at the German schools learn English from a very early age. Most of the teachers are able to speak good English and are therefore able to impart their skills and knowledge to the children with confidence. English is incorporated into lessons throughout the school day. At the start of the day children count, talk about the weather and answer simple questions in English. They sing action songs and also have specific English lessons in a specially designated English room. The school is well resourced for the teaching of languages and has a huge range of books written in various languages in the library. When you enter the German schools it is immediately evident that they have a large International focus. A cabinet of food packaging from England was displayed in an entrance hall and posters teaching English words and phrases were also displayed in the classrooms. There were also International themed displays and artwork on the walls. It was also impressive to see that a Turkish teacher was employed at the school to give lessons to children whose native language was Turkish. It is considered very important for children to become proficient in their mother tongue, German and English. Links with other schools is given a high priority. Children Skype those in England, Finland and Germany; a joint sing-a-long was also held with children from these countries.

There was an English club for the pupils in the school. The pupils could decide which club they would attend. This happened a few times a week. Everyone takes part in these clubs so even the smallest ones get in touch early on. One special thing I noticed and thought was great, was a small collection of books in foreign languages in the school's hallway. I believe the books were in some pupils' mother tongue. This Comenius project is also visible and that promotes the learning of languages.

Throughout the whole school, the learning of English is widely promoted. An English library is available for children to choose books from. All children have English lessons, which they split into same age groups for. However, in addition to these separate English lessons, English is also incorporated into other lessons throughout the day. The standard of the English taught much depends on the teacher's own level of fluency in the language, which I have found even those who deem themselves to speak poor English still speak and teach the language to a much higher standard than we would see languages taught in schools in the UK. This is something that has definitely given me food for thought at my very poor skill with languages and even how I am beginning to introduce the very youngest children in the school to the idea of introducing a new language.

While visiting the school many of the children were keen to speak to me in English and enjoyed hearing me read English books. The Comenius project itself is well established in the school and all the children are aware of it. They are keen to establish links with the English children and it gives them a wonderful opportunity to practice their English. While I was visiting the children sang live on a web link to a school in England and the children thoroughly enjoyed singing in English. They also talked of their excitement of coming to England. The project promotes the importance of language, makes the children more culturally aware and allows them to see how English can be used. English lessons take place twice a week for Grades 3 and 4 and once a week for Grades 1 and 2. There are a variety of different English groups taking place for a variety of different abilities and the children are able to visit which group most suits their needs. The choice given is again another way of motivating children to learn. The children learnt English through song, stories and role plays. I learnt of a particularly interesting event that had taken place in the evening one day where the children had to run a kiosk to enable them to practice an English dialogue they had learnt.

## Question 7

**English - What did you personally gain from the school visit?**

**German - Was ist für Sie der persönliche Lernzuwachs aufgrund Ihres Schulbesuchs?**

**Finish - Mikä oli vierailun anti sinulle?**

I found the experience very useful and gained much insight into the German education system and the way that the school system operated. I learnt a lot from the daily group discussions, and although I did not agree with all of the points put forward, I found it very interesting to debate education with teachers from different nationalities, with such a wide range of opinions and experiences. Having to reflect, so as to be able to argue my viewpoints, gave me the opportunity to question the practices that I use and whether they are efficient and effective and if not how they could be improved. Once again, as was the case in Finland, the resources for P.E. were fantastic and the space much bigger than we have, even in our secondary schools. The children even in the younger years went to the local sports hall, where in the lesson I observed, they had use of the whole space. I did not find out who paid for this (school, parents, grant etc) and would still be interested to find out the answer! The standard and structure of the lesson that I saw was very similar to the way I would teach my lesson, however I did learn a new fun warm up game! On a personal note I also learnt about some German traditions and enjoyed sightseeing in parts of Germany that I had not previously visited.

I gained a lot! I went in a bit sceptical, I admit and I need to say that I was surprised. The visit made me think about and question many things we do in my school and my country. It made me re-think the philosophy behind learning and teaching. It made me want to try new things and be even more open to different ways of doing things. The visit also made me see clearer the things I like about our school system. I gained general knowledge of the German school system and the culture. I also got a possibility for the first time in my life to try my German skills in an authentic situation and I gained a huge amount of confidence from that. All in all the visit was a success and I learned a lot also about myself. Big thank you to everyone in Germany!

I liked the way teachers started the learning session talking it over together with pupils. And I liked the general atmosphere of the school which I found relaxed, positive and unrushed. That is something I'd like to be able to pass on to my pupils, too. I was amazed how some teachers spend voluntarily longer hours at school with their pupils than what was their duty

I really enjoyed having the opportunity to observe how independent the children are in their learning and how much control they have over what they learn. I could see that there very unstructured, relaxed learning worked well for most of the children and they seemed very keen to actually get on with their own learning; even those in their first year at school. This has made me think that in my own practice I could allow the children to have even more autonomy during focused sessions as well as in some aspects of child initiated play. I also enjoyed having the opportunity to visit the kindergarten, which was amazing. On the particular day that we visited all the toys were having a holiday and a day of rest, so the staff covered all the toys over with large sheets and all the children had to play with were natural materials to really encourage their imagination. I absolutely loved this idea as I think that with all the wonderful toys children now have and can get, they do not always use their imaginations and certainly not like when I was little, and even then I do not think we used our imaginations like when older generations were younger. Another aspect that I found amazing was that all the children used proper breakable plates and glasses and not little plastic ones as we do. They choose when they went into the kitchen for breakfast and helped themselves to what was available in the fridge (though it was readily prepared specially for them). The level of independence the children were developing was again eye opening because although in nursery we really encourage the children's independence it is not to this same level. They even had a little oven IN the classroom permanently. At one point during the morning session the kindergarten children all have a circle time where they all sit around lit candles to have a chat about a certain topic, for example the snow. One the wall they also had the same letter chart Harmonie use for the children to learn to read and write with, so that if the younger children wanted to start in kindergarten they could.

It was such a privilege to be able to spend time in a German school and meet such open and friendly children and teachers. It is very easy when you are teaching in the same school every day to forget that actually there are many different ways of teaching and learning. To have the opportunity to see another education system in action was enriching and I came away with many ideas that I hope to try out with the children in my Key Stage. Thank you for this amazing opportunity. I hope that many other teachers and children will be able to gain from having the same experience in the future.

There are many aspects of teaching and learning that I witnessed in Germany that I would like to implement in my own classroom. I think it would be more beneficial to my children's learning to allow them to have more choice over what they would like to write about as I feel that this would in turn give them more motivation to write and therefore produce a better quality of work. I would also like to involve the children more in choosing what topics they would like to learn about. This would hopefully give them further enjoyment in their learning. In one of the schools my colleague witnessed a child using earphones to block out background sound while they were learning. I would also like to try this in my own classroom as I believe it would suit our learning environment and benefit some of the children. There are many aspects of language teaching that I saw in the German schools that I will influence my own approach to teaching languages. I feel that the amount of language taught and the early age at which it begins being taught plays a large part in the standard of English in the school. I think that one language needs to be concentrated on in Key Stage one and this language needs to be used regularly throughout the day at different opportunities. I would like to build links with the German schools that I visited allowing the children to see language being used making it real and purposeful. I would like to send examples of work and letters to the younger children in the schools and in return receive work from them. This would build relationships with the children from an early age and enhance the enjoyment of their trip to Germany when they reach Key Stage 2. I also feel that the school council had a larger part to play in making the decisions that affected the whole school. As school council overseer I think that our own school council needs to be more proactive in the decision making process. Overall I thoroughly enjoyed my visit to the German schools and feel it has made me a more open-minded practitioner and enhanced my passion for teaching, especially the teaching of language.

To open up all rooms as learning rooms, even the teachers room is a math room to. Keeping space for special things every day, like art, theatre, presentations of pupils or teachers can be visited, dancing, singing and music. Also all pupils have Englisch at the same time which makes the whole school to an Englischhouse. Everybody seems to be a little more relaxed.