



Europe4you



European Partners:
Lark Rise Academy, UK
Caddington Village School, UK
Hämeenlinna Normaalikoulu, Finland,
Europaschule Harmonie, Germany
Gemeinschaftsgrundschule, Germany
Voktor Frankl Hochschule, Austria

Tagesordnung/Agenda/Kokouksen Esityslista Teacher's Visit Three - UK

Hosts:

Sue Teague - Caddington Village School

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School Time:

Tuesday 15th March (8:00am) - Thursday 17 March 2011 (1.00pm)

Travel days:

Monday 14 March and Thursday 17 March (afternoon onwards)

Locations:

Caddington Village School

Five Oaks

Caddington

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<http://www.premierinn.com/en/hotel/DUNTOB/luton-south-m1,-j9>

1st Day Tuesday (15/3/2011):

07:45am	Hotel Pick up by minibus
08. 30	Arrival at schools
09:00 - 12:00	Lessons and break with link/shadow teachers
12.00 - 12.30	Meeting with Headteachers/Deputy Heads (LR=Sue/Carrie, CVS=Sue/Jamie/Laura) - Questions about school
12.30 - 13.00	Lunch with host teacher
13.00 - 15.00	Lessons and assemblies with link/shadow teachers
15:30 - 16:00	Leave schools for hotel by minibus
16.00 - 18.30	Break and rest (Hotel)
18:30 - open ended	Return to Caddington Village School Social Gathering at Caddington Village School for buffett food and light entertainment

2nd Day Wednesday (16/3/2011):

07:45am	Hotel Pick up by cars
08. 30	Arrival at schools
09:00 - 12:00	Lessons and break in different key stages to link partners
12.00 - 12.45	Lunch with host teacher
12.45 - 14.00	Meeting with Headteachers/Deputy Heads at Lark Rise Academy (LR=Sue/Carrie, CVS=Sue/Jamie/Laura) - Questions about UK schools system
14:00 - 17:30	Visit to St Albans - Market, Cathedral and Shops by minibus
18:00 - 21:00	Meal at restaurant in St Albans and visit to UK pub
21:30	Return to hotel by minibus

3rd Day Thursday:

07:45am	Hotel Pick up by minibus
08.30	Arrival at schools
09:00 - 11:00	Lessons and break with link/shadow teachers
11.00 - 13.00	Debrief meeting with for all participants at Caddington Village School followed by light lunch.
13:30	Depart for railways stations by minibus

Question 1

English - Please comment on the philosophy and ethos of the school.

German - Beschreiben Sie die Philosophie der Schule.

Finish - Kuvaile koulun filosofiaa ja eetosta.

Lark Rise Academy: Lark Rise is a school of 290 pupils, so it is quite small. I think this also has an influence on school's ethos, which seemed to be warm and friendly. Lark Rise has earned the title "Academy", so they have proved already before, that things in their school work well. As a visitor you can also notice that. Caddington Village School: School is formed of several buildings with different aged children, who have their own places, for example yards. So there is no mass feeling, although there are more than 500 pupils. The atmosphere in the school seemed to be quite free and the relationship between the teachers and pupils was not very formal. In some cases it was warm. In assembly you could see that the teachers kept pupils quiet strictly.

The philosophy of the school is in our opinion very well balanced. On the one hand there are quite strict rules how the pupils should behave and act, on the other hand they are allowed to express themselves and "feel at home".

Lark Rise Academy had a sense of calm which alongside an ordered learning programme ensured the children were learning and developing to the best of their ability. There was very much a sense of freedom both in decision making with the children but also in the way children could tackle a task. When I asked my fantastic guide, how Lark Rise had changed since becoming an Academy, her answer was simply "Lark Rise is a happy school". This was confirmed judging by the number of smiles seen around the school. As mentioned on a display in the main corridor children were very much seen as decision makers. The school name and logo were proudly and liberally displayed around the school, even on the 'special mat!' creating a sense of community and unity within the school. The thematic approach to learning certainly aided cross - curricular planning and learning and the outcomes in the form of topic books were stunning. I really liked the fact that children were able to take their work home on a regular basis while the learning from it was still fresh in their mind.

Lark Rise Academy: School had recently got a freedom to do things more or less as they want (as they now are a academy). That showed in school ethos. Lark Rise felt very warm and welcoming, although strict at the same time. I felt pupils and staff were proud to be part of Lark Rise Academy (and they had all right to be!). Lark Rise was giving children possibility to learn in safe environment and children seemed to have chance to influence to things at school. The school atmosphere was warm, welcoming and very positive Caddington Village: I felt school had a very clear vision about how things should be done. Children were very polite and behaving well even when it was a pyjama-day, I was very impressed about that! Teachers seemed to be very committed to school ethos and were proud to be a part of Caddington's school community.

The English schools work with the consequence- and praise-staircase. There are clear structures in regards to what is expected of the children. Extraordinary work or actions are given special recognition. Individualized special help is possible by dividing the children into groups which are at the same learning level. At Lark Rise every class has an assistant teacher so that differential learning is sometimes possible within the class.

There is a calm, friendly and positive air about the school and all children are expected to achieve their full potential at all times both academically and socially. There is an ordered theme based curriculum from Nursery through to key stage 2 which builds upon previous knowledge and moves all children forward. The children at Lark Rise Academy are encouraged to develop not only knowledge based learning but also skills for life right from the start of their education in the Nursery. They are encouraged to become active members of the wider community and to take responsibility for both themselves and the world around them, for example through the awarding of the Tidy Teddy for the tidiest cloakroom every week. The 'Virtues' curriculum encourages social and emotional development and children are rewarded for being kind and caring with the awarding of a cup each week. The children I spoke to were all, without exception, positive about their school - "We learn here and have fun" and were keen to show me the various things about their school that they were proud of such as sporting trophies, the Eco-frog and their work. They were proud to show their class' topic books which were beautifully displayed on the wall in each classroom. There is a commitment to staff wellbeing, for example all teachers have their PPA time at the same time each week enabling them to share ideas and to plan and develop their own practice collaboratively.

Question 2

English - In what ways do the pupils and adults communicate within the school?

German - Beschreiben Sie die Kommunikation aller am Schulleben Beteiligten?

Finish - Millä tavoin lapset ja aikuiset kommunikoivat koulussa?

Children were happy and willing to talk to both adults and peers alike, and this included strangers. I was particularly impressed with the way digital cameras were used in Reception as a way of communicating their learning. I was told by one boy "we can only take pictures of good learning", which I thought was really nice! I really liked the way the children were welcomed into school in the mornings by the head teacher. Class teachers and support staff had a friendly relaxed air when dealing with children and this clearly made for a confident and trusting relationship between adult and child.

Lark Rise Academy/Caddington Village School: At first communication seemed to be a little bit formal maybe because the pupils called the teacher Mrs. or Mr. Otherwise communication was often unformal and relationship between the teacher and pupils was warm. In both schools the teachers gave a lot of positive feedback to pupils. Pupils were eager to communicate with visitors in both schools. An assembly in Caddington was formal, for example two pupils were standing for some reason in the beginning of the assembly when the others were sitting. In both schools some pupils wanted to discuss with the teacher before they left the classroom. I think their relationship was warm.

Lark Rise Academy: Communication between children and school staff was in my opinion more or less typical to English schools. Children have a certain "code" how to communicate. Compared to Finnish school it felt very formal, but at the same time, it is the normal way to do things in England. And still I have to admit that I would have thought it would be even more formal, so that was a positive surprise for me. Communication between me and pupils was very open, and I was very glad to see the children were so spontaneous and open. Caddington Village: I observed five lessons and saw five different teachers at work in Caddington. The communication varied from very formal to very open and relaxed. With younger pupils it was quite similar to Finland, but with the oldest pupils the communication was a bit more formal. In Caddington as well, children were very open to me and they did communicate with me very spontaneously. In Caddington I also had a chance to have a presentation about Finland for year three and it felt nice to actually "teach" in England too ;-)
Teachers are understanding, polite and matter of fact in dealing with the children. The definition of the teacher is clearly defined. For example, when sitting in the circle children sit on the floor and the teacher on a chair. The children are open and approachable; however they are not so secure when it comes to independent work (teamwork). In preschool learning time which is fixed or open change after short periods of time. Teacher to teacher communication is matter of fact and polite.
The communication is what we have seen so far pretty good. Every morning the staff gathers to discuss problems and so on and during the day we experienced that the teachers talk to each other frequently. The school assemblies are also a good way for the pupils to communicate with each other.
There is a free dialogue between children and adults across the school. Children are encouraged to ask questions to develop their own learning and to comment on events that are important to them (e.g. when answering their register the Key Stage 1 children were seen to be sharing news with both the teacher and the other children). They are confident enough to share their ideas with adults, regardless of who the adult is. All adults were seen to talk politely to the pupils with a calm manner and took time to explain tasks to the children at a level that was appropriate to their needs and stage of development. In every classroom I visited (from Nursery to Key Stage 2) children were happy to speak with me demonstrating that they were happy, confident and felt safe in the school environment. It was lovely to see that the Head teacher welcomed children into school in the mornings with a smile and a 'hello'. The school ambassadors do a fabulous job in welcoming adults to the school and are confident in answering any questions thrown at them.

Question 3

English - How well do pupils communicate (verbal and non-verbal) with each other and in what forms?
German - Wie und in welcher Form kommunizieren die Schülerinnen und Schüler untereinander?
Finish - Miten hyvin ja millä tavoin oppilaat kommunikoivat (verbaalisesti ja nonverbaalisesti) keskenään?
Children were politely addressing each other as they met on their way to classes and I also noticed a confident and approachable relationship between some of the older children with those in the Nursery and Reception. During group activities and in class discussions children demonstrated good turn taking and sharing. They were very good at ensuring they put their hands up and this ensured a calm learning environment where all children were happy to contribute ideas. In all lessons observed, children were very good at putting their hands up rather than calling out.
Lark Rise Academy/Caddington Village School: During many lessons pupils were sitting in groups of 3, 4 or 5. Especially in Maths they studied a lot in those groups. Their co-operation was very natural and most of them really tried to do their best, also those who weren't so good in Maths. Members of the groups helped each other. In Caddington the choir session proved that communication can happen fine in a musical way too. The teacher herself was a really good singer and she had good influence to her pupils.
Lark Rise Academy: That depended a lot of the subject. In ICT lesson pupils worked alone and there were not much communication between pupils, verbal or non-verbal. In English lesson and in nursery children communicated a lot; they were chatting, playing and helping each other; they were also smiling and using their hands a lot while speaking. Caddington: Children were very open and communicative; not just verbally but non-verbally too. I remember especially a girl who was clearly enjoying maths and problem solving and her whole habitus was showing how eager she was to learn new things (she had sort of "burn" in her eyes). The feeling was overall very positive and communication seemed to be working well.
Pupils seem to enjoy themselves and communicate a lot, verbally as well as non-verbally during the school breaks, before and after school.
The children at Caddington and Lark Rise communicate very openly. The same games can be found in the school yard as at our school: catch, football or other running games. Some fighting occurs as a result of conflicts. There is a community board, where the children note all important topics. The children occasionally talk in the middle of lessons and help one another.
The social interaction between children is positive in all age ranges throughout the school. I witnessed many occasions where children demonstrated good manners towards one another e.g. "Thank you for holding the door." The children work collaboratively in lessons such as when sharing ideas or developing their own knowledge prior to completing an independent task. Through working in mixed aged Social groups (that are employed during Friday afternoon sessions) the children happily and confidently interact with older and younger children. The children are given opportunities to discuss their own learning and to comment on that of each other. The level of language is generally that which is expected at the children's different ages. The children use talk readily in their play (in the Foundation Stage) and also use appropriate non-verbal language to indicate their feelings/wants to one another. They are able to take turns in conversation actually listening to one another and responding appropriately. The Eco-Warriors and Playground Leaders who assist one another during free times communicate well. I heard a year 1 child telling another "I'm a play leader today. I'll play with you if you're lonely."

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.

It is evident throughout the school that the children's opinions are valued by the adults in the school. There are School Ambassadors who represent the rest of the children and the school, for example to meet and greet visitors. At the weekly Pupil Voice (Pow Wow) meetings representatives from all classes are given the opportunity to report to the Head teacher the wishes or comments from their classes. It was lovely to be told of one example where a class had been bought a sofa for quiet reading after requesting this at a Pupil Voice meeting. Throughout the school it is evident that the children have 'ownership' and feel that they are valued. Labels to classrooms demonstrate that the rooms 'belong' to the children rather than to the members of staff. We witnessed a sign on the wall 'children as decision makers' which shows the different ways in which the children's voices are heard e.g. eco warriors and play leaders, ambassadors and class representatives at the Pow Wows. Outside the calm room there was a sign telling visitors that this was a result of the children not being happy about the room being used badly previously and that the chill out room was an improvement.

Lark Rise Academy/Caddington: Both schools had a pupils' council, which could do proposals to the head master. At least in Caddington there were peer mediators too.

Lark Rise Academy: Lark Rise had school ambassadors who could suggest things to the head master. Other pupils could get their opinion heard via school ambassadors. School ambassador's "job" was clearly very wanted and respected so I would imagine children felt they could have an influence in things by being an ambassador. The ambassadors also worked as our guides and did that extremely well. Caddington: Caddington had a system called pupils council, which even took part in staff recruit interviews! That was something I would like to take back home with me! Pupils council consisted one pupil from every class, so children had a chance to be part of the decision making process.

The School Ambassadors did a great job in showing us round and were very responsible in their jobs of collecting and delivering us to our various destinations. Their lovely badges made them feel very important and this came across in their confident and helpful attitude. From my guide's comments it seemed that all the children had had a large say in improvements they wanted during the change to an Academy. Their role was taken very seriously by all members of the school including the privilege of being allowed in the staff room and making adult's drinks. Eco Warriors and Play Leaders were clearly visible throughout the entire day in their bright bibs. I liked the way they wore these all day and so were instantly identifiable, which again made the rest of the school realize how important these children and their roles were. Peer mediators and class representatives took an active role in looking after their peers and taking comments and suggestions to staff.

We weren't able to experience democratic action in the schools we have visited. We think that the observation time therefor was too short.

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.

Both schools are beginning to individualize their lessons in order to meet the varying needs in the class. Children are divided up according to their level, there are open work phases at times but there is a lot of frontal teaching. There is seldom the opportunity for children to develop and decide upon their own way, as well as speed of learning. At Lark Rise there is a class with one child who has special needs. This child is supported by a teaching assistant. Children present their work results once a week at the daily assembly.

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I saw one child who had been diagnosed as being on the Autistic spectrum receiving 1:1 adult support. Children with Special Needs were not obvious to an outsider- presumably demonstrating that inclusion works successfully at Lark Rise Academy. I was quite surprised to hear that there were only 6 children with IEPs and 2 statemented children. Presumably this means that individual needs are being met through the class teachers' and LSAs' support/provision after identifying these needs? Children are set according to their abilities in Literacy and Numeracy from year 1 and then within each set I witnessed differentiation in key stage 1 in that the year 1 and year 2 children completed different independent activities. An example of other differentiation was seen in the top set of the Key Stage 2 Literacy lesson where the children were put into 4 groups according to their abilities. 2 worked with the adults in the classroom completing different guided reading activities and the other 2 worked independently writing a newspaper report building upon knowledge gained during Topic sessions in the afternoons. The availability of independent rooms means that groups can work away from the main class.

Inclusion was very simplified at Lark Rise with only 6 children on the SEN register and 2 with statements. Years 1 upwards were set for Mathematics and Literacy and this seemed to remove the need for any differentiation. Each class teacher planned Maths for their set and so could differentiate one way for their particular set. In Reception effort was made to ensure all children were attempting the adult – led activities. The onus seemed to be very much on class teachers and LSA’s to recognize and deal appropriately with individual learning requirements. With full-time LSA’s this is perhaps made slightly easier, particularly alongside the independent rooms of each class.
Lark Rise Academy: Lark Rise had only a few children who were in need of special help. If I remember correctly, the exact number was only 6! So there wasn’t much of inclusion to be seen. Children come to Lark Rise at such a young age that all the problems could be foreseen before the critical years in learning. Caddington: In Caddington about 150 pupils (out of 500) have some sort of plan how to improve their learning. In Caddington they had used a lot of resources to find out what sort of help pupils would need and managed to meet the needs very well indeed! So Inclusion was a big part of schools ethos.
Lark Rise Academy: There are only a few pupils with special needs in Lark Rise. Caddington Village School: They said that there are about 150 pupils with special needs. Relatively it is much more than in Lark Rise. In some groups there were a few pupils, mostly boys, who had problems in concentration. In the schoolyard I saw at least one pupil with a wheel chair and one with white stick.
We weren’t able to experience inclusion in the school. Our focus was mainly on Physical Education and English and we didn’t really see inclusion in the schools.

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)?
A general exposure to different languages and cultures was clearly visible throughout the school, particularly on display boards. There was a large display board in the hall which showed the links to other schools around the world. There was a very colourful Spanish display outside the KS1 classrooms showing key phrases and work which the children had completed. In KS1 children learn Spanish, and in KS2 this is extended to German and French as well. I felt this was impressive for children at such a young age to be learning such a diverse variety of languages, but wondered whether they got as much out of it as if they focused on one, possibly two, languages. I observed a very good Spanish lesson where the colours were taught through various speaking and listening activities including the use of multilink to ‘grab the colour’ which had been called out.
Caddington & Lark Rise Academy: I did see plenty of childrens work, displays (kind of “exhibition”) etc. in the walls (in both schools) and some of it was written in different languages. There were also maps and flags of different countries to be seen in the walls. The languages children were learning were usually French and German. In both Caddington and Lark Rise the staff was very eager to improve their language teaching.
From my observations Key Stage 1 learn Spanish and in the Key Stage 1 corridor there was a bright colourful display in Spanish. Although I didn’t witness any language teaching in Key Stage 2 it is my understanding through conversations that Key Stage 2 learn Spanish, German and French. Display boards throughout the school demonstrate the school’s commitment to European partnerships such as a map in the hall showing all the link countries and another board which makes reference to the school being part of a larger community – the world. In each Key Stage there were displays of the key vocabulary for the languages being learned. Even in the nursery there were obvious displays in foreign languages.
German is an important language at both schools due to many factors but especially because of the student exchange. Phases of work in German repeatedly take place. As a result of the exchange motivation to learn German is very high. Children write mails and Skype. French is generally taught starting in year 5.
Lark Rise Academy: French and German are taught as foreign languages. Caddington Village School: The foreign languages were also French and German. They also had a language of the month, this time Polish. On the walls there were posters with different flags and easy words in some languages.
Learning of languages seems to be very important to both schools. English of course but also foreign languages play a big role in daily school routine.

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?
Due to the fact that both of us are teachers in secondary schools we have seen quite a lot of new things concerning nursery and primary school. It was interesting to see the differences between the Austrian and UK-school system. We were also surprised that so much new-media is used in school – which is very helpful for the teacher and saves a lot of preparation time.
Early childhood education is tightly interconnected with school contents and is very professional. School and Kindergarden co-operate successfully. The children learn through playing and there are regular phases of observation. The lessons are very hands on, for example sand in the classroom. Although there are various learning centers in the room, this form of lessons does not continue in the upper years. The rooms are quiet (often carpet) and the children show a lot of discipline. The teaching profession is more highly regarded in English society than in Germany. We were impressed by our own language experience and for the children in the exchange this experience is a fantastic motivation to learn a language.
For me it was a good opportunity to compare our school system with the one in England, for example way of teaching, buildings, equipment, school yard, staff room,... It was also useful to discuss with colleagues from England, Germany and Austria. After a while maybe my reflections concerning what I saw will have an influence on my own work in Finland. I also think that it is good to have a little break in my own work. It was good to notice that we all teachers have the same target; we try to teach and educate our pupils as well as possible. We all teachers are doing very important work in our countries.
It was a great experience to be able to see another school and how it works. I really liked the calm and relaxed atmosphere, and the way children seemed so central to the running and decision making in the school. The tidiness of the classrooms was something that I would like to see in my own classroom! I would also like to increase the amount of cross-curricular planning across the subjects and using ICT resources for other subjects. I saw a history and a Maths lesson in the ICT suite using Photostory 3 and MathBase, both of which were brilliant programs and very simple to use. The large proportion of adults was very beneficial to the teachers and the children and clearly made learning a much more individualised process with the ability to split off small groups into the intervention rooms. I thoroughly enjoyed my experience at Lark Rise and would like to thank all the staff and children who made us feel so welcome.
It was lovely to be given the opportunity to visit another school and to spend an extended period being able to see the whole school in operation (including before school clubs). I enjoyed seeing how mixed age classes work successfully as this is something I have not had experience of before. Prior to my visit I envisaged it being extremely difficult to manage 2 age groups through differentiation and through the curriculum being delivered. My observations however, have shown how this can be achieved through collaborative working with other staff and through a theme based curriculum which allows for different levels of development to be catered for. Visiting another Foundation Stage has given me many ideas as to how my own practice can be developed further for example to develop the learning of key skills rather than just focusing on the EYFS guidance. I will adapt my own practice as a result of this visit, moving around the school day in Reception to include whole group writing rather than it taking place as an adult-led session freeing up time for other areas of the curriculum to be delivered. As a mentor I feel that I have learnt different approaches to activities and learning which I will share with my NQT at our next meeting such as guided reading assessment, use of classroom space and a theme-based approach to the curriculum. I feel that Lark Rise have shown to me how even the very youngest children can be made to feel more involved in the running of the school and will recommend that our Foundation Stage is included in the school council from next year.
School visit was excellent! I learned a lot about British school system and especially about working with quite young children. It really made me think if I should start doing some things differently. I would always like to improve my work and there is of course always something to learn from the others. A visit like this really broadens your views. I would love to do this again in near future!