

# Bedford-Copenhagen Learning Exchange

B3 Group Visit: 11<sup>th</sup> - 15<sup>th</sup> January 2015

## Peder Lykken Skolen

Peder Lykken Skolen is a school for children from age 6 to 16, first to tenth grade. It has a mixed catchment, with children from affluent families and children from what was described to us as the 'ghetto'.

Classes are up to a maximum size of 24; totalling 750 pupils in the school. There are also a number of Grade 11 pupils, who attend the school but are managed and taught by a different team.



The school site has outdoor play areas, each area designated for different age groups. The indoor spaces are also designated for different age groups, each set as a wing leading off one main corridor that runs the length of the site. The main corridor has specialist rooms which run along the whole length of the building; for example, music room, DT room, Library, cooking facilities. There is a large Sports Hall, which is also used by the community outside school hours, meeting rooms and offices.

We were impressed by the sense of space in the school. For a school of 750 children it seemed remarkably under crowded. Classrooms were bigger than we are used to in the UK, and large shared spaces meant that children and young people have plenty of room. Each classroom has an IWB and also traditional blackboard and chalk. A key feature of the school and its philosophy is that there are no doors on the classrooms.



In-school support for pupils includes a Social Worker, Reading Experts and Maths Experts. These all have qualifications specific to their roles.

During the week we were in school there was a whole-school focus on re-cycling and the environment. We saw young adults cooking with waste food from the local supermarket, children learning to sort materials for re-cycling and children learning about the water cycle. The curriculum appeared to be planned in a very similar way to our primary schools, but teaching staff told us this is not the same during a 'normal' week. Whole school topic weeks take place 6 times per academic year. During this time high-achieving children from across the school are taught together as a group with open-ended tasks.

The school day runs from 8am to 2pm, with additional after school activities run by Pedagogues. Pedagogues are the nearest Danish equivalent to Teaching Assistants. However they work independently of teachers, supporting children with homework and leading learning from 2 to 4pm. Pedagogues are all degree qualified. In response to recent workforce reforms more Pedagogues are working alongside teachers, but how this will work is as yet unclear.

We found that the learning environment was less Spartan than we'd been led to believe, although displays are not used in the same way. One teacher told us 'the walls in the classrooms belong to the children, they decide how they want them to look'. We saw effective use of a 'working wall' where children were recording definitions of scientific terms describing the water cycle, to be used to support a piece of recorded work later in the week.



One thing that was very clear was the importance of democracy. The word was used frequently to describe the way that staff and pupils worked. Peder Lykke Skolen has four key values: High Achievement, Respect, Democracy and Unity.

Brief plans for each week are shared with parents on-line. Planning didn't appear to us to be done in as much detail as in our schools. Neither are progress and attainment measured as rigorously. Parents meet with teachers in much the same way as they do in England, but the view of the teachers we met was that parents feel school work should be kept at school and is not the responsibility of the parent.

The teachers we spent time with were very committed and caring about the children they were teaching. It is common practice for a team of teachers to work with one age group. Each will have areas of the curriculum they specialise in; Danish, PE, Music etc, and they teach those areas of the curriculum across the year group. Regular meetings take place (termly?) when all teachers will discuss the attainment of every individual in the year group. This means that even the youngest children, at 6 years old, will be taught by a range of teachers. For continuity it is customary for this group of teachers to move through several grades with the children.

There is a strong focus on social and emotional well-being across the school. In Grade 1 the aim is to find the best mix of children to work together. To this end class groupings regularly change until the teachers are satisfied that the children in each group will get along well with each other. This group then stays together as a class through the school.



The role of the Head Teacher appears largely to be focused on office work and administrative tasks. Lennart, the Head Teacher, told us that he spent much of his time on tasks dictated by the Municipality and would prefer to have more time to spend with the children. He said that he spends a lot of time at the beginning of each academic year with the Kindergarten children so they get to know who he is. He also walks around the school at the start of each school day.

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