

# Bedford-Copenhagen Learning Exchange

B1 Group Visit: 2<sup>nd</sup>- 6<sup>th</sup> February 2014

## Stenurten Nursery

Stenurten is a new nursery specialising in sustainability as part of everyday life and learning. It was built about 10 years ago from recycled materials. It is located on a small plot of land without much outdoor space for running around, although there are some fantastic structures for the children to play on outside, our favourite being a wooden ship. The wood burning fire in the entrance provided a warming environment to walk into, for children, staff and visitors.

One of the first things that we noticed was that there were children wandering around the building and appearing not to be being supervised. They were playing in the corridors, in some cases dressed up, quite happily. They would often approach the kitchen area, which was open plan, to chat to the cooks and request drinks. The open plan kitchen meant that the children could see their lunch being prepared and interact with the kitchen staff on a very informal basis.



Kitchen area

The Nursery is an eco- friendly establishment and it was explained to us that the food served to the children had to be organic. As organic meat is expensive in Denmark the children have lots of vegetables to eat and sometimes fish. On the day that we visited vegetable soup was on the menu for the children and staff. The children all sat on chairs suitable for adult height, rather than small plastic ones that may be seen in a nursery in the UK. What was also unusual was to see these young children eating out of crockery that was not plastic.

The older children (5 and 6 year olds) have around half an hour a day of structured time. This seemed to be in the form of discussions around a variety of topics. There was no evidence of the children writing or doing letter patterns but there were lots of examples of art work. The arts and crafts area was the only place to which the children did not have unlimited access because of safety reasons. As we visited different schools the reoccurring theme of good quality art work amongst young pupils became apparent.

We were surprised by the lack of resources in the rooms in comparison to a nursery in England. There were not many specific areas for role play and other such activities. The children did appear happy and seemed to be engaged in 'doing things' for the time that we were there. There were books around for the children to read and we came across a lovely scene of two children sitting in a room on their own sharing books.



There was a lot of emphasis placed on outdoor learning. The children were encouraged to play outside despite the ice on the ground and the cold temperatures. They were all well dressed for the weather in snow suits and boots. We were told that the children go out whatever the weather. We watched children hitting the ice with sticks before play fighting with the sticks. We were told that sometimes this type of play leads to fights but that they spend a long time talking to the children about getting on with each other and the importance of being a good friend. We found this quite different from in England where we thought that the sticks would have been removed before they could fight with them! This socialisation of the children seems to work well as we did notice how happy and confident the Danish children appeared.

The children also visit the "forest school" that is owned by the nursery. They spend one week in three taking part in outdoor activities there. They leave the nursery each morning returning at home time. We were told by the teachers that Danish people do spend a lot of time outdoors and they believe that it is really important for their children to enjoy being outdoors. Many of the children cycle to the nursery and each cloakroom area has hooks for bike helmets.

Our overriding feeling was of the freedom that the children appeared to have. There were not adults hovering over them or "controlling" their activities. They were allowed to wander around quite freely. This seemed to develop confidence and the children appeared to be very happy. The emphasis on well-being through healthy food was also interesting, although this was not necessarily a theme continued in schools for older children.

It was a fascinating visit that we all found interesting.

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