

Bedford-Copenhagen Learning Exchange

B1 Group Visit: 2nd- 6th February 2014

Ålholm Skole

Context

Ålholm Skole in Copenhagen currently has 390 pupils on roll from ages 6-16. The area is a mixed demographic with the school being surrounded by old people's homes and a 'ghetto'. The school has a nursery for 3-5 year olds attached. The school opens from 8.00am - 1.00pm and they operate an after school session from 1.00pm - 4.00pm. These sessions are run by 'pedagogues'; the equivalent of a teaching assistant or nursery nurse in the UK.

Attainment

In comparison to the National expectations in the UK the attainment in the nursery and kindergarten appeared low. This trend continues through the 6-10 age range but then there appears to be a sharp rise in the expectations from the age of 10, particularly in numeracy.

It was evident that by the age of 15 most children were able to speak with fluency in English and we were shown around the school by students who spoke fluent English to us.

Teaching and Learning

The atmosphere in the nursery was comparable to that in an English nursery, although children were allowed to hang off the tables to practise their core strength.

In the kindergarten children were taught numbers in English by being allowed to run around the classroom, including over the tables. This kinaesthetic approach allows children much more freedom. The children then have a reflective period before lunchtime.

In a Grade 1 class, the equivalent of our Year 2 class, children were given workbooks to complete addition calculations.

There was no evident differentiation in any of the classes we observed, children worked from age related workbooks in numeracy.

It was pleasing to see that SEN children were fully integrated into the classroom.

The school does not appear to have a wealth of resources - these are kept in a central resource centre in Copenhagen.

The learning environment was very bare and sparse in comparison to an English nursery or school with little or no displays on the walls.

The children are allowed a lot of freedom to decide where and how they wanted to work - we witnessed children working unsupervised in the corridor. The teaching staff are able to choose the subjects that they want to teach. If a member of staff is off ill the class is left unsupervised for that time.

Children who are new to the country with no Danish are expected to attend 'receiving classes'. These classes induct new children into the Danish way of life and learning.

Behaviour

The children appear very independent learners and this is due to the amount of freedom and choice they are given in where and how they choose to learn.

The Danish teachers' strategy for behaviour management is one of discussion rather than management. Low level disruption in the classroom is ignored by the teacher and therefore does not escalate.

High social development indicates a reduction in social problems between pupils in the school.

Graffiti was evident all around the school corridors more prominently in the corridors outside the classrooms of the older children.

Leadership and Management

The Head Teacher ensures that he walks around the whole school every morning greeting staff and pupils.

Observations of teaching are peer led and based on the teacher's self-identified areas of development.

All the staff appeared happy and relaxed in their environment.

When asked how he would react if children didn't perform as well as national expectations he said that he would be pleased with any result because that would be the best the child could do.

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