

Bedford-Copenhagen Learning Exchange

B1 Group Visit: 2nd- 6th February 2014

Kirsebærhavens Skole - Immersion School

Kirsebærhavens Skole is situated about half an hour drive from the centre of Copenhagen. The staff told us that the school population is made up of children from both affluent and more socially deprived areas. On our second day at the school we were informed by a member of the public, as we waited for the bus that there had been a shooting near the school that day.

One of the first things that we noticed was the links that the school has with the local community. The library is a community resource which is open to the public at the same time that it is available for the pupils. When we were there a group of parents with pre-school children were using the library. We were highly impressed to see that the school had a dentist on site. Again, this dentist can be used by the community when pupils are not using it. We witnessed a young girl proudly going to see the dentist because her tooth had come out!

The school caters for children from ages 6-16. It is divided into the lower school which has classes Grade 0-3, middle with classes Grade 4-6 and the secondary part which has classes Grade 7-9. This school also has an additional class Grade 10 for those pupils who do not feel ready to move on with their education. Pupils can also come to the year 10 class from other schools. The teachers have the same class for the first three years (0-3) and the children also stay together from classes 4-6. The teachers said that they feel they get to know the children and families really well by having them for 3 years.

The school appeared much more relaxed than schools in England. There is no school uniform and the pupils call the staff by their first names. Interestingly, some of the teachers who had visited England said they quite liked some of the more formal approaches that they had seen on their trip to schools in Bedford.

We noticed that the classrooms did not have many displays on the walls (apart from two of the teachers who had been inspired by their visit to Bedford!). It was explained to us that the classrooms are the pupils' rooms and that they have the majority of their lessons in this one room. Teachers therefore felt that they could not put their own displays relating to their own subjects on the walls. Some teachers teaching older pupils said that they would like their own rooms. One of the advantages that we did notice by pupils staying in their own classroom was that there was not the mayhem that can occur when pupils move classes at the end of a lesson. The corridors remained quiet at all times.

As with other schools we visited during our trip we noticed how confident the pupils appeared to be. The pupils were very keen to try out the English they had learned and spoke to us in the lessons that we visited. One Danish teacher said that this confidence was a problem at times as she feels some of the pupils were constantly questioning her decisions.

One of the lessons observed had pupils using 'power pause'. This is similar to sensory circuits and can be used to either stimulate the brain, encourage physical exercises or relaxation. The teacher explained that it is done if pupils have had double lessons and need to move. It was led by pupils in their groups and then demonstrated to the rest of the class. The pupils demonstrated their independence throughout this activity and appeared very self-motivated.

Immersion School Report of a year 9 (UK equivalent) Lesson

Topic: Representations of violence in the media

Pupils were asked to research and produce a written report on representations of different types of violence in the media. Although there was no specific Learning Objective to inform the lesson, pupils seemed clear as to what was expected of them. This was probably due to prior learning previous to the lesson observed.

I observed a relaxed atmosphere in the class with pupils arriving gradually over the initial 10 minute period at the start of the class. In addition, pupils were encouraged to use their mobile phones to research topics but it was also noted that when pupils were using phones for non-research purposes not linked to their learning that the teacher gently reminded them to keep on task which they subsequently did.

Most pupils in this class were on task and working independently for the majority of the lesson with the teacher moving well around the classroom advising and addressing specific issues around the learning with individual pupils as required. Levels of engagement were good and although the lesson was in Danish it was apparent that progress was made by the majority of learners.

There was a studious and calm atmosphere and I did not witness any behavioural issues. The pupils seemed to work in partnership with the teacher, took responsibility for their own learning, were clear as to what was expected of them and the teacher's role within this was about supporting and guiding pupils in their learning.

Lateness to class was rarely addressed in any of the classes we observed and staff at the school, although aware of the challenges mobile phones caused in potentially distracting pupils from their specific learning tasks, did not challenge use of phones at all, encouraging pupils to use them as a learning tool instead. Moreover, very little disruptive behaviour was observed apart from in the Springboard Centre. This may have been because very little was challenged by teaching staff, although extreme disruptive behaviour was not observed. Moreover, there did not seem to be any clear provision for pupils over 13 exhibiting BESD which could have disrupted others learning.

On the school site there is also a Behaviour Unit called Springboard (a unit designed to support pupils aged 8-13 with behavioural difficulties). Pupils are placed here from a variety of different schools. Social Workers appeared to have quite a large influence over whether it was felt a child needed a placement. It appears to be run like behaviour units in Bedford, with small groups and a relatively high staff ratio. We saw pupils engaged in lessons and co-operating with each other. There seemed to us to be pupils with a variety of conditions in the Unit. Springboard is seen as separate from the rest of the school with not much interaction between the pupils and those in the main school.

As with the pupils we saw in other schools in Copenhagen, pupils go outside at break time whatever the weather. We found it strange that despite the playground being covered in ice the children were still outside playing on it.

There was definitely a feeling of concern from the teachers at this school about the changes that are being made to their terms and conditions. They were very keen to discuss with us our teaching commitments and what time we have for planning work. They gave us the impression that many of them are extremely anxious about the forthcoming changes.

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