

**ANGLO-GERMAN FELLOWSHIP PROGRAMME: PILOT  
CURRICULUM PROJECT  
February 2003**

**Longwell Green Primary School, South Gloucestershire  
The Sir Bernard Lovell School, South Gloucestershire  
Gemeinschaftshauptschule, Hellenthal**

**PROJECT REPORT**

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## **OUTLINE OF THE PILOT CURRICULUM PROJECT**

This report contains an outline of the work undertaken by a mixed group of 24 English and German pupils who spent a special week, 9 to 16 February together.

## **BACKGROUND**

In early Autumn 2002 the British Council sought proposals from schools wishing to take part in a pilot curriculum project to be developed through a week's residency in a German school. This presented an opportunity to bring a primary and secondary team of pupils and teachers together to undertake a cross-phase development. An application, involving the three above schools and co-ordinated by the International Learning and Resource Centre, was submitted and subsequently approved. The date for the residency in Germany was set for February 2003. It was decided that the project would be cross curricular and would aim to produce an introductory language module which could then be used as a pilot for pupils meeting German for the first time. It would be based on a traditional story which was known in both countries. Elements of ICT, literacy, art, design, technology and personal and social education were to feature strongly.



## **PROJECT PARTICIPANTS**

At Longwell Green the 55 Year 6 pupils were brought together and had the project outlined to them. An explanatory letter was sent home. If they were interested they were asked to apply within a week. Thirty pupils applied and a rigorous long and short-listing procedure was adopted. The quality was really high illustrating just how motivational writing for a real purpose can be. Four girls and two boys were eventually selected. All the children were called together and told of the outcome. Each "winner" received a spontaneous round of applause. The children were genuinely pleased for their fortunate friends and subsequently remarked on the openness and fairness of the process.

The process was similar at The Sir Bernard Lovell School with the difference being that selection was made from the Year 8 "fast track" cohort. These pupils had demonstrated a particular aptitude for working with languages.

From the beginning it was important that the children selected were aware that they were representatives of their class and school and not an exclusive group. We wanted to ensure that

the project would be integrated within the range of normal class activities and not be seen as an extra activity.

### **KEY LEARNING POINTS**

- *Explicit references were made throughout the process to the effect that this was a representative group. The guidance for the letter of application specifically asked “How could you share your experiences when you return to school?” Information relating to the project was shared with Governors and the school community through a newsletter*  
.....

#### ***Extract from primary schools newsletter to parents***

*“.....selecting six was really difficult for the quality was so high. Mrs Bowker, Mr Fry, (year 6 teachers), Miss Dean and Mr Leggatt (teachers accompanying the group) agonised long and hard but eventually decided that the following would represent the school..... We shall be producing a special report for the British Council and look forward to sharing the results of the project back in school.....”*

- *The selected children took personal profiles of the children in their class to share with the German pupils.*
- *30 questions, compiled by their classmates, were posed and answered as part of the evening review sessions.*
- *The children will be directly involved in giving presentations to their parents and peers. This sharing of experience has been an expectation from the beginning.*
- *The participants clearly understood their representative role. In his personal evaluation David wrote “I thought all of it was good but it would have been nice if more people from my class could have come too”.*

### **PLANNING**

The English teachers charged with planning this project knew that social and collaborative skills would need to be highlighted and developed. To this end a meeting geared towards “ice-breaking” activities was arranged for all the staff and pupils who were to participate. Also at this meeting ground rules and expectations were set, and likewise individual and group aspirations. These aspirations were written and placed in sealed envelopes 3 weeks prior to the visit and formed part of the review on return to school. Final details of the visit were given to the pupils, together with an outline of the anticipated outcomes as far as the language module was concerned. There was a commitment to the success of the project from all concerned.

A meeting with the parents was held prior to the visit during which the project details, expectations and the logistics were shared. Also at this meeting we asked for the parents to share their aspirations in terms of what they hoped their child would gain from the experience. Nearly all the parents mentioned increased confidence coupled with cultural awareness and opportunities for speaking German. The parents were also asked whether they thought there would be any gains as a family and to consider, following the visit, whether they thought that the visit had been of value and whether they had noticed any differences. Children, staff and

parents sensed that this was indeed a groundbreaking opportunity and all were determined to make it work to the best of their individual and collective abilities.

Four staff, two primary and two secondary, were part of the English team. The two secondary teachers are linguists, the primary teacher has specialist ICT knowledge in animation and the writer of this report was the project co-ordinator and is the Headteacher of Longwell Green Primary School and a Headteacher Researcher at the International Learning and Research Centre.

The skills of the staff team were complementary. All possessed keenly developed interpersonal skills. Good humour prevailed.

### **KEY LEARNING POINTS**

- *The parents were genuinely pleased to be consulted. One commented “It’s all about letting go, it’s her first time away from home”. Another considered that the family might gain “a wider international perspective, through our son, about life elsewhere in Europe”. Seeking their views in the way we did mirrored the way we asked the pupils and ourselves as teachers to articulate what might be learned. Sharing aspirations and expectations gave common points of reference, and was particularly valuable in embedding the concept that we wanted high quality outcomes.*
- *The specialised nature of the project meant that the inclusion of a highly proficient linguist was essential. This worked at two interconnected but subtly different levels - translation and interpretation.*
- *One of the desired outcomes – the production of an animated film – also demanded specialist knowledge.*
- *The intensity of working in this immersive way should not be underestimated. Residential visits and the attendant responsibilities demand a 24 hour day commitment. Stamina and a sense of humour are just two of the essential attributes needed.*

### **THE PROGRAMME**

A programme for the week was planned to incorporate a mix of school-based and cultural activities. In practice the mornings were predominantly project based and the afternoons and evenings culturally orientated. The school day starts early in Germany and lasts longer, typically 08.20 to 13.00, and we were conscious throughout that we had to work quickly. The making of an animated film is complex and was a completely new experience for all the German pupils and 50% of the English students.



Throughout we were conscious that the learning was to centre around two complementary strands: the skills needed to produce the language module and the team working skills necessary to ensure high quality.

The two secondary teachers provided intensive linguistic input; this comprised non-stop interpretation and translation support for all pupils during group tasks and during extra curricular activities. One of the linguists provided language learning opportunities most

evenings. The language taught was selected to relate to the animation project or to support inter-cultural understanding eg

- greetings (hello/goodbye etc)
- personal information (name, age, where they live)
- asking for drinks and ordering simple foods
- polite phrases for use in hotel and restaurant (accepting/declining/thanking)
- the body
- colours

### **KEY LEARNING POINTS**

- *From beginning to end there was an underpinning honesty which permeated the approach to the project. Teachers saw themselves as learners and modelled this consciously and also subliminally. New experiences layered one upon another; that these were viewed positively by all, irrespective of nationality, age, experience or status gave real depth, quality and richness to the project.*

### **THE RESIDENCY IN HELLENTHAL, 9 to 16 February**

Following a smooth journey we arrived at our hotel at 15.00. That our partner school was situated in a typical village (population approx 3000) in the beautiful Eifel region of Germany was a real bonus. We experienced superb weather throughout, and were walking every day through 30cms of snow which all added to the richness of the experience.



From the start we were warmly greeted by our hosts and it was immediately apparent that our German colleagues were every bit as committed to the success of the project as we were ourselves. The majority of the German teachers spoke a good standard of English and all showed interest. A German teacher of English was placed with the group for the week and her flexibility and openness really gave the project a boost. Our comfortable, friendly hotel was situated one kilometre from the Gemeinschaftschule which meant each day commenced at 08.00 with a brisk walk in sub zero temperatures. The group worked in school until 13.00 each day before returning to the hotel, where a light lunch would precede the cultural activities which would then occupy the remainder of the day.

### **KEY LEARNING POINTS**

- *The pattern of the days meant that the English pupils were immersed in a German language environment for significant periods. This gave meaningful opportunities for speaking, listening and understanding for all participants.*
- *A strong motivator for the project was the fact that quite a number of the students at the Hauptschule in Hellenthal did not have a very strong command of English and this meant that our pupils needed to make a much greater effort at trying to communicate in German.*
- *The blend of formal (lessons), semi-formal (fun related language sessions each evening) and informal (playtimes, free time at the hotel, visits) experiences maximised opportunities for bi-lingual conversation and social interaction. Just how rich the*

*experience was can be gauged from this entry in Sophie's journal for the Wednesday afternoon.*

".....At 3.00pm Eva came and picked me up so I could go to her house. At first I was very nervous..... the first thing we did was to go sledging. Afterwards we played ludo with Eva's Mum it was really fun and I came in second place. After having tea they dropped me off at the hotel. It was a really fun day and for me was the highlight of the week so far. I learned loads!....."

### **THE GERMAN PUPILS**

The twelve German pupils, six boys and six girls were the same ages as their English counterparts (from 10 to 14 years old).

The German pupils were warmly disposed towards their English counterparts and were very friendly which meant that good relationships were quickly established. They were keen to speak English whenever they could and were very supportive of the younger English children. This was particularly important for the group dynamic and was a strong feature of the week. There was no sense of the Year 6 pupils being patronised. In fact the reverse was the case, with many instances of the German pupils encouraging their younger English friends. All this led to a strong sense of teamwork and a commitment to the project. The German pupils were very happy to work with the traditional tale that had been jointly agreed, Red Riding Hood/Rothkappchen, and were intrigued with the whole notion of making an animated film. They all accompanied us during the varied afternoon visits and at least six came back to the hotel each evening to play a full part in our daily reviews. The German parents too showed many kindnesses (e.g. welcoming the English children into their homes, baking 'munchen', a local cake speciality, helping with transport). Each evening all the German pupils who lived locally visited the hotel and shared in the activities. They willingly contributed and related well to their peers and the English teachers. Jasmin wrote this journal entry on 14 February (day 6)



".....This day was very nice. Today we were at the Wildfreiehege and it was very funny. We have looked at many animals.....the project was very great and I have found new friends.....this was a very, very nice day for me....."

### **KEY LEARNING POINTS**

- *Copies of the year 6 applications were sent to Gemeinschaftschule prior to our arrival together with letters of introduction written in German. This served to show our hosts just how positive everyone felt about the project. It was clear to us in turn how much*

*thought they had put in to our welcome and into the week. It was learned subsequently that two of the pupils had written special "Welcome to Hellenthal" messages and specially cleaned the room and windows in our honour. Petra wrote on the 12 February*

*"..... The day was very nice. We could go with the English people at home....we have went to the pizzeria and told something about us and the world. I think Natasha and the others are going to be good friends....."*

### **THE ENGLISH PUPILS**

The Year 6 and Year 8 pupils worked sensibly and well together throughout the project. The Year 6 pupils were novices at German, Year 8 had been learning German for 1½ years. They demonstrated a high level of commitment from beginning to end and lived up to the statements they made in their original applications. They were excited and enthusiastic about making new friends and trying new experiences.



There was a pleasing spontaneity about the way the children related to each other and to the German pupils. They were not overawed and treated everyone with respect. Behaviour was good throughout. The nature of the project appealed to the children and gave scope for creativity and the use of artistic and I.C.T. skills. All the children worked effectively as individuals and also achieved significant success through their teamwork.

### **KEY LEARNING POINTS**

- *Having a structure for the week was important. The fixed focal points such as the evening German language sessions –great fun and enjoyed by the English pupils, the German pupils, and the English teachers alike- and the daily reviews and journal entries all greatly aided the consolidation of the learning.*
- *The re-visiting of aims, aspirations and expectations at the beginning of each day helped to put into context and focus the activities and tasks. David's journal entry for 13 February reads*

*".....the animation was really good.....the film was really fun to make BUT HARD TO KEEP THE BACKGROUND STILL....."*

### **THE PROJECT - WORK IN SCHOOL**

The project had to be carefully time managed for there was much to do in a short period. We wanted a high quality language module that would include animation, an original version of a traditional tale, model making, story boarding, comic strips and audiotape.

In addition, we wanted to give the pupils the opportunity to see an English lesson and a German lesson. The children were split into four groups with each group consisting of an Anglo-German mix of gender and age. They remained in these working groups all week.



We were fortunate to have a dedicated classroom and unrestricted access to the computer suite. We were able to share the purposes of the project: to create a language module and work effectively as a team and to stress that we wanted high quality outcomes. We quickly established a rich workshop environment, which buzzed with humour, dialogue, and the exchange of ideas.

Periodically a stop was made to allow for a teaching point to be shared or to celebrate a success. Reviews of progress were held regularly. The teachers modelled the learning process through trying out language and new skills related to animation and the construction of the



plasticine figures. Getting to grips with installing software through following instructions in German was a challenging and ultimately fulfilling experience for one of the team.

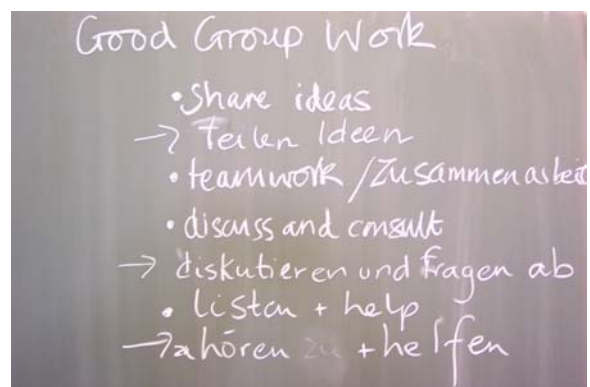
This was an exciting and dynamic way of learning and, judging by the standard of the finished product and the consistently high levels of motivation, one which was greatly appreciated by the pupils themselves.

### **KEY LEARNING POINTS**

- *The cross curricular approach greatly added to the project's appeal and success. It meant that all the children could utilise their skills and expertise within the context of the group.*
- *There was a huge amount of new learning, for example the sequence of producing an animated film involves the following: planning, storyboarding, making the backdrop, designing the characters, making the characters, filming, directing, editing, I.C.T. skills, and reviewing all within a framework of being an integral part of a team.*

### **THE PROJECT - WORK OUT OF SCHOOL**

The richness of this visit offered huge learning opportunities for all the participants. Indeed this was as fulfilling an educational experience as any of the young people had ever experienced before. The children knew that their inter-personal skills had to be well honed if they were to achieve maximum benefit. Characteristics of effective teamwork were explicitly shared and celebrated at every appropriate opportunity. The children experienced daily the benefits of working collaboratively. Both German and English children had an open approach to communication and were willing to speak in the other language. They soon became comfortable with each other and strong friendships developed across all the pairings. Cultural awareness raising and understanding was in many ways the foundation stone underpinning the whole project and so it was truly



wonderful seeing the emergence of so many positive aspects. Meaningful and real friendships emerged. The way the children mixed and comfortably moved between formal and informal settings was noticeable. The week showed time and time again that these were young people completely engaged with their learning, their surroundings and with each other. As teachers we all felt hugely privileged to be a part of this wonderful project.

## EVALUATION

- *This was a unique experience which all participants found enjoyable and fulfilling.*
- *The project was carefully planned and produced high quality results: original versions of a traditional tale, with animated films and bi-lingual audiotapes, storyboards, comic strips and power point presentations. There was a tremendous amount of learning in a short amount of time. The products will be available on CD ROM.*
- *The children employed a sophisticated range of process skills; listening, building on ideas, communication, leadership and collaboration*
- *The children all gained in confidence in mastery of new animation and I.C.T. skills, language skills, new social settings, inter-personal skills, and cultural awareness*
- *Professional development for staff provided insights into another educational system, cultural awareness, cross-phase, pedagogic possibilities e.g. research into story sequencing and the development of the language module*
- *Some language myths were challenged e.g. English children do not have a language “ear”. The Year 6 children, who had no German language but interestingly some experience of French and hence no fear of languages, managed very well and found the development of the module helpful*
- *It was impressive to note how eager students (and staff) were to use the language in a real context, in restaurants, shops, the hotel and in the school. Students requested help with translating the meaning of what they wanted to say but did not expect teachers to be their ‘mouth piece’*
- *The project has established some pointers for future collaborative projects between Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3 and possibly internationally.*
- *Since our return a number of the Year 8 students have been corresponding with their partners in Hellenthal in a mixture of German and English. The German partner teachers are currently matching requests for penfriends from other Year 6 and 8 students who were unable to participate directly in the project.*
- *The grant for the project was supported by additional funds from the Longwell Green and The Sir Bernard Lovell schools and also significantly by the International and Learning Research Centre. The high levels of staffing greatly contributed to the overall success of this pilot project*

## SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE WORK

Whilst there can be no doubt that all those fortunate to participate in this Anglo-German project have benefited hugely, the challenge is to see whether there are ways in which these benefits can be extended across other schools in other contexts. There is considerable potential for this to happen.

1. *Further development of the materials produced in Hellenthal so that a resource pack containing the language module is compiled.*



2. *Produce a series of teacher notes and suggestions to accompany the pack.*
3. *Establish a trial in a group of primary schools in order to evaluate the language module materials.*
4. *Plan for further developments following the outcome and review of the trial.*
5. *Consider the use of other traditional tales as a common basis for language extension.*
6. *Extend the development of power point presentation as an aid to language development and communication between pupils locally and internationally.*
7. *Promote the development of email, snail mail and video conferencing to consolidate friendships and to communicate.*
8. *Link the ideas in the resource pack to other facets of research being undertaken at the International Learning and Research Centre for example, investigating further the work on story structure and sequencing and its impact on pupils' writing.*



## **APPENDICES**

1. Samples of applications
2. Examples of story
3. Programme
4. Participants' feedback
5. Parent feedback

**EXTRACT FROM PUPILS' EVALUATION SHEETS**

What do you think you have gained from completing the project?

“I think I have learnt how to work better as part of a team. I have improved my animation and computer skills. I have enjoyed working with children of different ages and children from another country. I feel I’ve done something that I feel proud of”

David (Year 6)

“I have gained a lot from this project as I have learnt how to use computer animation properly. I have also gained new friends”

Stephanie (Year 6)

“I have gained some more computer skills and lots of friends. I have also gained the confidence to do things I would normally be worried about doing”

Sophie (Year 6)

“I think I have gained friends from another country and I have kept them as pen pals. I didn’t know the English pupils from Sir Bernard Lovell School and now I’m friends with them all.

Jordan (Year 6)

“I think one of the things that I’ve gained is to work together with year eights and German pupils. I also think that I have become more confident in speaking aloud, trying new foods and speaking German”

Michael (Year 6)

“I think I have gained a lot of experience in working with children from other countries”

Lucy (Year 6)

“I think I have gained a better understanding of German and I now know that people in other countries are very similar to us, but we think of them as being very different. I also now know how German children learn in school and relax at home”

Matthew (Year 8)

“From this project I think I have gained confidence in speaking German and got to know their culture, also I have gained a pen pal”

Michael (Year 8)

“I think I have gained a lot of things that I didn’t know before such as a few more German words, a bit more of a German accent, knowing that Germans are very similar to us and most of all a big project which took a lot of commitment and work to do”

Jeni (Year 8)

“I feel I have gained knowledge of the German language and culture. I now understand the way in which their day runs. I have also gained a true friend”

Emma (Year 8)

“I feel I’m friendlier as a person. I certainly know a lot more German now than I did and it is great having Petra as a pen friend”

Natasha (Year 8)

“I was nervous at first but I was amazed at how friendly they were and the way they invited us in to their homes. It was a brilliant week”

James (Year 8)

**EXTRACTS FROM PARENTS' EVALUATION SHEETS**

Do you think the visit has been valuable?

“Very, I feel Michael has really grown from this experience. He has been using the German he learnt and I think he was very surprised how alike his German partner was and that they had similar toys etc. He has a better understanding of other cultures and is much more confident about himself”

“Natasha really enjoyed herself and absolutely loved the country. She has gained a pen friend and written a couple of letters to her in German; so in time maybe she will visit again. She gained a lot of confidence and she is more independent - a very valuable thing”

“Absolutely ..... these children went with a pre-conceived ideas or prejudices and worked with strangers. People aren't born prejudiced they develop it through experiences. Hopefully this project has killed off any seed of prejudice about “foreigners” before it has had time to germinate. In fact I know it has”

“Yes very - Sophie was really enthused by the whole project. I was delighted that she had the confidence to go to Eva's house on her own. Languages and animation are two of her loves ..... she has definitely grown up (in a nice way). She is better organised at home in terms of both her things and time management”

“Definitely David really enjoyed the whole experience - he enjoyed meeting new friends, travelling/flying, doing the animations; taking part in a real adventure while learning so much”