



Comenius



Ringwood Waldorf School 2011 - 2013



Each year a number of UK schools and colleges are funded through the Comenius programme to work with partners in Europe. They work on projects that develop the European dimension in the curriculum. Pupils can find out first hand about other European countries, staff can experience different educational systems, ideas and approaches. Comenius programmes are funded by the EU and run by the **British Council** in the UK.

Ringwood Waldorf School is taking part in a Comenius programme called a multilateral school partnership. Our school has 5 European partners: a Waldorf School in Germany the initiators of the project, one in Spain, one in Estonia, a state school for 10 – 13 year olds in Italy and a TED (Turkish Education Association) school in Turkey. The title of the project is 'SHARE THE ARTS' and its aim is to get the pupils of all partner schools working together, with an emphasis on artistic aspects. The EU has provided us with funding to help us meet associated costs such as travel.

Outline of activities:

We are forging links between children of the same age by sending letters, photos, maps and drawings, the subject matter of which is linked to areas of the Waldorf Curriculum.

We are trying to set up a network of work experience placements across Europe, which will enable our pupils to go abroad to work during Class 10/11 for an agreed period of time, and we will aim to do the same for our partner schools.

Each school will host a workshop at one point during the two years, where all partner schools are invited to take part. Ours was the first, in the first week of November, entitled: "Music, Song and Dance", followed by a theatre workshop in February at the Waldorf School in Germany, and in May a Medieval Games & Dance workshop in Italy.

The project needs to be documented and reported on and the older students from all the schools will work together on this. We will produce a book, which will have contributions in the languages of all participating countries, with contributions from all age groups with samples of exchanged work, documentation of workshops and experiences.

There will be a website, which is currently being set up by upper school students of the German Waldorf School. This site will have an area for each school, administered and run by their own pupils. There will also be a teacher area, a news forum, etc.

This is an exciting opportunity for us to take part in a project which will enrich our children's experience of cultural diversity and support them in making contact with new friends from across Europe.

Nigel Reville – School Administrator



COMENIUS SCHOOLS PARTNERSHIP PROGRAMME 2011 – 2013

Part One - The Week Europe came to Ringwood Waldorf School! 'Music Song and Dance'

Introductions by Geli Patrick, Class 5 Teacher
and main organiser of Comenius project

During the week of 31st October to 5th November 2011, 43 pupils aged between 10 and 17 years and 14 teachers from 5 European countries came to Ringwood to share in a week of art, music making, singing and folk dancing with our pupils. This exciting get-together of 6 different nationalities promised to be a feast of colourful original presentations. For example, the children from Estonia bought their zithers, teachers from Spain introduced flamenco dancing, the Italian pupils performed a tarantella in costume and the young people from Turkey practised a traditional regional dance with their own musical accompaniment. All pupils practiced folk dances and music from the British Isles and shared their achievements with the wider community at the end of the week in the form of a cultural evening. During the week, in addition to working together artistically, pupils had the opportunity to discuss their views of Europe as well as their hopes and vision for a common future.

Diana Asur, visiting Kindergarten teacher from Estonia, reported after the event "As for our trip to Ringwood, it was just wonderful. The children regretted that the week was too short. They would have liked to stay much longer. It was full of exciting events starting with genuine Halloween evening and ending with Big Party Night. All of us were especially grateful to our host families. Every now and then I can hear children sharing their good and a bit nostalgic sounding memories of their stay. We also kept diaries during the trip, mine is the thickest – more than 30 pages... Who will ever read it I wonder, but when I go through these pages, I can still feel how great it all was."



Class 7 wrote essays about the week and here are some extracts:

Ruari Chisholm "The Comenius Project was, in my opinion, a success. In our school it was being done for the first time so nobody knew what it would be like. It went very well... It would be a brilliant thing to do again in another school."

Alistair Kane "I strongly recommend the project and I learnt about how Estonia fought for independence by singing ancient folk songs lead by an Estonian."

Bethany Barfoot "I enjoyed hearing musical instruments being played that the visitors had bought with them."

Frances Lynn "An Estonian teacher came into our class and told us about Estonia including different letters of the alphabet, traditional clothes, the landscape, the big hill and my favorite, the Singing Revolution. We were split into three groups and took turns each day playing music, folk dancing and doing eurythmy. It was good fun playing music; we played Greensleeves, the Skye Boat Song and On An Irish Green."

Indya Score-Owens "I got the chance to make new friends and see different cultures and a popular thing that they do in their country... I enjoyed showing the visitors folk dancing from Ireland, Scotland and England."

Jacob Thomas & Christian Risoli "I hope this project continues so more people can have this incredible experience. We now have friends all over Europe."

Onna Borbely Bartis "I made friends that I have kept in touch with. I would like to thank you for giving us this once in a life time chance to meet new people, thank you."



Jenny Drake, Class 2 and 5 parent said "We agreed to be a host family for 2 Estonian children who needed accommodation on their first and last night, so on Sunday evening I drove to Ringwood bus station with my very excited children in the back, to collect our guests. Once the coach arrived we soon met Eric and Josep who came back sitting very quietly in the car. Eric spoke a little English so he acted as translator for us. All four boys soon settled down to laughter and not going to sleep once they were in the bedroom away from adults! Michael was extremely interested in finding out about the different countries but especially Estonia since his class was the same age as the Estonian children and he had never heard of it before! We joined in with the school outing to Bournemouth beach and Oceanarium where Michael was very impressed with the hardiness of his Estonian friends as they gaily splashed about in a cold sea, (photo on page 32) which they insisted was quite warm really. By the end of the week Michael had made firm friends with Karl-Markus with whom he is still in touch and our two house guests were much more forthcoming demonstrating their sense of humour in the company of adults as well as children. I was both surprised and delighted with the impact the week had on Michael, nothing like actual contact and a real experience to nurture a genuine desire for learning rather than an intellectual exercise in finding out information."

Part 2 Visit to Germany – 'Theatre'

The next phase of our Comenius project took us to our partner school in Walhausen, Germany. Ten of our Class 8 and 9 pupils joined a week long theatre workshop in February attended by pupils from all six partner schools.

Here is what our pupil, Ben Dickenson-Bampton, from Class 9 wrote:

Germany, Walhausen (22-28 February 2012)

Comenius was, honestly, one of the best weeks of my life. As I write this, I am astonished by its impact on me, and also how briefly it came and went. I have met some of the nicest, most genuine people ever, and am almost heart-broken that I may never see some of them again.

From our arrival in Germany, the trip was full of a lively energy that, despite the eventual lack of sleep, stayed right until the end. Through each drama workshop and afternoon feature this energy thrived off the positive desire from every child to get to know one another. In setting out to bring teenagers from all over Europe together, the Comenius project succeeded in the best way it possibly could. Had you just looked in that sports hall on the very last night, and seen the tears of so many, you would know exactly what I mean.

Over the course of the project, each aspect encouraged the mixing of the Comenius children, and from the various groups and activities, strong bonds emerged. Divided into four groups, 76 kids from Italy, Spain, Turkey, Estonia, Germany and England, spent their mornings busy in workshops for drama, juggling, and gymnastics, with the focus on theatre. Afternoons were spent playing sports and taking trips to local sites (the Roman city of Trier and an iron ore mine particularly notable), with the evenings

full of singing, dancing, and energetic socializing. Incredibly strong friendships were made throughout these activities, and after a week of being part of the Comenius project, I can confidently label it a complete success.

Full version of Ben's article can be found on our website.

Part 3 Bari, Italy – 'Medieval Dance and Games'

16 students from Class 7 travelled to Bari to take part in a workshop on Medieval Dance and Games. Some of the activities took place in a medieval castle, and there were excursions to some of the famous landmarks of the region.

Here are some extracts from the essays written by the pupils on their return:

"Italy was breathtaking! On the 14th May, Class 7 took a trip to the beautiful countryside of Italy. The sights, the sounds, the smells, the people and the food were wonderful to me, as was the language. The way Italians show and express their emotions are quite different from us English! As I stood on a balcony overlooking Italy I breathed in the essence and atmosphere. It was truly magnificent. From where I stood I could see all things that make the land of Italy so stunning: the high rolling hills, the tall green trees, the picturesque castles and unique buildings. We saw thousands of splendid castles; all of them were amazing. Their high walls and brilliant views really captivated me." Bethany Barfoot.

"Part of this experience is being able to be away from home and manage myself without my parents. We had to get ourselves up on time every morning, get breakfast and be ready to leave at a certain time. For some people, being away from home is difficult and it was harder for them. But everyone managed and probably felt proud of themselves after. I ate every evening with an Italian family. Dinner time lasts a lot longer in Italian homes than at my home and there is a lot more food! Sometimes there were five courses; they seem to have many starters and then a main meal with extras!" Christian Risoli

Our group visited a medieval castle in Puglia, Castel del Monte built by Frederick II. Later on that day the children from all the countries took a walk to the beach, and from there we were taken to host families houses to eat. As a fan of food, I especially enjoyed trying new things such as octopus and muscles. Alistair Kane

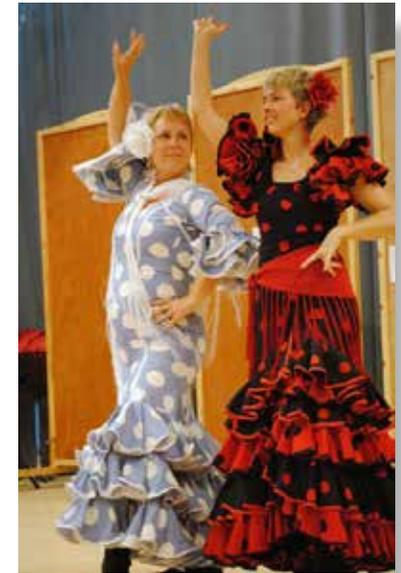
Bethany finished her report by saying, "I thank the whole Comenius project for allowing us take this step to other countries and letting me be a small part of this big project."

The remaining workshops will take place in Estonia 24th – 29th September where 10 pupils from classes 6 – 9 with 2 teachers will travel to Rosma with the workshop theme being 'Michaelmas Time and Nature'; an Upper School workshop in Madrid in March and a final meeting in Turkey at the end of May 2013.

Meanwhile, we are also working on establishing links by post with our partners, sending and receiving pictures and letters from all schools showing what work each year group has been doing during this school year. The themes of these exchanges are closely linked to our curriculum and some superb work has already been done in this area.

One other exciting project within this project is our endeavour to establish links across Europe for work experience placements. The aim is to have a directory of willing hosts who would take students from abroad for work experience placements between 2 and 4 weeks. This would benefit students for many years to come and can hopefully be added to long after the term of the project.

The name Comenius derives from the 17th-century Czech educator John Amos Comenius 1592–1670, one of the earliest champions of universal education, he is considered the father of modern education.



Comenius

The two year Comenius project, 'Sharing the Arts' is drawing to a close. Five of the six countries have hosted a creative week of art, each one with a different theme but with the common goal of building bridges, forging links and experiencing art as a global language. Turkey hosts the finale in the first week of June, the theme this time being Eurythmy. Many children in the school have been involved in some way or other throughout the two years. A book is being made about this project and contributions from all countries are requested to add to this.

Geli Patrick and Sandi Weir - May 2013

Comenius Trip to Madrid by Olga Coxon-Aristizabal, parent

We arrived at the train station of El Pinar, the town where the Waldorf Free School Michael is and were warmly welcomed by two teachers and the host families. It was a week packed with activities; we carved animals out of soap stone: we had to look for the animal within the shape of the stone.

We visited Madrid, a 40-minute journey by train. We went on a tour bus and saw the beautiful architecture of the city. At a picnic stop in a park where there was water the children and some teachers went for a boat ride. We made a stunning mosaic around a beautiful tree in the main school yard. The teachers had been preparing the wall in advance of this activity, which was the main one of the whole week. It looked amazing when finished!



On our last day we went into Madrid again with the Class 8 Spanish students, we did a Flamenco workshop, lunch at a park and then went to the Reina Sofia Museum where we saw Picasso's most influential work - "Guernica." A visit to a famous chocolatier to have the most delicious hot chocolate with 'churros' which are Spanish doughnuts (long sticks). After a bit of shopping we headed back to school where the host families were waiting for us with nice food. Groups of children from the different countries performed their songs and dances which was a lovely end to a very busy, tiring but most enjoyable week.

And this what some of our children said:

"Staying with the family was an amazing experience. I learnt about their culture and they were really welcoming." Frances, Class 8

"I really enjoyed the trip. I met many lovely people and had lots of fun! The city was beautiful and so was the weather. The workshops were also good fun and we made a beautiful mosaic. I will never forget this week; I wish we could do it again!" Kirstin, Class 9





The Comenius Project - Spain

by Frances Lynn, Class 8 student

Going to Spain was such an amazing experience. I saw a few people I already knew from the Comenius trip in Italy and I also made loads of new friends.

Monday was the day we arrived. We met our host families at the local train station at mid-afternoon and went to their houses. At first I was nervous about staying with people I had never met before, but the family I stayed with were extremely welcoming and thankfully spoke English very well.

Every morning started off with singing Spanish songs with the Comenius groups and the Spanish grades seven and eight. After that, we spent the mornings in workshops.

Tuesday's workshop was soapstone carving which we did almost all day. We all made animals - mine was an elephant!

On Wednesday, we spent the morning smashing coloured tiles for a mosaic. After snack we spent the day in Madrid with only a few Spanish pupils. We rode on an open-top tour bus and saw some amazing, tall buildings with intricate sculptures and designs. After lunch we bobbed about in small rowboats dabbling our feet in the cool water. The wooden oars gave me a massive blister!

Thursday was the day when we actually made the mosaic. There was a short, thick wall around a tree in the yard, which we covered completely in mosaic flowers, animals, hearts and an amazing sun!

On Friday we spent the day in Madrid again, this time with grade eight. We had a tiring Flamenco lesson which I found quite fun, especially when the

guitarist started to sing! We also went to the Museo Reina Sofia, the museum that holds Pablo Picasso's Guernica. The Guernica is a grey, black and white oil painting of the Spanish Civil War. After that, we stopped for a delicious, rich, chocolate drink with a sweet pastry straw thing (they are hard to explain)! We spent a bit longer in Madrid before heading back to the school for a meal and assembly.

Saturday was (unfortunately) the day we left. I am not ashamed to say that I was crying as we all said goodbye.

The trip was an amazing experience that I will not forget. Staying with my host family taught me lots of things about Spanish lifestyles and I am already missing Spain loads! I am incredibly lucky to have been on two Comenius trips and I really recommend going if you have the chance.

Estonia

by Louise Tiley, teacher

The Comenius project has been an amazing opportunity for our school. All the pupils have been so enthusiastic to visit the other host schools and take part in the workshops. I was lucky enough to be able to join a group of Class Seven and Class Six pupils travelling to Estonia to celebrate Michaelmas. In our school, as in other Waldorf schools, the Michaelmas festival is an important one, where we face our challenges. To prepare we decided to practice an English folk harvest song and dance that is traditionally done as part of a barn dance to celebrate good crops as our contribution to the festival day.

The children met each other with open arms and were excited to be able to spend time with the friends they had made a year ago at the Ringwood Waldorf School.

All the people, children and adults alike, that took part in the Estonia project were warm, friendly and welcoming. It was inspiring to work with such talented and enthusiastic people. As part of the festival preparations the children did various workshops such as dragon making, music, circus skills and dance. A firm favourite were the wide games which were great for everyone to get involved in and work co-operatively with each other. Our particular favourite game was the one played on the wooded bank where our school bursar, Carol, played the role of the angel who rescued the captured players. There were many laughs and much fun was had by all.

The final festival was an incredibly special event. The school was lovingly prepared and a space that inspired reverence was created, and then the celebration took place. The evening was full of magic, darkness and light, challenges to be overcome and dragons to be tamed. Everyone had their part to play in making the evening a true Michaelmas celebration that will be remembered forever by the many who took part and met in Estonia.



Visit the School



ringwoodwaldorfschool.org.uk

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Ringwood Waldorf School is an independent school taking children from 3 to 16 years of age. It is one of over 1000 Steiner Waldorf schools worldwide, with 35 in the UK, which use the Steiner Waldorf curriculum.

In our school we offer a wholesome, rounded education in an unhurried and creative environment in which children can thrive, and where childhood is recognised as an important part of the journey into adulthood - not a stage to be hurried over.

Our teachers recognise the natural expectation and enthusiasm of the young children in their first days at school and aim to keep these qualities alive by stimulating their academic, practical and social abilities. Our school leavers, we are regularly told, are creative, motivated, and articulate, with notable social skills.

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