

Teachers International Professional Development (TIPD)

Pauline Lovering, an Advisory teacher in Early Years writes about her experiences leading South Gloucestershire teachers on a TIPD study visit to Denmark, 22-26 October 2007



During October half term, I led a team of six teachers from South Gloucestershire Schools on a TIPD Study visit to Viborg, Denmark, to look at the impact of the Forest School approach on children's learning in the Foundation Stage and in KS1. Our visit was co-ordinated by Jane Williams Siegfredsen, a trainer of Pedagogues in Viborg.

The group visited a number of Danish Nature Nurseries (Naturebornehave) to see children aged 3-6 years working outdoors with Pedagogues. In Denmark children do not start formal school until they turn 7. The adults working with these youngest children are called Pedagogues and undertake a three and a half year specialised training (it is a degree level profession). Employment is high at 95% and parents make very good use of the high quality nursery provision. The children are outside most of the day, whatever the weather. In Denmark they told us, "there is no such thing as bad weather, just bad clothing"



At Kaepsmarken Naturebornehaven we joined the children to help make the lunch. After helping to dig up the vegetables (grown by the children) we joined them to wash, peel and chop the carrots, potatoes and leeks and put them in the big pan to make soup.

The Danish curriculum (only formalised in the last two years) places great emphasis on developing children's competencies. "Competence" in terms of the Danish curriculum, represents the abilities (social, emotional and cognitive) and proficiencies that can be fostered and developed in children, in particular using the outdoor environment. Use of the outdoors to promote life skills is very much a part of Danish culture. The children have a lot of space, time and freedom to explore, guided by their skilled Pedagogues. It was apparent throughout our visit just how competent these young children are.



All the teachers in the group have started to implement ideas back in their schools. At Rodford Primary, Tracy Shipp was able to confidently explain to the Ofsted Inspector how her children were using the reception outdoor area and what they were learning. All the team now feel more confident in explaining to colleagues and parents the importance of outdoor learning in raising self esteem and nurturing competent young children. It is hoped that the group will support each other in developing their outdoor practice in the coming months and develop into lead practitioners happy to share their skills and knowledge with visitors in the future.



The last word goes to one of the group who sent me the following message after we returned:

"I think I can just about start talking about it all now without getting emotional. It was amazing. I have learnt so much and have so many ideas. I need time to reflect on my own practice now. Thank you for organising the visit. It was a life changing experience and one I will never ever forget"

Pauline Lovering - Advisory teacher (Early Years) .