



Erasmus Exchange trip to Barcelona 17th– 23rd March 2019

After two years in the planning, on Sunday 17th March 2019, a group of twelve Hanson Academy students (Y7 – Y10), set off on the second leg of their adventures. Having already hosted Finnish & Spanish students in November 2018, they were incredibly excited about meeting up with old Spanish friends. Prior to the exchange and thanks to the wonders of modern technology, the students had been keeping in touch with their Spanish friends via social media. This meant that they had been able to calm any nerves in advance of staying with their families.

After saying a fond farewell to parents early on Sunday morning, we set off for Manchester airport. For three of our students who had never flown before, this was about to be the adventure of a lifetime! After many chocolates and sweets had been consumed on the journey (and after everyone had gotten over the shock of the price of KFC at the airport), our travelling group landed safely in Barcelona.

Following a short trip from Barcelona airport, we finally arrived at Instiut Joan Salvat Papasseit. We were warmly welcomed by the Spanish families and then the children spent their first evening settling into their homes for the week.

The following morning provided much excitement at the school, with the children excitedly discussing how they had spent their first evening in Barcelona. A few feelings of home sickness were bound to be expected and the students were fantastically supportive of one another and many comforting hugs were provided! The children's Voki characters were introduced to the rest of the Erasmus team; the Finnish & Spanish students who were also involved in the project. Trying to guess who was who from the Voki character description proved very entertaining & gave the entire Erasmus team the opportunity to learn a little bit more about each other.

That afternoon gave the Hanson students the perfect opportunity to participate in PE lessons, Barcelona style! Body boarding in the sea and volleyball on the beach was the perfect way to explore a new way of learning. Wet suits provided, the students had an absolute blast and even those who got thrown from their boards by the waves, laughed it off and learnt from the experience. Confidence levels were beginning to soar!

Many exciting experiences followed throughout the subsequent days. Designing logos for sweatshirts under the guidance of a local designer, visiting the incredible Science Museum (CosmoCaixa) and the wonderful sight of Sagrada Famile, also participating on the Actiontrack orienteering course around Barcelona. I don't think the students will forget too easily, the chocolate doughnuts provided at the checkpoint in the station!

One of the stand out moments of the week was when our students presented their story telling drama. This was rehearsed for several weeks in the UK before we arrived in Barcelona and was Hanson's interpretation of two incredible female icons in Barcelona; Carmen Amaya (a Flamenco dancer) and Clara Amoar (a suffragette and political activist). This production took many of our students out of their comfort zone, but they delivered the performance with gusto and passion.

Moreover, when our students produced their interpretation of the gamification aspect of the venture, their attitude when delivering these games was inspiring. Working with two local primary schools, in the run up to the project, the students created two games based on the project title, "Like/dislike me." To teach a class of nine year old's in a foreign language was a challenge. However, the Hanson students grasped the task exceptionally well & were able to explain the rules & deliver the games in a brilliantly supportive way. There are some definite future teachers amongst our young people! They were patient & encouraging of the youngsters & the gleeful shouts of "Gracias" as we left, summed up the spectacular success of the afternoon.

By the time the end of the week arrived, there were several tears shed as we said goodbye to the families and teachers who had hosted us. Lifelong friendships forged, experiences and fond memories stored, I am so very proud of the way our Hanson team took themselves out of their comfort zones and threw themselves into the experience of a lifetime.

Of course, it goes without saying that throughout the project, parental support has been absolutely second to none. Without this enthusiasm and collaboration, the project would certainly not have been the resounding success it was. An enormous thank you to all the parents and grandparents and other family members who have championed the Erasmus project in various guises. Your endorsement of a project like this cements a moment in time for your children and encourages other Hanson parents to get on board with the fabulous opportunities their children can experience at Hanson Academy. Thank you.

And finally, to the students. If this experience has taught you anything at all, believe in yourself. You have demonstrated beyond belief that you have the maturity and social poise, the absolute courage to take yourself out of your comfort zone with the utmost success. You have grown as individuals, shown high levels of personal flexibility and self awareness. You perhaps don't know it yet, but you will carry this experience into your future as a reflection of the superb young people you are!

By grasping this opportunity with both hands, you have shown what it truly means to be a Hanson Academy student. We are very proud of you.