

Freezing Finland adventure for Y7 Hanson School students on the first leg of their Erasmus project!

The week before February half term, Hanson School excitedly waved goodbye to ten of its Year 7 students who had been lucky enough to be chosen to participate in an Erasmus project to Finland. The project titled “Don’t stereotype me, Like/Dislike me” was the brainchild of three teachers representing Hanson School alongside Vatiala School in Kangasala, Finland and Institut Joan Salvat Papasseit in Barcelona. The idea behind the two year project was to enable the young people from all three countries to work together, specifically identifying and breaking down barriers surrounding stereotyping in our modern world today. In creating the project, particular emphasis was placed on creating an experience for the children, whereby their critical thinking skills would be encouraged. In a day and age where a quick “like or dislike” judgement can too easily be made on social media, the aim was to promote thinking time before making a reactionary and uneducated response.

To get the exciting project off the ground, the staff involved spent time putting together a bid to Erasmus Plus; a European Union programme established in 2014 aimed at giving young people across the EU an opportunity to experience the life long benefits of an exchange programme. With around 70% of schools achieving funding (very few of those being in Bradford), Hanson school and its partners were delighted that their project was accepted and given the thumbs up to go ahead.

So, on the 4th February, Hanson School and Institut Joan Salvat Papasseit, set off on the first part of the adventure. At 5.30 in the morning, and with bleary eyes, the Year 7’s said goodbye to their nervous parents, full of expectation and excitement as their Finland adventure awaited them. Arriving into Helsinki airport, the students and staff were greeted with -17 degrees temperatures! With hats, gloves, scarves and plenty of layers on, we began our two hour magical road trip (wide eyed as we had never been driven on snow roads before) to the snowy city of Kangasala where the host families would welcome the children.

The week which ensued was one which the children will never forget. Apart from being made to feel so welcome by their host families, the children experienced life in school as a child in Finland would. With no school uniform being a starting point, ice sliding at break, Finnish style Technology, Drama and Music lessons experienced, one of the high points was being involved in “Action Track” activities. Action Track offers on and off site learning for schools in all levels of education in Finland. This gamification experience enabled our young people to use technology at the very cutting edge, using iPad’s and mobiles to navigate and orienteer themselves around the school. Progressing on, the students from all three countries then had an opportunity to plan and design key components on the Action Track QR codes that will then be transferred into an exciting orienteering challenge when all the students come to stay with us in Bradford.

At the end of an extremely enthralling week and where life-long friendships were forged, our stay sadly had to come to an end. We would like to sincerely thank our host school and the families who kindly looked after our children so thoughtfully. We are really looking forward to the next instalment of the project when the staff and children from Finland and Barcelona will be welcomed by Hanson School and its wonderful host families in November. Kiitos!