

Report on Oehlenschlaegersgades School

Oehlenschlægersgade 57 (ved Istedgade)
1663 Copenhagen
Denmark



As you approach Oehlenschlaegersgades skole, the imposing building, built in 1855, stands proud amidst the central Copenhagen streets. The modern extension reflects the creative attitude of the Danes and marries old and new

well.

The school has done much to repair the poor reputation that it once had. The neighbourhood was, (and in parts, still is), a very mixed representation of Danish society. Children from well-off, affluent families attend alongside much poorer and deprived children and also those from the Christiania freetown community.

Walking into the school, you notice a keyboard-playing teacher, who greets the children with music each morning from 8am. This creates a very calm, peaceful atmosphere as the school corridors are in fact quite dark, austere places, mainly due to the school's design and age. There is very little of the children's work on wall displays to lighten the walls. The Danes did not think that this was necessary or indeed that it was too important. A sharp contrast to English schools.

The culture of the school is of significant importance though. “We look out for each other – it’s a normal, regular school for everyone.” Their ethos and values, roughly translated are as follows:

- We must create meaning for children
- Children need to feel part of a group
- There is room in the learning to think with your hands
- Children need to feel enthusiasm for a subject

These values were gathered as part of a full day collaborative activity, all staff being involved. They were asked to contribute a ‘story’ when they made a difference to children’s lives- the values above were then ‘picked out’ from these ‘stories.’

On the day of our school visit, we were invited to a forest school learning session with 6-7 year olds. This involved a short coach journey to an outdoor activity centre, complete with: rope swings, trees to climb, cooking area and lots of exciting woodland hideaways to have fun in. Children are encouraged to: run, explore and ‘be’ in order to be in a suitable state to learn. Children were taught ‘mindfulness’ techniques to support them as learners and as developing humans. Independence and responsibility for self was a key theme to the learning- there is mutual trust and respect for and from teachers. Outdoor learning is seen as a vital part of the child’s curriculum, not an added extra. High importance and value were placed on this – it’s not just important to be outside for fun but to learn life skills there too!





Back at the main school building, there was an opportunity to walk around the classrooms and talk to staff and children.

Staff talked about 'teaching to strengths,' in that the year group and the classes in it are seen as a whole unit and not made up of individual classes/groups. For example, a maths expert teaches all the maths. It also means that classes are fluid and children can move around, according to their needs. Teachers feel that in this way, staff work very closely together in a collaborative approach for the benefit of all the children.

The opportunity to talk to students during the visit was insightful and informative. They felt that the school had really improved in recent years - it had had a poor reputation previously, as stated earlier. They felt that not all the teachers were good and that there was some bad behaviour in school, which they believed should have stronger consequences. Children unanimously felt that positive relationships between them and their teachers was the most essential element in their school. They felt that they have trust and responsibility from teachers but at times there was not enough pressure on them to achieve. They even felt that they would quite

like to wear a school uniform. “It would save time choosing what to wear each day!”

Overall, I left the school having learnt that the child is at the forefront of all that they do at Oehlenschlaegersgades Skole and that the curriculum changed only if it has a positive impact on children’s learning.

Noreen Leonard

November 2017