ECP Report

I have been lucky enough to gain a place on the enrichment placement at the English College in Prague. I was first drawn to apply as the idea of gaining a third placement experience, in an international context, seemed like an invaluable and unique opportunity that should not be turned down. The college teaches the International Baccalaureate (IB) as opposed to A-levels, as is traditionally done in the UK, and this was of particular interest to me as I believe its aims align with my own vision of education. I have always recognised the value of studying a broad range of subjects, as I did during my own studies, as it provides ample opportunity for interdisciplinary connection. I often get asked by students why they should study a language that they may never use. I emphasise that by studying a language they can become a better writer, scientist, or mathematician as they can communicate more effectively to solve problems and deal with abstract concepts. This is something that really stood out to me at the ECP as everything the school does inside and outside of the classroom is geared towards moulding well-rounded and curious pupils. To do this the school has very clearly carved out a specific and effective lower school curriculum which feeds seamlessly into the upper school IB diploma so that students are well prepared to think critically and make links between subjects. This is something I believe the UK classroom could benefit more from as cross curricular learning helps students see the value in what they are learning and how subjects do not merely exist in isolated silos. This creates learners who can think more critically around their specialisms, drawing on knowledge from other fields and areas which aids in problem-solving and innovation. The Theory of Knowledge and Extended Essay aspects of the IB were a clear indicator of this as students learn how to question, analyse, and debate topics across a range of disciplines. Students are even encouraged to carry forward these skills to challenge their subject specific teachers during lessons so that knowledge is never taken at face value. This is also something which can be taken and cultivated in a UK environment. Teachers should not be afraid of pupils initiating debate and thinking critically about content and perhaps challenging traditional knowledge or ways of doing things. In this way, ECP students often seem excited and highly engaged in their learning and have a sense of ownership over their education.

In addition to learning more about the IB, I was extremely interested to see how the British style of education works in a context outside of the UK and how students from different backgrounds respond to it. One of the clearest examples of this is through the ECP's pastoral care system which is palpably British with form tutors, heads of year and heads of house. The pastoral provision is excellent at the school and the teachers care deeply for their pupils' wellbeing. It was great to see this working well in an international setting and pupils themselves expressed how this is marked difference from other schools they have

attended. They enjoy the teamwork and camaraderie of being part of house groups, as we were able to observe during the school sports day. They also appreciate form time as a hub each morning before the busy day begins.

As I near the end of my time at the ECP I feel very grateful and privileged to have had this experience and to now possess extra nuggets of insight to take forward with me into my career. I believe what I have observed here will stay with me and continue to produce fruitful thoughts and reflections at different stages in my future. I would like the thank the ECP and One Cumbria for this opportunity and I hope future cohorts will have the chance to apply to gain the same insights.