Enrichment placement (IB focus): The English College in Prague.

When the opportunity arose to take part in the Enrichment placement in Prague, for me the initial attraction came from my research into the International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme that is taught at the ECP. The programme's aims to develop well rounded students who have a depth of knowledge, are internationally minded and can make sense of the complexities of the world around them aligned perfectly with my own interests in teaching and learning. Upon arriving in Prague, I was intrigued to see these aims being implemented in practice. After observing multiple lessons at ECP and undertaking training sessions on the IB, I have found that the programme did not disappoint. The pupils at the ECP are reflective and critical thinkers who ask insightful questions and have a curiosity for a range of subjects. The way that the pre-IB programme is taught in Years 1-4 lays the foundation for developing the attributes of the IB Learner profile which consists of being inquiring, open minded and risktakers, to name a few. I particularly enjoyed observing this through the way that the teachers in the classroom engage pupils in discussions and ask probing questions with the expectation that one another's ideas are built upon to gain a number of different perspectives.

One requirement of the IB diploma programme that I was particularly interested in was the 'Theory of Knowledge (TOK),' which is a topic in which students reflect on the nature of knowledge and on how we claim to know what we know, with the aim of being able to question the knowledge that they are given. When walking around one of these classes and discussing their 'TOK' exhibitions with the Y5 students I found that they had been using objects/concepts to engage in questions such as: 'What is the relationship between personal experience and knowledge?' and 'Is bias inevitable in the production of knowledge?' These questions allow pupils to question how reliable the knowledge that they are given is, which prepares them for university level thinking where they will have to discern how biased or reliable a source is and reach their own conclusions based on their findings. As an English teacher I found it fascinating that these high-level critical thinking skills, alongside other research skills such as referencing, were being taught to students in this age group.

When observing how English and the Humanities are taught at ECP I have observed many practices that will have an impact upon my own teaching. The use of group project work in the classroom here helps learners to autonomously delve into their topics and build creative pieces that strengthens and builds upon the knowledge that the teacher imparts. Additionally, the way that the English department as a whole works with the library staff on the 'Accelerated reader' programme and other programmes to develop literary skills has a positive impact on the students as they are encouraged to read for pleasure and around topics of interest alongside their studies. The use of probing 'why' questions and cold calling in the classroom are extremely developed at the ECP and lead to peers learning from one another as well as the teacher and this collaborative process is one that I will be hoping to develop in my own practice upon my return to the UK. Overall, this has been an eye-opening experience that has helped me to observe a different way of teaching my subject to develop critical and well rounded learners.