

GB News in Brief

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Have our schools seen better days?



Unfortunately I was unable to join the meeting on 10th February. I have only just caught up with it 10 days later. What a tour de force! Well done Liz! As an examination of the UK's education system, its problems, its possibilities, past, present and future, the differing political views and their potential impact, it was a thorough explanation of what is happening now and what the future might hold for our children.

This presentation must have taken hours of research and preparation to produce such a scholarly, thought provoking talk. Thank you Liz.

Joan Carroll, Alpha Chapter.

Many of the 'Educational Topics' Zoom meetings, including Liz's talk, can be found at www.dkgeurope.org

The Cult of Beauty



It's interesting how expectations and experiences differ. Not having read the pre-visit information by the Wellcome Collection about the exhibition, I was expecting exhibits portraying beauty familiar to me as it was in the past and current trends today. I realized very quickly that 'The Cult of Beauty' was offering something quite different.

The exhibition was organised into different sections with an eclectic mix of art, objects, ideas and beliefs.

The scene was set with a reproduction of the bust of Nefertiti, an icon of beauty since it was first displayed 100 years ago. There were photographs and paintings, not just representing western ideals of beauty from the past to the present, but of those accepted by different races and cultures.

As we moved through the different sections, the exhibition presented more challenging ideas of beauty. There were displays dealing with the beauty industry from cosmetics to cosmetic surgery (A display which immediately put me off the idea of any rejuvenating procedures). Displays dealing with beauty, ethnicity and skin colour. Displays showing the length women in particular went to be beautiful – the 'Slendertone Woman' and a sculpture of everything a female had used in her lifetime to be beautiful.

Finally, we were challenged with a movie 'Permissible Beauty' dealing with racial and gender norms—Men of African descent wearing make-up and wonderful dresses.

It was only afterwards that I read the intent of the exhibition: "We invite you to question established norms and reflect on more inclusive definitions of beauty."

Lavinia Soul, Alpha Chapter.

A detail from one of three pictures, showing an empress and court ladies in traditional dress in 1878. Taken from a picture from the Wellcome Collection by Otagawa Chikashige.



Gordon's Quiz

Anne Goldstein's friend Gordon, who she has known since school days, is very keen on quizzes and kindly arranged one for DKG.

Anne said - "when we have a special DKG Quiz put together for us by retired girls' grammar school teacher Gordon, it will be in school subjects and will also celebrate International Women's Day. Gordon is also a fluent German speaker, so it can be bilingual too, if our German friends would like to come".

There were many positive comments, these included:-

I attend a few quizzes, but this was one of the best organised, and presented one I have attended for a long time. The questions were a good mixture of difficulty.

Evelyn Goodsell, Gamma Chapter.

I thoroughly enjoyed the quiz. It was great to get the old grey cells working on a Saturday afternoon, and the presentation was fantastic - with the photo clips and the music - quite nostalgic. I was amazed at how consistently bad I was - 6 out of 10 for every round except the history round in which, I am ashamed to say, I scored only 3 out of 10! Still cross that there wasn't a maths round!

Kathy Hodgson, Gamma Chapter.

"DKG School Subject Quiz" led by Gordon was great fun. I could almost believe that I was taking part in "Who Wants To Be A Millionaire?" Unfortunately I don't think I would have made it to the final. The multiple-choice answer rounds (1-3) meant that I succeeded in getting full marks in the Literature round (totally unexpected) but I need to swat up on my Geography and particularly Music knowledge gaps. Without the help of optional answers, the final two rounds (History and Radio & TV) proved much trickier. This was a well-planned and very enjoyable session. Thank you Gordon. Wouldn't mind trying another quiz like this.

Penny Kinnear, Alpha Chapter.

I really enjoyed the quiz. Very impressed with the presentation!

Aileen Dickson, Gamma Chapter.

I thought our quiz meeting was great fun. The questions were interesting, I learned a lot. Varied topics. Demanding but not so extreme to make them daunting. We should do this again. Probably in one of the duller months when a Zoom meeting would be appreciated.

Joan Carroll, Alpha Chapter.

Thank you very much for organizing the session with Gordon. It was so much fun. Please let Gordon know: Vielen herzlichen Dank, lieber Gordon, für die exzellente Vorbereitung und Durchführung dieser Veranstaltung. Das Quiz war großartig. Es hat sehr viel Spaß gemacht. Alles Gute und herzliche Grüße von Marika Heimbach. **Thank you very much, dear Gordon, for the excellent preparation and execution of this event. The quiz was great. It was a lot of fun. All the best and best regards.**

Marika Heinbach, Germany, Chair of the European Forum.



School Systems in Canada and Finland

Marie-Antoinette Hubers de Wolf, our Regional Director, welcomed everyone.

Kathy Knowles, Manitoba, introduced the three Canadian speakers.

Lenore Paupanekis spoke about working in the north. Responsibilities for education are outlined in law. Manitoba is one district, the largest division being Winnipeg with 79 schools. They work either a full-year programme or a semester system. Schools may be public, independent (funded if they implement the Manitoba curriculum) non-funded independent and there is home-schooling.

The Frontier Schools Division is the largest area geographically in Canada, with schools being very scattered. Education may be given in schools that work in indigenous languages (including Cree) English, French, or French-immersion for second language students. School can be cancelled due to blizzards, no buses run when the temperature is below minus 45C!

Sarah Melo explained the difficulties in helping children close the gap in maths. She explained teaching French-immersion students their numbers. They need to understand multiplication to work out the French, for example, in

French 90 is 4 X 20 +10! She believes tables need to be taught earlier. Not enough teachers are confident enough to teach in their own languages. Student absenteeism is high in some Winnipeg schools. In one local high school it was 31% of students.

Teachers' professional development is good in some aspects; for example, racism, diversity, inclusion, but not in academic training and key foundation skills. There is not enough consultation with teachers, nor enough money for numeracy support. Sarah said that struggling students need concrete things to manipulate and systematic logical learning to build the foundations of maths.

Sheri Skwarchuk introduced the Toybox Project, a community project based on research that offers activities to encourage children's learning as they play, for example with card games or letter Bingo.

Maarit Kostamo spoke about education in Finland. In a 5.6 million population, 8.3% have a foreign background. Finnish and Swedish are both spoken. 11% of the population have a basic education, 46% upper secondary or higher, 43% tertiary. All teachers have a master's degree.

There are 377 high schools, term is 10th August to 1st June. Students are in school around 187/8 days per year. We looked at some time-tables showing students work 5 or 6 study periods at a time, then have an exam week.

Everyone has a right to free education, aged 6-18 it is compulsory, at home or in school. Teaching is seen as an attractive profession; teachers are appreciated and trusted. There is no ranking of teachers, students or schools. Annual instruction time is low. The focus is on support and groupings are flexible. The core curriculum comes from the state with some local input. SEN pupils are increasing, as are mental health problems.

Students receive free lunch, materials, tuition, laptop, wi-fi and transport to school if the distance is too far. There are no bells, no clubs and no sports, these are done after-school.

The crisis in boys reading skills and the importance of education is declining, although newspapers still report educational issues daily. Mobile 'phones in school are a problem and the excessive workload on teachers with too many admin tasks seemed all too familiar.

Diana Bell, Alpha Chapter.

The full talks can be seen in 'Educational Topics' on the European Website www.dkgeurope.org

A 'blast from the past'. 6th August 1999 — you might recognise some faces.



Joan Carroll, Alpha Chapter, sent in this photograph. It was taken at the Amsterdam, Netherlands, DKG Regional Conference. So many GB members attended conferences then. Everyone seems to remember the 'potato boat' - one of the fun activities from the conference. Sandra Blacker and Mary Wardrop were also there.

Have I missed anyone? Looking at the photo from the left:-

Sybil Kay, Di Billam, Gloria Redston behind Di, someone behind Dorothy, Dorothy Haley, Pam Irons, Evelyn Barron (International State President) Barbara Kern, Joan Carroll, not sure who is behind Evelyn, Evelyn Goodsell, Bettina Kulsdom, Gail Alcock, Anne Cattoor, Unity Harvey, Phyllis Kern.

Sadly many of the members are no longer with us.

DKG GB State Conference at Dulwich Hamlet Junior School

OUTSTANDING!!

It was lovely to be back at Dulwich Hamlet Junior School for our AGM after such a long time. Claire took us on a tour of several parts of her school explaining how the Curriculum is delivered and how her staff and management teams are structured. We visited the "Music Suite" with its fabulous array of musical instruments and learnt that almost all children learn to play a musical instrument. We also visited the "Arts and Crafts Suite" which not only caters for Art but also Design Technology including Cookery. Each Year group is also timetabled in this room for a week to work on a project which is carried out around Core subjects – Maths and English as well as PE etc.

Following our tour, Claire talked us through how the current

OFSTED Inspection is carried out. It's very intense - over two days - and a long way from the first Inspections of 1992. It had been 15 years since Dulwich Hamlet had last been inspected and Claire had worked over the years to ensure that everything that would be asked for was in place when the call came.

It was very apparent from everything Claire spoke about that she is passionate about the education which she is responsible for delivering at Dulwich Hamlet Junior School. She clearly values both her pupils and her staff. Well done Claire for your OUTSTANDING OFSTED Inspection in 2023.

Penny Kinnear, Alpha Chapter.

GB State Conference and AGM 2024

Our AGM this year, held at Dulwich Hamlet Junior School, was as enjoyable and informative as usual, even more because there we were – all sitting in the same room! Claire hosted us, took us on an extensive tour of the school, and explained how her school collaborated with a number of other schools in the locality. She then told us in some detail about their experience of their most recent Ofsted inspection.

We had all brought a contribution to a bring and share lunch, which we enjoyed after Claire had finished speaking to us. There was a great choice, and not much was left at the end. We had also brought a raffle prize and Barbara had already ensured that we had all bought some tickets. As usual I did not have a winning number – never have much luck with raffles! - but Barbara took pity on me and let me choose one anyway. This kind gesture was a day which reminded me how lucky I am to have a group of friends like my fellow members of DKG GB.

Diane Billam, Gamma Chapter.

A Memorable Day

We are very fortunate to have Claire Purcell, the headteacher as a member of DKG and Diana Bell, a former head, who both organised an enjoyable and memorable day at the school.

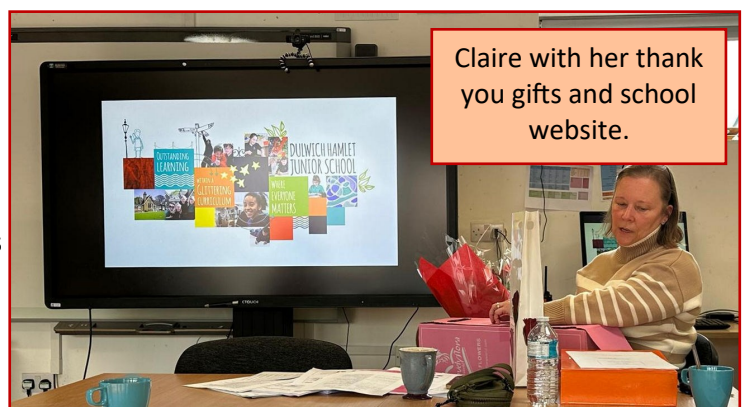
Claire took us on a comprehensive tour, and even though the school was closed, I am sure that we could feel the effort and love that the staff obviously give to make this a very happy and vibrant place to learn well. Everywhere we went we found attractive displays showing the broad interests and achievements of the children. I was very impressed with the mature investigations made about climate change and the connection with Helen Hayes MP who must have enjoyed the beautiful handwriting!

There is a very orderly feel about every area we went into which I'm sure encourages the children to appreciate and value the books and equipment and to take care of everything. The music room, arts and crafts and kitchen must always be buzzing with eager students.

It's pleasing to hear that the excellent practice at this outstanding school is shared with other schools in the Trust and that there is a connection when possible.

Many thanks for a thoroughly enjoyable day

Liz Malik, Gamma Chapter.



Claire with her thank you gifts and school website.