



BREZEL-NEWS

Eighth Edition, July 2014

Newsletter of the German Saturday Schools Islington and Hackney Wick

Dear Saturday School families and Saturday School friends,

The Football World Cup and the Saturday School year in our two schools in Hackney and Islington are coming to an end. Sport unites – families from both of our schools have come together at the Drayton Park pub in Islington for a "Public Viewing" of the Germany matches. This also applies to our summer school in which children from our two schools will participate at the end of August, plus Frauke, Jenny, Kai and Ulrike from Hackney and Sonja, Martina and I from Islington. This time we will examine the topic of "environment".

There are, by the way, about 20 German Saturday Schools in Great Britain. A quarter of the 1000 Saturday School pupils in this country attend our two schools; Islington is the largest and Hackney Wick takes sixth place already. Martina reports on the other schools and our umbrella organisation, the Association of German Saturday Schools (Vereinigung Deutscher Samstagsschulen, VDSS) in this edition.

Charlotte Schulze has been the new chair of the VDSS since May 19th. After 15 years as chair and deputy chair I am quite happy to just be involved as a representative of our school at this organisation from now on. Many thanks and much success in your new role, Charlotte!

Pauline Meyer, classroom assistant in Islington, is telling us about another school: her experience at our partner school St Mary Magdalene Academy where she has completed the IB programme in the school's Sixth Form.

This year we proposed Christine Müller as a candidate for the German Teacher Award of the German Embassy. Important criteria are cultural exchange and innovation. We have nominated outstanding candidates since 2007, but sadly our nomination was once again not good enough. It is a little disappointing that our fantastic Saturday School teachers and their dedicated work do not get official recognition, especially considering that they do not have the framework of a regular school as a backdrop and also have to develop

the curriculum for our multicultural, bilingual clientele. Luckily we know how amazing you are!

Therefore we are particularly sad that Gaby Kienle is leaving the Saturday School Islington after 10 years of teaching for us, as she is moving to Dorset with her family. We will miss you, Gaby! At the same time we welcome three new teachers who join our team: Libby (the oldest class since June) and Kaj (beginner's class from September) in Hackney Wick and Caroline, who will start teaching at the Islington school in September.

Many thanks to Ulrike Hensel-Burg, under whose guidance and direction our school in Hackney Wick has made outstanding progress in this past school year, and to Janet Kroll, our new treasurer, who has rung in the age of online banking for us.

After reading this edition and watching the football final it's off to the summer holidays ... have lots of fun and see you in September!

Cathrin xx
Cathrin Cordes, Managing Director
German Saturday Schools Islington & Hackney Wick



Gaby in action at the Summer School 2012

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Internationales Baccalaureate (IB) or A level?

Pauline's experience at St Mary Magdalene Academy

In May 2013 I completed the "International Baccalaureate Diploma", IB for short, at our partner school, St. Mary Magdalene Academy, which is just around the corner from the Islington Saturday School. The IB is an alternative to the English A level exams.

Many of our Saturday School parents, who grew up with "Abitur" or "Matura", wonder at the English A levels. While students in Germany, Austria and Switzerland have to take a wide range of up to twelve subjects until they graduate from school, English pupils generally only choose four A level subjects, one of which they usually drop again at the end of the first year of Sixth Form.

The A level system has the advantage that students are able to focus fully on the subjects they like and that they are good at. "It was the very first time I really enjoyed school and learning." This remark of an English mother explains one of the advantages of A levels. On the other hand boys and girls aged 15 or 16 have to make a big preliminary decision regarding their future professional career. Those who choose only Art and Social Sciences will hardly be accepted for studying medicine. To focus on Maths and Natural Sciences will eliminate a whole number of other possible career paths. Many young people are overwhelmed by this decision, others would prefer to continue studying a broad range of subjects.

That is also one of the reasons why so few pupils study a foreign language at A level: those who want to study medicine or architecture usually cannot afford to choose French or German as universities ask for specific subject combinations and high grades. Foreign languages are seen as relatively difficult A level subjects which make it hard to achieve target grades.

Because A levels are much more specialised compared with qualifications such as Abitur or the French Baccalaureate, they are not internationally recognised as a qualification for higher education admission and particularly not in German-speaking countries. I wanted to keep my options open and toyed with the idea of eventually going to university in Germany. The International Baccalaureate is offered in England as an alternative to A levels and is an academically demanding and balanced programme.

The IB was founded in Geneva in 1968 and nowadays the organisation offers four programmes for students from 3 to 19 years. The programmes aim to develop intellectual, personal, emotional and social competencies to enable students to live, learn and work in our globalised world. These programmes can cover all of a pupil's school

career, or – like the IB diploma programme at SMMA – they can be offered as stand-alone courses. At the moment there are more than 1.184.000 IB students in 147 countries at 3.788 private, state and international schools around the globe.

During the two-year IB diploma programme, students take three Higher Level subjects and three Standard Level subjects. To ensure a balanced education, every student has to study their mother tongue (English in Great Britain!) as well as another language, a social science, a natural science, mathematics and a subject from the creative arts or another subject from one of the above categories. I chose German, Biology and Psychology at Higher Level and English, Maths and History at Lower Level. Also, like every IB student, I had to take the Theory of Knowledge course, which is meant to promote critical and analytical thinking.

The IB will enable me to study Psychology in Germany. However, in Germany there are some conditions for the IB to be accepted as qualification for admission into higher education: You have to have studied a second language and mathematics at least at Standard Level, economics, geography or history as a social science and at least one natural science or mathematics at Higher Level.



IB expedition to Romania

The demanding IB programme is valued by leading universities worldwide as it combines the best educational ideas of many different countries. Assessment happens through a combination of coursework and final exams. In addition, each student has to write an extended essay (4 000 words), the topic of which is independently researched. Also, extracurricular achievements are rewarded through the Creativity, Action, Service (CAS) Program.

For each subject from the six groups a maximum of seven points are awarded, whereby you have to achieve at least four points each for a pass. Those



Leavers 2013 - Pauline's IB year group

who do not pass are awarded an IB Certificate only. Up to three further points are given for Theory of Knowledge, CAS and the Extended Essay. Thus you can achieve a maximum number of 45 points. The average number of points is usually around 30 points – a measure of just how difficult the IB is. This figure remains constant – there is no grade inflation. Only about 0.05% of candidates achieve all 45 points. Universities in England specify the exact number of points and combination of subjects they expect from IB students. To compare IB results with A level results the two are converted into so-called “UCAS tariffs”. While the IB is in demand at many British universities, there are unfortunately some that still seem less familiar.

Although the programme was very demanding I strongly recommend it as it offered me a broader education. I really enjoyed my time at SMMA as the Sixth Form is headed by dedicated teachers. These teachers supported me with passion and encouraged independent learning. Since the beginning of the year I have been working as a classroom assistant at the Saturday School in Islington and am happy to answer questions about the IB at any time.

Two other former Saturday School students decided to take the IB at SMMA: One of them is Helene, who has been working at the Saturday School in Hackney for the past two years. She completed the IB in the summer of 2012. After her GCSE exams she had contemplated studying architecture or geography and with her combination of IB subjects she kept both options open. Now she is reading Geography and French at UCL. Sarah Diamond, who joined SMMA in Year 7, has just finished her IB exams and is waiting for her results in English, Maths and Economy (Higher) and Physics, Psychology and Mandarin (Lower).

Finally, a word from the school's Principal, Paul Hollingum: "St Mary Magdalene Academy opened as a new all-through Academy in September 2007, with the specialism of Humanities and Global Citizenship. ... The Academy wished to set

aspirational academic standards for our students, while maintaining the broadest curriculum possible in the Sixth Form. The IBD does this, so almost from the word go we were building a curriculum throughout the Academy which would feed this programme. Of course it also gave us a Unique Selling Proposition in North London to attract a certain type of student into our nascent Sixth Form. This has worked amazingly well and we have recruited from the state and independent sector in London and unexpectedly from Europe and wider afield."

The first year group started the IB Sixth Form in 2009, and 14 students finished with a grade point average of 30 Points in 2011. 26 students including Helene finished with an average of 31 in 2012. Last year Pauline's year group was the third to finish and the 31 students achieved an amazing 33-Points-average. This year 39 students including Sarah sat the exam and are awaiting their results.

The Saturday School Islington has some other links with SMMA. Since 2011 our students can take their GCSE exams at SMMA as external candidates. SMMA's current German teacher, Jim Bell, visited our Saturday School in March to meet his GCSE candidates Amber, Hannah, Jonas and Victoria from Melanie's class, as well as some of our teachers. Sylvester and Laurenz are full time students at SMMA as well as Hannah from Gaby's class and Edmund who were not due for exams this year. Two of our Saturday school mothers, Julia Fahrenkamp und Kathryn Davies, are school governors.

Apart from St. Mary Magdalene Academy there are a number of other schools in and around London that offer the IB, for example the City and Islington Sixth Form College or the Anglo-European School in Ingatestone, Essex. A complete list of all schools in Great Britain which offer the IB can be found on this website: <http://www.ibo.org>.

by Pauline Meyer, Cathrin Cordes, Martina Köpcke



SMMA German teacher Jim Bell visiting Melanie's class at Saturday School

Inspirational Saturday School teaching for four-to-ten-year olds

Teaching children who are growing up bilingual requires a different approach than ordinary teaching in your mother tongue or traditional foreign language teaching for young children. At the German Saturday Schools in Islington and Hackney Wick we employ mother tongue German speakers and believe in a more informal approach as a positive and fun element is essential to motivate children to come to extra classes on a Saturday morning. Our aim is that children like coming to Saturday School, as we believe that this is the most effective way to enhance their German.

The teachers of our younger children lay the foundation for the success of our Saturday Schools and they do so over a considerable number of years. They need to instil enthusiasm and tenacity in our children and provide a class room environment that fosters friendships and commitment in the hope of motivating them to stay with us all the way through to GCSE and A level exams.

At Primary level we do not insist on formal teacher or language training as we firmly believe that dedication and the ability to teach young children in German in a positive and creative way is more important. We usually look among our parents with a suitable background first.

Christine Müller for example was originally trained to work with young people in a training programme by the Lutheran Church in Germany, before moving to London and then spending three years in Africa with her family. Back in London, she started working as a church toddler group coordinator and her daughters joined Saturday School. She was an ideal candidate to ask.



Christine Müller (centre) having fun with her colleagues Charlotte Schulze and Christine Pleines

Our classes are held in German and children need to have a sufficient understanding of German when they join us. When children start our Saturday School from 4 we provide "Kindergarten" classes in

German with a strong emphasis on strengthening and extending the children's vocabulary. This was the age group Christine first taught when she joined us back in September 2007, and as we try to keep children and their teachers together for as long as possible to ensure continuity, Christine carried on with this group and acquired a whole new skill set which goes far beyond her kindergarten teaching background.

From the age of six, when our children tend to have basic reading and writing skills in English, we gradually start to introduce reading and writing in German as well as basic German grammar, e.g. nouns, articles, pronouns. All this is still embedded in playful and informal activities. Christine has taught these consecutive steps with her first cohort. From the age of ten, we slowly start preparing children for their GCSE exams in German and move on to a more academic level. Christine then decided that she had reached the end of her scope and went on to teach a new group. The six- to seven-year-old children in her current group were born when Christine started teaching with us back in 2007.

Christine has invented many games and activities which are very suitable for the Primary stages at Saturday School and her approach to introducing German reading and writing using the "Anlauttabelle" has been very successful. Children really enjoy attending her classes, they like coming to Saturday School and often don't even realise that they are improving their German. For example, they play games in groups and have to combine their actions with German sentences, stage the pictures of their own pirate story or create card games and booklets.

Christine also shares her knowledge and experiences with other Saturday School teachers. She has individually coached some of our teachers at the Hackney School and held an inspiring session at our teacher workshop in February this year. She and Charlotte from the Islington School also led a Q&A session for our Hackney Wick teachers in April. Christine impressed everyone explaining how she plans whole terms and all the individual sessions in advance. At the same time she is always prepared to pull an alternative out of her sleeve, just in case an activity does not go down well or the kids are not in the right mood.

Our teachers like Christine, Inka, Frauke, Jana, Klaudia, Anja, Gabi, Yasmine and Sonja prove that teachers without a "perfect teaching degree" may well be perfect Saturday School teachers for our young bilingual children.

by Cathrin Cordes

German Saturday Schools in Great Britain

Our fellow schools and the umbrella organisation

More than 1 000 children and teenagers regularly attend one of about 20 German Saturday Schools in Great Britain: there are nine in London alone and the rest are spread all over the country, from Edinburgh to Manchester and Brighton. The first of these schools were founded in Ealing, Hendon and Richmond in 1988; our school in Islington followed in September 1989 and the newest school in Brighton and Hove opened its doors about a year ago. They were all started privately by committed parents and rely on their own finances, and they all have a common goal: They want to support families with a German-speaking background in the bilingual upbringing of their children.

Most of the German Saturday Schools in the United Kingdom are members of the German Saturday School Association ("Vereinigung Deutscher Samstagsschulen", VDSS), including the German Saturday School Islington. On 19 May, our co-director and Islington teacher Charlotte Schulze became the new Chair of the Saturday School Association; the new Vice-Chair is the Swiss Marianne Siegfried-Brookes from Leicester. They have replaced Chair Birgit Berg from the Richmond School and Cathrin Cordes, who had been Chair and then Vice-Chair for an impressive 15 years.

Tasks of the VDSS include the exchange of experiences, mutual support, the organisation of training events, the representation of all Saturday Schools towards third parties and the exploration of finance and funding options. All member schools are independent and there are differences between the various Saturday Schools, especially with regard to size and programme, but also with regard to organisation.

Schools in smaller places with a smaller German community – for example in Bath – can often only offer a single class for younger children. The two biggest – Islington and Richmond – have grown enormously since being founded and today each teaches 160 children or more, offering GCSE and A level exams and adult courses. We are the only ones who have founded a school in a second location so far, and with the new beginners class opening in September Hackney will probably be the fifth-biggest school already.

The weekly get-togethers proceed in a similar way in the majority of Saturday Schools: the sessions are subdivided into two lessons with a short break in between. However, some Saturday Schools, e.g. Leeds, only meet twice a month for lessons. While in most Schools lessons take place on Saturday mornings, others they take place on a Saturday afternoon, e.g. in Nottingham and Manchester.

Some Saturday Schools only employ qualified teachers while others rely on enthusiastic parents – all of them CRB-checked, of course.

The majority of Saturday Schools have developed from parent initiatives whereby the newer schools often benefit from the expertise of the existing schools. The Saturday School in Tonbridge, for example, was founded in 1998 by three German mothers who were tired of their long Saturday car journeys to Croydon but were able to bring their experience from Tonbridge to the new school.

The Saturday School in Leicester grew out of a "German Cultural Circle", explains Swiss Director Marianne Siegfried. "The Cultural Circle offered all things to do with German culture – Christmas party, Carnival, Lantern Walk, even a Midsummer Festival. But German lessons were missing. Initially I taught my own two children at home on a Saturday, later we were joined by other children from the Cultural Circle. In September 2010 I officially opened the Saturday School and Kindergarten Leicester with altogether 12 children. It all took place in the kitchen and playroom of my house, until two years later I found myself with 21 children and massive problems with my neighbours. That's when I started renting three big rooms in Countesthorpe College, which is where the Saturday School still is today."



Mid summer festival in Leicester

The oldest Saturday School outside of London is in Manchester. It was founded in 1995 and has been run by the most senior Saturday School director, Katrin Krüger-MacSweeney, ever since. The Saturday School Manchester does not rent rooms in an English school. Everyone meets in the German Martin Luther Church, and as space is limited the younger group (4 – 7) meets in the morning and the 7- 9-year-olds meet at lunchtime. While for Marianne in Manchester the Saturday School is a fulltime job, it has always been a part-



"Our" Charlotte Schulze and Marianne Siegfried-Brookes from Leicester after being elected as new Chair and Vice Chair of the Saturday School Association (VDSS)

time job for Katrin. She says: "I have to always stay on the ball to make sure the school runs smoothly. That's why we aren't getting bigger, because I couldn't manage more classes and more children."

What's special about the Saturday School in Richmond is that it takes place on the premises of the full time German School there. Although the proper German School is on their doorstep, many families have opted to send their children to an English schools, which means that in Richmond, too, another 160 children with a German connection attend the German Saturday School. And the northernmost Saturday School in Edinburgh impresses with the most original name: "Allemann Fun".

While most Saturday Schools share similar beginnings, there are many different legal frameworks today. Many Saturday Schools such as Tonbridge and Woking & Guildford are non-registered charities, others – like Cambridge and Hendon – have chosen to set up as community interest company for fiscal reasons, while Islington and Hackney Wick are operating under the organisational form of a non-profit limited liability company by guarantee. In addition to school directors, some schools have a management board or a parent committee.

The size of a Saturday School determines what is on offer: Smaller Saturday Schools offer contact and exchange with other German-speaking families in a manageable environment and a cosy atmosphere. Everyone knows everyone else and parents chat and swap ideas while possibly enjoying a cup of coffee as their children are in their lessons. That of course does not mean that we in our enormous school in Islington and in our fairly large school in Hackney do not like to try the same!

As some of our Saturday Schools don't have a communal room they can use in the school building they rent, parents visit nearby cafes. For example in Hackney Wick and in Ealing. "Once in a while – providing it is dry and warm – my colleague Susanne – brings in a few thermos flasks filled with coffee," says Anette Bennett, long-standing director of the Ealing school. "Then she invites all parents to gather in the playground so that our parents have the opportunity to get to know each other a

School	Founded in	number of children	number of classes	adult course	age group
Bayswater (Central London)	1988	108	9	nein	2 – 16
Croydon	1991	77	9	1	3 - 16
Ealing	1988	57	6	nein	3 - 15
Greenwich	2012	36	4	1	3 - 10
Hendon	*			2	4 – 17
Hackney Wick	2011	62	5	1	4 - 9
Islington	1989	170	12	2	4 – 17
Richmond	19	160	7	2	4 - GCSE
Tonbridge	1998	56	6	-	3,5 - 12
Woking & Guildford	2006	40	4	-	3 – 13
outside of London:					
Bath	2012	12	1	-	4 - 6
Brighton & Hove	2013	20	4	1	4 - 9
Bristol	2008		5	3	
Cambridge	2009	47	4	-	6 - 13
Edinburgh	2005	*	1		3 – 11
Leeds	2011	40	4	nein	6 - 13
Leicester	2010	68	5	2	3 – A-Level
Manchester	1995	45	4	-	3 – 13
Nottingham	2012	*			
Oxford	2008	40	6	ja	1 ½ - 11
Southampton	2011	20	2	-	5 - 12

little better.”

Besides drinking coffee, reading the paper and eating cake, parents also have other duties in almost all the Saturday Schools. “Helping with parties, supervising during break times and making coffee” in Richmond. In Greenwich, the parents do a little more. “Here the parents sign up for rota duty in the classroom which they do twice per term,” tell us Corinna Ilchner (Chairperson) and Ela Law (Secretary) in Greenwich. “That means they help teachers with the setting up, tidying up and supporting children with various activities. Whoever happens to be in the teachers’ room just before break time is asked to help prepare snacks for the break. Other than that, the management board currently consists of six parents.” “In Bayswater,” explains Nia Verdenhalven, “the parent committee organises events: St. Martin’s, Christmas, Easter, the summer party and events such as our second hand book sale. The smooth running and organisation of the baker’s car is also secured by parents.”

On top of German lessons, traditional feasts or DVD and book libraries, some of the Saturday Schools host very special events. For example in Tonbridge: “We organise an annual football tournament in which the fathers of the German Saturday School play against the fathers of the English host school,” reports Cornelia Hill

(Chairwoman). “We even have a trophy and it’s always a grimly embattled game. It contributes to a nice atmosphere between all the fathers and we also improve our account balance as we sell hot dogs, coffee, tea and homemade cakes. All profits are divided between the two schools.”

In Nottingham all German children are especially looking forward to the summer holidays. The Saturday is organising three special circus-themed days. Here, children are meant to have fun with “magic, acrobatics and clowning” while also promoting the German language and identity. In Islington, too, there will be another exciting holiday programme, this time with plenty of creative activities under the topic “environment”.

In conclusion, dedicated mothers and fathers have achieved quite an extraordinary organisation during the last 25 years, and all that literally without any official support. Considering the decreasing numbers of students studying German in the regular schools in this country, this is quite an astonishing development against the general trend. The following chart gives an overview over all the German Saturday Schools in Great Britain which we have managed to trace up, specific numbers without guarantee.

by Martina Köpcke

Posters in Martina Geccelli’s class – “This is our concern”

The children in Martina’s class discussed “critical” issues and each pupil created a collage poster addressing a topic of their choice. They chose amongst others the topics War and Peace, Animal Protection, Environmental Protection, Climate Protection, Energy Conservation etc. Then each child wrote a short German text about their chosen topic. What does war mean? How do you preserve peace? What will we do without wild animals? What will happen when the Arctic melts?

Martina’s idea was to find out what occupies the minds of eight- to ten-year-olds in this world. Which critical issues are they interested in? On top of that was the task to visualise their opinion, their view of things. The children could have chosen “smaller” issues such as “no homework”, no school or “children should have more say in things”. But the result shows that they are interested in the bigger issues. Many children are well-informed and have very clear viewpoints. It’s about their future.

Pupils learnt that a poster needs to present a topic clearly and easily legible. Visual language and text have to complement each other. On July 21st we chose the winning posters in our school hall. Artist Edgar Schmitz, director Cathrin Cordes and



Pauline Meyer, former Saturday School student and current assistant in Martina’s class, handed out small prizes from the baker for the artistic design of the poster, independent working and the accompanying text, as well as the overall most effective poster. Dario, Hannah, Yannick and Frederick won the special prizes but we were impressed by all of children’s designs and ideas and everyone enjoyed a well-earned biscuit.

Show Time for Shy Dragons

Yasmine's troupe of actors appeared anything but shy as they participated in the world premiere of their play "The Shy Dragon". Besides various dragons – one of them actually shy – there also were a royal family, David Beckham, James Bond, Harry Potter and Asterix on stage. Under Yasmine's direction the eight- to nine-year-old children had rehearsed the play over several Saturdays. With lots of action, a few laughs and of course a happy end, the performance was a hit with the audience.



Fenja's head shave for charity



Fenja Akinde-Hummel, one of our former Saturday School students from Christine's class, has not only just finished her A-Level exams at Camden School for Girls. Right in the middle of her exams she decided to fundraise for charity. In May she had her head shaved to raise money for the McMillan Cancer Centre at UCH Hospital. To date she has raised an amazing £1 689 which was well above her target. Many thanks to the Saturday School parents who contributed, well done Fenja, and of course it is never too late ... <https://www.justgiving.com/Fenja-Akinde-Hummel>

"Public Viewing" for our two Saturday Schools

We are going all the way ... On Sunday night we will be meeting at the Drayton Park Pub in Islington for the World Cup Final Germany vs Argentina. We started with Germany's opening match on the 16th of July and Mark, the Irish publican, had decorated his function room with German flags and balloons for us. It has been worthwhile - on Sunday loyal viewers will be heading to the pub for the 7th time. Especially the afternoon matches against Portugal, Ghana, USA and France turned out to be very popular with families with young children from both schools. We enjoyed some great matches and a lovely atmosphere. Sunday is another evening match, but hey, it's the World Cup final and not that much is going on the last week of school before the summer holidays.



Saturday School Dates

13th September

first day of autumn term

20th September

@ 15.30 teachers' seminar

13th December

last school day and Christmas party

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"Deutsche Samstagsschule Islington", "German Saturday School Islington", "Deutsche Samstagsschule Hackney Wick", and "German Saturday School Hackney Wick" are the trading names of The German Saturday School