

Hilden Visit April 2011: Music Team

Music Learning Conference and Teaching Practice

Participating Staff: Janice Pounds, Arts Adviser, Fran Sixsmith, Keyboard Project Manager, Mel Birkett, Gospel Sing Project Leader

Activities during the visit

This visit took place between 4 and 6 April 2011. The original Comenius Regio bid contained a Music Learning Conference activity and it was decided after negotiation with the British Council that this activity would have greater impact if it was run jointly between Hilden and Warrington. It would also provide an additional opportunity for the 2 countries to continue to share good teaching practice and to develop material to be shared in the final celebration of the project in June 2011.

During the visit the Music Team demonstrated further teaching materials regarding the Gospel and Keyboard Projects which have now been adopted and applied in Hilden schools. The team concentrated upon the observation and demonstration of lessons on 5 April, followed by the delivery of the Music Learning Conference to approximately 15 Hilden Musikschule teachers on 6 April 2011.

Tuesday 5 April – Team Teaching and Lesson Observation

Gospel Choir Project

Mel continued to work with the Secondary School Gospel Choir which was formed during our visit to Hilden in October 2010. The choir is now starting to work well with students from both schools now forming friendships. Michael Wulker (the newly appointed Hilden Gospel Singing Teacher) has started to develop his teaching methodology and the choir performed a traditional Gospel song in 2 parts for us. Mel introduced further 'warm-up' activities to the choir for Michael to use and also taught them some additional material which will be sung in our celebration concert at Liverpool Cathedral in June 2011.

Mel left some backing tracks for Michael of the songs used in her teaching exercise as an additional resource. It is clear that their teaching methods differ greatly and Mel is keen for Michael to incorporate more dance movement into his teaching. This helps the students to articulate the lyrics and also to express the general meaning of the songs. It is hoped that Michael will be able to visit Warrington in May in order to consolidate his learning, as he acknowledges that this style of learning has presented some new challenges.

Keyboard Project

The format of the afternoon was one of a formal lesson observation of Frank Lescher followed by a demonstration lesson which was delivered by Fran. Frank had adopted the layout of the instruments and class set-up which is used in Warrington and had produced a work book for the children. Frank had a good rapport with the children.

It was agreed that further work was needed with Fran in order for Frank to structure his lessons and vary learning activities for the children. All agreed that this type of activity was very specialised and that a certain teaching 'formula' is needed in order to progress the

children. Fran taught a sample lesson in order to demonstrate further techniques, especially with regard to the development of chord formation with the left hand.

It was agreed that Frank would also benefit from an additional experience of the Keyboard Project and it was suggested that he accompany the visiting group to Warrington in May.

Wednesday 6 April – Music Learning Conference

Karl Hentschel, Head of the Hilden Musikschule arranged for 15 colleagues to hear our presentation about Wider Opportunities and the directives for Music Education in England which have been highlighted in the Henley Review of Music Education (February 2011)

We conveyed information relating to the development of Whole Class Instrumental Tuition since 2003 and the benefits and challenges we have faced since its introduction. We discussed national funding, and the relationship that the Warrington Schools' Arts and Culture Service has with schools in order to deliver the target of 100% participation in Instrumental and Vocal Tuition for primary school children which has been set by the set by the government.

It was interesting to note the similarities and differences in our systems and to reaffirm our passion for delivery of quality Music activities for our children. We talked about the numbers of children we teach every week and the merits of an inclusive policy for learning. Hilden colleagues were very interested to observe our DVD showing extracts of assemblies, warm-ups and progressive teaching methods.

Janice discussed the English Singing Strategy of 'Sing Up' and the positive impact that it has had on primary schools and the involvement of children and teachers in singing activities on a daily basis. Karl Hentschel, Head of the Hilden Musikschule was impressed by the 'Sing Up!' teaching resources and is interested to develop this work in the future. Janice was interested to hear the reason why singing is perhaps not currently common practice in Germany, which lies in the use of singing as a tool for propaganda during World War II.

General Action Points from Further Discussion:

1. Early Years Project

Although Early Years did not feature in this visit, the Warrington Early Years Project which was actioned as a result of observing Ina Beckerer in Hilden is progressing well. This project has been piloted in 6 Warrington schools and a celebration assembly is planned for 17 May to which Ina has been invited. Kate Palmer has been involved in further EY training through a 'Stepping Out' course and it is hoped that the resulting pedagogy will be shared with the entire Warrington Schools' Arts and Culture Service teaching team as a structured training programme for 2011 /2012.

2. Gospel Choir Project

We feel that with a little additional experience, Michael will be in a good position to lead the Hilden Gospel Choir at the Liverpool Cathedral Concert in June 2011. Hilden Council has raised funds to bring a choir of 45 children to Warrington as well as 20 children who have been involved in the 'Das bin Ich' Art Project which forms part of this Comenius Regio Project. This serves to consolidate learning and add value to the project as a whole.

3. Keyboard Project

Frank was able to further his understanding of the Keyboard Project and related teaching techniques through his observation of Fran and her observation of his lesson. He accepted that he needed to adopt more of the routines and activities which feature in a typical lesson and welcomed the opportunity to develop his skills further.

Fran is particularly keen to show Frank how to develop a progressive and structured keyboard course and will share her thoughts more fully during the next visit which is proposed in May.

Impressions and learning points

Both the Gospel and Keyboard lessons were delivered in English with occasional translation into German. We were very impressed by the children's understanding of English and the positive way in which they received our teaching methods.

Both Warrington and Hilden colleagues are determined to try to continue this work beyond the conclusion of the Comenius Regio Project in June 2011. The value to both parties in terms of the development of pedagogy and genuine friendship has been immeasurable. To develop a link of this kind with our Twin Town has been extremely rewarding for all concerned.

Janice Pounds, Arts Adviser – 21 April 2011.