

Report on visit to Ankara, Turkey

Aims: The sharing of knowledge and experience through observing the Turkish education system; evaluating our own practices; visiting local libraries; planning activities and forming professional relationships which will develop into lifelong friendships.

During the week of 1st-5th March the 'Art of Reading - Power of Creativity' Comenius Project teams visited Ankara, Turkey.

We visited two schools, Ufek Ege Kindergarten-Batikent for 3-6 year olds and Batikent Primary School for 6 - 14 year olds to learn about the Turkish education system. Compulsory education is from 6-14 years. Children may start work from 14 but they are considering raising the age of compulsory education.

We visited classrooms in both schools and were able to see children's work as well as ask questions, compare their building, class room furniture and admire any display. The teachers were all very hospitable and the children were very friendly. We were made to feel very welcome.

First we visited the Kindergarten and were taken to the principal's office for a welcome. The kindergarten classrooms had tables to one side of the room and a large clear area for activities. They also had cushions to sit on. There were beds, piled on top of one another off one of the corridors so that the children could sleep after a cooked lunch. They had an inside play area and an art/craft room in the basement. There was an interesting display on their procedure for earthquakes.

The primary school welcomed us with a wonderful display in the playground of Turkish dancing in their traditional dress. This was followed by a singing, dancing and acting show in their school hall. We looked around the school. Classes seat 34 in three rows facing the front. All rooms had inter-active whiteboards. There is a set cursive handwriting style throughout the school. They have two sets of pupils and staff in the school every day, changing at lunchtime.

We visited many historical sites and museums on our stay in Ankara learning about their history and how it has shaped the country as it is today. Visits included the ruins of Roman baths, a French church, the Aledin Mosque, The Republic Museum, The Museum of Turkish War of Independence and The Museum of Anatolian Civilizations. We did have time to do some shopping, go for a coffee and wander.

Our hosts had planned a full and interesting agenda which included walks in parks and through the city. We went to a number of different eating places such as one overlooking a lake and two in older parts of the town. It was good to share food and mix with the teachers from other countries learning about their education system and culture.

On Friday, 4th April our day started with a visit to the Middle East Technical University Library. We had a general talk about the facilities then we toured the departments, and were shown some very interesting books on architecture and sciences. This was followed by a visit to the National Library where, as well as books, they have various collections of artwork and historic artefacts. We were also treated to a cup of traditional Turkish tea. We had lunch on 7th Street, which is a busy shopping area, after which we went to visit Anitkabir, which is the mausoleum of Ataturk who was the General who created the first Republic of Turkey. Ataturk was moved here from his original resting place in the Republic Museum. We also looked around a very interesting museum which was full of scenes from the Great War and the fight to become a republic. We were then taken to the Ankamall where we were able to buy traditional sweets and food and have dinner at our leisure. We returned to the hotel three hours later where we had a drink, dance and chat with our fellow teachers, which was a great way to end our trip. We had many interesting conversations with the other teachers comparing our literacy teaching methods and it was interesting to share ideas. We really enjoyed mixing with the other nationalities and learning so much about Turkish history.