

A Finnish School Plays Host to a Group of Students from Crickhowell High School

In the last week of April, an intrepid group of students in Years 10, 11 and 12, donned their snow boots and headed north to Finland. Their final destination was a small school in Nurmes located in the North-Karelia region of Finland.



The purpose of the trip was to participate in an Erasmus KA2 project, involving a strategic partnership of three secondary schools, namely Nurmeksen Lukio in Finland, BG/BRG Klosterneuburg in Austria and Crickhowell High School. The project, entitled 'Roots and Wings – Survival Skills in the Digital World', focusses on three main topics: digital literacy, identity, health and wellbeing and higher education.

All in all, 87 students, between the ages of 16 and 19, and 9 teachers, will collaborate on the project for two years, both online and face-to-face, through three student meetings and two teacher meetings.

The aim of the project is threefold:

- To enable students to better understand their identity, to appreciate their background and cultural heritage
- To equip them with the skills needed in the modern world
- To encourage students to be responsible, show initiative and to take charge of their lives

Students work together in a series of workshops using a variety of digital tools. Teachers also collaborate to try out new pedagogical methods and tools.

The Crickhowell High School students were treated to a 'trip of a lifetime' making some great friends and memories along the way, interviewing a journalist and a professor from Helsinki University on Skype, learning some Finnish and developing strategies for overcoming cultural sensitivities.

Read below what the students had to say about the trip in their own words.



Monday 24th April 2017

“We arrived at school and were greeted with a Nurmes goodie bag, which was a nice surprise and very generous of the sponsor. However everyone was a little apprehensive and shy and so there was not much conversation between the nationalities. The ice breakers (lining up in name order and a game based on what we liked) helped us feel more comfortable and get to know each other’s names and hobbies. The tour of Nurmes was interesting because of the differences between Finland and Wales and it allowed us to talk in our smaller workshop groups.

The lectures were also engaging and gave us new insight into some topics surrounding digital literacy, for example, the way we portray ourselves online may not be the same as how others see us. The second lecture with a journalist, Ms Minna Dufton, was a skype session. We asked questions and learnt just how much the internet and computers has changed that field. The visit to a host family in the evening was really fun as we could talk more freely and it was exciting to see the differences in our home lives. We were also introduced to typically Finnish foods, which was also fun. Overall I think it was an entertaining day to see the differences in how we live, even if it was a little awkward.”

Tuesday 25th April 2017

“Tuesday was the second day of our trip and so everybody was still struggling to open up to each other. To conquer this, we decided to increase the time of the morning energiser to try and break the ice. The activities we did were: standing in a large circle, introducing ourselves and saying one interesting fact about ourselves. The second activity was where we were tied with rope to a student from another school and we had to figure out how to untie ourselves. These activities were really good for making things less awkward between all the students. After this, we spent most of the school day in our workshop groups. The work we produced can be seen on the Erasmus website. On Tuesday evening, we had a games night at the barn next to our hostel. We played games such as Chinese Whispers and Splat. Overall, it was great fun and helped to improve the interaction between the students.”



Having fun at the Angry Birds Activity Park



Chilling Out!!

Wednesday 26th April 2017

“On Wednesday the whole group went to the Angry Birds Activity Park. The day started as normal with breakfast at 8.00 am and the bus coming to pick us up at 8.45 am. We were the first to be picked up by the bus from Hyvärilä. The bus then took us to the school where we picked up the Finns and the Austrians. The bus then took us on a two hour bus journey to the park. We arrived at around 11.00 and spent the day exploring the activity park, going on trampolines, climbing walls, zip lines and skateboards on a variety of indoor skate parks. We spent around 5 hours at the park and had lunch from pre-packed lunch and had the option to buy from the park restaurant. The journey from the park consisted of teaching songs to each other from the different nationality groups and breaking the ice. During the night, we went to host family houses for a ‘Movie and Games’ night. We had a bonfire in our host family’s garden and roasted marshmallows and cooked sausages as well as a visit to K-Market. We finished the day at around 9.00 at night and then went back to our hostel to go to bed and relax.”

Thursday 27th April 2017

“Thursday was made up of mostly workshops. However, as quite a few of the groups were nearly finished, more socializing happened. The CSI online workshop spent a lot of their time playing pool in pairs with one person blind-

folded, which turned out to be very entertaining. The rest of the workshop groups completed and put the finishing touches on their presentations. Lunch was delicious as it had been all week. We then left school at 3.45 pm and headed back to the hostel for dinner. That evening, we were meant to have a games and sports evening. However, the snow meant that we had a games night at the Barn at Hyvärilä. We played games, such as zombies and twister and we also learn some new Finnish and Austrian games that were really fun. Once everyone had left, we went back to the hostel and dragged all of the spare mattresses out to form a couch again and played cards until quite late, ensuring that the next morning we looked like zombies!



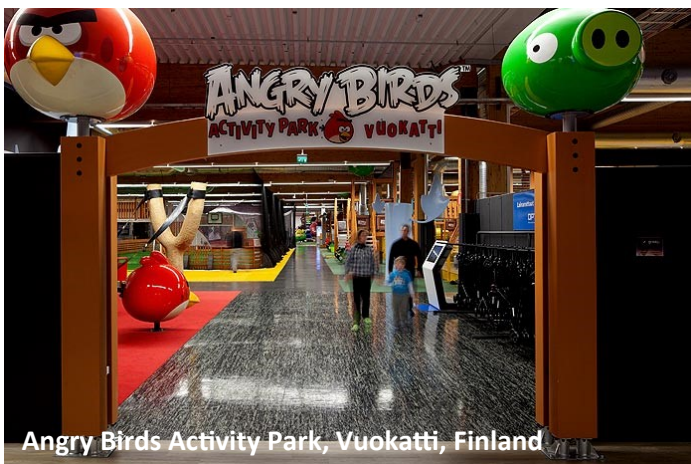
Angry Birds Activity Park, Vuokatti, Finland



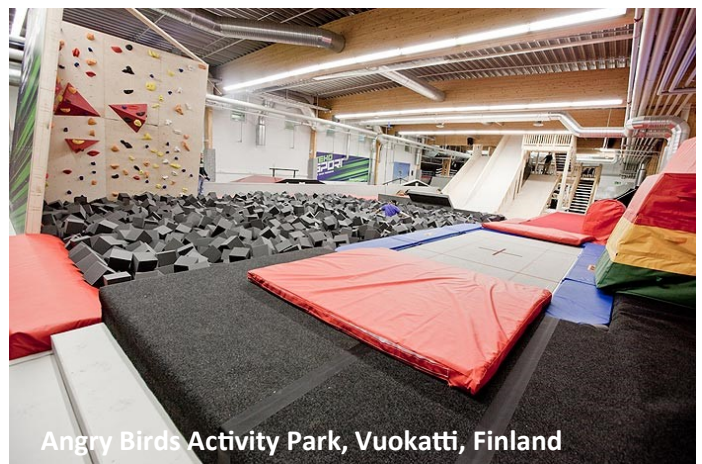
Angry Birds Activity Park, Vuokatti, Finland

Friday 28th April 2017

“Today we had a guest lecture from a Professor Ilkka Kurkela of Helsinki University who talked about life skills and future studies. Using his experience as a teacher and lecturer (an all round great guy) he encouraged us to live more positively and pursue lifelong education. He made clear the importance of always moving forward and taking the road less travelled, opening ourselves up to a new opportunities. After the lecture, we split up into our workshop groups to give presentations on the work we had produced over the week. In the afternoon, the Finnish students took us shopping to the town centre. We saw all the local sights – Nurmes’s only traffic light and the infamous K-MARKET – before returning to the hostel to prepare for the barn party. At 6 pm, everybody arrived at the barn and we spent the evening learning their traditional dance, the Letkajenka. We had great fun watching ‘rap offs’ and ‘dance battles. The evening closed with Dirty Dancing’s ‘I’ve had the time of my life’ and we all said heartfelt goodbyes before returning to our rooms to pack our cases for the long journey home.”



Angry Birds Activity Park, Vuokatti, Finland



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The Crickhowell High School team is looking forward to welcoming the Finnish and Austrian teams in June. Watch this space!