



CHINA STUDENT EXCHANGE

• JANUARY 2017 •

CHINESE NEW YEAR ROOSTER HERALDS NEW ERA OF OPPORTUNITY



From the moment they walked through the door Kin Fen and his fellow students sparked a burst of intrigue and opportunity throughout Winchmore School. Twenty four special visitors from the Experimental Campus of Shunde Number 1 Middle School, South China, were welcomed for a ten day educational exchange visit which commenced on Friday 13th January. The exchange sought to develop and deepen our cherished five year long partnership by immersing our Chinese guests in language, learning and family life.

Kin Fen, a senior student from Shunde, led the way. He couldn't wait to meet his host family at an informal welcome ceremony. All the students were carefully paired, based broadly on age, gender and interests. Some students, like sixth formers Stefan and Tian were already friends from a previous exchange. For the majority, however, this was the first time to meet. There was lots to talk about, and interpreters 'at the ready' to help drive conversations forward.

Host families are key to the success of any student exchange. Shaoman, Baiyang and Jun were quickly adopted by their host families. Their host parents prepared meals, provided bedding and sorted out laundry. They arranged entertaining nights-in, and nights-out.



Kin Fen leads the way

On top of that they were there to reassure, care for, and above all make sure they arrived bright-eyed for school every morning.



Sixth Form Students, Stefan and Tian

The exchange was formally launched on Tuesday 17th January, with a spectacular musical welcome at the prestigious China Exchange Centre in Soho. Performing for our Chinese guests, host families and other friends, sixty Winchmore students sang and danced their way through the big hits from this year's school production of 'Billy Elliot'.

The stage shuddered and the room shook as the great 'Billy Elliot' pageants 'Solidarity', 'Born to Boogie', and 'Electricity' echoed beyond the building and through China Town. Sparking new friendships and a sense of togetherness.

Winchmore's orchestra, singers and dancers had raised our partnership to a new high.



'Electricity'



'Solidarity'

Rapturous applause filled the room, as the performers took their final bow. This was followed by surprise demonstrations of Martial Art rituals, dancing, singing and magic from our Chinese friends.

Closing the event Deputy Headteacher, Noel Thompson said:

'Can there be anything more convincing of the depth and power of our partnership than what we have seen today. Students from opposite ends of the earth giving their all to welcome, embrace and cherish each other's lives, worlds, hopes and dreams. In an increasingly smaller and divided world, a world where politicians and diplomats struggle to find solutions, this exchange is bringing the world that much closer together, and lifelong friendships are being made.'



'Born to Boogie'



Jay displays Martial Art

It was an exhausting day. Five doors down and five hours later, dinner at a local Chinese restaurant was the perfect setting to round off a perfect day. One hundred and twenty students, teachers and parents enjoyed dinner together in the large, traditionally decorated Cantonese dining room. They enjoyed old-style dim sum, steamed pork ribs, rice rolls, prawn rolls and a variety of carefully pre-chosen dishes from a menu that could have stretched to China and back.



Chinese Break Dancing

That said, ushering one hundred and twenty wired students, teachers, instruments onto two huge coaches parked in Shaftsbury Avenue during the rush hour, was a challenge. We counted them on, we counted them off. Seeing everyone back in school for an early start the following morning, was a testimony to the professionalism and leadership of the teachers in the Expressive Arts Faculty who planned and organised every step of the event.



One Hundred and Twenty for Dinner in Chinatown



Tottenham Hotspur Changing Room

about the future of the club with the new 61,000 seater stadium. Kin Fen asked if he could come back next year to see the new stadium in action, especially if Manchester United were playing! As they left the ground the students dug deep into their pockets and almost cleared the shelves of souvenirs from the club's mega store.

A 'must see' fixture for our Chinese students was a visit to Tottenham Hotspur Football Club. They saw the pitch, the press gallery, the VIP lounge and the changing rooms.

They were surprised by how close the seats were to the pitch. 'I could almost jump on the pitch from here' said Jun, 'I wouldn't do that if I were you', replied an on-hand football coach.

The students heard about the history of the club, its status and success in the Premier League. They asked questions



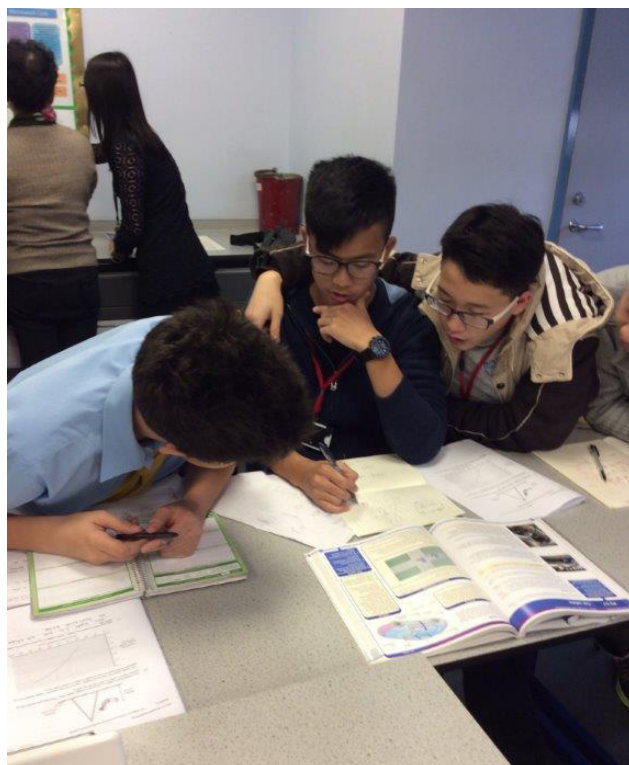
Team Shunde at Tottenham Hotspur

In school, arrangements had been made for our visitors to shadow their host partners. Jun and friends would accompany their host partners to their normal lessons to listen, watch and, when possible, participate.

Following their lesson shadowing, the Chinese students provided some interesting feedback.

They said:

- That Chinese students were used to bigger class sizes
- That there was more opportunity for the Winchmore students to work together in groups, with less direction from the teacher
- That there was less reliance on textbooks, and more discussion and personal use of the internet
- When answering a question in the Winchmore classroom, the students would raise their hand to respond. In Shunde, the student would stand, wait until invited, and then respond
- Although not always the case, lessons in Shunde tended to be more formal
- When asked where more work was covered, all students from both Shunde and Winchmore agreed that it was in China, if for no other reason than most Chinese students would start their school day at 7.10am, and many would not finish their studies until 10.30pm.



Students Shadowing in Class



Other in-school activities had been arranged. The learning ethos at Winchmore has always supported team building through creative problem solving. This strategy would loom large as we organised activities and events which aimed to develop skills and relationships through 'hands on' tasks which were creative and involved speaking, listening, sharing and doing.

One morning the exchange students found themselves in the school's 'state of the art' cookery rooms. Within a matter of minutes, with aprons tied tight, they were measuring the ingredients to bake bite size Italian biscuits.



Biscuit Baking

This was a perfect opportunity to learn about baking, about each other, and something about England and about Italy too! Most of all they were able to share their biscuits with their friends later.

As a specialist Arts College we wanted to combine a 'strength of the school' with something familiar to the Chinese. As the Chinese New Year, was pending we decided to base an Arts workshop on the 2017 Year of the Rooster. Those born in the Year of the Rooster are said to seek wisdom. They do not just rely on what others tell them, but search for the truth.



Jaw Dropping



One of eighteen magnificent Chinese New Year roosters

Fen and Jax. This was the art of self-defence at a very high level. Having been warned not to try any of the moves at home, the children were keen to know how the boys did not injure themselves. They said that they had started to learn self-defence from the time they could walk. This had provided them with an instinctive skill, to the mini-second, to know when and where to stop.

Visiting Bedford School, an independent school for boys enabled our students from Shunde to make comparisons with their own school, also a boarding school. Tours of the school were provided by

The students were provided with large trays of coloured mosaic pieces, cutting tools and protective goggles to avoid possible accidents. They worked feverishly cutting and sticking pieces of tiles onto wooden boards. Bold and colourful shapes of roosters began to emerge.

Most avoided mosaic splinters landing in their eyes, but not their mouths!



Roosters Rising

Towards the end of the exchange, we wanted our Chinese students to experience life in other schools. Highfield Primary School, our partner primary school with whom we share strong links both geographically and historically, provided a perfect opportunity for this. Ms Kemal, the headteacher, gave a warm welcome to Kin Fen and his friends, and provided a short talk and tour of the school.

Kin Fen, and his fellow Shunde Sixth Former Jax, asked if the children would like to see some of the rituals and techniques from the Martial Arts. In front of a young audience of nearly a hundred students the boys performed individually, and in combat. The children watched in awe at the skill, agility and speed of Kin



Martial Arts



Visiting Bedford School

Chinese boarders from Bedford School. The gothic styled great hall, galleries, narrow staircases, chapel and bell room, prompted Jun to ask ‘Where’s Harry hiding?’ referring, of course, to Harry Potter’s Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry.

As well as touring the school, a visit was made to the ‘Trains, Boats and Planes’ Exhibition in the Bedford School Foyer.

Intended to portray life as it truly is, Michael Checkett’s exhibition of paintings provided a visual narrative, of the healing power of nature, in contrast to the stresses and strains of busy city life. Images of packed tube trains and weary commuters were displayed alongside tranquil countryside landscapes, and village market scenes. Michael Checketts, met and talked to the students about his work. They asked searching questions about the content, style and purpose of his art. He added that ‘it is never my intention to change what I see. I try to get as close as possible to it.’

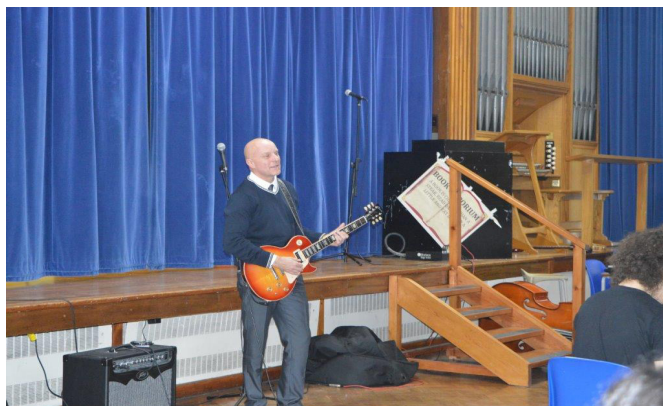


Victoria Line



Final Approach

Closing ceremony



Mr Owen plays us out

On Saturday morning students, teachers and host families met to exchange gifts and say goodbye. Cases and luggage seemed to have doubled in size, as they were wheeled into the school reception area. One by one Mr Owen, Winchmore School’s Headteacher, called Kin Fen and his fellow students to the stage. On shaking their hands he presented each student with a small parcel containing a number of gifts which included a Winchmore sweatshirt, water bottle and the mosaic of their Chinese New Year rooster.

Mr Owen and Mr Chen, the Vice Principal and Leader of the group from the Experimental Campus of Shunde Number 1 Middle School thanked all the students, parents,



carers and staff for what had been a successful exchange. Both stressed how much their schools were looking forward to visiting the Experimental Campus of Shunde Number 1 Middle School, in October.

As a finishing touch, Mr. Owen played his guitar for the group. A moving and personal tribute to our schools, our exchange visit, our communities and our growing partnership.

The coach drew up at noon. Following more applause, individual and group hugs, photographs and goodbyes, Kin Fen, Shaoman, Baiyang, Jun and everybody took their seats on the coach.

A final gift was presented. It was a lantern in the shape of a star, with a small supply of candles. The lantern and the candles represented the warmth, light and hope that had been generated by our exchange. Please, keep a candle burning until next we meet. Everybody waved frantically, as the coach drove out of Laburnum Grove.

When they arrived they sparked a burst of intrigue and opportunity. By the time they left, they had asked their questions, explored, photographed and recorded everything there was to see and do. No opportunity was left unturned. Every day, hour and moment had been seized upon! How do we know?



***Jun spark out!
Here's to Shunde, October 2017***