

Birmingham Schools delegation to Guangzhou southern China 19 - 27 March

The International School has been involved with the “Connecting Classrooms” project sponsored by The British Council since 2007. The project aims to foster links between partner schools in Guangzhou to exchange information on teaching methods between the teachers and cultural diversity and learning between the students.

Mrs Williams and 2 Year 9 students visited our partner school No 5 Middle School and spent 3 days joining in with lessons, having discussions with the students and teachers.



We used 4 presentations to discuss with teachers and students during our visit. In the first presentation we described our school and the curriculum; this was then developed to discuss a student’s timetable and the learning in the individual subjects. This gave both the Chinese students and teachers some idea of what it is like to go to school in

England. The Chinese students were very interested to learn that our students can learn French and Spanish, as they only learn English as their foreign language. They were also surprised that all students learn technology as in China these subjects are only available to the “less able” students.

The groups of students we talked to were keen to learn what it was like in Birmingham and what the UK was like. We used our 2 presentations about Birmingham as a multicultural city and the UK landscape and tourist attractions to help to describe life in the UK. Many cities in China do not have people from overseas and to see pictures of people from a variety of different backgrounds and cultures living in Birmingham was very strange to them.



We joined in with some very interesting lessons such as Chinese calligraphy and traditional Chinese painting. It is very difficult to paint in the Chinese way as they use a very thick brush and hold it in a different way to us. But our students made a very creditable attempt and went round to each group and painted a flower for them.

Another lesson we joined in with was a music lesson, where the teacher had tried to use a British song that she thought we would know. However she was under the misconception that Eire was part of the UK and used a traditional Irish folk song for us to play on the recorder. Sadly we did not know the song and with an added complication that the Chinese do not use notes on a stave, but “doh, ray, me” with number notation. I tried to translate the song into our notation, but by the time I had nearly finished the lesson was over!



Meal times were also interesting, first we had to get to grips with using chop sticks, something we all managed quite well. We visited several restaurants serving traditional Chinese food, but definitely not the type of Chinese food we get here! Soup with chicken feet in was particularly off-putting! We were also very privileged to be invited to the homes of 2 students and 1 member of staff for evening meals. It was a good



experience for our students to see some traditional Chinese homes and enjoy the hospitality of our hosts. We all decided that we definitely enjoyed "home cooking" more than in a restaurant.

Our final evening in the city was spent on a cruise of the Pearl River, where we could experience the colourful lights and the river boats, which far outshone Blackpool illuminations! On our final day in Guangzhou we went on a cultural tour of the city which included a trip to the top of the TV tower which stands 610 meters high and is the tallest TV tower in the world.



The views from the top are amazing.

