

Emily Verden - Prague Blog

The English College in Prague offers a high-quality programme of education, and is a school which supports the development of knowledge and develops inquisitive students. I have not only noticed the benefits the ECP offers for its pupils, but its staff too, and I have had the privilege to partake in professional development sessions that have supported me in my path to becoming an effective educator and a member of a collaborative professional learning community.

To ensure both breadth and depth of knowledge and understanding, IB students must choose six courses from six distinct groups: 1) studies in language and literature; 2) language acquisition; 3) individuals and societies; 4) sciences; 5) mathematics; 6) the arts. Pupils may choose to replace the arts course with a second course from one of the other five groups. At least three, and not more than four, subjects are taken at higher level, while the remaining are taken at standard level. In addition, three core elements - the extended essay, theory of knowledge and creativity, activity, service - are compulsory and central to the philosophy of the programme.



The IB learner profile describes a broad range of human capacities and responsibilities that go beyond academic success. They imply a commitment to help all members of the school community learn to respect themselves, others, and the world around them. Each subject is committed to the development of students according to the IB learner profile. Therefore, ECP aims to help their students to become: inquirers, knowledgeable, thinkers, communicators, principled, open-minded, caring, risk-takers, balanced and reflective. The ECP centres on learners, and has developed (and continues to develop) an effective approach to teaching and learning. The school works within global contexts, helping students understand

different languages and cultures. Furthermore, the ECP explores significant content, developing disciplinary and interdisciplinary understanding that meets rigorous international standards. Overall, an ECP education aims to transform students as they learn, through dynamic cycles of inquiry, action, and reflection. The staff enable and support students as they develop the approaches to learning they need – for both academic and personal success.

Students at the ECP are given a unique, challenging, and diverse education. All pupils are encouraged to think critically and solve complex problems, and this is particularly evident in the IB subject of Theory of Knowledge. ToK allows learners to reflect on the nature of knowledge, and how they know what they claim to know. Furthermore, the pupils drive their own knowledge and are extremely independent. Plus, the emphasis on languages enables ECP pupils to become more culturally aware through the development of a second language. A child who goes to ECP is able to engage with people in an increasingly globalised and rapidly changing world. Overall, ECP students are likely to perform well academically, however, strong academic attributes are developed hand-in-hand with social and emotional characteristics.

From my observations, and conversations with the pupils themselves, I noticed how much more prepared IB students are for university style study and research, and how they will be able to carry through their organisational skills the ECP has embedded into them to aid in the continuation of coping with demanding workloads and time-management challenges in higher education.

Being a teacher at the ECP has a plethora of benefits too. All staff partake and are encouraged to engage in high quality professional development that encourages critical thinking, self-reflection and dedication to lifelong learning and continuous improvement. All the staff I have interacted with have been keen to show me and the other trainees the innovative and diverse education frameworks, unit planners, teaching resources and evaluation tools the ECP uses. I have seen, and hope to incorporate into my own teaching, a pedagogical approach which is producing students who are motivated to continue inquiry and lifelong learning, beyond school study.

IB history is a world history course based on a comparative and multi-perspective approach to history. It involves the study of a variety of types of history, including political, economic, social, and cultural, and provides a balance of structure and flexibility. The course emphasises the importance of encouraging students to think historically and to develop historical skills as well as gaining factual knowledge. It puts a premium on developing the skills of critical thinking, and on developing an understanding of multiple interpretations of history. In this way, the course involves a challenging and demanding critical exploration of the past. ECP staff explicitly teach thinking and research skills such as comprehension, text analysis, transfer, and use of primary sources. There are six key concepts that have particular prominence throughout IB history: change, continuity, causation, consequence, significance, and perspectives. The aims of history at the ECP is to enable pupils to: develop an understanding of, and continuing interest in, the past; encourage students to engage

with multiple perspectives and to appreciate the complex nature of historical concepts, issues, events, and developments; and to promote international-mindedness through the study of history from more than one region of the world.

I was, and continue to be after my experience at the ECP, interested in the IB because it endeavours to go beyond the basic curriculum and inspires students to become caring and curious, and I have a keen interest in ensuring the students I teach have the opportunity to step outside of the typical historic subject material. Furthermore, the IB shapes global citizens who have a rich knowledge about the world, as it incorporates quality practice from national and international research and the IB global community. I want to encourage my students to be internationally-minded, within this complex and hyper-connected world. Therefore, the IB ethos and history go hand-in-hand.

I am thankful to One Cumbria and the ECP for this amazing and enriching opportunity. This has been an invaluable experience, and one where I have immersed myself within a unique global environment. I have developed as an educator and have gained knowledge that is recognised and valued internationally.