



# BREZEL-NEWS

Seventh Edition, March 2014

## Newsletter of the German Saturday Schools Islington and Hackney Wick

Dear Saturday School families and friends,

It's been stroke upon stroke since the beginning of the year: By the end of January, the older pupils in Islington had to decide whether they wanted to take their GCSE, AS- and A-level exams this summer. This decision process and the exam registration are not always straightforward and we have registered a record 28 exam candidates.

After Saturday School on February 1st, the teachers from Hackney Wick ventured to Islington for a joint workshop for both of our schools. Christine Müller shared her experiences in introducing reading and writing in German at Saturday School over the past seven years. Do you know what an initial sound index is? And how many different games Christine has come up with? Then Charlotte Schulze gave practical instructions in the use of LÜK boxes and we were amazed when we uncovered the correct patterns. I was especially moved to hear both teachers talking about "their children" and not actually referring to Helene, Caspar, Anna or Susan. Charlotte also introduced other new games which – thanks to the donation from the ZfA - we were able to buy along with new LÜK boxes for Hackney and many new LÜK booklets.

The following Saturday was our "Day of Professions" in Islington and immediately after the half term holidays it was Carnival which was, of course, celebrated with the children at both schools.

On March 15th, there is the book table and parents' consultation in Islington, on March 29th the Easter bunny visits Hackney and Islington, and for the first Saturday of the holidays we have organised a first aid course for teachers of both schools. Phew.

Fortunately, Janet Kroll, our new treasurer, has been part of the team since January. Ulrike, Janet, Martina, Charlotte and I are now working about 50 hours per week to keep things going at our two schools. That is more than one full-time job, plus

the time our fantastic teachers spend each week teaching and preparing their lessons.

Charlotte is keen to prove that her expertise extends beyond LÜK boxes and following Frauke's contribution on art in teaching she explains how she reads German books with her pupils. Martina consults a number of the school's own experts to report on horse-riding, brass workshops and other ideas for our children to improve their German. Plus two of our students - Gipi Schiavo and Fenja Akinde-Hummel - add their own accounts of "Berufetag" and participating in a language course in Germany.

Happy reading and until next time,

Cathrin xx

Cathrin Cordes, Managing Director  
German Saturday Schools Islington & Hackney Wick



Celebrating Carnival in Hackney Wick

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# Saturday School Bookworms

To our four-year-olds speaking German was already paramount and from the very beginning books played an important part in lessons. The little ones had books read to them, they looked at and discussed picture books. Step by step the children began to decipher words and individual sentences. During this phase detective stories played an important role in my lessons. Using information from the text in combination with the pictures, the children had to try to solve the crime. One had to listen carefully and be ready for discussion if they wanted to solve the problem – these books were very popular.

Then I rediscovered a book from my own childhood, “The Adventures of the Black Hand” by Hans Press. Once again, these are crime stories in which the protagonists are a group of child detectives. Every double page contains a chapter, with the text on the left and pictures on the right hand side. Here, too, readers have to find the solution on the basis of the information given in text and pictures. The text was easy enough to serve as a first reading source for the about ten-year-old pupils.



Inspired by reading a book about emigration to America, children designed their own card game

Even relatively good German speakers did not always find it easy to begin reading. One reason was that I chose books that were appropriate for their age but not necessarily for their language level. As far as German language skills were concerned, the books were too challenging for some. But appropriate books for my pupils' language skills would have been books aimed at children two years their junior, and ten-year-old children will not be excited by literature aimed at eight-year-olds! There is just no reading material specifically suited to our “bilingual students of German”, who are somewhere between native speakers and those learning German as a foreign language.

When the children were about eleven years old, we read our first book without pictures, “Negrita” by Onelio Cardoso. The book focuses on the heart-rending experiences of a dog belonging to a poor family of farmhands in Cuba. Themes such as the contrast between rich and poor, between power and powerlessness, pet dogs and wild dogs and love gave much occasion for debate. Even children who didn't really like animal books or did not generally find books that interesting were captivated by Negrita.

Our second book was “Paradise Lies in America” by Karin Gündisch. The fate of a poor Transylvanian peasant family who emigrated to the USA in 1902 is described from the point of view of the eleven-year-old son. Felix, one of the boys, brought in a contemporary atlas of the world so that we could trace the family's travel route in detail. The book dealt with emigration and immigration, with language, culture, history and new beginnings. As a project, the children made their own card game based on the book. As we still had many questions about the book, we wrote a letter to the author.

Much to our delight we received a detailed reply after the summer holidays. “Dear children, (...) many thanks for your nice letter and the lovely drawings for the card game.” We were surprised that the family at the centre of the book actually existed in real life. Their “descendants (...) today live scattered all across America”. However, Gündisch also invented many little episodes in her book and used some from other immigrants' letters. She has been on various reading tours of the USA where she also read from her books at some German Saturday Schools. “I am convinced that it is very important for you to learn German thoroughly, including reading and writing. If you were able to read my book you already read very well and your letter proves that you can write, too. (...) In Romania it was and still is natural for many children to grow up with several languages, as many ethnic groups live side by side in our country. In my circle of friends there are many children who grow up speaking German, Hungarian and Romanian. At school they also learn English and French. I wish you many more reading experiences with books that make you happy.”

Now we have just finished reading our latest book, “When Hitler Stole Pink Rabbit” by Judith Kerr. The 240 pages were quite a challenge for our eleven- to twelve-year-olds, but Kerr's autobiographical account of her family's 1933 escape from Berlin via Switzerland and France to London was very interesting. The everyday experiences of a ten-year-old refugee girl, her attendance at different schools in foreign countries where she did not



speak the language, and personal experiences from the first years of the Nazi period gave occasion for many discussions.

And what did the children gain from all this reading? For most this was an introduction to German books in general. Many read them regularly with their parents and reading out aloud to the children has made a contribution to the improvement of their knowledge of German. Some now read German books quite independently, which is fantastic considering that their first language is really English. Also, we have written

about the books and thus – after tackling speaking, understand and reading – we have been getting to grips with writing. It was great to discuss various topics in depth and as a group, too. As we are not tied to a curriculum, we could freely choose the books based on our own interests. The linguistic term for all this would be *immersion*, where the acquisition of language largely follows the principles of the acquisition of the mother tongue and the learning of the language is really incidental. Of course this only works if it is also fun.

by Charlotte Schulze

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## Guess My Profession...

with Oliver Bärwald, Claudia Berg, Philipp Blaubach, Sebastian Borger, Julia Fahrenkamp, Jessica Kinast, Maria Kramer, Anna O'Brien, Edgar Schmitz, Jana Scholze, Max Schulze, Rahel Vonmoos and Dorit Young

### “Day of Professions” at the Islington Saturday School on February 9th

For the old hands of the Islington Saturday School this is a well-known event. It is the day when parents go into classrooms and introduce their professions to the students. This year's participants were a banker, a lawyer, two architects, a journalist, a dancer, an artist, a doctor, a museum curator, a cameraman, an economic historian, a science editor and a hat maker.

The great variety on offer is typical of our Saturday School and kills several birds with one stone. I first had the idea for it almost ten years ago when Klaus-Dieter Rossade, current teacher of one of our adult groups, gave a talk about the cultural aspects of Saturday School at a workshop for our teachers. In line with our doctrine that Saturday School has to be fun and offer variety, he suggested to involve our parents in days which focus on a specific theme. There are two obvious advantages to this: On the one hand, we motivate new and old parents to actively engage with Saturday School. On the other hand, it is important that besides their own parents and their Saturday School teachers our children get to listen to and communicate with as many German speakers with different intonations and regional accents as possible.

When the teachers of the older classes asked if some of the parents would like to talk about their jobs in one of the lessons, the idea was settled. More and more Saturday School pupils were preparing for their GCSE and A-level exams, where professions and which profession to choose are important topics. In the first year, just two or three parents visited the exam classes, but we



Photo: Alexander Hug

Former Saturday School mother Dorit modelling one of her hats

soon realised that it was worth extending the event. Translator Sandra Heistrüvers was a pioneer in 2007. This year, Sandra's daughter Tara in the GCSE class has benefited from the job descriptions of other parents.

Talking to older children or teenagers is often a new experience for parents with young children, as it was for Sandra back then. The learning process works both ways, as lawyer Claudia, whose daughter Antonia is in our current beginners' class, describes her experience: "In the second group, Melanie's class, I had already learnt a lot." Tara and the other pupils in Melanie's GCSE group also experienced Anna, a doctor, who encouraged the pupils to feel each others' pulse, as well as cameraman Philipp and Edgar, an artist. Clara Lilli was particularly happy to have her dad Edgar visit

her group, and other children whose own parents visited their class felt the same.

Other participants also found it rather challenging to describe their own profession age-appropriately as well as in German since many of us work in an exclusively English environment. "Also, the children's questions forced me to reflect on my actual reasons for choosing this profession and on the required training and experiences", says journalist Sebastian Borger who was participating for the second time.



Photo: Alexander Hug

Architect Jessica in Barbara's class

This year, 13 parents visited eight classes of children aged eight and above as well as both of our adult groups. That also required flexibility. Economic historian Max had to discuss the transportation of goods in the 19th century and artist Edgar the complicated copyright laws with Klaus-Dieter's "advanced" adults. Sebastian and architect Maria, on the other hand, had to adjust their German vocabulary to the language level of Carola's class for "intermediate beginners". Carola and her students had discussed the German vocabulary for both professions in advance and the students had to do their homework and think of questions to ask their guests.

The A-level students were more interested in how you make the decision to choose a profession that you will possibly stay with for the rest of your life. Sometimes it helps if you have an uncle who is a

museum director, but what if there is no such uncle at hand? Further, the path to your dream job is not always straightforward. To become a journalist you don't necessarily have to study journalism. Sebastian suggests that it can be more useful to learn something about the subjects that you want to write about later on.

Some students were surprised to hear that you have to train for ten years to become an architect. At just 13 or 14 this seems like a very long time. Lawyers, too, require many qualifications, and in Germany you have to understand the various meanings of the word "Jura" to start off with. "Jura" in German is not only one of the Jurassic period when dinosaurs lived, but also another word for law or jurisprudence, i.e. the subject you have to study if you want to become a lawyer.

Museum curator Jana let us know that the chair design of our Drayton Park School is also represented at the "Victoria and Albert Museum", and economic historian Max really enjoys his work at university. But what does a professor do in his free time? With a working week of about 60 hours – probably not a lot. Those who work from home can sometimes take a little nap at lunchtime (but not always!), and having a really great job doesn't necessarily mean that you also earn lots of money. China has lost its former wealth due to the integration of markets and the industrial development of Europe, and what we live in nowadays is called a "service economy".

You also learn an astonishing amount of French at German School, because an artist's studio is called "das Atelier", and when you have a newspaper delivered every day it is called "das Abonnement". There was one question, however, that all of the participants introducing their professions answered quite clearly. Are language skills and particularly German language skills useful? Yes.

In the younger classes we try to introduce some more hands-on professions. Hatmaker Dorit and her assortment of handmade hats was one of the highlights. On top of that she is a former Saturday School mother who paid us a special visit (her daughter Gaia left two years ago after taking her A-level exam). Cameraman Philipp, another repeat performer, is always an attraction and has exciting material on his laptop to show to the classes. 10-year-old Giulia was very impressed with banker Oliver and is now determined to become a banker herself, at least until our next "day of professions". Some of the younger children might have liked an astronaut or a bankrobber to talk about their careers. Perhaps one will volunteer for next year.

By Cathrin Cordes and Christine Pleines

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## Saturday School Dates

### 29th March

Easter Egg Hunt & last date of term

### 5th April

First Aid Course for teachers

### 26th April - 12th July

10 Saturday School altogether sessions

Half-Term holidays on 24th and 31st May

# Day of Professions - the student perspective

The mornings in Carola's adult course at Deutsche Samstagsschule Islington are always joyful and very interesting, but they could not have been more animated on February 7th. "Berufetag" always brings a little buzz to our school, it is nice to be visited by professionals, who try and explain the pros and cons of their profession to the different classes in the school.

Visiting our class is a little daunting, I have to admit. Being interrogated by a bunch of highly opinionated individuals trained by years of life together with a German partner is not a stroll in the park or the usual idea of a quiet Saturday morning!

Yet, our guests did brilliantly!

The first to visit us was Sebastian, a very communicative journalist, who introduced us to the intricacies of a free-lance job in the media sector. Prompted by our many questions, he described his typical day, which normally starts with an overview of what is happening in the world via internet, radio and press agency news. This first "filtering" is fundamental for his decision on what to consider worth discussing. Selecting a handful of topics to offer to the various newspapers and weekly magazines in Germany and in the UK is the most important decision of the day, since it determines the topics on which Sebastian will write later on during the day.



Photo: Alexander Hug

Architect Maria in discussion with Gipi and his classmates

Clearly this job never stops, as we are all bombarded by news from all over the world, which incessantly arrive via internet, radio, television and smartphone. Is there still a role for journalism in this "wired" era? Sebastian's answer was an enthusiastic: "Yes, of course. Journalists are at the frontline of the information flow, providing at the same time highlights on the most important news and analysing on how these impact on local and global life". Therefore, journalists select, inform and educate their readers, everyday. Not a job for the fainthearted!

Our second guest was Maria, a young and dynamic architect operating in London. Maria first told us how she learned the trade by some of the most emblematic architects teaching in London, such as Christine Hawley at the Bartlett School of Architecture at University College London.

Maria was immediately catapulted into the lion's den – our class has its good share of architects (Alan and Dan), who knew exactly the rules of the game and grilled her from the very start. Maria did brilliantly in answering their and other questions coming from the attentive audience, such as: What are the most interesting aspects of the job? What is the most difficult part?

Whilst the first answer was not univocal, the second part was: all agreed that the relationships with the project managers remain the most delicate aspect of the trade. This was a true discovery for the non-experts in the field. This discussion highlighted the difficulties in translating the concept of a new building into the reality of brick and mortar, and in managing a myriad of contractors operating at the building site. Therefore, the daunting aspect of this job seems not to be at the "creativity" end but at the "practical" end. What a breaking news: would you have expected this?

by Giampietro Schiavo (Gipi) from Carola's adult class

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# Different ideas for visiting Germany

School visits, camps, horse-riding, language courses or music workshops

## The Three Musketeers

"May 2013. Three boys from Christine's class in Islington travelled to Germany together, to the Friesland Brass Academy! In the Whitsun holidays 2013 Gabriel, Leon and I spent a week playing our brass instruments in Zetel, a small village on the North Sea coast. Two trombones and a trumpeter were part of a group of about 100 young people who all had the same hobby. We were immediately dubbed 'the three from Great Britain'. Even the regional newspapers in North-West Germany mentioned us and were proud that three Londoners had come to Zetel. Leon and I were participating for the second time already. It was great that we could improve our music as well as our German, and in the process met good friends from all over Germany with similar interests. We also took part in the big final concert and of course we stay in touch via Facebook."



Leon, Gabriel & Nelson at "Friesland Brass Akademie" in May 2013

As Nelson has correctly noted, you most successfully learn and improve your language skills in the country where it is spoken. Regular holidays in German-speaking countries are therefore just the ticket for our Saturday School pupils. It doesn't always have to be holidays with Grandma and Granddad, though. Our Saturday School pupils have tried a variety of things and we have researched a few holiday offers in Germany and Austria.

## Caitlin's visit to a German school

First of all Caitlin will have her say. Two summers ago, when she was 11, Caitlin had the opportunity to attend a school in Frankfurt for a few weeks: "The first morning I was quite nervous. I thought I'd be in the same class as Leon, my youngest cousin.

But then I ended up in the parallel class where I didn't know anyone. But two girls from the class welcomed me straightaway. One of them was half English, too, so I was immediately relieved. The teacher and the other children in the class were also very nice and I felt comfortable from the start. The teachers were also quite cool and they didn't insist I do all of the homework! All of our work books were in different coloured sleeves and it was great fun to shop at the German stationer's.



Caitlin and her cousins in Frankfurt

I had many new experiences and my new friends made me forget my homesickness. The Carl-Schurz-Schule is very big with more than a thousand pupils and long corridors. We had to change classrooms for each lesson. During the lessons there were many things that I didn't understand straightaway. The topic in maths, for example, was geometry and the words were particularly long, so that initially I didn't understand anything. During breaks I had lots of fun with my friends. We were the youngest in the school and my big cousin Maxi always kept an eye on me. On the last day of school, my class made a lovely farewell card for me.

It was exciting to experience a school in Germany. In Secondary School it would be much harder, I would be worried about missing too many lessons. Although I was a little homesick, I benefited from my time at the school in Frankfurt. My German is definitely better and I have much more courage to try out new things."

Caitlin made use of the second half of Year 6, the last year of primary school, when no new subject matter is being taught and pupils cannot lose their school places. Lilly, who like Caitlin is now in our GCSE class, also spent time in Germany when she was in Year 6, and currently, Lupa from Gaby's class has just set off.

## Horse-riding holidays

There are hundreds of horse-riding schools in Germany who offer horse-riding holidays for families or unaccompanied children – sometimes from as young as 6 - and youngsters: Novices can participate in daily riding lessons, those more advanced can work towards a variety of riding badges. A perfect holiday for horse lovers.



Harriet's horse-riding holidays, summer 2013

Harriet, a Saturday School pupil from Barbara's class, agrees: "In the summer holidays I spent a week at 'Ponyhof Schulze-Schleithoff', a pony farm in Münsterland, near where my Grandma lives. I had to speak German the whole time and that was a lot of fun. Two to ten children sleep in a room together. I shared a room with five other girls. We went pony-riding every day and the food was great. Besides riding there was a rowing boat, a lock for swimming and a huge garden! There were about 60 ponies, from Shetlands to huge horses. I think it is a great holiday if you like horses."

## Holiday Camps

Besides horse-riding camps there are a whole range of other holiday camps: for example sports holidays, holidays on a farm, adventure holidays and camping holidays. There is a huge variety on offer. A seal of approval, the "QMJSicherGut!", is given by the Federal Forum of Child and Youth Travel to organisations that fulfil certain pedagogical criteria. One of those organisations is KIJU-Reisen, which runs holiday camps for various age groups (6-9, 10-13, 14-17) all over Germany and besides the archetypal holiday camps with night-time excursions, campfire and disco there are adventure or themed holidays with a focus on e.g. photography, drama, sports or dance. A week costs from €169.

German youth hostels also have the

'QMJSicherGut!' seal and offer children's and youth camps for children from the age of eight. Camps cost from €195 per week and offer a variety of activities. You could even learn how to build a tepee. There are sports, games and football fields and, of course, the obligatory night-time excursions.

## Language Camps

For older children and particularly teenagers who might like to intensively prepare for a language exam we recommend a language course in Germany or Austria. Fenja, currently in Christine's class, was totally thrilled by her experience at the KAPITO language school in Münster. A three-week language course at KAPITO currently costs €510, plus €490 for a room with half-board.

The Goethe-Institut offers two- to three-week-long language courses for children from the age of nine in 32 cities from Aachen to Vienna. Besides the German lessons, of which there are 20 to 30 per week, there are various sports, cultural and leisure activities. Sounds great, but isn't cheap: on average two weeks cost €2,440 plus flight.

The Humboldt-Institut also organises language courses in eight locations in Germany and Austria. The majority of courses are for teenagers aged 14 to 18, but there are also two language schools for 10-to 14-year-olds. Pupils are housed in boarding schools or host families. Costs are from €737 per week, plus extra for activities such as sailing, diving or rowing. The institute also offers attendance at German boarding grammar schools, for between €1,400 and €3,100 per month.

With some googling, asking around and imagination there are probably many other and less expensive possibilities. Nelson's mum, for example, discovered the brass course purely by chance in a local newspaper.

by Martina Köpcke with contributions by Nelson Falcó Cordes, Harriet Marchand and Caitlin Southern.

## Websites

<http://www.reiten-weltweit.de/daten/kinderreitferien-deutschland.html>  
<http://www.kiju-reisen.de>  
<http://kapito.com>  
[http://www.goethe.de/ins/de/spr/kuj/kur/deindex.htm?wt\\_sc=jugend](http://www.goethe.de/ins/de/spr/kuj/kur/deindex.htm?wt_sc=jugend)  
<http://www.humboldt-institut.org/german-language-courses/courses-for-teenagers.html>  
<http://www.jugendherberge.de/inspiration/kinderfreizeit>



## Fenja's language course experience in Münster

In the summer of 2012 I attended a three-week language course in the German city of Münster. The language school – KAPITO – was fantastic, and I enjoyed it so much that I would have loved to have stayed on. There were students from all over the world, which was amazing! There were loads of people from Switzerland, some Mexicans, Venezuelans, Koreans, Polish, Spanish, literally from everywhere.



Fenja (centre with red top), surrounded by her course mates in Münster

Everyone was very friendly and I made some really good friends with whom I am still in touch. My German improved tremendously and it really boosted my confidence. Münster is a really good city and very safe. You can cycle everywhere. It's a really young city as well so there were a lot of young people to meet.

We had four hours of German lessons every day. We did a lot of grammar which I actually enjoyed. There was also a lot of reading but the main focus was on grammar and speaking, and we would discuss a topic each lesson or learn some poetry etc.

There was a so-called "culture course" running alongside the language course: on the first day we all went to the local sports ground and had a game of football, which was good because I was feeling a little bit lonely. This was a good way of meeting people. They showed films in the school, we also went canoeing, were taken on a trip to Cologne and also went to a Picasso exhibition. One weekend I went to a football match - Münster against Bremen – and Münster won, which was amazing! There was a lot to do so we were never bored. Sometimes I had to rest because it was so exhausting, and it was also the hottest summer in decades. I would definitely say that the culture course was as good as the language course, if not better because it was more fun. We also had a lot of free time and were able to wander around Cologne on our own to explore the city.

There are various accommodation options. You can stay in a self-catered apartment or with a family. I chose the family option. They were lovely, and again I am still in contact with them. They provided me with two meals (I would buy my own lunch) and generally look after me. It was good to be in a family environment, especially as I was only 16 at the time. They were very relaxed and nice and even lent me a spare bike to get around. I would definitely advise to stay with a family.

After my stay in Münster my German was about five times better, but more importantly I was about twenty times more confident to speak it. I would definitely recommend it to people and I fully intend to return to Münster in my gap year.

By Fenja Akinde-Hummel

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## Our new Saturday School Treasurer Janet Kroll

Hello, my name is Janet and I am very happy to be the Saturday School's new treasurer. My son Julian had spent many years on the waiting list. We had heard many good things about this school, and now we have been coming here for almost two years and really appreciate how Saturday School promotes German in such a friendly atmosphere.

I am a historian and a Ph.D. student in Ancient History. I had been looking for part-time work for some time. When Cathrin's email appeared in my inbox, looking for a new treasurer for the Saturday School, I saw it as a sign, as I originally trained in a bank and studied business in Germany.

Cathrin, Ursula and Ulrike helped me learn the ropes and the Saturday School families have given me a warm welcome as their new treasurer. In future, we want to move further towards online banking and would like to ask for your support. I already look forward to the coming term!



Janet and her son Julian in the Saturday School