



## PRESS RELEASE

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### **Educational Visit from Finland**

Over the past week Lower Primary School staff have welcomed Finnish educationalist Ms Leena Heinila to their schools. Ms Heinila's visit has cemented the cultural and educational ties established by the Department of Education after their visit to Helsinki earlier this year. Teachers have attended presentations, taken part in collaborative discussions and have enjoyed workshops where they have been able to achieve a better understanding of what has made the Finnish educational model a point of reference for outstanding educational philosophy, practice and achievement throughout the world.

Ms Heinila has also had the opportunity to learn about Gibraltar's educational system in a primary school setting by peer and collaborative teaching in our classrooms through the week. Another highlight of the visit was a question and answer session held at Westside School with Newly Qualified Teachers where peer mentoring, empowerment and collaboration were the main topics discussed. The Department of Education will continue to engender these cultural and educational learning exchanges by extending them to all teachers in other school sectors in the near future.

Ms Heinila said: "It has been a brilliant possibility to enhance learning and sharing from each other. There are so many great collaborative school projects happening in your schools, which engage students and promote their reflective thinking and knowledge applying skills. When reflecting about daily education practices in the light of another culture, even another local school or class culture, our eyes open to completely new questions enabling a mutual learning and sharing. I am amazed to see the rich cultural opportunities you have here in Gibraltar to be implemented and applied into your own local learning culture. Thank you so much for sharing it with me."

Director of Education, Mrs Jacqueline Mason, said: "This has been an exciting opportunity for our professionals to come together sharing and celebrating outstanding professional practices both here in Gibraltar and Finland. Ms Heinila has led workshops and discussions on collaborative teaching and learning focussing on a holistic, topic-based model."

Minister for Education, the Hon John Cortes, said: "The Finnish educational model of collaborative teaching and learning, reduction of stress from exams, and focus on developing the child as a person



is very close to the Government's philosophy driving the current changes in our Education system. By exploring the model at close quarters, we are better placed to consider how we may be able to adapt our system as we move forward. It shows how deeply we are looking at improving Education, and how we are not solely focusing on buildings, important as they are."