



## PRESS RELEASE

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### **Department of Education: Lessons from Finland**

A team from the Department of Education have concluded their three day educational visit to Finland. The team comprised of Senior Executive Officer; Dympna Holmes and Education Advisers; Stuart Borastero and Christopher Gomila. The visit aimed to get a behind the scenes insight on the successes of the Finnish Education system.

Finland's education system is regarded as one of the most successful education systems in the world, with countries such as Singapore looking at Finland in order to improve their successful but rigid system.

The visit allowed the team access into a number of Finnish Schools and the leading Vocational Studies college in Finland, this was coupled with academic lectures and meetings aimed at finding out what makes the system run so effectively.

#### **Teaching and Learning**

Unsurprisingly the team found that at the core of the Finnish system was the central focus on the teaching and learning processes. All training and professional development is targeted at improving the understanding and quality of the teaching and learning processes that take place in lessons. Teachers are constantly asked to question how best children learn and how they can improve the quality of learning that takes place in their classroom. There is a huge emphasis on co-teaching and co-planning with every child receiving an almost individualized pathway for their education. Children are nurtured so they become the citizens of tomorrow.

#### **Curriculum**

The central Finnish curriculum is designed to allow teachers to flourish in their creative approach towards teaching and learning. The central curriculum is distilled by the school and its teachers to ensure that they develop happy, responsible and resilient self motivated learners. The lack of high stake exams from the ages of 6 through to 18 means that students are nurtured in a successful and



less stressful environment throughout their educational journey. The curriculum builds learners that see the value of learning and take responsibility for their academic success.

### **Pastoral Care**

The Finnish Anti-Bullying scheme ranks amongst the best in the world. It defines bullying as systematic and aggressive behaviour against an individual who cannot defend themselves from the actions of the perpetrator. The program focuses on working with the bully, the victim and the bystanders. The key philosophy being that bystanders are the most powerful way of eradicating bullying.

### **Vocational Studies**

Students wishing to follow a vocational route can do so in Finland as from the end of their compulsory education at age 16. Up to 50% of students attend specialized Vocational Colleges who deliver a wide range of vocational options very similar to those being planned for the Gibraltar College. These vocational courses offer students the opportunity of developing skills for work by means of work placements at local employers who are key to the setup of these colleges.

### **Learning Communities**

The entire Finnish educational system is setup to nurture communities of learning. Teachers have lunch with their students so that they develop social skills and can model positive behaviours. Students can choose how they learn best in a relaxed environment and are taught at an early age to value those choices. Parents support and value the teaching profession which in turn allows teachers to focus on teaching and learning throughout the school year.

### **Key Lessons**

The visit has provided the Department of Education with a number of lessons which will gradually be implemented across our schools for the benefit of all of our students. The contacts nurtured during this visit will allow the Department of Education to coordinate the exchange of students, staff and training over the coming years. It is an exciting time for education in Gibraltar and the lessons learnt from Finland have served as reinforcement that we are heading in the right direction with regards to Vocational education and have given us direction in other areas with exciting potential.

Minister for Education, the Hon John Cortes, said: “We continue to look at ways of improving Education in Gibraltar and we are reaching out beyond England to explore possibilities to achieve an Education system that is second to none.”