



香港直接資助學校議會

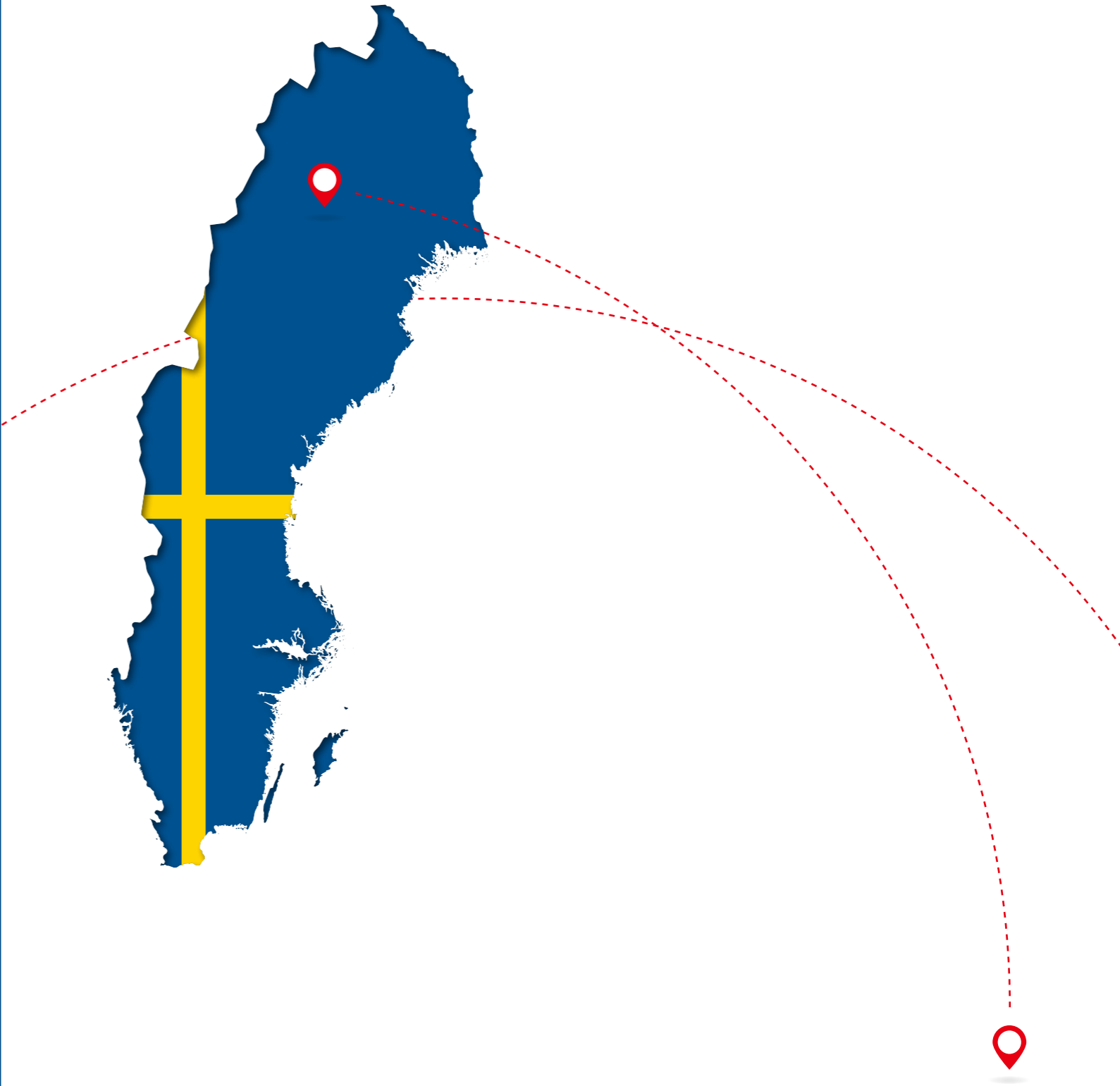
Hong Kong Direct Subsidy Scheme Schools Council



VISIT UNIVERSITY

SWEDEN EDUCATIONAL TRIP 2023





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FOREWORD

The Hong Kong Direct Subsidy Scheme Schools Council's Overseas Educational Tour has been a hallmark event since its inception in 2008. After a hiatus caused by the pandemic, we were thrilled to resume this tradition with a remarkable visit to Stockholm, Sweden, in late April 2023.

Our diverse delegation, including teachers, principals, university lecturers, and School Sponsoring Body representatives, embarked on a transformative journey. We explored Swedish schools, engaged with local educators, and immersed ourselves in the vibrant culture of Stockholm. This journey provided an opportunity for our participants to gain a deep understanding of the Swedish and Scandinavian education systems. It expanded their horizons and offered insights into the unique educational practices of this region. Interacting with Swedish students and educators enriched our cross-cultural perspectives.

Beyond academic exploration, this tour fostered strong bonds among participants. Collaborative exchanges of ideas and best practices strengthened our educational community. The tour ignited a spirit of unity, and we left Stockholm with a renewed commitment to collaboration. Without a doubt, all participants found immense value in this trip and eagerly anticipate future collaborations between Hong Kong and Stockholm schools as well as the professional exchange and partnership among Hong Kong schools.

In conclusion, the 2023 Overseas Educational Tour to Sweden was a resounding success, reinvigorating our commitment to educational excellence and global engagement. As we look ahead, we see boundless opportunities for collaboration, and we remain dedicated to providing exceptional learning experiences for our members on the international stage.

Dion Chen

Chairman, Hong Kong Direct Subsidy Scheme Schools Council
Principal, Ying Wa College



DELEGATION

School	Name	Position
Caritas Charles Vath College	Ms. Hung Yuk Yee (Uri)	Principal
Creative Secondary School	Ms. Lo Lok Yin (Tiffany)	Deputy Head of Junior School & Drama Teacher
	Ms. Zhao Jingjing (Grace)	Deputy Head of Junior School & Chinese Teacher
Delia (Man Kiu) English Primary School	Ms. Leung Yuk Ping (Carol)	Administrator
Diocesan Girls' School	Mrs. Stella Lau, SBS, JP	Principal
DSS Admin Support	Mr. Cheng Enoch	
ECF Saint Too Canaan College	Mr. Lee Ka Ming	Principal
	Mr. Pang Bing Lun Leander	Vice Principal
Good Hope School	Ms. Chu Hoi Yan (Angel)	Associate Head of Student Affairs Committee
HKBUAS Wong Kam Fai Secondary and Primary School	Dr. Cheung Shui Ha Ruby	Vice Principal (Student Development)
HKMA David Li Kwok Po College	Ms. Sit Tsang Jenny	Deputy Principal
HKUGA College	Ms. Chen Hing Corina	Principal
	Ms. Shum Ka Yan Dorothy	Head of Admissions & Career Guidance
	Mr. Lam Cho Pang (Gary)	Assistant Principal
Law Ting Pong Secondary School	Ms. Lam Sui Mei (Eliza)	Vice Principal
PLK HKTA Yuen Yuen Primary School	Ms. Yu Yuen Man (Janet)	Head of Physical Education
PLK Laws Foundation College	Dr. Suen Ka Chun	Principal
	Mr. Lee Kin Fung William	Principal
	Mr. Leung Yuet Fai (Simon)	Senior Teacher
Stewards Pooi Kei College	Mr. Lam Wah Yeu (Roy)	Senior Teacher
The Education University of Hong Kong	Dr. Fong Wai Tsz Ricci	Assistant Professor
WF Joseph Lee Primary School	Ms. Poon Ka Suen (Victoria)	Principal
	Ms. Lee Christina Maisenne	School Manager
Ying Wa College	Mr. Dion Chen	Principal / Delegation Leader
	Mr. Tsang Chi To (Joseph)	Vice Principal
YMCA of Hong Kong Christian College	Mr. Andrew Higgins	Deputy Principal

TOUR ITINERARY

29th April, 2023 (Saturday)

Departure

30th April, 2023 (Sunday)

Visit to a local church for Sunday service
 Explore market in central Stockholm
 Visit Skansen outdoor park for 1st May Valpurgis celebrations

1st May, 2023 (Monday)

Culture visit in central Stockholm
 Meet with Professor Ulf Fredrikson from the University of Stockholm

2nd May, 2023 (Tuesday)

Visit to Internationella Engelska Skolan Taby

3rd May, 2023 (Wednesday)

Visit to Ansgars Christian School
 Visit to Gamla Uppsala
 Visit to Uppsala University

4th May, 2023 (Thursday)

Visit to Christian School Johan Movinger
 Visit to St Erik's Catholic Primary School
 Attend a music concert by the Royal Stockholm Philharmonic Orchestra

5th May, 2023 (Friday)

Visit to Adolf Fredriks Primary School
 Visit to Kulturama Gymnasium Secondary School
 Visit to Manillaskolen (a Special Educational Needs School for deaf children)

6th May, 2023 (Saturday)

Return to Hong Kong



Dr. Ruby Cheung
 Vice Principal, HKBUAS Wong Kam Fai Secondary and Primary School

Ms. Uri Hung
 Principal, Caritas Charles Vath College



29th April, 2023 (Saturday)

Having taken a long flight, we started our educational journey in Sweden on 29th April, 2023.

To start with, everyone put aside their tight work schedule in Hong Kong and learned to taste the “relaxing” life in Sweden. We enjoyed a relaxing lunch at Picchus Café. It was really a fantastic experience. We were greatly impressed by the Swedish hospitality in the restaurant. It was well decorated with a warm and relaxing home environment for the guests. Most importantly, we tasted the Swedish food and experienced the Scandinavian cultures through interflow with the people there.

Following that, we explored the “beauty and prosperity” of Stockholm by visiting some highlight attractions around the charming harbour. The city buildings exhibit the unique architectural style, culture and history of Sweden. A memorable moment of the city tour was discovering lots of cherry blossoms in a market selling food and handicrafts of Scandinavian traditions and culture. We could not wait to share our wonderful and excited feelings at the dinner gathering.

In summary, we treasured friendship and shared an enjoyable journey with each other on our first day in Sweden!

Mr. Lee Kin Fung William

Principal, Stewards Pooi Kei College

Mr. Lam Wah Yeu (Roy)

Senior Teacher, Stewards Pooi Kei College

Ms. Sit Tsang Jenny

Deputy Principal, HKMA David Li Kwok Po College

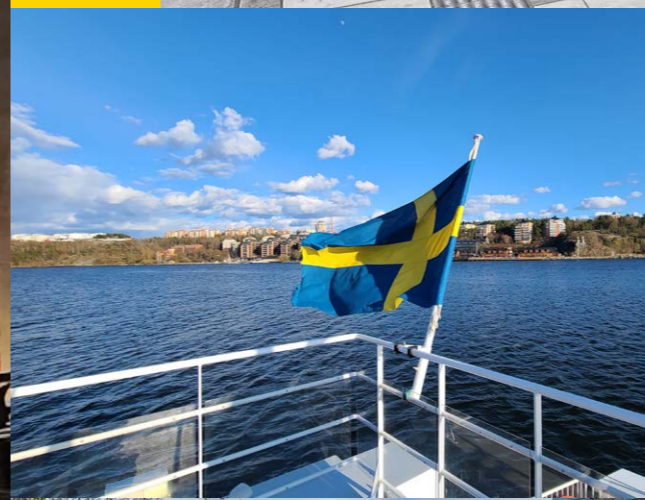
As the sun rose over the stunning city of Sweden, the warm rays of sunlight illuminated our path towards the second day of our tour focusing on the rich culture of Stockholm.

We started our day with a visit to the Sunday market outside the Stockholm Concert Hall. The bustling market was filled with a variety of stalls selling old historical items, like old coins and stamps, vintage clothing and vinyl records of Swedish music. It provided a glimpse into the rich cultural heritage of this city.

After exploring the market, we hopped on a bus to a nearby church for the Sunday service. It was a pleasant surprise to experience such a stress-free and clean bus ride. The contrast with the Hong Kong bus service was striking, as passengers with pets could also take the bus, showing the respect of equality in Sweden.

The Sunday service at St Peter and St Sigfrid's church was a beautiful and serene experience. The decorations of the church were breathtaking, with intricate stained-glass windows and ornate carvings adorning the walls. The service began with a hymn, followed by a prayer, and then a reading from the Bible. The sermon was centered on the love of Jesus, who sacrificed himself for the sins of humankind.

After lunch, we embarked on a boat tour to explore Stockholm 'from the water'. Stockholm is known as the "Venice of the North", and it is easy to see why. The scenery was breathtaking, and we were able to see many historical landmarks from the boat, including the Royal Palace, the City Hall and Gröna Lund's Amusement Park. We then visited the Vasa Museum, an important cultural institution that showcases the history of Sweden's naval power. As soon as we entered the Vasa Museum, we couldn't help but be amazed by its core exhibit as well as the subtle lighting that adds to its fantastic effect. The museum houses the well-preserved Vasa galleon, a 17th-century warship which was originally built to be the largest warship of its time to demonstrate the king's power. However, it sank within minutes of setting sail in 1628 and remained a controversial topic for many years. It was not salvaged until over 300 years later and has since been restored to excellent condition. The ship is divided into six levels, allowing visitors to carefully admire the Vasa galleon from the keel to the stern. The ship was incredibly well-preserved revealing the extraordinary engineering feats that were achieved during the 17th century. The intricate decoration was a testament to the craftsmanship of the time. It was inspiring to see such a piece of history up close and personal, and the effort Sweden has made in its heritage conservation.



As the day drew to a close, we headed to Skansen outdoor park to celebrate Valborg, the night of the bonfire in Sweden. The park was filled with people of all ages, and the atmosphere was electric. At dusk, a bonfire was lit, and people gathered to listen to speeches and songs welcoming spring and a brighter future. It is traditionally believed to ward off evil spirits, but now a festive way of getting rid of excess gardening odds and ends. Valborg is an important celebration in Sweden as a reminder that despite the long, dark winter months, there is always a time of renewal and growth. The evening was filled with laughter and joy connecting with friendly Swedish people.

Overall, our trip to Stockholm was an incredible experience. The city is filled with beauty, culture, and history. We were thankful for the Hong Kong Direct Subsidy Scheme Schools Council's efforts in creating such a memorable adventure. The warm and friendly Swedish teachers and students made us feel welcome, and we left with a newfound appreciation for Swedish schools and its education system, especially for its uniqueness: focusing on equality, creativity and the individuality of children.

30th April, 2023 (Sunday)

Dr. Fong Wai Tsz Ricci

Assistant Professor, The Education University of Hong Kong

On 1st May, 2023, we had the pleasure of visiting Stockholm's City Hall. Located on the shores of Lake Mälaren, the building is known for its remarkable architecture, grandeur, and significance in Sweden. It houses the Municipal Council, and its Blue Hall is the venue of the annual Nobel Prize banquet. We were mesmerised by the intricate details and artwork that adorns its interior. To me, the Golden Hall was the most unforgettable space in the building. Even from a distance, one will be attracted by the breath-taking and unique Egyptian-inspired decor of the Hall. Decorated by millions of shimmering mosaic tiles made of glass and gold leaf, the depiction of Gustav Vasa, the founder of modern Sweden, sits at the centre of a gigantic mural facing the hallway. Surrounding the depiction of Gustav Vasa are scenes from Swedish history and mythology. It includes a scene which shows Gustav Vasa riding a horse and leading his army to victory against the Danes. Another scene depicts Saint George slaying the dragon, a symbol of the triumph of good over evil. The hall also features depictions of famous Swedish authors and scientists who are celebrated for their contributions to Sweden.

To prepare us for the week of school visits, we attended a sharing session by Prof. Ulf Fredriksson from Stockholm University in the afternoon on Swedish education system and the key challenges they face. The general structure of their education system is different from that in Hong Kong on various fronts whether in terms of funding structure, quality assurance mechanisms, and student admission policies. We were impressed by the system's emphasis on equity, equality and student-centredness. Their education focuses on nurturing individuals with critical thinking, creativity, and skills that they need to succeed in life in their own unique ways. These are goals that we have been striving to achieve through our school education in Hong Kong and we could not wait to find out more about Swedish education at the operational level.

However, Prof. Fredriksson also highlighted three key challenges that the Swedish education system is facing, namely, teacher shortages, equity issue among schools, and the overall quality of education. In the first instance, the point about teacher shortages surprised the audience and we were intrigued to learn that Sweden is also facing a similar conundrum as we do due to a different set of contextual factors. Another challenge is the increasing school segregation, with students from different socioeconomic backgrounds attending different schools. This has resulted in increasing ethnic segregation among schools (i.e. educational inequity), which in turn, carries a notable impact on the quality of education in some district areas. In terms of the overall quality of education in Sweden, the academic performance of Swedish students declined in international tests from 2003 to 2012, followed by a rising trend in performance over the most recent decade. We had a fruitful dialogue with Prof Fredriksson, both at the sharing session and the dinner that followed. His sharing boosted our interest in Swedish education and set a perfect stage for the subsequent week of school visits.



1st May, 2023 (Monday)

Mr. Dion Chen

Principal, Ying Wa College

Mr. Tsang Chi To (Joseph)

Vice Principal, Ying Wa College

On 2nd May, the delegation visited Internationella Engelska Skolan (IES) Taby junior school campus and senior school campus, and was warmly received by their principal Dr. Anthony Adames and their two assistant principals Mr. Chris Bradley and Ms. Pic Wartanian.

IES Taby is one of the independent schools in Sweden, which offers education to children of years 4-6 (mellanstadiet) and years 7-9 (hogstadiet) as part of the compulsory education of the country.

Independent schools in Sweden (as opposed to 'municipal schools') share some similarities with DSS schools in Hong Kong – they are publicly funded schools in which students come to study with tax-funded vouchers; yet these schools strive for developing their own unique characteristics to appeal to parents and to attract particular student groups.

Bilingual Education

IES Taby, as one of 46 schools in Sweden under the IES group, prides herself on their bilingual (Swedish and English) education. As we visited their junior and senior sections, we found that many teachers are recruited from overseas, and they demonstrated both high proficiency in English as well as a strong sense of language support in their classroom teaching. As what we observed in the junior aesthetic lessons (wood work, home economics, craft, textile), classroom settings, displays, teaching aids such as posters and cue cards were made in both Swedish and English. Interestingly enough, teachers shared that raising the English competence of their students was also an explicit objective to assist their learning of Swedish.



Life Skills Education

We were particularly impressed by the set-up of their Home Economics subject. The teacher explained that traditional stoves (not controlled by a touch-based electronic panel) were used in their classroom. While students might find them unfamiliar, the teacher adopted an enquiry-approach to guide students to explore in what ways they were different from the stoves they had at home, and let students figure how to turn the knobs to switch them on and adjust the heat. These seemingly trivial matters in fact are important problem-solving skills that our younger generation need to equip themselves with. Their Home Economics curriculum also stresses how to manage household finances, and how to make sensible consumption choices by taking environmental factors (how human interact with the nature) and healthy lifestyle choices (nutrients and healthy eating) into consideration.

Student Welfare

Principal Dr. Anthony also shared with the delegation that IES Taby, like many other schools in Sweden, puts a strong emphasis on the welfare of students and staff members. IES Taby has a specific 'environment improvement team' to inspect the school campus and identify needs for repair or improvement on a daily basis.

Not only the physical environment, but also the social environment and welfare are well taken care of. Students are provided with free meals with great nutritional value every day. The meals come with a wide variety of food, and are significantly less salty compared with the food the delegation tried in commercial restaurants. IES Taby has three school nurses and a school doctor to provide all students with health prevention interventions, e.g. vaccinations, health talks and medical checkups for scoliosis.

Freedom and Order

Students in IES Taby enjoy a lot of freedom. They do not have to wear school uniform to school. (In fact school uniform is banned in all schools in Sweden.) They also have a rather personalised timetable: they come to school at different times, and they have a lot of free time during school hours on campus, spending time in common areas hanging out with friends or doing their own studies.



However, the school also has high expectations on students' morals and behaviour. Students there need to call their teachers by 'Mr.' or 'Ms.' instead of their first name. Their 'mentor programmes' (which is similar to the class teacher system in Hong Kong) are in place as an opportunity for teachers to work proactively with issues that impact school. Topics such as mental wellbeing, study techniques, appropriate language and respect, drug and alcohol awareness rotate monthly and include 2-3 mentor activities, an assembly and a parent/student homework. To handle students' misbehaviour and special needs, 'consequences' and 'support' are equally stressed.

Curriculum and Assessment

Sweden does not have a public examination similar to the HKDSE as a high-stake common exit examination for secondary school leavers. Instead, school teachers grade their own students, generally starting from grade 6 onwards, and those grades are used when students move up along their 'study ladder' applying for senior high school (gymnasiums) and universities. Teachers use grading criteria to assess students' knowledge in relation to their grades, and they assign the grade that best reflects the student's overall performance in the subject. When students are not satisfied with their grades, they can ask for teachers' feedback and continue to improve their work in order to achieve a better grade.

Meanwhile, there are 'National Tests' for particular subjects (i.e. Swedish, English and Maths in Years 3 and 6) and also in Science, Social Studies and Modern Foreign Languages in Year 9). When assigning grades for internal assessment, teachers must take the results of students' National Tests into account. In other words, the National Tests are used to regulate the standard and assessment literacy of school teachers, and to a certain extent, uphold fairness across schools in the whole nation. Nonetheless, even though the national test papers are uniform and highly secured, school teachers mark the papers of the students of their own school.



IES Taby follows the Swedish national curriculum and assessment practice. Integrity in grading as well as assessment literacy are pivotal at their school. All teachers employed at IES Taby are qualified (i.e. possess a teacher license) so that they can do the grading by themselves. Moderation is set up internally to help teachers that the grades are set fairly. Any deviations in grades are compared to the national test results. Subject facilitators and academic managers coordinate the quality of teaching and grading. On the other hand, Skolinspektionen, the Swedish school inspectorate, has confirmed that IES Taby grading works well. As a matter of fact, students at IES Taby do very good in their internal assessments as well as the national tests.



2nd May, 2023 (Tuesday)



Ms. Lo Lok Yin (Tiffany)

Deputy Head of Junior School & Drama Teacher, Creative Secondary School

Ms. Zhao Jingjing (Grace)

Deputy Head of Junior School & Chinese Teacher, Creative Secondary School



The School

Täby Internationella Engelska Skolan, located in Sweden, is a unique educational institution that provides education for students from Grade 4-9. Established in 2006, this school has quickly become a popular choice for families seeking high-quality education for their children. The school comprises of two campuses for lower and upper school, accommodating a total of 1306 students. One of the distinguishing features of this school is that it teaches in both English and Swedish, with a 50-50 split between the two languages, preparing students to become considerate and persistent global citizens in the future.

Our Visit

During our visit to Täby, we were truly inspired and educated by what we witnessed. As soon as we had arrived, we were greeted by familiar faces - Anthony Adames (Principal of Täby, also our former Principal at Creative Secondary School), Pic Wartanian (Assistant Principal Academics Years 4-9) and Chris Bradley (Assistant Principal of Junior School).

One thing that immediately stood out to us was how friendly and welcoming the students were. They were eager to engage with us and share their experiences at the school. It was clear that they took pride in their education and were passionate about learning.

As we walked around the school, we could see all the walls and corridors are well decorated to show students' creativity and achievements. The smiles on students' faces are great evidence of the school achieving their aim to create a calm, safe and orderly environment for students and teachers!

School Policies

Following the Swedish culture, there is no social distinction between staff members, non-staff members, and students in the school. Despite this, the school has still been able to enforce some policies, such as all subjects must have a seating plan, students must call their teachers by "Mr." or "Ms.", and, very similar to Hong Kong schools, there is a no-phone policy. These school policies clearly outline the responsibilities of both teachers and students, setting expectations and accountability for all involved in the students' education.

Curriculum

In Täby, students need to finish 17 subjects for their studies. The school's curriculum goes beyond traditional academic lessons and includes practical life skills such as Woodwork, Home Economics and Textiles, which provide opportunities for students to develop hands-on skills and gain a deeper understanding of various trades. It was fascinating to see that students are given the flexibility to choose their own learning path based on their abilities and interests.

With the option to reduce the number of subjects to a minimum of three (with valid reasons), students can focus on what they excel at and have a better chance of succeeding in their academic pursuits.

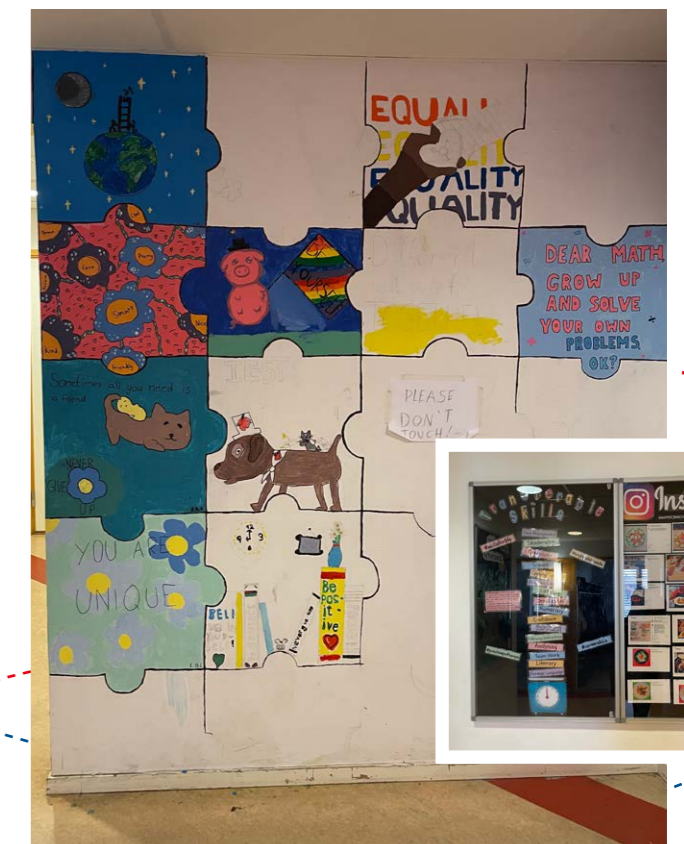
Besides academic learning, Täby also provides 'Fritids' (a bilingual, pedagogical center) for all students from grades 4-6 after the last lesson until 5 pm. Students can do activities, enjoy games and make new friends there. They also have an after-school Junior Club that allows students to do their homework.

Chinese Programme

As part of Täby's language programme, students have the opportunity to choose from German, French, Spanish, and Chinese as their third language. Täby's Chinese programme provides students with an exciting opportunity to learn about the Chinese language and appreciate the culture. Through this programme, students have the chance to connect with people from different parts of the world by writing letters to foreign pen pals to practice their written language. Additionally, grade 6 students will start learning a dragon dance next year as a way to further deepen their understanding of Chinese culture.

Conclusion

Overall, our visit to Täby Internationella Engelska Skolan broadened our horizons and provided us with valuable insights into the Swedish educational system. We hope to apply some of these practices to our classrooms in Hong Kong and continue to foster a love of learning among our students.



2nd May, 2023 (Tuesday)

Ms. Chen Hing Corina

Principal, HKUGA College

Mr. Lam Cho Pang (Gary)

Assistant Principal, HKUGA College

Ms. Shum Ka Yan Dorothy

Head of Admission & Career Guidance, HKUGA College

Reflections on Ansgar School in Uppsala

On 3rd May, we had the pleasure of visiting Ansgar School in Uppsala, Sweden. This esteemed institution, consisting of both junior and senior levels, is committed to providing quality education and upholding the shared values of protecting every child's education, safety, and personal development. The Ansgar schools are a modern school with high results in a warm study environment. Since the start in 1985, Ansgarskolarna has grown to ten school units with preschools, primary schools, special schools and high schools with a total of almost a thousand children and students and 200 employees. The schools are located in different places in and around Uppsala, but are all imbued with the same goal: to protect every child and student's education, safety and values.

A Culture of Safety and Inclusivity

Upon entering the Ansgar School campus, it was immediately apparent that the school prioritizes the safety and well-being of its students with their dedication to providing a secure and inclusive environment for all students, regardless of their backgrounds.



Personalized Learning

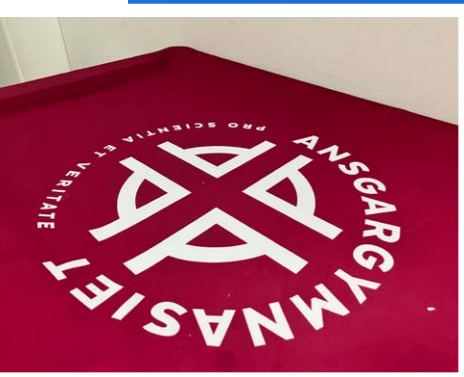
Ansgar School is renowned for students of diverse abilities and interests. During our visit, we observed teachers who were genuinely passionate about inspiring and supporting their students. The small class sizes and personalized approach to teaching and learning allowed for greater interaction between students and teachers, ensuring that each child receives the attention and guidance they need to excel.

Emphasis on Values and Character Development

Integral to the Ansgar School philosophy is the development of strong moral values and character in its students. Throughout our visit, we witnessed numerous examples of students demonstrating kindness, respect, and responsibility, both inside and outside the classroom. The school's emphasis on fostering these values is reflected in their curriculum which promotes a sense of community and shared responsibility.

Mr. Lee Ka Ming

Principal, ECF Saint Too Canaan College



On the fifth day of our trip, we visited a beautiful historic town called Uppsala in the north of Stockholm.

In the morning, we visited Linnaeus' Hammarby, a botanical garden dedicated to Carl von Linné (1707-1778), the father of modern taxonomy. After the visit, we went to our second school visit of the trip, Ansgargymnasiet.

Ansgargymnasiet is a private Christian school founded in 1985, which caters to students of different ages, from primary to secondary. As a Christian school, it places great emphasis on Christian values such as respect, resilience, and compassion, which are in line with the values promoted by our school, the "3R values" (Respect, resilience, and responsibility). During our visit, we split into two groups to tour around the campus, and my group paid a visit to the secondary school section. The school is connected to a church, so upon entering the campus, we found ourselves in a large café. There are a large auditorium and different classrooms. It is interesting to see that the walls outside the classrooms display photo of various activities and concert organized by students. It reflects that the school offers many opportunities for student to perform and to encourage self-directed learning. I also noticed that there were many introductions of different career and job descriptions on the walls. It seemingly aimed at helping students plan and shape their future career prospects. On the primary school section, there are also many classrooms and a large outdoor playground, providing ample space for students to play.



The beautiful historic town UPPSALA

During our visit to Ansgargymnasiet, we were not able to meet many students as they were sitting for the National Test on that day. The National Test is a unique feature of the Swedish education system. It is not an entrance exam to universities nor an evaluation of students' academic performance. Instead, it aims to assess the grading system of the schools and the level of the teachers to ensure the consistency of grading in all Swedish schools. This approach shows that the Swedish government allows local schools a high level of autonomy. Teachers have great flexibility to design lessons, to plan the curriculum, to grade assignments and to evaluate students' performance.

On top of that, another characteristic of Swedish education is autonomy. Swedish students generally are not required to wear uniforms, and the curriculum is designed to cater to the development of students in different aspects. Students can develop their interests in the curriculum, and there are many opportunities for them to unleash their potential, such as woodworking and knitting workshops. In addition to Swedish and English, students can also study German, French, Spanish, and even Chinese, as well as mathematics and natural sciences. Some schools even offer courses in performing arts.

Afterwards, we had a chance meet the Principal and Vice Principal of Ansgargymnasiet. They shared their view on Christian education and how Christianity nurtures people. By hiring Christian teachers, the school can arrange mentorship programmes to provide guidance and help students grow.



After the school visit, we toured around the city centre. The Uppsala city centre is situated on the northeast bank of the Fyrisån River. On the southwest bank of the river is the Uppsala University City, where the famous attractions of Uppsala Castle and Uppsala Cathedral are located. The Gothic-style Uppsala Cathedral is the oldest bishopric cathedral in Northern Europe, and there are many fascinating artworks inside, including some modern installations by contemporary artists. The cathedral is also the burial place of the famous Swedish monarch Gustav I and botanist Carl von Linné.

After visiting the cathedral, we went to a folk museum beside the Fyrisån River, where we learned about local Swedish culture, history, as well as special stone carving cultures from different regions of Sweden. This visit allowed us to gain more insights into Uppsala and the culture of Sweden.

It is worth mentioning that Uppsala University is also known as the "Swedish Cambridge", the oldest university in the Nordic region, and one of the top universities in Europe. Established in 1477, the university has produced 17 Nobel Prize winners and is currently ranked 117th in the QS World University Rankings.

This trip to Sweden provided me with many eye-opening experiences and insights, which allowed me to reflect on the Hong Kong education system. Touring with school principals and teachers, the professionals in the Hong Kong education industry, also gave me the opportunity to learn a lot from them as well. Finally, I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to the Direct Subsidy Scheme Council for organising this exchange programme, giving us an opportunity to visit and learn from Sweden.



3rd May, 2023 (Wednesday)

Ms. Lam Sui Mei (Eliza)

Vice Principal, Law Ting Pong Secondary School

Stepping into the St. Erik's campus, we were greeted by friendly, smiling faces of students and teachers enjoying their break time together. We were treated to a simple but delicious curry dish by the passionate hosts, which kickstarted the school visit.

We were divided into 3 groups to attend classes of different grades and talk to students there. Classroom layouts are relatively simple and tidy with a whiteboard, and homework corner. In one of the classes observed, twenty-six Grade 8 students were having their English lesson and the teacher herself was an alumna, having served the school for 40 years. We held dialogues with students in small groups, in which they shared details of their school life with us. A typical school day at St. Erik's starts at 8am, with prayers before the first lesson, and about five 50-minute lessons, after which they leave school and enjoy other external activities. All 17 subjects except English are taught in Swedish. Maternal language classes are also arranged every week, in addition to a third language, with choices between Spanish, French or German. Daily homework usually takes around 1 hour to complete, and a couple of tests are scheduled per week. Lessons are conducted mainly on paper and pen. Overall, they enjoy their learning that aims for their future. We also shared with them about the school life in Hong Kong and they were surprised at how different it was from theirs.



4th May, 2023 (Thursday)

After the class visit, Principal Mats Hansen delivered a speech together with the school priest, introducing the school history, school mission and school life as well as the challenges they face. Among the only three Catholic schools in Sweden, St. Erik's Catholic School is the oldest one, dating back to 1795 at Sodermalm, Stockholm. From 1931 till 2005, it was operated by the sisters of Norte Dame. Due to an increase in the number of students, the school moved to a new school building in Enskede, the present location, in 1967. It was named after Saint Eric, a King of Sweden. The school now serves about 230 students from pre-school to Grade 9 classes, thirty-some of which are kindergarten and preschoolers. Being a multicultural school with students from about 40 countries, the students' needs are quite diverse. St. Erik also takes pride in its Catholic values-based education. Daily prayers in the morning, lunchtime and before the end of the school day are mandatory and mass celebrations are also held. These enable students to grow in knowledge and understanding of the teachings and practice of the Catholic Church. The school specifically emphasises the core values of honesty, respect, kindness and responsibility. The school priests also spend time talking to students and teachers, listening to their needs and offering them support. Unlike other schools in the southern parts, students there are taught to address their teachers and seniors by 'Mr.' and 'Ms.', instead of by their names directly, giving due respect to their teachers who, in a certain sense, need to exercise authority and educate them. However, due to the national system and societal changes complicated by politics, the school faces various difficulties. Among them are students' misbehaviour. Just like other Swedish schools, students are given mostly unchecked freedom, which leaves the school limited means to deal with students' misbehaviour. Misdeeds often come with no consequences. The school finds itself handicapped in this situation, with the only resolution of talking with students and parents concerned.

The school visit ended with the presentation of souvenirs. We wished them all the best in continuously providing quality education to their students.



Reflection

The warm and sincere talk with students having a pleasant and communicative character, which I think is being shaped by the school culture, have left me with good memories. I was greatly impressed by the patience, love and hope displayed by the principal, priest and staff there. In the face of restrictions and challenges, they still find some leeway to uphold their school mission and values. Their boldness, truthfulness, faithfulness and dedication for education are encouraging to me.

Ms. Poon Ka Suen (Victoria)

Principal, WF Joseph Lee Primary School

Ms. Lee Christina Maisenne

School Manager, WF Joseph Lee Primary School

We were warmly welcomed by a team of three, led by Tim, the Headmaster of Johan Movers Gymnasium. The school's website describes it as an independent high school in Stockholm with a Christian profile. Tim shared that although the school was founded years ago, it moved to its current site just last August, where they had their Open Day. The Gymnasium currently has over 60 students, while their feeder school at a different venue has over 90 students. Johan Movers was a Swedish priest who has devoted much of his life to helping young people, and the school is part of "Petrus Gruppen," which means "Peter, the rock and foundation" in the Christian faith. Tim explained that his goal was to provide young people with a solid foundation of values and a strong work ethic. The students at Johan Movers come from diverse economic and cultural backgrounds, and have different abilities.

After sharing with us the Swedish custom of "Fika," a pause during the day to share coffee and snacks with others, Tim encouraged us to ask him tough questions. He wanted to share his philosophy on education and how he saw the state of Swedish education. In response to our questions on values and how they might be delivered at school, Tim shared his views on Swedish culture. He explained that while Swedes may appear to be individualistic, they are also quite mellow, shy, and rarely want to stand out. Although they may depend on the state for many things, they do not want to be dependent on others. Swedish people also have a love of nature. Many immigrants, including a large number of Muslim immigrants, have impacted the culture of Sweden.

According to Tim, the traditional Swedish characteristic of being hardworking and dutiful has changed rapidly, and schools may have focused too much on the "love of learning", but not on teaching the value and need for hard work. He emphasised that the use of knowledge is no less important than the love of learning, and that discussions about rights only are not healthy without a discussion about duties. Tim encouraged such discussions among his students and regularly invites guests to talk about Christian values at school. He believes that Christian principles underpin the school's ethos, which includes the development of God-given gifts. Students should pursue excellence and use such gifts for the common good, rather than just focusing on their own feelings and dreams.

Fika and Education: A Conversation with the Headmaster of Johan Movers Gymnasium



Tim also discussed some of the challenges posed by the current culture and the school system, such as the difficulty in educating children in the way they should go when teachers' and parents' power is taken away and given to the child. He also talked about the poor mental health of young people, especially those with the strongest grades, and the need to provide them with a moral compass and a sense of direction. Additionally, every school has to educate children as young as 10 or 11 years old about sex, as required by law, and Tim explained that the school nurse is tasked with this instead of involving all subject teachers. Finally, he mentioned the challenge of getting youth excited or interested in participating in activities outside of school hours, as these are often held by non-profit organisations.

After Tim's talk, we came away with a renewed appreciation for the gravity and importance of teachers and their role in shaping the future of a country. As Tim said, "the best way to shape a country is to shape the children," and he encouraged us to create strong, humble individuals who can succeed outside the school doors. We were also grateful for the delicious fika treats, including extra chocolate and licorice, which we took home in souvenir tote bags.



4th May, 2023 (Thursday)

Mr. Andrew Higgins

Deputy Principal, YMCA of Hong Kong Christian College



music & dance performances

The school has an experienced and qualified faculty of teachers who are professionals in their aesthetic expressions, providing students with access to special skills and a close connection to the artistic professional practice.

During our visit to Kulturama Gymnasium, we were privileged to have the opportunity to observe rehearsals in the music and dance classes. The music class consisted of eight students on piano, drums, vocalist, electric guitar, bass guitar, saxophone, and they performed two songs. One was a pop song in English and the other was a jazz song which switched effortlessly between French and English, and featured an impressive ad-lib vocal improvisation. The students had clearly put their own personalities into re-interpretating and adapting the songs. The dance class had four students, who performed a modern dance using a simple set consisting of chairs and a table, combined with a highly effective lighting arrangement to help bring the performance to life. The students gave well-prepared, confident and self-assured performances.

“Here you can be yourself.”

On 5th May, the team divided into two, with one group visiting a primary school while the rest of us went to an intriguing and fascinating high school, Kulturama Gymnasium, that specializes in the performing arts.

“There is something unique about Kulturama Gymnasium.”

Located in Hammarby Sjöstad, a short train journey from the centre of Stockholm, Kulturama offers courses for all ages and levels, from beginner courses to advanced continuation courses for adults. In Sweden, gymnasium education is optional for students aged 16 to 18 years old, yet Kulturama attracts students from all over the country. Some move to Stockholm, while others commute from nearby cities, which is a testament to the school's reputation, the wonderfully creative atmosphere and the unique educational experience it provides. One of the best high schools in Stockholm in the aesthetic field, and for many, it is the first step in developing their artistic practice under professional guidance.

On arrival at the school, we were greeted by the Principal, Lovisa Jansson, the Deputy Principal and the Marketing Director, who presented us with a souvenir brochure of the school in a tote bag featuring the winning logo design for the 20th anniversary of the gymnasium.

The lobby of Kulturama Gymnasium features a Wall of Fame with photos of 30 alumni who are now all well-known celebrities in Sweden. It also showcases students' artwork and one of five stages, which is used for some of the 300 performances held every 170 days. Everyone at Kulturama shares an interest in aesthetic expression.

Kulturama Gymnasium offers a combination of theoretical and aesthetic studies, providing students with university entrance qualification and enabling them to develop their interests in the arts. There are two programmes: an Arts Programme and a Natural Science Programme. Within the Arts Programme there are five specializations and ten different profiles:

Image & Design: Art & Design; Dance: Dance; Aesthetics & Media: Photography, Writing. Film; Music: Songwriter & Artist, Music Production, Artist & Musician, Musical; Theatre: Theatre



Each performance was followed by reflection and evaluation, in which students readily engaged in conversation, discussing areas for improvement. The feedback students received from the teacher was specific and concrete, and served to move their learning forward. It was clear that this was their normal way of working. No egos were on display and the focus was on improving the quality of the performance. The relationships between teachers and students are more akin to a professional coach working with adults, such as the level of maturity of the discussion and the respect accorded to students' ideas.

After a characteristically healthy lunch in the school (including knäckebröd) with students and staff, gifts and souvenirs were presented to the Principal on the stage.

Our visit to Kulturama Gymnasium was an eye-opening experience; we were particularly impressed by the importance accorded to aesthetic education in Sweden, the high quality of the performances and the professionalism of both students and faculty. One of the best high schools in Stockholm in the aesthetic field, it is, for many, the first step in developing their artistic practice under professional guidance.



Kulturama Gymnasium: A Unique Educational Experience

5th May 2023 (Friday)

Ms. Yu Yuen Man (Janet)

Head of PE, PLK HKTA Yuen Yuen Primary School

Adolf Fredriks Musikklasser has a rich history that spans over seven decades, and its commitment to fostering musical talent is evident in every aspect of its existence. Nestled in the heart of the city, this renowned music school holds a special place in the cultural tapestry of Stockholm. From the moment I stepped foot into the school, I was greeted by an overwhelming sense of dedication and passion. The walls seemed to resonate with the melodies of countless past and present students, who have honed their skills and found their voices there. It was truly inspiring to witness the culmination of years of hard work and perseverance.

A Haven for Young Musicians

The school's mission to provide an exceptional music education for young students was palpable throughout my visit. The bustling classrooms and practice rooms were abuzz with activity, as eager young musicians diligently refined their techniques and explored the depths of their musicality. It was evident that Adolf Fredriks Musikklasser offers an environment that encourages creativity, nurtures individuality, and fosters a deep appreciation for music. The dedication and enthusiasm displayed by both the students and the faculty were truly commendable.

Emphasis on Music Education

Adolf Fredriks Musikklasser places an extraordinary emphasis on music education, dedicating a significant portion of its curriculum to fostering musical talent and creativity. The school provides students with a wide range of musical opportunities, including instrument training, vocal ensembles, and composition classes. The focus on music as a core subject cultivates a deep appreciation for the arts and fosters a holistic development in students.



Integration of Arts and Academics

One remarkable aspect of Adolf Fredriks Musikklasser is its seamless integration of arts and academics. The school recognises the value of a well-rounded education and ensures that students receive high-quality instruction in both music and academic subjects. The curriculum is designed to support the development of critical thinking skills, creativity, and problem-solving abilities.

Reflection

Visiting Adolf Fredriks Musikklasser provided me with a unique perspective on the importance of music education and its integration with academics. It stands as a testament to the enduring impact of music education and serves as an inspiration for future generations of musicians. As I explored the school's facilities and interacted with its students and teachers, I could not help but reflect on the striking differences between this institution and the educational landscape I am familiar with in Hong Kong. Comparatively, while efforts are being made to incorporate arts into the curriculum in Hong Kong, there is still a significant gap in terms of integration and recognition of the arts as an essential component of education. Besides, Hong Kong's education system tends to be more examination-focused, resulting in a more competitive and individualistic learning atmosphere. I am reminded of the need for a more comprehensive approach that values the arts and encourages creativity in education. We should create an educational landscape that nurtures well-rounded individuals, encourages artistic expression, and fosters a love for learning.

5th May, 2023 (Friday)

Dr. Suen Ka Chun

Principal, PLK Laws Foundation College



Half of our team visited Kulturama Gymnasium on 5th May 2023 (Friday). At the beginning of the visit, Ms. Lovisa Jansson and her two colleagues welcomed us and introduced the rundown of the visit outside the main entrance of the school.

We took a nice photo and received souvenirs from Kulturama Gymnasium. At the foyer, many students' art products are displayed, showing appreciation and encouragement to the students. There is a mini-theatre at the foyer. Students are welcome to give a show. We then went to a classroom to enjoy a music performance by a team of students. Two songs were presented by them. Afterwards, we enjoyed a dancing show.

Before presenting our souvenirs to Ms. Lovisa Jansson, we were answered to our many questions about the National Test and the professionalism of the teachers in Sweden.

5th May 2023 (Friday)



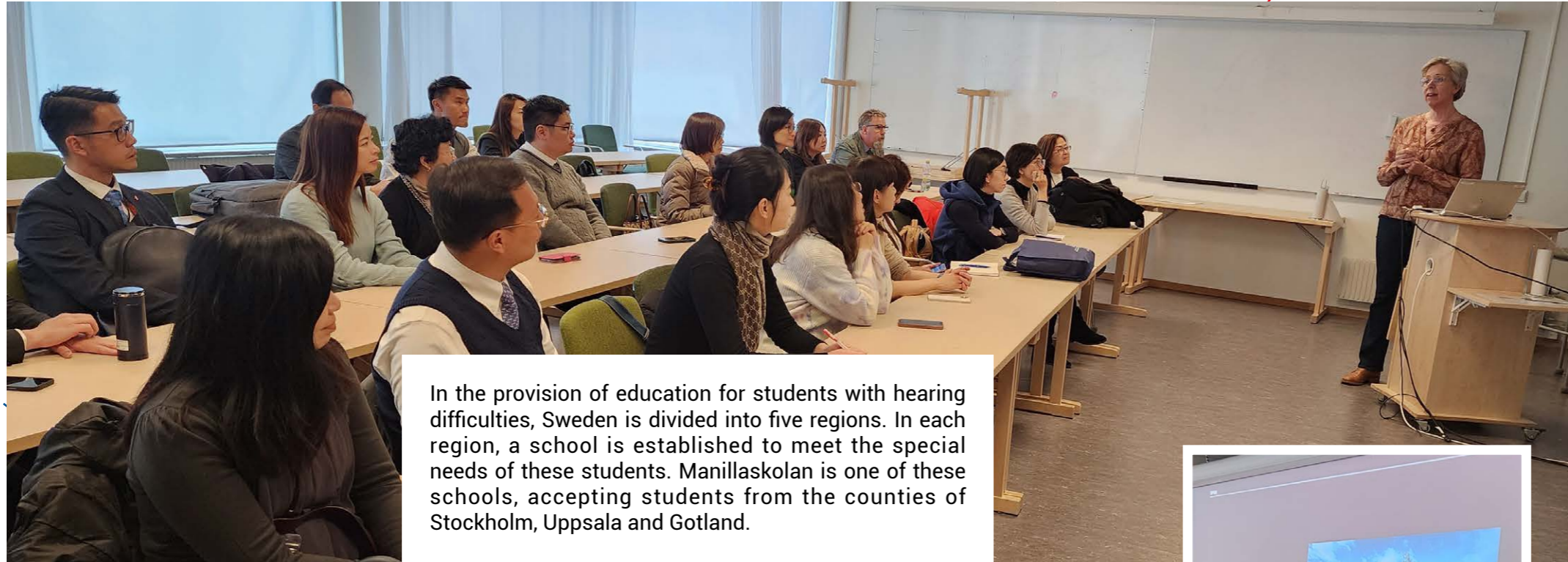
Kulturama Gymnasium offers two university preparatory programmes to students. In general, students can choose to study Aesthetics programme with nine aesthetic profiles or the Natural Sciences programme with special variants in aesthetic expression. It is observed that this school puts a lot of effort to maximise students' potentials in aesthetic areas including music, drama, photography and video production. Students are proud of studying in this school and continue to study aesthetic areas at university.

Ms. Lovisa Jansson, Principal of Kulturama Gymnasium demonstrates a strong passion in nurturing students' potential, especially their interest and ability in aesthetic areas. She is an experienced Principal and participates in training for pre-service teachers. She demonstrates her trust in teachers' professionalism in Sweden and appreciates the educational system in her country.



Mr. Pang Bing Lun Leander
Vice Principal, Good Hope School

Ms. Chu Hoi Yan (Angel)
Associate Head of Student Affairs Committee, Good Hope School



In the provision of education for students with hearing difficulties, Sweden is divided into five regions. In each region, a school is established to meet the special needs of these students. Manillaskolan is one of these schools, accepting students from the counties of Stockholm, Uppsala and Gotland.

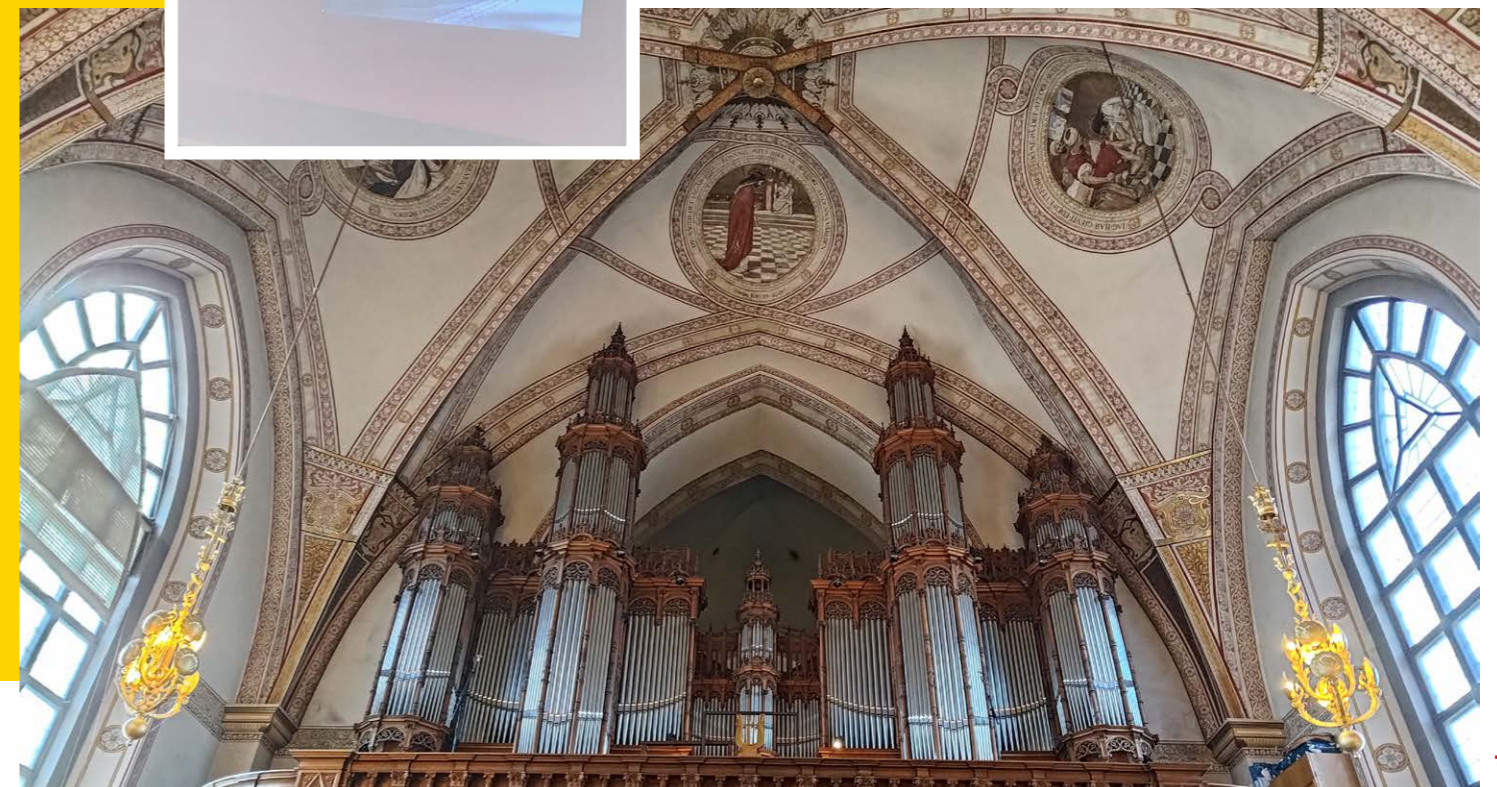
Manillaskolan has a long history of more than 120 years. At the moment it provides education for about 100 students from pre-school to Grade 10. Hearing-impaired students have equal access to education and they follow the national curriculum. The only differences are that students with hearing difficulties take Swedish Sign Language and drama, instead of music. If students live far from school, the government pays for their travelling expenses, including air tickets, to relieve the financial pressure of sending children to school, while enabling them to stay connected to their families on weekends.

For the hearing impaired, their bilingual education is in Swedish sign language and Swedish, where the language is studied in written form. During the school visit, a video about reading to learn in Grade 2 was played. The teacher read a story to the students in sign language, and then engaged the students in a joint-reading activity where vocabulary in Swedish and sign language were highlighted and learned side-by-side. Next, the class proceeded to the writing task: the students discussed the content and brainstormed a passage together. Sign language does not interfere with the learning of Swedish showing that students with hearing difficulties can master Swedish as well as any other second language learner.

We did not have the chance to meet the students and attend classes because they were out for a fund-raising sports day with other schools. This is an example of students having special needs not being deprived of fruitful school lives. The lead teacher mentioned that they were 'segregated in order to be integrated'. Meeting the needs of these students at school paves a better way for them to be included in society in the future.

To help integrate students with hearing difficulties into society there are deaf communities offering careers and guidance support. Although this disadvantaged group might have fewer occupational opportunities, these communities have helped a lot in finding careers for and keeping them active and involved in Sweden.

Aristotle said that man, by nature, is a social animal. Communication between people is indispensable. Learning sign language and having opportunities to interact with peers and teachers in a school environment give communication and social skills to children with hearing issues. These special schools play an important role in an inclusive society that embraces individual differences.



Ms. Leung Yuk Ping (Carol)

Administrator, Delia (Man Kiu) English Primary School

Mrs. Stella Lau, SBS, JP

Principal, Diocesan Girls' School

School leaders of the Direct Subsidy Scheme Schools embarked on an experiential learning journey to Sweden where we exchanged insights with our Nordic counterparts on how to bring out the best in students in a post-COVID world. It is hoped that the enjoyable and rewarding Sweden Educational Trip 2023 marks the start of many interflow projects between schools in Hong Kong and in Scandinavia.

Covering seven schools over eight days, and guided by a resourceful and affable tour director, Per, our trip offered a fascinating glimpse into the Swedish education system through opportunities to engage with students and hold dialogues with educators, thereby expanding our expertise and perspective on education as well as widening our professional network.

We learned about the benefit of making time in the fast-paced Hong Kong work day for Fika. The Swedish practice of sipping coffee or tea, savouring some confectionery while bonding with colleagues or students will boost our sense of wellbeing and facilitate the promotion of values like integrity and respect for diversity.

Perhaps a big surprise for many of us was to discover that Swedish schools do not set homework, but it was hearing that some have gone as far as to do away with extracurricular activities that astonished us. The rationale for these curious differences between Swedish and Hong Kong schools is a set of "School Laws" that give the teacher and student in Sweden the autonomy to determine how much formal schooling takes place. Be it the student or the teacher, the individual's welfare and wellbeing are given priority. This translates into a curriculum that recognises different talents and capacities for learning, offering broader options for career planning to acknowledge the importance of academic, vocational and life skills as well as providing comprehensive support for those with special educational needs. Teachers are professionally equipped to make decisions on assessment and grading.



According to our hosts, though Sweden ranks as one of the best countries in the world for education and one of the top ten happiest places in 2023, it has its fair share of challenges too and teachers' dedication to mentoring youth is of paramount importance to ensure that their interest in learning is sustained for life. On the last day in Stockholm, we participated in a Kahoot game featuring the institutions we had the pleasure of observing over the week, before we re-lived the special moments on our itinerary captured in the numerous snapshots uploaded in our digital tour album. Another highlight was the heartfelt feedback written by children at the St. Erik's Catholic Primary School we visited.

We sincerely thank the Hong Kong Direct Subsidy Scheme Schools Council for the thoughtful arrangements behind this valuable learning experience and look forward to joining others in the near future.

6th May 2023 (Saturday)



Memories

