



BRITISH COUNCIL
International School Award



Neos International Conference in Bocholt, Germany
22 – 26 October 2007

I took four year 13 students to the NEOS International Conference. The conference was held at the Europa-Institut in the beautiful German town of Bocholt. Bocholt is situated in the Nordrhein-Westfalen region of northwest Germany, very close to the Netherlands.

The conference consisted of a number of workshops with each workshop focusing on a different area. The four areas for this conference were: social competence, learning competence, scientific-environmental competence and intercultural competence. NEOS has held a student workshop before, but for the very first time there were also separate teacher workshops based on the same topics.

Each of the workshops consisted of students (and teachers) from all over Europe, from countries such as the United Kingdom, France, Spain, Italy and Germany as well as countries further a field such as Poland, Hungary and Finland. Although the 'official' language of the conference was English, students (and teachers) had the opportunity to practise and brush up on their language skills. The workshop groups were a vibrant mix of different nationalities and cultures. This made for an interesting week.

The timescale was tight; we had to produce a twenty minute presentation with only two days to prepare. Needless to say every group had to start working straightaway and there was also no time off during the week for sightseeing visits. No-one seemed to mind this because we all knew the work that we had to do, and also because working with and sharing information with people from all across Europe was so interesting.

Thursday was the day of the presentations. We had the morning to make final preparations and to rehearse and in the afternoon we were very lucky to hear a presentation from Professor Nieke from Rostock University who talked about what it means to be a truly European citizen. When it came to the student and teacher presentations everyone was amazed at the results. Everybody had put in so much work and effort and the results were all very insightful and varied. The presentations used powerpoints, role plays, surveys, group/individual presentations, and one group had even made a DVD to show in their presentation! The teacher presentations were also a success and our pupils enjoyed seeing us in different roles.

All the students at the conference were a credit to their school and to themselves. It was great to see people challenging stereotypes and getting along so well with each other. I think the students really got a lot out of the conference and also really made the most of the opportunities they had. The NEOS conference was an excellent opportunity for the students and teachers to broaden their horizons, experience first hand new and different cultures, and also to share and exchange information and ideas with other European students and teachers. The conference was an excellent experience and it made us all realize that as European citizens we do have our differences but we also have much more in common.

Stephen Bowman-Jones

02/11/07