

### New Residential Accommodation Opens at Ekeskolan, Örebro.



#### Sten Tolgfors and Jack, a student at Ekeskolan, cut the ribbon together.

On 25th of March 2011, Mr Tolgfors inaugurated Ekeskolan's two new dormitories. Tegelbacken 1 and Tegelbacken 2 are unique and built to the system of eco-certified buildings at the gold level.

Sten Tolgfors, who for a long time in his political career has had a commitment to Ekeskolan, cut the blue and yellow band with Jack, one of the school pupils. His inaugural speech contained many personal reflections and memories of his contacts with Ekeskolan over the years.

#### Environmental Class Gold Level

The property is planned and built under the eco-certified buildings at the gold level, which means that it is a sustainable building. The focus has been on energy efficiency and nontoxic building materials. The work has been completed at the gold level, but will be validated over the year through measurements and analysis.

"It is the first eco-certified building in Special Real Estate and we already have more projects under way," said Maria Widfeldt who has responsibility for the environment the Special Property. "Special Needs Education (SPSM) has been a driving force for the implementation of the work and we have had experts from the Royal Institute of Technology (KTH), Chalmers University of Technology and Gävle involved," outlined Maria.

Solar cells on the roof provide 60% of all the hot water and 20% of all indoor heat. 20 cm of additional insulation in both walls, ceiling and base plate provides a well insulated building. Throughout the work a moisture expert has guarded the construction.

#### Accessibility

Whilst the environment has been a focus of the work, a second key consideration was accessibility. "As far as I know there is no boarding house which is so well suited to students with visual impairment and physical disability," said Ronny Nilsson, Ekeskolan President, proudly. "It became just like we wanted it, designed by our students' needs".

#### Green Flag

Well-fitting and honouring the day, Ekeskolan's green flag was hoisted for the first time. The flag is a symbol of the school's priority of an action-oriented approach and is part of Sweden's largest environmental award for preschool and primary school. This award is not only consistent with the eco-certified building, but is an award for the work done with students to promote environmental awareness.

# A Swedish project: A wider perspective on ImPAct

**A Swedish project aiming at forming a coherent focus on the 5-step model, on mutual competence building, and on methodical collaboration**

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## Introduction

A Swedish "Impact" project was concluded in 2010. The 3-year long project was funded by the Swedish Inheritance Fund and the National Agency for Special Needs Education and Schools (SPSM). Collaborating partners in the project were SPSM, Swedish Association of the Visually Impaired (SRF), the National Association for Disabled Children and Youth (RBU), Örebro University (ÖU) and Tambartun National Resource Centre for the Visual Impaired, Norway.

The main target group of the project were eight children and young persons with Multiple Disabilities and a Visual Impairment (MDVI). Secondary target groups were eight local and regional networks (parents and professionals), responsible for the main target group's education and habilitation. The project resulted in the following insights:

The use of a systematic working method – the innovative 5-step model - had positive effects on the collaboration within the local networks. This development had an evident positive effect on the individual's life situations. Improved activity, engagement and involvement for the target group were also recorded during the project.

## Purpose and intent

The purpose of the project was to utilize and further develop both regional and local skills and, together with the expertise that already exists within SPSM, help acquire new knowledge in the field. Furthermore, the project aimed to develop

collaboration between parents, schools and professionals at municipal and county level so that this knowledge will benefit children and adolescents.

The project was organized around eight networks of parents and professionals working with a child or youth. The network's combined competence in its turn identified and took measures to support eight children and youth with visual impairment plus additional disabilities. These children and young people were, at the start of the project, between three and nineteen years' old and all were facing a major change in both school and life in the next few years.

The intention of the project was to maintain the user perspective and safeguard the child/young person's right to influence and involvement in accordance with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989). Specifically, this means that each network adopts a down-top perspective, which according to the project definition meant that all the support mechanisms sought to address the problem from the client's perspective. This means that various professional skills are made subordinate to the child's/youth's needs, such as present and future challenges he or she may be facing. Such an approach is based on the child/young person as an active participant with a focus on his or her personal needs and development potential.

## Collaboration on a systematic method of working

An important starting point was the child/young person's right to participate and interact with peers, both within a school setting and in other areas of society, in accordance with the International Classification of Functioning, Disabilities and Health, ICF (WHO, 2001).

The tools which formed the more specific points of the networks' learning process and which the project equipped each network with for working with its child/youth were primarily the steps of the innovative 5-step model (Elmerskog, B, Storliløkken, M & Tellevik, J M, 2008), which is a systematic method of working in five steps: 1. Assessment of the individual's life at present, 2. Description of a future desired life, 3. Prioritization of activities, 4. Analysis of priority activities and

implementation of rehabilitation initiatives, 5.

## Evaluation

The 5-step model primarily focuses on activeness and involvement rather than on factors such as disability or lack of skills. In concrete terms, the measures taken by the network related to the context the child or young person wishes to participate in. It also meant that support from society was coordinated in order to be consistent with the actual needs of the children and young people. Despite insights into the importance of collaboration, (Danermark, 2004), says that problems arise when collaborating from different perspectives. It is easy to say that agencies must work together, but collaboration must bring some advantage to the person the participants are working with.

However, for collaboration to develop and be maintained, collaborative skills are necessary. By this is meant insights and knowledge regarding, for example, processes which hinder or promote collaboration (Danermark & Kullberg, 1999, Danermark, 2004). Three such processes have been highlighted in the project: 1) the regulations that the various parties are subject to, 2) the organizational conditions they operate under, and 3) their perspectives on the project they are collaborating on.

## Results

The overall assessment of the project's independent evaluator (Coniavitis Gellerstedt, 2010), is that the project contributed to a learning process and skills development for participating parents and professionals, especially education professionals, in addition to the children and young people themselves who benefited from increased activeness, involvement and connectedness.

The following relationships have been clarified by the project:

- The importance of collaboration and of the fact that realistic opportunities for collaboration are created with the input of all the parties concerned;
- Breaking down and documenting an activity in its various details can be important for assessing - and working with - children and youth's opportunities for activity and participation.

In addition, it is worth noting that the project's participants gained new insights into the link between a systematic method of working and the importance of developing collaborative skills and seeing how this affects the activeness and involvement of children and young people. For example, the results demonstrate that networking on skills development has generated positive expectations of the child/young people activeness and involvement, such as the abilities not previously observed. This meant that identifying the child's/young person's potential capacity led to greater expectations of what he/she could achieve, which in turn gave rise to a different range of activity and support.

## University Course

The project has also given us new insights which call for a greater integration of training materials and a form more attuned to educational needs than originally planned. One outcome that has already been decided is a new university course to be offered by Örebro University (ÖU) in collaboration with (SPSM). The course is a part-time course entitled "Cooperation in Children with Multi-disabilities in a Participatory Perspective, Basic Course, 15 higher education credits", to be offered in the 2011-2012 academic year. The course makes it possible to combine study with work and is based in part on the collaboration project's conceptual model that encompasses four key sections:

- 1) The Convention on the Rights of the Child,
- 2) WHO's International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF),
- 3) the 5-step model (an educational method of working to secure the goal of children's and adolescent's activeness, involvement and participation in life situations) and
- 4) Collaboration.

At the time of writing the project management is very busy compiling the results, which will be presented in the form of a project report and articles during the autumn of 2011.

(Visit [www.mdvi-euronet.org](http://www.mdvi-euronet.org) for more information on the original ImPAct project.)

## References

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## Jordanstown School

**By Rob Jones, Principal, St Joseph's Primary School for Children with Visual Impairment, Dublin**

Jordanstown School is a school in Belfast, Northern Ireland, for learners who have a sensory impairment. The school has recently moved into its brand purpose-built new buildings and I was fortunate to have the opportunity to visit the school in May of this year. I was extremely impressed not only by the quality of the school, but by the warm welcome given to me by the students and staff. They are all very proud of their new school and rightly so. Congratulations to Anne Magee, Principal, and all involved. For more information about Jordanstown School, please visit their website at [www.jordanstownschoools.co.uk](http://www.jordanstownschoools.co.uk).



## Moon Workshop - St Joseph's Dublin

MDVI Euronet held a one day workshop for teachers and other practitioners working with children and young people with a visual impairment for whom the Moon Code may be a pathway into literacy in March of this year.

### What is Moon?

Moon allows people who are blind or partially sighted to read by touch. It is a code of raised shapes invented by Dr William Moon and is for people who are blind or partially sighted of any age. As Moon characters are fairly large with over half the letters bearing a strong resemblance to the print equivalent, it has been found to be particularly suitable for those who lose their sight later in life, people who may have a less keen sense of touch or for learners with additional physical and/or learning difficulties who struggle with braille.

### Presenters

The presenters for the workshop were Mickie Milne, a Chartered Teacher from Hazelwood School in the City of Glasgow and Angla Eccles, a support teacher for the visually impaired with Derbyshire Council.

### Delegates

Over thirty delegates attended the workshop which was held on a Saturday at St Joseph's Centre for the Visually Impaired in Dublin. Teachers and Special Needs Assistants from St Joseph's Primary School for Children with Visual Impairment were joined by colleagues from St Joseph's Centre and by delegates from Ireland's Department of Education Visiting Teacher Service, Jordanstown School, Belfast, The Royal Blind School, Edinburgh and Tambartun Centre, Norway.





**Gymnázium Obchodní Akademie a Obchodní škola  
pro zrakově postiženou mládež**

Praha, Czech Republic

## Interdisciplinary School Projects in the School Year 2010-2011

**by Klara Eliaskova, Jitka Jansova and Ivan Antov  
High School for Student with Visual Impairment, Prague**

Interdisciplinary projects are a firm part of our school's educational programmes. They are an important tool for awaking the natural enthusiasm and creativity of the students. Working on the projects enables our students to learn to understand the links between different subjects and the context as a whole. On one side it supports getting to know the importance of hard individual work, on the other side students learn a lot about the importance, as well as the difficulties, of team work which strengthens their feeling of responsibility. The projects are one of the ways of preparing our students with visual impairment and other disabilities for independent life.

### **Project *A Day Across Europe***

The topic of this school project was Europe. For students this was not only an important region from the point of view of travelling but also a territory where they could perhaps obtain work opportunities. The project was focused on learning how to understand better interdisciplinary relations and on strengthening of social relations, one of the most important goals in teaching the visually impaired.

At the very beginning of the project (late September 2010), the students of class three of the grammar school formed five pairs. Each pair drew lots for one European country (France, Great Britain, Poland, Russia and Sweden), and were allocated a supervisor – one of the teachers participating in the project (biology, Czech language and literature, English, geography, ICT) who became a guarantee of their work. During the following month the students collected materials, visited the embassy of the country in Prague and discussed issues with their teachers. One

month later the first meeting was held and the students introduced their project plans.

The Project Day took place in December. All the students enjoyed the unusual school programme very much. There was friendly and creative atmosphere in which the students continually co-operate together on their projects. They worked hard on the final forms of their presentations in PowerPoint, preparing a leaflet in English, making boards introducing the countries, completing tourist guides providing readers with basic information about the countries in Czech and English, discussing the problems, thinking of their performances. In fact, they were able to prepare themselves successfully for the final performance of the project.

Public presentation was the real summit of a half-year of work, all pairs were dressed according to traditions of their countries, they prepared tasting of traditional food of the nations, performed commented presentations, showed traditional products of the countries, etc. Everybody could touch all objects on display, there were texts in Braille too. Performances were evaluated by student and teacher juries. All boards introducing the countries are placed on the third floor of the school now.



### **Project *Sciences and Philosophy in History***

In the first half of April 2011, The final Project Day took place. The links between sciences (biology, chemistry and physics) and philosophy were explored. Someone could find the combination peculiar, however, the presentation of the project showed how much philosophy and sciences have penetrated our thinking since their early beginnings.

Students of the first and second classes of the grammar school participated in the project. They were decided by casting lots into five groups, each of them consisting of three members. Each group drew lots the topic and got a supervisor – a teacher participating in the project. The topics were Asia and Egypt, ancient Greece and Rome, Central Europe (up to the end of the 19th Century), Western Europe (20th

Century) and Eastern Europe.

Students looked up information according to their visual abilities from different sources (books, journals, internet), prepared text was discussed with their supervisors or other teachers. Presentations of the groups were performed during the Project Day and evaluated by students of the third classes as well as by teachers.

Each group chose a different way how to prepare their presentation. The results of the project could be used by students during the lessons of sciences, social sciences and history.

### **Project *Norman MacCaig***



This project started in late autumn 2010 and should be finished in early autumn 2011. Ten students of class three of the grammar school took part in it. The project included Czech language and literature, English, drama, ICT, with some geography, history and social sciences. The main aim of the project is to translate selected poems of Norman MacCaig, an important 20th century Scottish poet, from English into Czech so that the students could understand better the culture, traditions and everyday life of people living in the north of Britain, learn more about the structure and context of language and become more self-confident in use of language.

The students chose poems close to their hearts from MacCaig's *Collected Poems*, so they were not influenced by translation into Czech. First they translated them verbally. Then they learnt more about social and cultural context as well as about the problems of translation to get the basic competence for creative translation. The next step to mastering the poems was the recital and all the class could enjoy the beauty and difficulty of live performance in front of the schoolmates during the poetic competition in late winter. The final output should be a thin book which means both individual and team further hard work. The book will be in print, Braille and electronic formats.

# Stem Cell Treatment for Batten's Disease

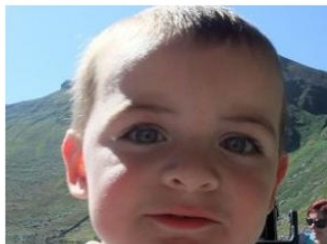
The Irish Independent newspaper has been following the story of Liam Heffernan, a 2 year old toddler who has Batten's Disease. Liam attended Weill Cornell University Hospital in New York for gene-therapy treatment involving stem cells. Liam has made remarkable progress in the short few weeks since the treatment. Liam's sister Saoirse died aged 5 as a result of Batten's.

Read more at: [www.independent.ie](http://www.independent.ie). Use the Search box and key in Liam Heffernan to read a series of articles on the treatment and progress made.

The screenshot shows the top of the Independent.ie website. The logo 'Independent.ie' is on the left, followed by 'NATIONAL NEWS' in red. Below this is a row of promotional banners: 'GRAND PRIX Q1 FINALISTS Vote for your favourite ad campaign', 'LIDL', 'Men's or ladies' Cycling Rain Jacket' for 12.99, and '1050 Hamr Dri' for 54. Below the banners is a navigation menu with categories: News, Business, Sport, Entertainment, Health, Lifestyle, Education, Travel, and Jobs. Underneath are sub-categories like 'Breaking News', 'National News', 'World News', etc.

## Brain surgery hope for Liam, 2

Monday April 25 2011  
A two-year-old Irish boy is set to become the world's youngest child to undergo pioneering brain surgery.  
Liam Heffernan, who suffers from Batten's Disease, will leave from Dublin Airport on Tuesday to participate in a medical treatment trial in the United States.  
The surgery, which involves six holes being drilled in Liam's skull, is scheduled to take place on Tuesday May 3 - exactly 15 weeks after his only sibling died from the same rare and fatal



This is another screenshot of the Independent.ie website header, identical to the one above, showing the logo, 'NATIONAL NEWS', promotional banners, and navigation menu.

## Liam catches up on playtime after pioneering gene treatment in US

By Ralph Riegel  
Tuesday May 31 2011  
IT is the priceless playtime that a young Irish couple never thought they'd get to enjoy with their son.  
But Tony and Mary Heffernan yesterday had their dream come true of watching their son Liam (2), who has a rare genetic disorder, play with his toy dinner just like any other

