

THE  
**WORK EXPERIENCE**  
REPORT

FINAL REPORT ON WORK EXPERIENCE OF  
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## PREFACE

It took quite a long time to organise the work experience in England. At the beginning there were a lot of pupils who wanted to do their work experience in England but finally only six students managed to do their work experience in England. Compared to 2003 the number of students going to England was even lower. Unfortunately TGG's partner school in St Albans let us know that they would not participate in the work experience exchange this year. So at that time we just had our partner schools in Pinner and Bromley. But then we found out that the teacher at Pinner who organised the work experience exchange was not at our partner school in Pinner any more. At that time there were just about eight pupils left for whom it would be quite probable to do their work experience in England. At that point all of them except for one student had a guest family. So the guest families were not the problem. Then there were problems with another pupil's work experience in England and then there were only seven pupils left. The flight was booked and about three or four weeks before the work experience nearly everyone had a WEX placement. But then we did not get any response from our partner school and a pupil having a guest family in Pinner did not get a work experience placement. He had to cancel his WEX in England a week before our departure because he did not get a placement in spite of the efforts of the two German teachers Mr Block and Mr Kenter. So only six students finally made it to England.

I am very lucky that I am one of the six pupils so I want to thank my host family, the Killeens, for their wonderful hospitality. I had a very nice time while I was staying with the Killeens. I also want to thank Mr Haigh, Mr Dumper and Mrs Cooper at Ravens Wood School who organised our work experience in England and Mr Friend and the other people at the IT Department where I spent a lovely time. And last but not least I want to thank Mr Block and Mr Kenter because they worked hard to make our WEX in England possible.

## CHAPTER 1: EXPECTATIONS & CONFRONTATION

### 1.1 EXPECTATIONS

I think that I am going to be confronted with a lot of new things like e.g. the British school system and I will recognize some more or less big differences to the German system. The biggest difference to German schools is of course the school uniform. Although I was told to wear “casual” clothing, I am not allowed to wear Jeans. Trainers are also not accepted.

When I was told that I would work as an “Assisting IT<sup>1</sup> Technician” and that my task would be composed of both installing and maintaining school PCs, at first I was surprised. I wondered why there were IT technicians at school. I have heard about IT technicians at big companies but I did not know that there were IT technicians at school. So I can imagine that Ravens Wood School has a rather big network and a lot of PCs.

I think that my main task will be to look after the school pcs and repair them if necessary. I will also have to install software on the pcs and set up new pcs. In this section I am particularly interested in how the school’s IT system deals with the permanent danger of having a virus on one of the servers or on a workstation<sup>2</sup>. Viruses are one of the biggest problems for a network. Maybe I will be confronted with this problem.

As I will work in the IT section I think that I can perhaps take part in lessons. If I could do that I would concentrate chiefly on the differences to the IT lessons at TGG where I also participate in IT lessons. I may recognize other teaching methods in England than in Germany.

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<sup>1</sup> IT = Information Technology

<sup>2</sup> Workstation = Personal Computer

Additionally I am interested in the sponsorship of the school network and the school pcs. Maybe the school is sponsored by a big company which is quite probable because a school network and a lot of school pcs are rather expensive and a lot of schools in the US and the UK are sponsored by companies like e.g. Microsoft. The other possibility is that the pcs are paid with a part of the yearly school budget.

As far as I am concerned I think that I will improve my English while I am in Britain and I hope that I also improve my IT skills and as I will most probably have to work in a team, I can also improve my team work skills. Additionally I want to learn a lot of things about networks and the use of IT devices to improve the teaching. Generally I expect that I will have to use a lot of different skills because a lot of possible problems exist in the "IT World". So "problem solving" will be one the most frequently used skills. Finally I hope that I won't be bored at my work experience placement.

## **1.2 CONFRONTATION WITH MY EXPECTATIONS**

When I entered the school building on my first day I was immediately impressed by the discipline of the pupils. In Germany the atmosphere before the first lesson is very "legère". In contrast to that all the pupils of two years were at assembly dressed with their school uniform. To me, this was quite strange because everything seemed to be very strict. But at the briefing I quickly noticed the teachers and the other people at the school were not so strict at all. To me they seemed to be very nice, sympathetic persons. In the development of my work experience I got to know a lot of teachers and technicians and I learned that they were rather strict in lessons but they were very nice and polite persons.

I learned a lot about the British School System when I talked to my colleagues. When I had questions concerning the school system or the IT systems, they gave me an answer and so I learned what I wanted to know.

Concerning the lessons I found out soon that being IT technician is a completely different profession than being a teacher. So the IT technicians did not take part in

lessons because that is not their job. Once I took part in a lesson at a primary school so I had the chance to see what school life is about in Britain.

### **1.3 EXPERIENCES I MADE**

The best thing of the work experience in England was that I improved my English because I talked to a lot of people and learned many new expressions. I learned how to understand with a strong accent and learned a lot of new colloquial expressions. I got to know the technical terms very quickly because a lot of them were similar to the German terms and soon I also used them and I even thought English. As I had a proper knowledge of IT and English there were few communication problems. At first I could hardly understand some people because they were speaking very fast but soon I managed to understand them. So after a very short period of time I did not have any problems any more understanding my colleagues.

Another thing I improved is problem solving in a team. There were rather difficult problems so it required more than one brain and we had to work together. That was a thing I really enjoyed. Nobody cared if I did my work experience or if I was an employee and because we respected each other we had no problems working in a team.

All in all I want to say that I am glad that I did my work experience at Ravens Wood School in Britain because I had a good view on the British School System and also gained economic IT knowledge. I learned a lot of things of the lifestyle of the British people and noticed some more or less big contrasts to Germany. I really enjoyed the two weeks at Ravens Wood School because they were like two weeks of real work. Quite a big contrast to school – but I enjoyed it. However, If I become an IT technician, that is another question because I think it is a big difference if you work as an IT technician for two weeks or for many years. In these two weeks there were a lot of new, interesting things so I enjoyed it. But I do not know if the profession would be still interesting if I do it everyday.

## CHAPTER 2: THE WORK EXPERIENCE PLACEMENT

### 2.1 RAVENS WOOD SCHOOL – GENERAL INFORMATION

I worked at Ravens Wood School in Bromley Common in the Southeast of Greater London. Ravens Wood School is one of several public secondary schools in Bromley Borough with a high reputation. RWS is a technically orientated school because it was already a Technology School when it commenced in 1958. The student number of RWS is currently 1425<sup>1</sup>. In years 7 to 11 there are only Boys because RWS used to be a school for boys. Now it is still a school for boys but since September 1997 they have a mixed sixth form meaning in years 12 & 13 there are also young ladies at RWS. In the last ten years the student number raised continuously except for 2003 when the student number was very high. So this year the student number is lower than in 2003 but still higher than in 2002. The raising student number may be one of the reasons why another secondary school is built in Bromley Common.

Because school is a service RWS is situated in the economical tertiary sector. But you cannot actually compare RWS with a private company situated in the tertiary sector because RWS gets its fund from Bromley Borough so they are more independent from the economic trend than private companies. But on the other hand school sections like the canteen or industrial links are quite affected by the economical trend because in the canteen it depends on the food prices how much food in school costs. The industrial links are affected because in a weak economy it is more difficult for graduates to find a job. The school equipment is also dependent from the economic trend because it depends on the prices for school equipment how well the school is equipped. But I think especially in the Greater London area there is a quite strong economy so there are a lot of jobs for RWS graduates. The community seems to have got enough money to provide RWS and other schools in Bromley Borough a budget with which the schools can buy a rather good equipment.

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<sup>1</sup> see Appendix

In the last Ofsted<sup>1</sup> inspection RWS was reported to be one of the 28%<sup>2a)</sup> of the secondary schools that are “outstanding” showing that a lot of RWS students are very successful. This Year approximately 74%<sup>2b)</sup> of the students attained five or more A\*-C grades. More than the British average of 51,3%<sup>3</sup> in the year 2002/03. Over a number of years student performance at RWS has been exceptional and RWS has been recently recognized as a Leading Edge school by the Department for Education and Skills. Professor Nigel Paine, Head of People Training and Development – BBC, said : “A good school radiates confidence and purposefulness...Ravens Wood is a good school – its pupils are filled with optimism and a sense of independence” – and I agree with him (from the point of view I developed in the two weeks of my WEX). One of the things being responsible for the good reputation is that students are well supported by staff and if they are successful in big competitions, they will be rewarded e.g. their success will be published on the school’s Hall of Fame.

At Ravens Wood School they have the vision to be “an internationally renowned community that provides an outstanding education for their students so that they [the students] can make a valued contribution as citizens of the world”<sup>4</sup>. And I think according to the results of the Ofsted inspections they try hard to achieve their vision. In order to do so they aim to<sup>1</sup>:

- “Provide opportunities to promote the student’s moral and social development”
- “Deliver an outstanding education that leads to high academic performance”
- “Create wider opportunities to achieve”
- “Prepare the community for the knowledge age”
- “Enhance skills for a lifetime of learning”

As you can see they have a rather clear idea of their aims and that is why they also have high requirements. RWS pupils are required to show discipline and to show good or excellent performance. Discipline is very important at RWS, so styles which could be associated with bad behaviour are not allowed.

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<sup>1</sup> Ofsted = Office for Standards in Education

<sup>2</sup> see Appendix A-1 <sup>a)</sup>Image.1 <sup>b)</sup>Image.2

<sup>3</sup> Ofsted Annual Report 2002/2003

<sup>4</sup> Ravens Wood School Prospectus 2004

Additionally I need to mention the international links with schools in Sweden, Quebec, Germany and France exchanging ideas, and developing working partnerships. All these international links are supported by IT facilities like i.e. video conferencing.

## **2.2 RAVENS WOOD SCHOOL – HISTORY<sup>1</sup>**

Ravens Wood School commenced as Beckenham Technical School and moved to its current site in Oakley Road in January 1958. Lt Col Lord Dudley Gordon initiated it as Bromley Technical High School for Boys on 13 October. In 1971 the school changed its name to Ravens Wood School for Boys. In 1997 girls were admitted to the sixth form and so the school changed its name again to Ravens Wood School in 1999.

## **2.3 RAVENS WOOD SCHOOL – STRUCTURE & PERSONNEL**

Ravens Wood School is composed of several departments with their employees. There are 99 teachers and most of them teach one subject, some teach two. In addition to that there are eight “Individual Support Assistants”, four “Support Tutors” and two foreign language assistants, one from Germany and one from France. At RWS there are eleven technicians being responsible for Information Technology, Design Technology, Curriculum Technology and Science. These eleven technicians include four “Gap Year Students”. They also have 14 office employees such as finance and examination officers and assistants, receptionists, office managers, administrative assistants, secretaries, learning resources officers, school communication officers and reprographics officers. Responsible for the industrial and business links there are two business links officers who also organized our work experience placements. And last but not least there are four cover supervisors, a cover co-ordinator and a connexions personal adviser <sup>1</sup>. Compared to the Teletta-Groß-Gymnasium there is much non-teaching staff at RWS. The non-teaching staff help to provide a better education because the teachers can completely concentrate on their lessons and the non-teaching staff work on technical problems to make sure

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<sup>1</sup> Data from Ravens Wood School Prospectus 2004

things like the school networks and school pcs work. Other non-teaching staff organise e.g. work experience placements for RWS students or help students planning their career. For administration, finance and examination there are officers. In this case RWS resembles a company because economical staff deal with economical stuff and a lot of big companies have an IT department like RWS.

There is another important group of staff: the school governors. At RWS there are 18 governors. There are seven governors elected by parents of students of the school, two local authority governors appointed by the local education authority, three partnership governors appointed by the existing governing body, two co-opted governors who are co-opted by existing governors and finally four staff governors (including the headmaster) elected by members of staff. The governing body is such important because it is responsible for managing the school's budget, so the school and the parents can decide on what they spend the money of the school's budget. Additionally the governing body has to make sure that the curriculum is balanced and complies with the national curriculum set down by the Department for Education and Skills. Other tasks include appointing the headmaster, deputy headmaster and other staff and regulating staff conduct and discipline. In addition to that the governing body determines the number of staff, pays policy for the school and after an inspection by Ofsted the governors draw up an action plan. The governing body also sets and publishes targets for pupils' performance and takes general responsibility for the conduct of the students. And finally the governors agree policies for equal opportunities, health and safety and for students with special educational needs. So you can easily recognize that the governing body is rather powerful and as the governing body is made up of at least seven parents, the parents have quite a lot of power at RWS. So the important decisions at RWS are not taken by the local authorities or only by one person. The headmaster consults the senior management team of the school and the governing body and then he takes an important decision.

## 2.4 RAVENS WOOD SCHOOL – IT DEPARTMENT

Like many big companies Ravens Wood School has got its own IT department. The function of the IT department is to maintain the school network of RWS and those of three primary schools in Bromley Borough. All these schools are linked to the London Grid for Learning (LGfL). The LGfL is a collaborative initiative by the 33 London Local authorities to provide broadband connectivity, managed services and on-line content to the education community in the London Region. The LGfL was established in 2000 to provide “real” broadband connectivity (minimum 2mbps) to London’s 2600 schools with 65,000 teachers and one million students in an area of 620 square miles. A real challenge but the LGfL is on track to cope with this challenge because 60% of London’s schools are currently connected to the LGfL network. By 2006 this task will probably be accomplished<sup>1</sup>.

RWS has got a rather big network with a lot of pcs so there are many problems. To solve these problems there are five IT technicians. The IT Manager Mr P Friend used to be a Design Technology technician but then RWS noticed that they needed an IT technician. So Mr P Friend became the first RWS IT technician because of his IT knowledge. Now there is another IT technician, Mr S Moon. Mr S Moon left school two years ago at the age of 16 and started working in the RWS IT department where Mr Friend instructed him being an IT technician. Then he got a promotion and now he is an IT technician. In addition to these two technicians there are three Gap Year Students. A Gap Year is the year between A level and university respectively college. So you can easily recognize that you don’t need a special education for being an IT technician at RWS. The people working there just learn things by doing things. The IT Manager Mr Friend tells them what to do and when they do not know how to do the things he or Mr Moon teach them how to do the things. Two of the major differences between an IT technician and a Gap Year Student are the payment and the fact that only the two IT technicians have administration access to the school network. In fact they have all the all the force. Obviously there are only men in the IT department and you may think that women are not interested in IT. But if you have a look at the

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<sup>1</sup> Data from LGfL ([www.lgfl.net](http://www.lgfl.net))

teaching staff you will see that there are more female IT teachers than there are male. However, the task “maintaining school network” means installing software on school pcs, installing new network connections, copying hard drives to repair damaged workstations and mostly repairing the teachers’ laptops. Every teacher at RWS and the primary schools has got a laptop funded by school budget. But I made the experience that most of the teachers cannot deal with their laptops so mostly the task of the IT technicians is to repair laptops. So if there is any computer problem at RWS the IT department will be called and they send one or more technicians to solve the problems. Another task is installing video conferences with other schools. Mostly this is the task of the Gap Year Students because most of the problems are minor problems. In case there are major problems Mr Friend or Mr Moon come to solve the problems. Each Gap Year Student works at one of the primary schools in the afternoon because they do not have IT technicians at the primary schools because they are just too small.

An IT department at a school with approximately 30 computers and 20 laptops would be superfluous. But in a school like RWS with six IT suites with approximately 20-25 pcs each and 99 teachers and other staff having their own laptop connected to the school network an IT department is rather necessary. With approximately 250 pcs the school’s pc number is similar to small and medium-sized enterprises.

## CHAPTER 3: MY OCCUPATION

### 3.1 MY OCCUPATION

At first I need to say that I did not have to do some “typical-work-experience-stuff”. I was somehow treated like a “real” employee although I was of course not paid and didn’t have the administration rights and passwords. One of the reasons for that may have been that there was actually no office work like arranging or copying any documents. Most of the time I helped my colleagues or did some interesting things alone. Every day was different and had its own challenges. So I am going to describe my general occupation at Ravens Wood School IT Department.

In the morning I commenced work at 8.30 hours and finished between 3.15 and 3.45 hours in afternoon although my colleagues actually worked until 4.30 hours in the afternoon. So when we arrived at RWS in the morning the first thing we did was switching on the computers in the IT rooms and that was one the few daily routine orders because there are always other things to do at RWS IT Department. But usually I worked on teachers’ laptops which were broken or had a virus or other problems. Most often I had to format the laptop and reinstall all the necessary software but with some laptops it didn’t help so we had to copy the hard-drive from another working laptop to the broken one. This was extremely interesting and I learned how to repair broken pcs. Because the described actions took quite a long time we went to the staff room in the meantime to get some tea or coffee. There were not any fixed times for breaks so we had a break when we wanted to have a break. Of course this system will only work, if the employees do not have too much and too long breaks. If there is a lot of work the breaks will of course be shorter and less frequent. However, once I had to set up a brand new laptop which meant installing all the necessary hard- and software. This was one of the most interesting things I did. This was “my project”. During the laptop maintenance and reparation works we were called from everywhere in the school because of IT Problems. Then I left our office with one the technicians respectively assistants to solve the problems. There were problems like a not working TV system (this was also our job because nobody else at

RWS is able to deal with that) or not working printers. Once I accompanied Mr Friend when he had to test a new video conferencing system. They were trying set up a video conference with a school in France and someday there may be a video conference with TGG. As RWS IT Department supports three primary schools in the Borough of Bromley, which are Hayes Primary School in Hayes, Princes Plain Primary School in Bromley Common and Castlecombe Primary School in Mottingham, each of the three Gap Year Students is also the responsible IT technician for one of the primary schools. So in the afternoons I went with one of the three IT assistants/Gap Year Students to one of the primary schools. Most often I was with Mr B Essenhigh at Hayes Primary School, where we installed Anti-Virus Software on each pc in the primary school. The LGfL<sup>1</sup> provides this Anti-Virus-Software so it has to be installed on every workstation in every school linked to the LGfL<sup>1</sup> network. Another thing we did was setting up a network connection where we had to relocate the cable and put on the plugs at the end of the cable. So this was our custom-made network cable! Another problem at Hayes Primary was a teacher's notebook. It was in a very very bad condition, so I formatted the hard drive and reinstalled Windows XP®, the operating system. But this did not help so we planned to copy the hard drive from another Windows XP® laptop. But there was only one suitable laptop and when I finished my work experience it was still not there. I also spent two afternoons at Princes Plain Primary School with Mr R Hole-Thomas. At Princes Plain Primary we just updated and maintained the pcs because no problems occurred while I was there. At Castlecombe, where I went with Mr R Wrench, we had to install a network connection from the main server to a WLAN<sup>2</sup> port and the cable had to be in the loft because there was a rather long distance between the server and the WLAN port. So Mr Wrench had to climb up the loft (and he nearly disappeared there!) while I was helping him with the cable at the server room and showed him in which direction he had to go. This was I think one of the few days where I also had to use practical skills and I also enjoyed that.

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<sup>1</sup> LGfL = London Grid for Learning (see 2.4 The IT Department p. 7f)

<sup>2</sup> WLAN = Wireless Local Area Network

## CHAPTER 4: WHY DOES A COMPANY NEED INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY?

***“What I get for my investments in the e-commerce? Are you crazy? Think of Columbus. Did he ask for the yield?”***

*- Andrew S. Grove, founder of Intel® (translated)<sup>1</sup>*

Although I did my work experience at a public school I think that it is important to treat the following topic.

### 4.1 INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY & DIGITAL NERVOUS SYSTEMS

Like every human being, every enterprise has an internal communication mechanism, a “nervous system”, that coordinates all the actions. All businesses include few basic components: customers, products & services, revenues, costs, competitors, distribution and employees. In each of these sections the company has to control the procedures meticulously and conduct them effectively. The managers everywhere in the company have to know a lot of things to improve the business actions. To make data like e.g. the latest information available for every employee and manager you will probably need a digital nervous system. An effective flow of information and good analysing methods will help you to gain knowledge about new yield possibilities out of flood of data. A digital nervous system supports the human intellect and reduces the human work simultaneously. A good digital nervous system is able to provide you the information you need to run your business and to understand the markets and the competitors at the speed of thought. A digital nervous system makes business actions possible that are nearly impossible with paper systems. Microsoft for example reduced the number of forms from 1000 to 60 by using their intranet and saved at least \$ 40 million in the first twelve months after the rearrangement between 1997 and 1998. Just to exemplify the thing: accounting companies estimate that the costs for orders using paper come to approximately

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<sup>1</sup> from Bill Gates’ “Business @ the speed of thought”, ISBN 3-453-15859-8 (German)

<sup>2</sup> intranet = internal network

\$ 145 per transaction. In contrast to that the use of the intranet at Microsoft costs \$ 5 per transaction. Some people may say that a digital nervous is very expensive but Microsoft paid \$ 300 000 for the hardware and the maintenance costs \$ 765 000 (in 1999) a year. Compared to the \$ 40 million they saved it is not much money. So in an effective digital nervous system every employee has got a pc linked to the company's intranet so that he has got access to all necessary data and also economic aspects of the company because the employees ideas can help the company to improve procedures and to save money.

#### **4.2 THE INTERNET CHANGES EVERYTHING**

Now, in the 21<sup>st</sup> century a basic new business rule is that the internet changes everything, well, at least the way companies, even smaller ones, deal with their employees, partners and suppliers. Not every company needs the internet to communicate with their customers because it really depends on the group of the main customers. If a company's main customers do not like using the internet or are not connected to the internet, it is not the best idea for the company to transfer their businesses on a website. But for most companies a website, on which the customers can make deals, is nearly as important as the telephone number or the address. Recently most of the big companies have their own websites. How effective they are – that is another question. As the dissemination of personal computers in private houses will someday be as high as the spreading of TV or telephone and most households will have a high-speed connection to the World Wide Web, e-mail will be as common as telephone and letter mail as a communication platform. So the basic changes in business life are:

- Most transactions between companies and customers, companies and companies and between customers and the authorities will be undertaken in a direct digital way. So dealers who used to be involved in the transactions will have to offer other services or disappear from the markets.

- Routine activities will be strongly reduced because a digital nervous system enables individual treatments for every customer because in a digital nervous system all necessary information is available to provide customers the best service and counselling.
- Companies will try to digitalize most of the internal processes and install a digital nervous system to be able to adapt to the permanently changing environment for customer needs and to be competitive because a traditional company without a *digital* nervous system will not be able to compete with a modern company with a digital nervous system because the modern company provides better customer service and can adapt better to the current economical trend.

But to come away from the “someday”. For a lot of years now enthusiasts have been saying that the internet will happen “tomorrow”. Bill Gates said in 1999 that the necessary infrastructure for the Web-Lifestyle will be good enough in five years. I think that in these days the necessary infrastructure is available but the attitude of the people sometimes stops the development to the Web-Lifestyle. A big problem is that the people do not trust in a digital nervous system and I think their doubts are justified. In these days we have a lot of problems concerning data protection because if you make data accessible for your employees you really have to trust them because they might pass on the data to your competitors for a lot of money. This is the disadvantage of wider management levels. All persons in the management levels have to keep silent about the company’s affairs. But concerning the use of internet and e-mail services I can say that this society especially the younger generation is improving. In my tutor group nearly everybody uses e-mail services and chatting software to communicate with each other because the distances between each other are sometimes rather big. So I think that this generation especially this tutor group will not have big problems with the use of a digital nervous system. However, I think that in foreseeable time the internet will not completely replace personal contact. Maybe in business affairs but not in private affairs. And if you think of the necessary infrastructure, you will recognize that it still costs a lot of money. Will the companies invest in the E-commerce during a weak economical trend? Will a digital nervous system get the companies out of the bad economic situation? Maybe! I am not able

to answer this question. On the one hand the companies are competitive with a digital nervous system and are able to provide individual service for each customer but on the other hand the Web-Lifestyle destroys a lot workplaces although a lot of new workplaces are formed. But the Web-Lifestyle requires qualified people and I don't know if a lot of people are qualified for a job in the Web-Lifestyle.

#### **4.3 DOES THE WEB-LIFESTYLE ALSO AFFECT SCHOOLS?**

Yes, of course it does. Using the internet teachers can exchange information and pupils can do research in a completely different way. But if the use of personal computers is not integrated in the curriculum they computers are just placed in the IT Suites and rarely used. The schools have to stop making the computers a subject. The personal computer is just a tool which can be used in nearly every subject for research or as a communication platform to work together online with other pupils in other cities, states or even other countries. If pupils are ill, they will not miss the lessons because with e-mail services or video conferences they will be up to date. A lot of schools are really succeeding in adapting to the Web-Lifestyle but almost every school is still paper-based. With an effective intranet paper would be superfluous because all the teaching material would be on the school's servers and would be easily accessible for the teachers. The tasks for the pupils can be downloaded from the servers so the worksheets do not have to be printed out. Messages for teachers are not sent to their "mailboxes" because they are sent to them by e-mail. But what to do if you want to work on a text? If you stare at the screen for a longer time your eyes will suffer from that. So it requires better screens. TFT touch screens for example. A tablet PC would be a solution because you do not suffer less from looking at a TFT screen than from looking at a normal screen<sup>1</sup> and you do not have to use the keyboard because the tablet PCs have a stick similar to a pen. With that "pen" you can write on the tablet PC like on a sheet of paper. So with the necessary hardware and software an effective intranet at school would be able to replace the old paper-based system.

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<sup>1</sup> "TFT monitors are indulgent for the eyes" (translated) – Henning Withöft from the "Stiftung Warentest Berlin" → <http://www.main-rheiner.de/multimedia/flachbild.php3>

At schools like Ravens Wood School the necessary infrastructure is available to install a school intranet abolishing as much paper as possible. Every teacher has got a notebook and an e-mail address, a lot of rooms are equipped with PCs and linked to the servers via fibre glass cables and they have an IT department to maintain the intranet. So why do they not use their intranet instead of the paper system? Well, they may not trust their intranet and although a lot of classrooms are equipped with PCs there are not enough PCs for every student.

#### **4.4 THE IT INFRASTRUCTURE AT RWS & THE PERFECT IT INFRASTRUCTURE**

At Ravens Wood School they have eight servers based on Windows Server 2000® or Windows NT Server®. In the IT Suites the PCs are connected to a central hub in the IT Room and the hub is linked to server by high speed fibre glass cables. The laptops have WLAN adapters<sup>1</sup> which enables a wireless connection to one of the 20 WLAN hubs at RWS and each of them has a range of 100 metres. The WLAN hubs<sup>2</sup> are linked with the servers so from every PC respectively laptop in the RWS buildings you have access to the servers and therewith access to the internet.

So if every pupil had a tablet PC or a laptop, every pupil would have access to the intranet and the servers. The teachers would have other administration rights than the students and so the teachers could save their work on the server and download it from everywhere in the school and if the teachers do not want that pupils have access or if they let them have limited access they will just have to change the properties of the data with a few clicks. The students can download the worksheets and other material from the servers onto their tablet PCs or laptops, work on them and save them on the server. If there was a fibre glass connection with other secondary schools in Bromley Borough, the pupils would be able to exchange information and to form workgroups. Incoming data is being checked on a server, that is only responsible for incoming data, and will then be conducted to the receiver(s).

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<sup>1</sup> WLAN adapter = Wireless Local Area Network card in a computer

<sup>2</sup> WLAN hub = Wireless Local Area Network hub is linked to other computers without a wire and is linked to the server by network cable

## CHAPTER 5: THE BRITISH SCHOOL SYSTEM

### 5.1 THE BRITISH SCHOOL SYSTEM – GENERAL STRUCTURE

Compulsory education starts with primary School. The children start primary school at the of age 5 years. But before that a lot of them went to nursery before. They can go to nursery when they are 3 years old. So that is very early compared with Germany. However, the children go to primary school for six years. At primary school they learn the basic things from Year 5 the learn a foreign language, mostly French. But I have to mention that primary schools in Britain are much stricter than in Germany. For example if an adult walks through the hall and they walk next to the adult they run to the door to hold it open for the adults because they are taught to do so at primary school. And as another example I want to mention that before the breaks the pupils have to stand in a queue and be quiet until the teacher lets them go out.

After primary school the pupils go to secondary school. Most of the secondary schools are comprehensive schools but there are also some grammar schools. But the difference between the German grammar schools (like i.e. TGG) and the British grammar schools is that in Britain you do not have to go to a grammar school to do your advanced level ('A' level). You can also do your 'A' level at comprehensive schools like Ravens Wood School. However, secondary schools are divided into "key stage 3" (Years 7-9) and "key stage 4" (Yeas 10 & 11). At the end of key stage 4 the pupils to their GCSE (General Certificate of Secondary Education) at the of about 16. Then one part of the students leaves school to work or to go to a further education college. The other students (70.8 % at RWS this Year<sup>1</sup>) continue school and go to sixth form. After two years in the sixth form the pupils leave school having achieved 'A' level. The advanced level ('A' level) is divided in to the advanced subsidiary (AS) in Year 12 and the advanced level itself in Year 13. The pupils have to achieve exams in usually three subjects.

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<sup>1</sup> see Appendix

## 5.2 WEAKNESS IN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

When I was in Britain I recognized that most of the British people (not only pupils) had serious problems speaking other languages. I was often praised for my good, fluent English because only few British people speak other languages fluently unless the language is their mother language. And this is not because they do not learn foreign languages at school. They do learn foreign languages at school, can choose foreign languages for their GCSE or 'A' level and, even primary schools, have international connections to other schools.

I think the problem is that English is quite an easy language. For British people it may be difficult to understand that there are several cases ("Kasus") in other languages. In German they have to learn four cases, the nominative, the genitive, the dative and the accusative. And each case in German has got its own endings for every "Numerus" and every "Genus". So they have to learn a mass of forms and they have to learn when to use the forms. This lowers the learning speed extremely so I even had to notice that I could speak French better than people who finished school with their 'A' level although they started to learn French in Year 5 and I learned to speak French in Year 7.

The other problem may be that British people do not need to speak foreign languages because they get along with English in any part of the world. For example, when British people travel to France they mostly speak English. If I travel to France, I will not get along with my German. I will have to speak French or English if I could not speak French.

At the end I want to say that I have seen a lot of excellent things at the British schools but the foreign languages are one of the major problems. So the question is if British people need to be able to speak foreign languages because they speak the "world language" English. I cannot answer this question but I think that it is somehow polite to speak e.g. French if I am in France.

APPENDIX A: GRAPHICS & IMAGES

IMAGE.1

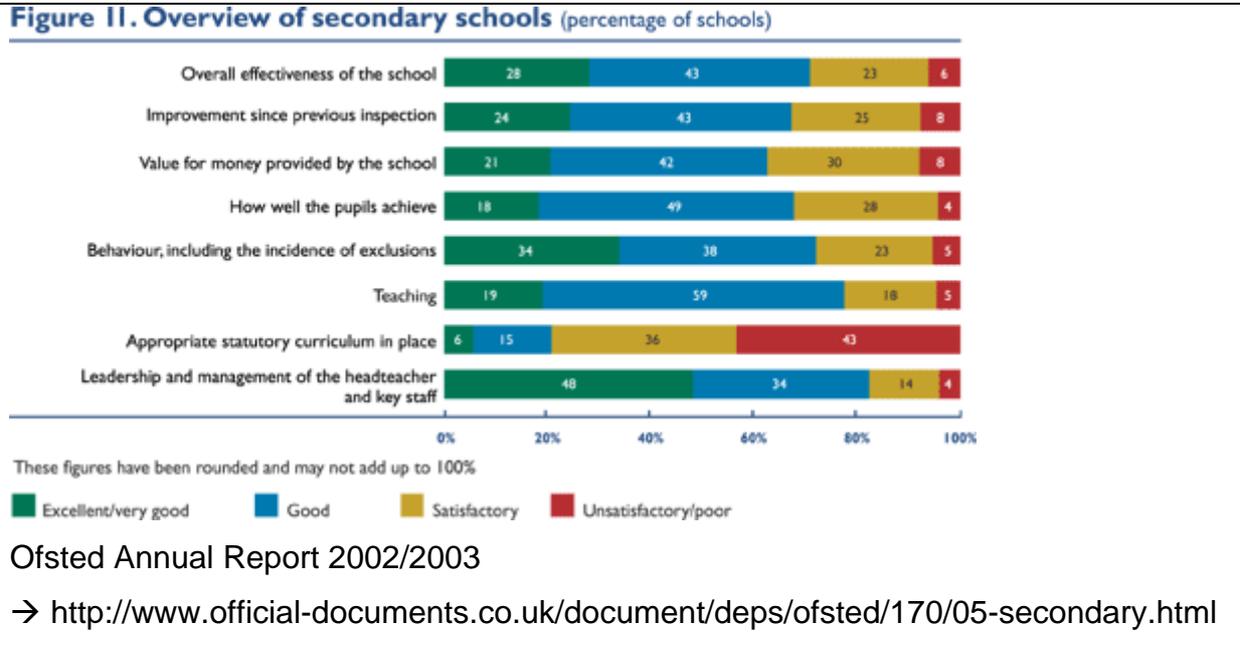


IMAGE.2

