

Education

Primary schools

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Meridian Primary hosts teacher trainees from Beijing for unique placements

Meridian Primary School in Comberton opened its doors and classrooms to five trainee teacher students from Beijing Normal University in China for four weeks.

In the first arrangement of its kind in the Cambridge region – and possibly in the UK – the trainees were each appointed to a class, as well as being given their own timetables to observe and take part in their specialist subject areas in other year groups.

“We have been delighted to have this link this year,” said headteacher Carole Etchie. “The students have really embraced our busy school life and established relationships with the pupils and staff really quickly.”

The trainees, who are in their fourth and final year of their teaching degree, will be applying for teaching posts once back in their home country. Ahead of the placement at Meridian Primary, they enjoyed a week of lectures at Hughes Hall at the University of Cambridge to learn and understand the pedagogy and educational philosophy implemented in UK schools – and how children are taught in smaller class sizes.

It was organised by Dr Li Yuan, a professor at the college of education for the future at Beijing Normal University. Dr Li Yuan has lived here and worked at UK universities, including Cambridge, for more than 20 years.

The trainees were interested in the teaching of phonics, which is



The trainee teachers with headteacher Carole Etchie, centre

Picture: Keith Heppell

taught at Meridian in small groups in the morning using the Read Write Inc scheme, and could provide a strong foundation for learning the English language even overseas.

One of the trainees, Jiayang Wang, said: “I have thoroughly enjoyed the various teaching methods and approaches here,

especially the use of group work for children's learning.

“I particularly appreciate the encouragement and constructive feedback given to the students. This is exactly what I need to apply in my future teaching. Teachers not only praise students' work but also provide guidance on how to improve it.”

Kang Jinpeng added: “My internship at Meridian Primary School has been an enriching experience. The cultural exchange has been invaluable, and I've learned a great deal from both the teachers and the students.”

And Wu Yucong noted: “What impressed me the most was the teaching of leadership in PE class.

The teacher dedicated most of the time to giving students the opportunity to design and create their own exercises and explain them to the class, fostering students' leadership skills.”

Li Ruijie said: “This experience has taught me how to incorporate the development of good habits into my daily teaching. For instance, I can pay more attention to the process rather than just focusing on the results when evaluating and assisting students. Additionally, I've realised the importance of connecting classroom knowledge to real-life situations.”

And Zhuo Ma Yang Zong observed: “I've noticed that Meridian Primary School places a strong emphasis on the social and emotional development of students. They encourage cooperation and mutual assistance among students, fostering a sense of teamwork and social skills. The students are friendly and respectful.”

After the placement came to end last week, Mrs Etchie said: “It's great that we have now established some links with a teacher training university abroad. It has been a three-way enrichment programme with our school, China and the professors at Cambridge University. Of course our school has had the real benefit of four weeks in class support and we have learned about these students and their lives abroad.”

Form the Future's annual conference this year will bring together educators and industry professionals to discuss how we should prepare young people for a rapidly changing world, writes editor Paul Brackley.

Taking place at the Moller Institute in Cambridge on Friday, December 1, and supported by the *Cambridge Independent*, the all-day event will feature keynote speeches, seminars, interviews and open debate to consider the future of work and the impact on young people.

Anne Bailey, co-founder and chief executive of Form the Future, said: “We are so excited about this year's event which is set to be our most ambitious conference yet.

“Our event is unique in bringing together industry professionals and educators and we will consider how best to prepare young people for the rapidly changing world of work.

“Never has this topic been more important and we are looking forward to hearing from leading industry professionals.”

Cambridge MP Daniel Zeichner is lined up to deliver a keynote speech at the conference.

Delegates will explore how employers, educators and

Conference will explore how to prepare young people for future



organisations like the not-for-profit Form the Future can help tackle this challenge, with themes including:

- Places and Spaces – with Cambridge renowned as one of the world's leading centres for the life sciences, technology and advanced manufacturing, the conference will discuss how the working environment will change over the next 20 years and, with hybrid and flexible working

practices now normalised, what can be done to prepare young people for these changes.

- The nature of work – as generative AI tools, data science and digital technology drive all industry sectors, delegates will explore the jobs of the future and how careers will develop and discuss how young people can build their skills, knowledge and employability.

- Diversity, inclusion, equality and belonging – Generation Z are recognised as being the most socially conscious generation, holding organisations to account for their position on a whole variety of local and global issues. The conference will ask how employers can build cultures that maintain a sense of belonging for young individuals from diverse and underrepresented backgrounds,

including those experiencing socioeconomic challenges, those with varying neurodivergent conditions, and those who identify with a range of genders and expressions.

- Pathways to successful careers – traditional academic routes into employment have changed, and with all sectors embracing these new pathways, apprenticeships have been re-established as an attractive and financially-positive opportunity for young people. With a dedicated stage, the conference will explore the lived experience of the apprentice, the feedback from mentors, and an exploration into the multiple sectors offering this route into employment.

The annual conference is open to employers, training providers, recruitment consultants, headteachers, leaders of multi-

academy trusts, governors, careers advisors, public sector organisations, academic researchers and anyone involved in connecting young people to their future careers.

Individual tickets cost £75 for corporates and £25 for those working in schools or non-profits, but Form the Future is offering an early bird registration discount of 20 per cent for registration before October 20.

- Register for a place at ftfannualconference2023.eventbrite.co.uk and look out for more on the conference in the *Cambridge Independent* in the coming weeks.

- A range of sponsorship and exhibitor opportunities are also available. To find out more, please contact Sue Walden on swalden@formthefuture.org.uk.