



# BREZEL-NEWS

Fourth Edition, March 2013

## Newsletter of the German Saturday Schools Islington and Hackney Wick

Hello dear Saturday School and Brezel News friends,

Welcome to the second year of our Saturday School newsletter! After our introduction of former Saturday School students in the last edition, Martina takes a closer look at our teachers this time. I myself am quite surprised by the positive feedback and the specific observations.

Christine Pleines reports on her family adventure of six months in Vienna last year: Christine (as a teacher), Chris (in the adult class), Franziska, Anna and Timmy are all Saturday School members.

The opportunity for this "family experience" is now also available in Hackney Wick after the successful start of our adult course there. This was a direct response to Carola's adult course article in our last Brezel News which motivated Massimo, Matthew, Natalia & Co to initiate the course. Now 9 mothers and fathers have started to learn the pitfalls of the German language with Florian, one of our new teachers.

Organising our school in Hackney Wick is becoming increasingly complex. It's not at all that easy for Ulrike, Ursula and me to keep an eye on everything from the distance: are all the kids in the suitable class group, does a teacher need a supply, who needs to pay for what... and to generally put names to all the faces. Also, building work is pending in Hackney Wick and we have to coordinate with the site manager which rooms we will be able to use in the meantime.

Therefore we are looking for someone who will be able to help with the school organisation in Hackney Wick from September at the latest. We would like to discuss the specifics of the new role with the potentially interested.

Anything else? Our three AS-level candidates have achieved fantastic As in January. Congratulations to Fenja, Aishia and Beatrice, thanks to Boris and the Fortismere School for their support, good luck to our 22 (!) GCSE-, AS- and A-level students in Islington who are currently taking their exams, and happy Easter holidays to all of you!

Yours, Cathrin

Cathrin Cordes, School Director



Lük here now: Charlotte and intern Laura at work with their class

### Contents

Carnival	Page 2
Saturday School Teachers	Page 3-5
Lük Boxes	Page 6
Viennese for Beginners	Page 7-8

### Saturday School - Upcoming Dates

#### 20th April

Beginning of summer term Islington and Hackney Wick

#### 27th April, 2pm

Fairytale workshop for Saturday School teachers from Islington and Hackney Wick

#### 25th May and 1st June

Half-term holidays

#### 11th July

Summer fete and last day of school

# Of “Jecken”<sup>1</sup> and “Kamellen”<sup>2</sup>

## Carnival at our Saturday Schools

In February the annual celebrations took place in the carnival strongholds of Cologne and Mainz as well as in our Saturday Schools. In Hackney, the children wore fancy dress while experiencing carnival-themed lessons in their class groups, while we braved the cold winter's day in Islington with carnival tunes, good humour and imaginative costumes: such as cowboys, clowns, squaws, vampires and multiple versions of Pippi Longstocking.

Martina Schwarz, as a true Cologne carnival friend, opened the party with a short concert with audience participation. After the lessons we enjoyed traditional doughnuts, some with a surprising mustard filling, plenty of chocolate, carnival music, “schunkeln”<sup>3</sup> and “Rucki-Zucki”<sup>4</sup>. Highlights of the festivities were the “Kamellen”-throwing and a polonaise across the school yard, led by Martina with her accordion.

Carnival is a German tradition we do want to acknowledge at Saturday School. However, no other German festivity is as divisive as carnival. Passionate carnavalists, – overwhelmingly from the Rhineland and Southern Germany – love it and throw themselves into the “five crazy days” with great abandon. More or less bewildered, the rest of the Republic looks towards the South where the revellers are out and about. The same goes for a large contingent of the more reserved adults at Saturday School. Those who were not inoculated with the carnival virus in earliest childhood often appear to be immune to the charms of the so-called “fifth season”. Words such as helau<sup>5</sup>, alaa<sup>6</sup>, Kamellen, Jecken, Bütt<sup>7</sup> and Narrhalla March<sup>8</sup> are words belonging to an entirely foreign language.



Pippi Longstocking with squaw and princess in Hackney Wick



A big Pippi joins the polonaise at Islington

and later created masks, for example in the shape of a sun, moon or flowers. In the Middle Ages, carnival was celebrated in order to chase away evil spirits and winter. Masks were meant to frighten and a lot of noise was made using bells, rattles and other instruments. The Allemannic carnival in Basel and the South-West of Germany is reminiscent of this. In the Rhineland carnival is celebrated differently. Many elements hark back to the year 1823: The war against France had only just ended when the first carnival procession once again took place in Cologne. That's why the parade features a variety of military outfits.

Besides its significance as a spring festival carnival also has a religious significance for Catholics. The name carnival comes from the Latin “carne vale”: “farewell to meat”. On Ash Wednesday, when the wild goings-on have ended, a 40-day fast begins. That's why extensive carnival celebrations have established themselves more strongly in Catholic areas.

Meanwhile, in London a group of enthusiastic Saturday School “jesters” showed true dedication, forcing even the biggest carnival grouch to admit that, actually, it had been quite jolly after all. Cathrin, as a Northern German more of a carnival sceptic, admits: “Every year I shudder at the thought of having to organise the carnival and without Martina I'd be lost. But when I see how much fun our children are having, it is worth it. And a small hint for the reticent contingent on the sidelines: Whenever I've decided to engage with the carnival and made the effort to dress up a little (the annual deployment of my fascinador of royal wedding fame) and join in with the “schunkeln” and polonaise I am surprised that I actually like it”.

<sup>1</sup> Jecke: carnival jester/fool

<sup>2</sup> Kamelle: carnival sweet

<sup>3</sup> Schunkeln: a rhythmic rocking to and fro

<sup>4</sup> Rucki-Zucki: German version of the hokey-cokey

<sup>5</sup> helau: carnival salutation used in Mainz

<sup>6</sup> alaa: carnival salutation used in Cologne

<sup>7</sup> Bütt: carnival soapbox

<sup>8</sup> Narrhalla March: a traditional carnival tune



# Saturday School Teacher – Vocation or Inspiration?

One Saturday morning in the spring of 2005 I had just delivered my four-year-old daughter to her class and was relaxing over a cup of coffee when Cathrin approached me: "Tell me, Martina, what is it that you do? And would you be able to fill in for somebody next Saturday?" The rest, as they say, is history. During that very first supply lesson I already noticed how much fun I was having, and am still having today.

Although there are a number of trained teachers at the school, many of our teachers have discovered their love of teaching in a similar way. When Cathrin is looking for a new Saturday School teacher she always searches amongst parents first: "When I took over the management of the Islington Saturday School I also "inherited" three excellent teachers who were mothers as well. I soon realised that this combination is a key to continuity which I wanted to bank on." This strategy has paid off: teachers who have been working with us for ten years or more are no exception: our longest-serving teachers at the moment are Klaudia, Yasmine and Martina Geccelli. Continuity is one of the main factors of the Saturday School's success.

## Enjoy working with children and young people

"I don't necessarily insist on perfect qualifications, especially not for the younger classes." When Cathrin has the impression that a mother would like to work with children and could fit into our team, she is happy to give her a chance. For example Sonja, a staff member for the past eight years and the Saturday School's undisputed "arts and crafts queen". "I was sceptical at first", remembers Sonja. "I work as a textile designer and run sewing classes for children. Cathrin encouraged me to just give it a try, as the younger classes usually learn through play – and arts and crafts are important of course! I never thought that teaching could be so much fun. Also I think it's lovely that the children spend many years in the same class group, friendships develop and as a teacher I get to follow the children's development."

Klaudia was a supply teacher even before Cathrin's time and first started teaching her own class in 2003. "Originally I worked in hotel management", explains Klaudia. "I started gaining teaching experience by volunteering at my children's school. For a number of years I've also been working in the special needs department of a large Secondary School."

Since 2005 Klaudia has been in charge of our beginners' class, always in partnership with another Saturday School teacher - and for the past

year and a half with Anja: "My daughter Luna started coming to Saturday School two years ago and then Cathrin asked me if I would be interested to teach the youngest children with Klaudia." Anja's professional background is in tourism. "My knowledge of childcare and education has developed through having my own children," she explains, "and through Saturday School. I have learned a lot by working with Klaudia."



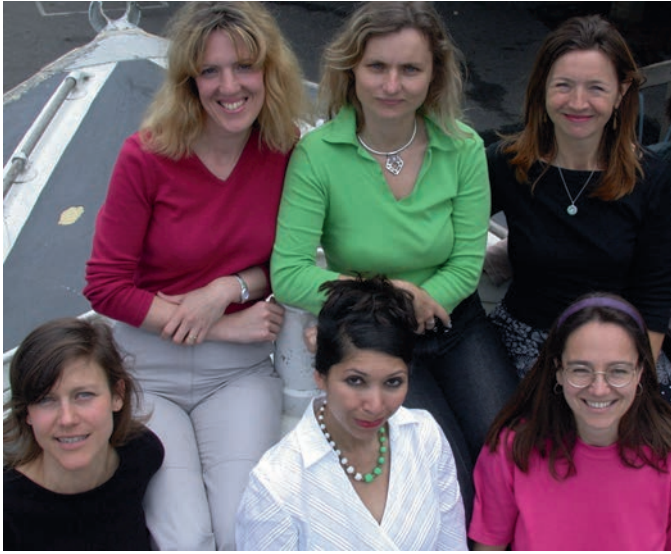
Klaudia and Anja with the beginners' class in Islington

Since joining the staff at Saturday School Martina Geccelli, a freelance artist with a degree in architecture and sculpture, has completed a PGCE in Art and Design. With prior teaching experience at university she had to get used to her very young students. "I always had to be on the ball", Martina recalls. "There was no pause for breath. But I had very nice children and it was fun and varied." Martina especially appreciates that the curriculum at Saturday School isn't precisely set and that teachers can bring their own strengths to the lessons. "It's about having fun - in German. I enjoy chatting with my students and working on many creative projects. Crafts, painting, modelling, films... I try to create a lively learning experience. That way I can do justice to my passion for child-centred learning. I always learn something new myself, which I find exciting."

## "Getting a taste for it" through Saturday School

Since their early days at the Saturday School Tanja Bridge, Martina Schmid and Birte Meyer have become successful teachers within the English school system. Tanja, a former journalist and interpreter, taught in Islington from 1999 until 2008: "One time a teacher was missing, I was asked, I enjoyed it and soon Cathrin offered me a permanent position. I was with that class – the same children! – until they took their GCSE exams. Thanks to the German Saturday School I got a post as French teacher at a private school. I went on to complete my PGCE at the Institute of

Education and have been working at a state primary school since then.” Tanja remembers her Saturday School days with fondness. “I actually miss Saturday School. Perhaps I should come back!”



Who remembers them? Tanja, Diane, Martina Schwarz + Schmid, Yasmine und Inge, Islington teachers in 2004

Martina Schmid: “In 2006, shortly after I took over a class at the Saturday School I started working as a teaching assistant at an English primary school. It was part of my preparation for a PGCE course. After completing my PGCE I got a job at a Comprehensive Secondary School where I am now Head of Photography. I always looked forward to Saturday School because the children joined in so enthusiastically. They especially enjoyed creative projects in connection with storytelling, songs or scientific themes. At Saturday School I always felt part of a team and we all got on well together. Cathrin always acted as liaison between parents and teachers. That was very important as she has a good understanding of how children learn and also of the relationship between teachers, parents and children.”

And our popular supply teacher Birte summarises: “I had been working as a costume and scene designer for almost 20 years. Through Saturday School I got a taste for teaching, completed my PGCE at the Institute of Education and have been teaching art fulltime at a Secondary School for the past seven years. I like it that the classes at Saturday School are very small and that you have time for each student.”

### Qualifications for older Classes

“Where the older classes are concerned, we do need to place a higher value on qualifications of course”, Cathrin explains. Christine Pleines, who is currently teaching our AS-level class, is a lecturer for German at the Open University and has a

wealth of experience in adult education, which is why she enjoys teaching the older children. Boris, who teaches our A-level group, had also previously taught German to adults before. “I am a freelance artist and German teacher”, says Boris. “I attended teaching courses while studying Philosophy and German at university in Berlin, as I had intended to train as a Secondary School teacher. Over the past 16 years in London, I have gained practical teaching experience at various universities, especially City University, at the Goethe Institut etc.”

Melanie, who teaches our 10- to 11-year-olds, is a “real” German teacher at a Secondary School in Walthamstow. “Saturday School is much more relaxed and casual than my English school, not least because I have a much smaller class. At my school I have to follow a strict curriculum, while I can be more creative and experimental at Saturday School.”

Gaby Kienle was “recruited” by Martina Geccelli in 2006, when both of them were attending the same PGCE course. At the moment, Gaby – with support from Mascha – is preparing our GCSE class for their exams. “I have enjoyed teaching at Saturday School from the very beginning. Every child brings his or her own experience, knowledge and accent/dialect to the lessons. That is very enriching and challenging and language and experience are a joint connection. The children not only identify with the language and culture but also with the overall experience, including the baker, their friends etc. It is especially rewarding when a discussion starts which captivates the children and which they then continue and develop without worrying about “making mistakes”. That happened a few times with my last class – a really great experience.”

“The top priority for our Saturday School teachers is that the children enjoy their lessons and also have some fun, otherwise we would not be able to tempt anyone out of their houses for another school session on a Saturday morning”, Cathrin explains. “The lessons are conducted in German, of course. Apart from that, we give our teachers broad guidelines. The focus for 4- to 6-year-olds is games and crafts, although with an eye to expanding their vocabulary and developing their confidence in speaking German outside of their family environment. From about the age of 6, and purposely not concurrent with the children’s English school, we start with reading and writing in German, and from about age 11 we start preparing them for their GCSE exams.

### The Team at Hackney Wick

The new school in Hackney Wick also started off with two artists, Frauke and Regina, and Sabine



had some experience in adult education. Last autumn we discovered our teacher for the new beginners' class amongst the mothers in Hackney Wick: Jana Gugelot.



Anke and Florian, our new teachers in Hackney Wick, with Cathrin

"My two boys were at Saturday School and apparently word got around that I worked in the nursery class of a primary school," Jana recounts. "I used to work in the hotel and fitness industry. After my own children were born, I was very keen to work with children. Since then I have completed my NVQ Level 2 in "Children's Care Learning and Development" and am currently waiting for my Level 3 Certificate in „Supporting Teaching and Learning in Schools“. I look forward to Saturday School every week because the children have so much fun. Although preparing the class can be quite a chore after you have already worked all week. In the end it is always worth it and a very satisfying feeling to have made the children and their parents happy."

Anke Eickhoff has been teaching the oldest class in Hackney since January. She is one of our "perfectly" qualified teachers – with a PGCE in Secondary School Education (German and French). "I applied for the job after hearing about you through a friend," says Anke. "In Germany I taught German as a foreign language at an international language school. I took my first teaching degrees at the university in Hamburg and then completed a PGCE in London. Currently I am teaching German at a Sixth Form College in Chelsea. But most of what I know about teaching I have learned through my own children."

### Teambuilding and Training

As Anke quite rightly says, as a mother you learn a lot about teaching. So please get in touch if any of you feel like having a go. There are always opportunities to join us as an assistant or as a supply teacher.

On top of experiences gathered while teaching at

the Saturday School there are also training events, especially the annual seminar held by the VDSS (Association of German Saturday Schools) in January. Topics of the talks are particularly relevant to the Saturday Schools. In 2011 the seminar even took place at our very own Drayton Park School, and all the speakers were from the Islington School: Gabi Wölfler shed some light on the relevant Child Protection legislation, Charlotte introduced the Lük-Boxes and Klaus-Dieter Rossade and Stephan Hammes discussed the potential benefits of social media for Saturday School communication. This year we explored reading strategies and exchanged experiences about the relationship between parents and teachers at Saturday School. These events are a valuable platform for animated discussions with teachers from other German Saturday Schools.

Sometimes we also attend training events at the Goethe Institute or the Austrian Cultural Forum. Yasmine and I recently attended a primary teacher training day at the Goethe Institute, and in the autumn, Sabine and Gabi trained with the Austrians. For April 27th Cathrin and Charlotte are organising a workshop about fairy tales for our teachers in Hackney Wick and Islington. The speaker will be Roma Schultz, the Goethe Institute's teaching expert. Following a communal lunch for once the teachers will be on the receiving end of an afternoon lesson at the Saturday School.

Last but not least, we are a great team. All of the Saturday School teachers are friendly and cooperative, advice and ideas are passed on from teacher to teacher and from classroom to classroom. One example are the Lük boxes feature in this newsletter. Many good friendships have developed amongst us teachers, and highlight of the year is our communal Christmas dinner.

by Martina Köpcke



Sonja and Martina Geccelli in conversation with Ulrike at the VDSS-Seminar in Islington in 2011

# The Trick with Lük Boxes

“Lerne – Übe – Kontrolliere” (learn – practice – check) is the request that gave its name to the Lük boxes. Nowadays it is doubtful whether our children are happy to comply with this pedagogical slogan, but one thing is certain: the Lük boxes are very popular. We have been using them regularly in lessons for a number of years and also have a lending library of more than 100 different exercise booklets with a variety of subjects.

**How it works.** The tasks are solved with the help of the Lük box. The box contains numbered tiles and the children combine questions and answers by placing these tiles on the numbered squares in the lid of the Lük box. In the end a coloured pattern is created on the reverse side of the tiles which can be checked against the exercise book – a built-in control function. An example from real life (see photo): The exercise in the Lük booklet shows twelve numbered images of objects. The child selects the verb that goes with the object from one of three possible answers. It takes the tile with the number 1 from the Lük box, chooses one of the three verbs printed under the foot, in this case “treten” (to kick) (with the number 7) and places tile 1 on square 7. So it continues until all of the tiles have been matched to the squares in the lid. In the end you turn the box over and check that the coloured pattern created on the reverse side of the tiles is identical to that in the booklet – then all answers were correct!



So geht's: Lük-kasten und -Heft

A video on the website of Westermann Verlag, the makers of Lük, demonstrates how it works (<http://www.luek.de/Flash/luek.html>). The children usually grasp the principle much more quickly than their parents. There are, by the way, mini-Lük boxes with 12 tiles for younger children and Lük boxes with 24 tiles for older ones, and even our adult classes have used them.

**Our lending library.** All booklets on the subject of German are especially relevant for our Saturday School students, from preschool age to AS- and A-



Alma and Anna from Charlotte's class are happy to have got the correct pattern

level topics: vocabulary, reading comprehension, spelling, grammar, punctuation and much more. Topic, design and execution of the booklets are varied; that's why they are so popular with the children. Our range of booklets also includes some with general knowledge or geography as topics, with questions on cities, rivers etc. in Germany or Europe. Our families in Islington can borrow the Lük booklets at the video table. The box itself, however, needs to be bought. It is also available at the video table, in Lük or mini-Lük format.

**Feedback:** For use in our lessons we have class sets of both box sizes as well as of some of the booklets, to enable the children to work together in pairs. In our experience, the combination of reading, understanding, discussing, working with their hands and checking are a recipe for success. Christine Müller enjoys using the Lük boxes in her group of now 10-year-olds. She likes that she “can respond to individual weaknesses, strengths and even interests of the children”. Emil, 7, is also enthusiastic: “That game is fun. We learned about numbers.” Even A-level students can practice grammar using Lük boxes, explains Boris. Students easily forget they are doing challenging school work. Faced with work sheets featuring similar content their enthusiasm might have extinguished much more quickly.

The systematic practice of language structure is particularly helpful to our bilingual children who learn German mainly through listening and speaking. And if they are also having fun, that can't be wrong!

by Charlotte Schulze



# Viennese for beginners

“Pfeilgasse, please.” - “Which access?” - “No idea. We’ve only just arrived.” A second taxi carrying the rest of the family is following behind. There are five of us and eleven pieces of luggage. It’s February 2nd and the temperature display in the taxi reads -19°C. Our home is now at no. 7 Pfeilgasse, 2nd stairwell, flat 3 in the 8th Viennese district. The apartment is not quite our style: spacious and bare with a long corridor. The view onto the courtyard is not particularly pleasant at this time of year and the park, which the agency had sung the praises of, is smaller than the flat.

Our first call is to the Registration Office – a few hours later we are officially registered inhabitants of Vienna. Next stop: the school authorities. My phone starts ringing while I speak to one of their friendly employees – the office of our son’s primary school in London wants to know where he might be. “He’s in Vienna. I’m just registering him for a place at a local school. We’ve got permission from Lydia.” Lydia is the head teacher in London and has dedicated herself to the improvement of the schools’ attendance statistics.

After Chris had got an offer to work as visiting professor at the University of Vienna for a year and we had decided to turn this into an adventure for the whole family, Lydia was my first port of call. “One year”, she mutters and turns a little pale. „I can’t allow it. I can’t“. I explain our position: a great educational experience, we don’t want to tear apart our family, no SATs on the horizon. “If you could settle for a shorter time period and let me have a copy of your husband’s contract...”, she whispers and looks around to make sure we are not overheard by other parents. “And anyway, your twins are now at secondary school. They won’t be allowed to go.” She did have a point.

“One week”, the secondary school says is the maximum leave of absence they could grant our daughters. They had checked this with the school authorities and there was nothing they could do. Our children say there was absolutely no way they would go to Vienna unless they were guaranteed their current school places on their return. However at the Learning Trust in Hackney we find such decisions are at the discretion of individual head teachers. Our next negotiation with the school is more successful, albeit that our dream of spending a year in Vienna has undergone a reality check: 1 February to 30 June, a full semester at university and school in Austria, but we are back in England before the summer holidays.

There are many more beautiful corners of Vienna than Pfeilgasse, but very few residential areas are more central. The wintry town hall with its amazing

ice rinks, the Vienna Ring, the Imperial Residence, theatres, museums and art galleries are all within easy reach – either on foot or by tram. Branches of Café Aida are scattered across the town, offering excellent Sachertorte. In April, summer arrives in Vienna. Even our tiny park is looking much prettier. We buy old bikes and ride through the Prater and along the Danube and its canals. We speak English when we walk around as a family and are taken for tourists.



Sachertorte at the Café Aida

But what we really wanted was to experience everyday life in a different country, and everyday life is very different for each one of us. Chris is part of an international research group who are running cutting-edge projects. Everybody is friendly and everybody speaks English, not just at University. When buying Faust Part 1 in German, the bookseller tells Chris in flawless English to use up his change as he won’t have any use for it “when you get home”; “But I live in the 8th Bezirk!” leaves her slightly nonplussed. Chris teaches a weekly seminar (in English) and the students love it. Their seminars are usually more formal, boring and teacher-centred, and Chris’s dynamic, London-style teaching comes as a surprise.

The children are at the receiving end of the traditional teaching. Our 9-year-old has to memorise the 23 districts of Vienna by heart. For homework, he has to copy sentences from a book. We had found his primary school by ourselves: it was nearby, the head teacher was friendly, they didn’t require children to be Catholic, and Timmy liked the cactuses in the classrooms. But when he has to go there every day, he absolutely hates it – despite friendly classmates who are treating him well. The worst thing for Timmy in Vienna: everything is in German. The best thing: school finishes at lunch time.



Chris in his beloved Viennese tram

The situation at the girls' venerable old Gymnasium couldn't be more different. Here too traditional teaching methods prevail (the history teacher reads from the text book, the science teacher does the experiments himself), but integration works much better. This may have to do with our girls' more positive attitude, but no doubt also with the fact that we'd been listening to recommendations and made use of connections: "Not all schools in Vienna are good with visitors, but this one is." The first day comes with a complicated time table: school, followed by a long lunch break, then more lessons in late afternoon. "What did you do in the time in between?" I ask the girls. "We went into town with our friends", Anna and Franziska reply. Now the Viennese friends are on Facebook and some have visited us in London already.

In the classroom, five months are not enough to get up to speed, and written work in particular remains difficult. Luckily there are no grades for visiting students, and in Vienna grades are what it's all about. In French our girls know less than everybody else despite the fact that they've been learning the language for a year longer than their Austrian peers. After all, French is a main subject here and not comparable with for example art or sport.

I am busy making lunch: Kaiserschmarrn and Wiener Schnitzel along with Austrian convenience fare, frozen or from packets, and many, many ham rolls. I've brought along some of my work, but none of my friendly colleagues. I so wanted to get away from London for a while, but now I realize how much we are part of a social network there. When I take Timmy to school in England, I see lots of familiar faces. In Vienna I see nobody, the children being dropped by car or coming on their own. Our

neighbours at no. 7 Pfeilgasse are considerate people who will hold the door open to me when I'm loaded with shopping, but I had imagined neighbourly chats.

Eventually I discover Viennese café culture. I now take my laptop to Café Florianihof. They serve the best breakfast in Vienna and you can stay as long as you like. After a while, I start bumping into people I know. Parents from both schools are organising outings and visits to beer-gardens. I mumble "Hello" and sit down at one of the tables. How very embarrassing! Of course, I should have shaken everybody's hand first and then the essential chat with the teacher, telling her how nice it was of her to come. It's okay to call the primary school teacher Frau Hütli or sometimes even Eva (although it's not clear to me when), the grammar school teacher, who looks as if he'd just turned twenty, needs to be addressed as Professor and the headteacher as Herr Direktor. And if someone could just clarify the rules for the use of Du and Sie for me I'd be more than grateful.

The day we return to England it is 36°C, 55°C hotter than the day we arrived. We have twice as much luggage, a daughter with her leg in plaster (lack of health and safety in the zip-wire park in the Vienna woods?), and we have learnt so much. Was it worth it? Definitely. Should you ever decide move to Vienna for a while, please, do invite us. We'll show you the Café Florianihof and we'll feel at home.

by Christine Pleines



Anna, Franziska and Timmy with luggage and leg in plaster

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"Deutsche Samstagsschule Islington", "German Saturday School Islington", "Deutsche Samstagsschule Hackney Wick", and "German Saturday School Hackney Wick" are the trading names of The German Saturday School