

October 2009

Dear Colleague,

## **Introduction**

Over the past ten years we have developed a well-organized programme for our bilingual students. Each school with a bilingual department has one or more international trips as an integral part of their curriculum. Schools are often faced with the problem that trips offered by commercial organisations do not always match the target group of bilingual students. These trips aren't suitable for all students and are mostly limited to transport and accommodation. This is sufficient when planning an average field trip but it does not comply with the goals of bilingual education. Trips to language schools do not always include useful excursions and other activities. Moreover, these courses are not always of a suitable level.

Over the past six years we have developed a programme for our third-year bilingual students in cooperation with the Irish College of English (ICE). This programme can also be adapted for year four or five.

## **About us**

We are both employed at ð Atrium, one of the first bilingual schools in the Netherlands. Anton Deley teaches English and ever since the start of the bilingual course he has been the coordinator of this type of education. He has taken part in excursions to many schools in the UK, the republic of Ireland and Canada. Marten van Meurs has been teaching geography to bilingual classes ever since the introduction of this system at ð Atrium. Like any other bilingual teacher we have learned by trial and error what works best for bilingual education. One of the things that really has become a success is the well-organized Ireland trip. Every time we go it is clear that students, parents and colleagues are very enthusiastic about the programme.

## **What is so special about this programme?**

What makes this programme so special is a combination of a few elements:

- The superb and convenient location.
- The high quality of the course at ICE
- The complete immersion of our students in host families
- The possibilities within the programme
- The fact that the lessons at ICE are not just about the English language but also about literature, history, geography, business or social studies. Any school subject can be fitted into the programme.

## **The superb location**

As our students are likely to visit Britain one day we thought it would be more interesting to organise a trip to Ireland. Dublin is the first obvious option that comes to mind. In the early years of bilingual education we stayed there in hostels. This was great fun for the students but a strain on the teachers. However, the present programme is organised from Malahide, a small coastal town at a twenty-minute train journey from Dublin. The students pay a few visits to Dublin but they always return to the peace and quiet of Malahide. No matter what size the group is there is always the pleasant combination of bustling Dublin and peaceful Malahide.

## **The quality of the courses offered by ICE**

There is also a wide choice of language schools. Why is ICE the right one? In our opinion the advantages of ICE are:

- It is a small school or rather institution. It is a small flexible organisation that builds the programme following your wishes.
- The school is situated at a distance of 15 minutes from Dublin Airport.
- English is taught by content and language integrated learning, comparable to how it is done at bilingual schools. The lesson contents show a great variety including Irish literature, history and culture and various other topics. The students do not only acquire a better command of English but they also learn a lot about the country where they are staying.
- The lessons are scheduled during the morning hours. In the afternoon the students go on field trips and excursions.
- ICE can also help you organize some activities for the evenings like Ceili Dancing.

## **Staying with host families**

It goes without saying that hosting students with local families has a number of advantages for the leaders of the trip, compared to staying at youth hostels or hotels. Still the greatest advantages are for the students:

- They are forced to speak English for a rather large part of the day. This is one of the best ways to practise and improve their English.
- The students develop their social skills as they are staying with people they have never met before and they will have to cope with a variety of unexpected circumstances. This may not always be welcome to them but it is a great learning experience.
- It is our experience that ICE pays excellent attention to the host families. They know them all personally. In cases where students are not happy with their stay they always find a satisfactory alternative for them.
- All host families live in the near vicinity of the school or have a convenient connection by local transport.

## **A varied programme**

The programme we have developed shows a balanced variety. First and foremost there is the combination of classes in the morning and excursions or other activities in the afternoon, which is very stimulating. As the length of each activity is limited the students are better motivated. Not only do we pay attention to cultural subjects but also to the natural beauty of Ireland. There is ample opportunity for walks in the countryside such as the Wicklow Mountains (Glendalough) and coastal walks.

## **Interested?**

Over the years we have acquired expertise in two areas:

- We have taken part in quite a lot of trips, excursions and other activities and can therefore be of advice on the pros and cons of the many alternatives. The ordinary tourist might opt for visits like to the Guinness Hop Store, but a visit to Kilmainham Gaol or the Abbey Theatre might be of more interest.
- Some of the activities on the programme were developed by ourselves. An example of this is the survey the students had put together before travelling to Ireland. They interviewed around 100 Irish people between them.

## **Contact**

If you are interested in such an educational trip to Ireland you can contact ICE directly. They will also be happy to give you our contact details.

**Anton Deley & Marten van Meurs**