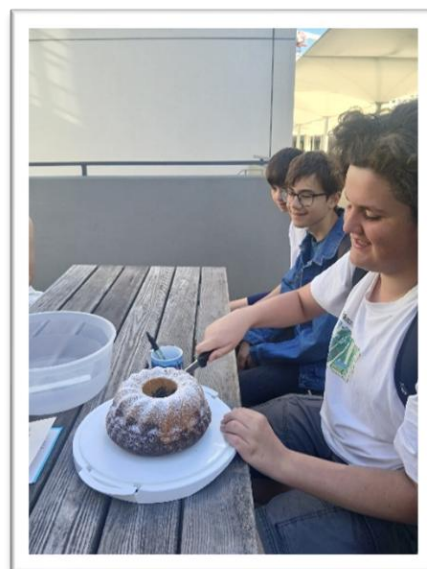




Freitag

Fittingly, the final day of this year's exchange began and ended with smiles and celebrations. We kicked off with cake for George's birthday. We were able to draw on the ample musical talent in the group for a hearty rendition of *Zum Geburtstag viel Glück* before fortifying ourselves with a slice of *Marmorkuchen* expertly baked in a *Gugelhupf* tin.¹

We then hopped on the S-Bahn so that we could explore a very busy, very warm and very sunny Munich. A fine day for admiring the views at the top of the *Alter Peter*, as the tower of St Peter's Church is affectionately known. And, of course, for yet another *Spezi* on reaching the bottom again!



It was really lovely to be met by our German partners who came into Munich after they had finished at school for the day to take over from the teachers as tour guides. This was helpful as it gave Mr Furnival and Mrs Mason time to work on their speeches for the evening.

¹ Mr Furnival möchte sich nochmal ganz herzlich bei Lara bedanken, da sie ihm mehrmals diese Woche in der Küche gerettet hat! 😊

The grand finale of the exchange was an evening event for all the students and host families. Everybody brought lovely food and there was an excellent spread. Unfailingly dependable when such duties call, Mr Furnival assiduously compared the various *Obatzda* varieties on offer.² There was more cake and more singing in honour of George. Students had a meaningful chance to share their own thoughts on the week while (you guessed it!) working through a crate of *Spezi*. As the Germans say, there was all-round *gute Stimmung*, and it was so wonderful to see one cohesive group of happy young people enjoying each other's company, sad to be parting, but already discussing how they might continue to keep in touch and visit each other in future. The highlight was undoubtedly watching students showcase their skills in a folk dancing workshop, and it was such a joy to see everybody having fun.

Backwell School and Camerloher Gymnasium have been running this highly successful joint exchange for twenty years. As we reached the end of this latest edition of the programme, it felt right to formally reflect on just what a special experience it is and express our thanks to our German hosts for making it happen. Mrs Mason spoke about the inspiration and lessons to take from this week, the unique value of exchanges, and the great importance of Anglo-German understanding and appreciation, highlighting how we can foster both through education. Mr Furnival put his reputation on the line by giving a speech in German. Hopefully there weren't too many mistakes! You can read both speeches below - including an English translation of Mr Furnival's.

It remains to wish everyone well and say...

Vielen Dank für einen tollen Austausch!

² *Obatzda* is a classic, slightly piquant cheesy spread which largely consists of Camembert.



Mrs Mason's Speech

This exchange matters for so many reasons.

Firstly, the opportunity for students to develop their language skills by being in real situations, really communicating with real life people. It might not be perfect all the time, but all this communication and language exposure supports students to get more confident and skilled as well as giving Mr Furnival the chance to get excited about German grammar!

However, this exchange is about so much more than language learning. It is about cultural understanding and respect, thinking about, observing and reflecting on what we share and what makes us different, you just can't get this crucial understanding from a textbook or clips on YouTube, you have to experience it, feel it and be in it to respect and learn from each other.

As a history teacher, this exchange has added importance. In the curriculum in England, students are typically taught about the darkest time in German history and there is a real danger that English students think this is all there is to know about Germany, both in the past and today.

We have tried really hard this week to expose and educate students to the wealth of German history, the people, the stories, the beauty and the culture of what influences modern Germany. We don't seek to hide the darkest chapters, but they are only a small part of German history and there is so much more students need and should know.

So, what have we learned this week? There has been a lot so here are a few highlights , including Evan's interpretative dancing,

I have learned how proud you are of your city of Freising and the strong community you have here. The proud history of this city has been fascinating to learn about along with finding out about the historic competition with Munich for power and influence!

We have talked a lot about the differences between German and English schools and I have some ideas I'm definitely taking back to suggest for our school in Backwell, including the early start and early finish- yes please!, the proper coffee machine in the staff room, the teachers' wine fridge, and the space, facilities and

technology you have here at your school.

Finally, I have learned that, in Germany, there is always time for coffee and cake!

Our message to the students who have been involved in this exchange is a simple one. This is only the beginning - keep these connections, stay in touch and plan to see each other again. The two weeks you have spent together are only the start of what is to come. Travel as much as you can. Travel makes you a more interesting person and opens your mind; take opportunities to see new places and experience new things just like you have done on this exchange. Be brave - you have had to be brave to take part in this and you have been brilliant. Keep putting yourselves out there, keep being brilliant and take all the opportunities available to you.

It has been our honour and privilege to spend this time with you all, and we are immensely proud of each one of you.

Mr Furnival's Speech

Dear students, dear host families,
dear colleagues,

We are so pleased to have been able to share this time with you together here in Germany. It means so much to us that this exchange exists and it is obvious that our partnership should be celebrated properly. We hope that you have an enjoyable evening and thank you for coming.

Of course, the very first thing I would like to do is say a heartfelt thanks to all the German students and their families whose effort, care and warm hospitality has made our very special week in Germany possible.

We must also not forget the demanding and time-consuming work that our colleagues Anke Frantzke and Felicity Steffan have accomplished throughout the school year.

I would also like to take some time to reflect on the twenty-year history of our exchange programme. In doing so, several important names come to mind of people who - although absent - ought now to be mentioned, above all Lucie Albert and Claire

Landbeck, who got everything up and running back in the day. Deep friendships have been forged that completely transcend the short, annual visits that we pay one another.

I am aware that the exchange does not revolve around Mr Furnival. That said, I would like to take this opportunity to say a few words concerning my own thoughts and experiences.

It brought me great joy when I got dressed this evening and thereby joined the Lederhosen-wearing community. I feel really at home, and I am grateful to you for indulging me.

The German language - and all the people, places, values, ways of life and culture that entails - has very decisively shaped my own life. I really know the value of German lessons because they opened a door for me at a difficult time, for which I have an incredibly great deal to be thankful. It was precisely this that led me to dedicate myself passionately to the teaching profession because I wanted to make the same opportunities possible for others.

However, this year I have made the decision to step away from teaching for a while. As a result - and with a heavy heart - I have to say goodbye to this exchange, these two schools and, above all, these wonderful young people. I know that on both sides, the next few year groups will certainly be in good hands thanks to my dear colleagues.

And I will definitely be present at more special events here in Bavaria. Otherwise, buying these Lederhosen would have all been for nothing!

Many thanks and wishing you a nice rest of the evening.