

Welcoming exchange students into Methodist College

We are fortunate to have had exchange students staying with us for various lengths of time. Oona, from Finland, has spent half year here at Methodist College. What a great chance for us to enjoy cultural diversity.

Exchange Programme	AFS Intercultural Exchange Programme (high school)
Nation	Finland
Period	August 2019 – February 2020
Exchange Destination	Hong Kong
Host Class	4G

My Experience as an Exchange Student in Hong Kong

by Oona

My name is Oona Laaksonen and I had the honour to be Methodist College's exchange student for 2019-2020. I come from a sparsely populated country that is located in Northern Europe so when choosing my country of choice for my exchange, I wanted to experience something completely different. That's why I put Hong Kong as my first option on the list of places I wanted to have my exchange in! In this article I'm going to share my experience and some of the many things I learned in Hong Kong while broadening my horizons studying abroad!

Firstly I would like to share a bit about my first weeks in Hong Kong. The first few weeks were definitely the hardest for me but I got used to everything rather quickly to my surprise, from the extreme weather to not having my own room! It wasn't a piece of cake, but with a positive attitude and all the support I received from the AFS volunteers and my exchange friends, I started to enjoy the sunny days and life in my new home. We had an orientation camp for a few days before we got to meet our host families and used that time to learn some basic Cantonese and bond with all the other students from all over the world. I made friends super fast and got the feeling of "Wow I'm going to share this year with all these amazing people!" and that's how it all started.

When it comes to school life, I think it was undeniably the best part of my stay! Everyday I woke up feeling good about the day that was to come and I truly felt like I didn't have any worries. I really enjoyed the education system, even if it was much more strict than what I was used to in my home country. I didn't go too hard on myself with the subjects I chose, since I didn't benefit from the grades, so I just tried to choose subjects I enjoyed and what I wanted to experience the most, which was a great decision, now that I think about it. My favourite subjects were History and English! At the beginning of the school year, I got to choose some activities I wanted to try while studying in MC. I played in the school orchestra and later on I decided to audition for the school's dance team, where I got to train for a bit. The school orchestra was a lot of fun and I met new friends there also! I have always loved music so it was great that I had an opportunity to play in the orchestra with so many talented students and enjoy the new music I played.



Playing with the orchestra on Founders' Day!



Me and my host sister Crystal, spending a day together with my host mother, who's taking the picture!

The most memorable days in MC were all the days with special activities such as the Sports Day, Careers day, Founders' Day and the Picnic day for Form 4! Sports Day was something I have never experienced before in Finland! We usually have sports competitions that are actually serious and I've been to a few but they have always been so stressful and all about winning. However, Sports Day in Hong Kong was so different. All the house colours decorating the green field, having fun and cheering for each other was so heartwarming! I had fun doing sports, eating out and taking a ton of pics with friends. I really feel like this tradition should be a part of every school's traditions, since it's such a great way to feel united with the people you study with.

While I was an exchange student, I lived in a host family the whole time, which was extremely instructive and gave me an irreplaceable insight into the family culture in Hong Kong as well! We lived in Lai Chi Kok, which was a relief, considering the distance to school. In my host family I had a one year older host sister, Crystal, who was also a student in Methodist College. It was a big help that she was always there when I was confused or troubled with something related to school. Since Crystal was often busy with school, we didn't do too much together but when we did, we went shopping. I also had a second host sister whom I got to meet once, since she was studying in the States. In my host family I also had a host mother and a father. At first it was rather hard for us to communicate, but it got a lot better with time and when I found out ways to cope with the

language barrier. I found out that my host mother was a fashion enthusiast and I had a lot of fun rating her outfits while doing homework for example. We sometimes cooked together and I really miss some of those heavenly foods I got to eat! My host dad worked long hours so it was understandable that I didn't really get close to him. I think the point when I really bonded with my whole family was when they took me to the mainland to celebrate the Chinese New Year holiday! I got to meet some of the relatives of my host family and they were so interested in my home country, which felt so good. Overall the whole family was extremely generous and inviting towards me the whole time, which was a relief since I was more than nervous to live with an unfamiliar family for months.

Spending my leisure time in Hong Kong was never hard, since I was always enthusiastic to try new things with my friends! The nature in Hong Kong was mesmerizing and I really loved to go hiking or just simply have walks in the nearby parks. One time I went to hike with my classmates Heidi, Athena and Tanya to Lamma Island. We listened to music while walking under the sun, took crazy pictures, had a picnic on the beach and played on the beach. That place has a special place in my heart for a good reason!



Discovering the wonders of Lamma Island with my dearest classmates



4G on Picnic Day!

Besides all the outdoorsy activities, I had so much fun going shopping, going to the movies and going to karaoke with my friends from other schools or with other exchange students. I also have to mention the food culture, since I'm amazed how affordable eating out and other activities were! My favourite place in Hong Kong was definitely Tai Kwun, since I loved the JC Contemporary Art Gallery. I went there at least 20 times during my stay, and I never got bored of the exhibitions.



Christmas party with a few of my close friends!

Even though my exchange wasn't an ordinary one and I had to leave earlier than planned in February owing to Covid-19, I feel like I wouldn't change anything. The memories and the experience I gained are something I hope I will never lose. I'm so very grateful for the teachers that were understanding and supportive of me the whole time and special thanks to Miss Emily Wong for giving me the chance to come to Methodist College to spend the most valuable year of my life so far! I have so much love for my second home and I really hope I can come back as soon as I can, so I can reunite with all the unforgettable people I met.

Reflection From Classmate

5G Tanya Janechokpinyo

I can still recall when Oona stepped into the classroom and sat beside me on the very first day of school. I am very grateful and feel lucky that she did, as this marked the beginning of our friendship, and I have earned such a precious friend since then.

On the first day, since I wanted to know Oona more, I started asking her some simple questions about herself, and we were thrilled to know that we actually have the same favourite subject, sport, and food. What's more, she talked about her life in Finland, which definitely amazed me, especially the fun winter activities Oona usually does there. She is a very talented person though! I found out that she knows how to play the cello and the guitar. In addition, she's so good at sports and dancing. Later at recess, Heidi, Athena and I started to communicate more with Oona and we eventually became very close. As fate would have it, it didn't take long for the other classmates to get closer with Oona too.



Oona's birthday party

Not long after being friends with Oona, Heidi suggested going on a hike on Lamma Island, to show Oona the green side of Hong Kong. So we grabbed lunch and took the ferry to Lamma Island. After we did some hiking - we even spent some time on the beach - it couldn't be more relaxing! We all had a very great time with Oona. She is a super fun person to play with and we often joke around.

During the first term of the school year, Oona joined every single moment with us, including the Founders' and Sports Days, the school picnic, class Christmas party and so on. To me, one of our best memories was undoubtedly Oona's birthday. When Oona's birthday was in the offing, we planned for a surprise birthday party. My classmates even came up with ideas like making a huge birthday card with blessings from all the 4G students and teachers. It was exciting though, as we were actually in the classroom writing on the card without Oona knowing about it, sometimes while she was in the classroom at the same time! I could still recall that she was overwhelmed when we were suddenly singing the birthday song. Actually we even considered singing the Finnish version, but it was so hard that we gave up figuring it out. The birthday party ended up with much joy and we were bursting with excitement. This was unequivocally one of the best, remarkable memories in 4G.

There surely are some regrets, since out of expectation Oona had to leave- due to the pandemic- and wasn't able to spend the rest of the term with us. Still, our classmates got the final chance to hold a farewell party for Oona in a party room. Sadly, I could not attend the farewell party due to the fact that I was overseas, but one day we will meet each other again and I will treasure the beautiful memories we have had. Up to now, we are still keeping in touch by sharing some bits of moments of our daily life!



Oona's Farewell Party

Oona is both like a big sister and a friend to me. I truly enjoyed every moment with her, and she is really one of the most supportive people I have ever seen. She always sees the good in others, and she cheered me up with warm words when I doubted myself. I couldn't be more glad to have Oona as my friend, and I hope our friendship never ends. MINÄ RAKASTAN SINUA Oona :) !!!

I still vaguely remember the first day Oona stepped into my classroom. She didn't speak much that day, as I guess that it must be really weird to suddenly be in a different place, filled with students who are not the same race as you. So my friends, Tanya and Athena, and I decided to talk with her during our first recess. As we communicated more, we started to grow closer and closer to each other.

Not long after, most of our classmates also grew closer to her. Those who are closest to her started a chat room together called "Oona and her Ching Chions", and in that chat group, we taught her some Cantonese, talked about the funny things that occurred during the lessons, and she sometimes even shared bits and pieces of her life in Finland with us. We all enjoyed communicating with her, as she was such a fun and entertaining person. Considering the fact that she might feel lonely, as she was having her birthday somewhere without her family, we even held a surprise birthday party for her. There were moments when she nearly found out that we were holding a surprise birthday party. For example, when she stepped into the classroom while one of our friends was writing on the card, my heart lost a beat! In the end, she loved it, and the smile on her face was one of the prettiest I've ever seen.



Having a blast during picnic day!

During her stay in Hong Kong, we had a lot of fun memories. One of them was hiking on Lamma Island. On that day, we hiked together, joked around and showed her the greener side of Hong Kong, to show her that Hong Kong is not only a concrete jungle, there is also a lot of greenery here. After hiking for a while, we came across a beach, so we chilled there, eating the snacks that we had brought with us and playing with the water and collecting seashells that were by the shores. I think Oona enjoyed the experience, as she collected a lot of seashells and put them in a pile. After resting, we returned to our hike and bought some souvenirs. From my perspective, the hike was very enjoyable, and this was the first time that I have ever hiked with my friends. If Oona ever came back to Hong Kong, I would definitely bring her to other hiking spots here to show her even more of the natural beauty of this small city filled with high rise buildings.

Another memorable memory was the time when we had the Christmas Ball together. I still remember that she wore a green dress that day, while Athena wore a red dress. We jokingly referred to Oona as a Christmas tree and Athena as Santa Claus. During the ball, while I saw a lot of boys from other schools flirting with the girls from our school, my friends and I ate a lot of delicious and gorgeous-looking desserts and jokingly sang along with the songs played. At the end of the ball, there was a moment when all the students there gathered around in a circle and danced along with the songs. We all absolutely enjoyed the experience, as we found it very entertaining. At the end of the day, we still had a really nice time as friends together and I am glad about it.

Although we had a lot of amazing and fun memories together, there are still some regrets. Due to the pandemic, she needed to leave Hong Kong early and I didn't get the opportunity to show her to all the places I had planned, for instance: Disneyland, Ocean Park, the Peak, Cheung Chau etc. I wasn't even able to say goodbye to her at her farewell party with our classmates, as I was in an immersion programme in Britain. However, we promised each other that we would see each other again someday, and someday we will all go to Finland to visit her. Nowadays, we stay connected with each other through the social media. All in all, I am grateful for having Oona as my friend. If I had to find a word to describe her, I would say that she is like the sun; always cheers me up when I am down and always brings warmth to me. I look forward to seeing her in the near future, I hope that we will stay friends forever.



Oona taking part in the cheering during sports day

UK School Experience Programme 2020

Target	Form 1-5 students
Destination	Colwyn Bay, Wales, United Kingdom
Period	20th January 2020 - 3rd February 2020
Host School	Rydal Penrhos School
Participating students	20 students from Form 1-5
Fee	Self-financed
Organizer	Methodist College



A visit to Blenheim Palace

5B Crete Ma



A typical classroom setting in the West

We participated in the UK Immersion Programme during the Lunar New Year holiday from 20th January to 3rd February 2020. The trip was divided into two parts- experiencing life in Rydal Penrhos School, the boarding school located in Colwyn Bay, Wales, and sightseeing in Oxford and London.

We arrived in the morning of 20 January at Manchester Airport, followed by a short trip to Liverpool before going to the school in the evening. During our visit to Liverpool, we saw a huge and well-known football field, which impressed us a lot. After our arrival at the school, we stayed in Rydal Penrhos for a total of ten days.

During the school day, we woke up at around seven in the morning and walked about ten minutes to the canteen for breakfast. We tasted the full breakfast, which typically included bacon, sausages, eggs, baked beans, tomatoes and mushrooms, toast, cereals, and a beverage such as coffee or tea. Having such a rich breakfast, we had a good morning every day.

During the weekend, we visited the cities of Chester and Manchester. We had the opportunity to meet two Hong Kong students there. Apart from them sharing their lives in the UK with us, we visited some churches, and went shopping. After shopping, we tried a famous British cuisine: fish and chips.

We left the school on the morning of 30 January, to begin our four-day sightseeing adventure. We visited several places, including Broadway, Cirencester, Blenheim Palace, and Oxford University, as well as Clarence House, Westminster Abbey, the London Eye, and the Natural History and British Museums in London. While we were taking the London Eye, the beautiful scenery impressed us a lot! The beautiful night view is unforgettable, and one which I think is worth going to.

We left the UK on the evening of 2 February and were back in Hong Kong the next day at around 4:00 pm. After dinner, almost all of us slept for half the day!

The school had provided good support for us and all the staff were friendly. Each of us was assigned a buddy of a similar age on school days. We had to follow our buddies for lessons. Their lessons are similar to ours in Hong Kong, but some of them have different content than ours. For example, during the visual arts lesson in Hong Kong, we just simply sketch and draw but in the UK, we did pottery and even went to a small exhibition at school that put all the students' work there and the teacher commented on them.

Apart from the regular classes, we had chances to take part in some extracurricular activities after school, for instance, making bath bombs, swimming, playing dough balls, and Eton fives, a traditional British sport developed by students from Eton College. Also, we had preparation time on weekdays after dinner, so we did some revision as well.

We had a brand-new experience in the UK. For example, we had chances to raise our hands and answer questions actively in every lesson, and some of us were asked to write and draw our ideas on the table to share with the class, which always encouraged us to think more.

Apart from our learning, we had a different experience while having lunch at school. When we first had the school day there, we followed our buddies to go for lunch. We waited for a long time outside the canteen and we thought the buddies were not hungry so they didn't get in there to have lunch, but later we figured out that the students there were having lunch according to their grade. Unlike in Hong Kong, we had lunch according to the time we like and do not need to wait for our form's turn.

In terms of sightseeing, we were happy to visit many villages, castles, universities, and museums, in order to understand more about the lives of the British as well as the history and development of the country. For instance, we enjoyed it a lot when feeding the fish and ducks in a small village.

Also, we had more chances to practice our English speaking and listening, by staying in a fully-English environment. Lastly, the group, though from different forms, became closer after the trip, and we cooperated well to finish the tasks given by our teacher. All in all, we had a great and memorable experience on this trip to the UK.



Our student and her buddy



Students and their buddies are enjoying their meal



Students are happy with their work



Students are having a drama lesson

Scrabblers' Triumphs on International Stage

14th WESPA Youth Cup 2019 (WESPAYC 2019)

Destination	Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
Competition date	28 Nov 2019 - 3 Dec 2019
Participating students	PO Chun Wo, Brian (6B), LAW Long Yin Thomson (3R) WONG Tsz Yu, Julian (3R), SO Ernest Yat Long (3R), Ian TSOI Yin (2R)
Organizer	World English Language Scrabble Players Association
Venue	Kuala Lumpur
Results	Brian PO– Overall 8th place

Apart from the local tournament, the Scrabble Team of Methodist College shone on international stage too.

In the 14th WESPA Youth Cup, the world's biggest Scrabble tournament for teenagers held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia from November 29 to December 1, 2019, over 190 players from different parts of the world fought for the honor. Brian and the other team-mates, Thomson Law, Ernest So, Julian Wong and Ian Tsoi joined other 5 players from other schools in the territory to represent Hong Kong as the 10 qualified players.

After rounds of competitive games, Brian PO (6B) got overall 8th place, beating other keen players around the world.

Congratulations to the Scrabble Team and our coach Douglas Tsang.



Brian Po in the game



Brian Po on stage



MC Scrabble Team in HK Team