

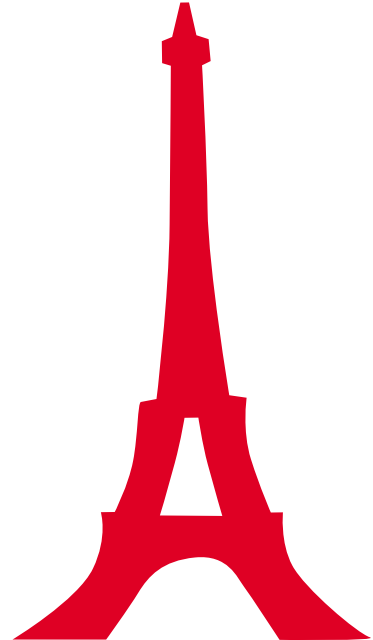


French

2003/4



French Exchange, March 2004



Earlier in March, Year 7 pupils were given the opportunity to go and visit their French pen friends from the Collège Jeanne d'Arc, in the Normandy town of Vernon. Correspondence between the pupils had started earlier during Michaelmas term and the children already knew details about their host families before going there. This third consecutive French exchange with the Collège Jeanne d'Arc ran quite smoothly and the 33 Vinehall pupils who bravely took part agreed that it had been a great experience!

Not only was the trip a linguistic excursion, with a chance to put into practice all the French learnt so far, but it was also a cultural experience, with a variety of outings. Every day, our driver Graham would take us to a different place, whatever the weather! In this way, we visited the windy Château Gaillard (or "saucy castle" as Mr Whitehead explained on Radio Frog), snowy Eurodisney, cold Versailles and the wet Normandy beaches. The children also had a chance to attend some lessons in the school, which was a very interesting experience.

At the weekend, by which time most pupils had gained confidence and were feeling comfortable with their hosts, the activities and outings were varied, depending on the families. Some met up with friends and played together, some visited Rouen and some very lucky children were shown around Paris.

In May, it was our turn to welcome our French friends and we spent another happy week together. The whole experience has undeniably been very rewarding for all participants, despite some difficult moments at times. For the language teachers, it has been very satisfying to see pupils putting into practice their language skills "for real".

Moreover, at a time when languages are becoming optional in British schools, Vinehall pupils should be very proud of their linguistic competence and knowledge, which will prove an advantage for the future. Well done everyone!



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Here are a few comments from some of the participants:

"I enjoyed the French exchange because it was a big challenge for me. There were three main things that were different I noticed.

- 1. The language. I noticed that I learned much more French because I was staying with a French family and that there was not other language they could speak.*
- 2. The food. I noticed that my French family always had a big three course meal every night, but had a very small breakfast.*
- 3. Customs. On Sundays, they go to a cake shop and buy lots of French gateaux to eat for lunch and dinner. Another thing I noticed was that French people, including French children, went to bed very late but got up around the same time as us on school days. Also, they give two kisses on each cheek to say another way of saying "Hello, how are you".*

The French exchange was a big experience for me. It was enjoyable, fun and challenging. This is a trip I will never forget!"

Gabriel Harriman

"My suitcase wouldn't close properly so my penfriend and her mum had to give me a hand (they sat on it!). We set off for the meeting point and we all packed into the coach. Our driver Graham started the engine and we were off. I thought that the French exchange was great fun! It really helped me learn some French and I learned how pronunciation goes! I got a great insight into a child's life! I would definitely recommend it!"

Jessica Wingrad

"I loved that moment when I was standing by the school drive and I saw my dad!"

Felix Canetty-Clarke



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"The French Exchange was exceedingly good fun. It improved different people in different ways. For me it improved my pronunciation of French words. It was also very interesting to see a French school and how it works in many ways different to ours, yet some very similar.

Something that struck us as somewhat odd was the concern of the French for their own and other people's health. For example, I said "J'ai mal au pied" (I have a sore foot), they whizzed me straight into hospital and went ahead with an X-ray!"

*L'échange français était SUPER !!
Merci beaucoup !!*

Chris Goldsack



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"I got a bit homesick and my pen friend didn't speak a word of English but later on I could talk a lot better to him. Every day I did something exciting and I enjoyed the experience. Definitely the best school trip!"

Tom Barton

"I thought the French Exchange was an excellent experience. It taught me what I needed to know and what I didn't."

Matthew Pexton

"I would have been gutted if I had missed the French Exchange. It was awesome. My favourite time was probably at Eurodisney but every day was great. The teachers, Madame Consul, Mr Ralph, Mr and Mrs Bolt and Mr Ropitini were great as well! I had a great experience."

Imran Iqbal

"It was a worthy trip and if you are given the chance, I would recommend it."

Napat Thavisin

"I thought that the French Exchange was none other than a total success. I loved all the food the mother made for us and the Carambars!!! I liked seeing what a French child, around my age, did. The French definitely made the trip a success through their endless enthusiasm, and when they come to England, I will treat my pen friend in the same way."

Bertie James

"After a few days, I found that I really understood how the French live and speak differently from the English! I also enjoyed visiting everywhere and all the trips were really interesting. My pen friend was really kind and very welcoming. She shared the same interests so it was great!"

Sophie Pugh



French Competition Winners