

Language students hosted by college

By Natasha Swift

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A CORNISH languages tutor from St Austell has highlighted the importance of foreign exchange programmes following the visit of French students to the county.

A group of around 70 students, all studying their baccalaureates, visited Cornwall College St Austell for an insight into the UK education system, kicking off the start of an exciting new A-level exchange programme.

The students travelled from Lycée Kerraoul, a high school in Paimpol in the Côtes d'Armor region of north-west France. The Lycée is what's known as a Polyvalent College, as it caters for students taking vocational courses as well as baccalaureates, something that it has in common with Cornwall College.

Lecturer Leah Kendall from Cornwall College said: "Overall, the visit was a great success and it highlighted how well our A-Level team work together to accommodate visitors in order to give a rich experience of our college life. I was first motivated by this opportunity because as the foreign languages lecturer for Cornwall College St. Austell, I feel that it is incredibly important for our students to have a strong sense of cultural awareness and respect for others. This is promoted on the A Level courses I run, but it is not enough to have an academic understanding because this is universally important. I was confident that our students would embrace the opportunity to make links with



the French students and I was happy to see that I was correct."

The French visitors were welcomed by students and staff and treated to a full programme of science and sport activities across two days.

Leah continued: "My languages students gained a lot from their visit and I am hoping to maintain contact with the Lycée in the future to continue the positive interaction between us. My students were given both opportunities in lessons and informal opportunities to practice their academic spoken language skills authentically which was of great value."

As a first activity, the students were taken to Porthpean beach for a rocky shore field trip, surveying the environment for a range of marine life. Following that, the group took part in a game of Danish Longball at Polkyth Leisure Centre. The second day of their visit was spent at Cornwall College, integrating into A Level classes across science, social science and Spanish, allowing the two sets of

students to interact freely.

Gerald Pearce, who teaches English at Lycée Kerraoul, helped to organise the visit alongside Cornwall College. Gerald said: "I was born in St. Austell at Penrice and lived in Gorran, before leaving Cornwall to live and teach in France permanently in 1994. I wanted to get my students more involved in the creation of the trip and I also wanted them to meet

with British students, to get an idea of the British education system which is very different from the one they know in France. I first thought of Cornwall College because it was where I went as a teen" continued Gerald.

"I was fed up with the traditional school trip where students get on a bus, travel for as much as two hours before getting off to visit a museum or landmark. They are basically passive, spend most of their time sitting and speaking to each other in French and I felt the whole thing needed shaking up.

"The reactions I've had from my students are very positive. They really appreciated their time spent at Cornwall College and they talked about the climate of confidence that there was in the classroom, the fact that even though the students and teachers are on first name terms there is mutual respect. They were certainly more confident in using English at the end of their stay and I think many of them would be keen to welcome St. Austell students in the future."