



Preparation for the real world, for the whole person

Finderup Efterskole allows pupils, whether or not they enjoyed their ‘folkeskole’ – the Danish primary and secondary education – years, to explore other interests and grow academically, practically and socially in a safe, fun and supportive environment in the heart of Jutland.

By Louise Older Steffensen | Photos: Finderup Efterskole

“It is our greatest joy as teachers to work with these great young people who may have struggled with learning challenges or had problems concentrating and so on, and to help them develop the confidence and sense of self they deserve,” says Allan Trelborg, the school’s enthusiastic principal. “We’re on the same team here, the students and our excellent staff. We don’t see the pupils as having problems; they just need the right opportunities to develop.”

Finderup Efterskole builds upon the traditional Christian ‘efterskole’ principles of empathy, belief in the value of each individual, and support based on the needs of each pupil. Here, every pupil learns at their own speed. The classes are small, consisting of between eight and ten pu-

pils, and students are grouped according to their individual level in each subject – so they may be at different levels in maths and Danish, for example. If they wish to, they can take what is known as ‘folkeskolens afgangseksamen’ – roughly the equivalent of GCSEs – in those two subjects at the end of the year; however, the school emphasises the importance of practical and life skills as well as academia.

Every day is highly structured, incorporating traditional academic subjects, long-term practical subjects (known as ‘linjefag’) such as car and metal work, media studies, construction or cooking, as well as various short-term electives (‘valgafag’) such as outdoor activity or creative work, giving pupils the chance to shine and get to know each other across

classes. “We don’t compete against each other, but support each other’s personal development,” Trelborg explains. “One of the most important things I think we can do for our pupils is to get them into a routine where healthy, positive living becomes easy – something they don’t even have to think about anymore.”

At night, phones and other devices are taken away half an hour before bedtime to encourage pupils to engage with each other and get a great night’s sleep. In the morning, a full, healthy breakfast followed by singing and a round of physical exercise help raise energy for the day. “At the moment, we’re actually all practising for a duathlon,” says Trelborg. “That might sound scary at first, but every one of us competes against ourselves and gradually extends our distance with the support of everyone else. That’s quite a nice metaphor for how our school works too.”

Web: www.finderupefterskole.dk
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