



### **The Columbus School and College in Chelmsford Essex**

The “Columbus School and College”, is a school with special needs which captured my attention because this kind of school is completely new to me. It includes students with learning disabilities as well as difficulties like Autism and Down-Syndrome just to name a few, ranging from the tender age of three all the way up to 19. Supporting these students gave me a unique and valuable experience which I would never have gained during my studies or internships in Germany. By acquiring these new competences I am better prepared for my further teaching profession. My tasks at the school included working under the guidance of a home room teacher to support the learning process of pupils with severe and complex needs. Apart from this, I established and maintained positive relationships with pupils and ensured their safety and also their welfare.

I have worked in class 4 with students at the age of 8-9. There are usually 10-12 students in a classroom with four teachers. Every day starts with a “Good Morning” song followed by repeating the weekdays, months and “Letter of the week”. By doing so the teacher have to make sure that all students sit properly on their chairs and pay attention to the board. Then the teacher gives the students a quick overview on the activities of the day followed by work time where I supported the students in communicating, counting, reading, writing or matching numbers and colours. After work time has finished they have some snack for a short break before moving on to the next assignment. Lunch time is always at 12 and after that the students go to the playground. In the afternoon they work on one activity before going home at 3.30 p.m. I am really proud of myself when I noticed that the one student I supported all the time made small improvements in reading and counting. What I also really like about working there is that almost all students respond positively to me.

The traineeship is very useful for my further studies because I have learned about new teaching methods like visual learning supported by signing to approach students with learning difficulties. Also I became more patient than before and learned how to work on individual targets of the students and how to react to challenging situations.

If you want to apply for this school it is better to do it a year before because the paperwork takes long and the contact via E-mail is not always easy. The most important thing for working at a school with special needs is that you have to be interested in working with children in general and being especially patient. It would be better to have background knowledge based on teacher training but it is not obligatory. Furthermore, you need to be open-minded to new situations and also show interest in the work of your colleagues by talking to them and helping them.