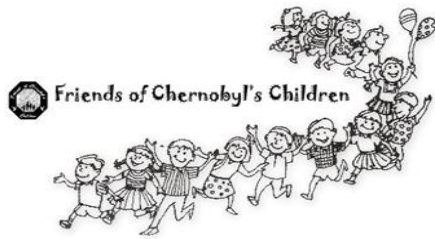


# FOCC Edinburgh West – Autumn Group



## Daily Blog for the group visit ~ 13<sup>th</sup> October to 9<sup>th</sup> November, 2010

### Day 1: Wed 13<sup>th</sup> October ~ Arrival & Meeting the Families



After a long and arduous trip, starting as early as 12.00am with temperatures already below zero, our 14 children and the 2 interpreters (Katia & Inna) arrived at Edinburgh Airport, following a brief stopover in Gatwick for a MacDonalDs.

The exhausted and apprehensive children were introduced to their host families before embarking upon the last stage of their journey, back to their family home. Tea, bath and early bed were then the order of the day for most.

**Stars of the day:** Katia, Inna, Heidi and Janice for safely delivering our children to us

### Day 2: Thu 14<sup>th</sup> October ~ Specsavers & Dentist

After a good first night for most (Katia's instructions to the children to get an early bed having been largely heeded), an early start for their first full day at 8.30am in **Specsavers** in Livingston. The staff had opened up early just for us and were wonderfully helpful and fun with all the kids. All 14 children (and reluctantly both interpreters) had their eyes checked, with the end result being that 3 of the children had problems with their eyes, with two of them being corrected with glasses (Angelina & Kostya). All of the children received an Asda's gift voucher, and the staff also presented us with a very generous donation which they had collected amongst themselves.



We then travelled to the Broxburn Parish Church and familiarised ourselves with our new base, with the children completing a drawing of their Belarussian homes and family. We definitely have some talented kids in our group. We then had a brief chance to play outside (Skipping and Boules) before lunch.

For lunch we had the first of the home made soups (supplied by Gillian McLean, and it will take some beating) followed by ham sandwiches.

In the afternoon we travelled to the **Bathgate Dental Spa** where the staff were fantastic with the children who were given a talk on oral hygiene (including a goody bag) followed by an individual check up. With 3 dentists working most efficiently we were completed in no time at all, with 9 of the children identified as requiring work to be done to their teeth. The children were remarkably brave, with no tears or tantrums at all. The only incident being a brief heart-

stopping moment when Natasha fled from one of the dental rooms, but it turned out she just wanted to leave her coat in the reception area!



Return to the church for pick up at the end of the day, and the children had lots of fun playing in the hall.

**Fun Stuff:** We discovered that a few of the children were completely perplexed by straws, having never used them at home.

**Stars of the day:** Angelina for her fantastic giggling, Kostya for looking so cool in his new glasses & Masha Bishop for her home run hit at baseball.

**Day 3: Fri 15<sup>th</sup> October ~ Lessons & Tumblezone**



The morning started with lessons where the children were asked to list their favourite food, and they then learned how to say the most popular items in English ... banana, soup, potatoes, cucumber, apples and oranges were some of the top answers. Hello, Goodbye and Thank were also taught, and there followed a day of incredibly polite children as they practiced their new words over and over and over again. Homework for the weekend is to keep practicing these words with their host families.

Morning playtime, and Inna had all of the children thrilled with a "jump the skipping rope game", and in spite of rendering herself helpless with dizziness on several occasions, a winner was eventually agreed (Vlad?).

Another excellent homemade soup (made by Sharon Bishop) was enjoyed by all for lunch, along with cheese and ham sandwiches.

The afternoon brought a trip to **Tumblezone** after a most entertaining wacky races style journey from the church. Trying to keep 6 cars in convoy through Broxburn proved to be impossible, but we all found our way eventually. It can be confidently reported that the children adored Tumblezone and ran themselves close to exhaustion over the couple of hours that we were there. Indeed the kids had so much fun, and were so well behaved, that the Tumblezone team have asked us back for a special visit later during their stay, and we will now be going again on Thu 28<sup>th</sup> Oct (pm).







**Fun Stuff:** Not having had Tomato Ketchup at home, one of the children was amazed to see her host family put what looked like strawberry jam on steak and chips! Misconceptions were corrected, and Heinz now have another convert. Also, the children were given a DVD of *Sleeping Beauty* & *Mamma Mia* (Russian language) to take home and enjoy if they can find the time!

**Stars of the day:** Inna for staying on her feet during the jump the skipping rope game, Nikita & Pasha for their brilliant English & Kristina for being able to hang onto a flying fox for an amazing length of time at Tumblezone.

**Day 4 & 5: Weekend**

On Saturday all the boys gathered as guests of *Livingston FC* to watch the match against Stenhousemuir.



After posing for some club and newspaper publicity photo's, we watched an exciting match, with the boys getting a special mention and huge round of applause at half-time. The game ended with a satisfying home win of 4-1, and the boys were able to gather autographs on their way out of the stadium.

Livingston FC have also invited the children to further home fixtures during their visit, and would be delighted to see the boys at their youth training sessions during the week. Contact Kenny Turnbull for further information.



Sunday was apparently bath night, but can you recognise the children?

**Fun Stuff:** Pasha ran into his room and came out with the "new toothbrush" he got from the dentist earlier and had the toothpaste on it as he was running to the bathroom. He proudly cleaned his teeth for about 5 minutes. When he was rinsing I noticed that he had



not used a toothbrush it was actually a pencil and eraser in the shape of a toothbrush. When I pointed out to him it was pencil he went away again and got the correct new toothbrush and cleaned them again!

**Stars of the weekend:** Nikita for taking on the Livingston FC defence during their warm up when he was supposed to be posing for publicity photos.



**Day 6: Mon 18<sup>th</sup> October ~ Edinburgh Castle**



Fabulous day out at **Edinburgh Castle**. The kids were all extremely well behaved on the bus into Edinburgh and the walk up to the castle from Princes Street was conducted at breakneck speed. Inside the castle we were met by Historic Scotland (Craig) and given use of their educational room. In the morning we conducted a full tour of the castle, including many oohs & wows at the crown jewels. We then returned to the education room for our packed lunch before watching the one o'clock gun. Afterwards we were escorted by Historic Scotland into some secret parts of the castle, including prisoner escape tunnels and outside toilets, before the children were invited to put on their finery and try some traditional Scottish weapons. The day was

completed with a visit to the stalks for all (which Inna seemed to enjoy) and a bus trip back to the church.



**Fun Stuff:** Pasha fits into Mons Meg!

**Stars of the day:** Elspeth for organising what truly was an excellent day out. Katia for her amazing knowledge of the castle and it's history. Olga & Vadeem for answering and posing excellent questions with Historic Scotland. Andrei & Masha Grant for holding hands in their Lord and Lady photograph.



**Day 7: Tue 19<sup>th</sup> October ~ Country Dancing – Local Park**

Good fun today as the children started their Scottish Country Dancing lessons. The somewhat reluctant boys were eventually paired off and everyone had lots of fun mastering these strange new dance steps.

Lunch was a wonderful soup by Jean Turbull & Mary Moyes and sandwiches, and the afternoon was spent at the park where the boys played a rather "robust" game of football.

**Star of the day:** Natasha was an absolute star today for having her bloods done. She was terrified, her veins were not great and she is very thin. She was asked what prize she dreamed to have if she could choose anything in the world. She answered a doll like a baby ... so now she has one (Rosie). Later that night she refused to let Kirstie (her host mother) remove her plaster when in the shower, and will continue to wear it as a badge of honour for another day.





**Day 8: Wed 20<sup>th</sup> October ~ Edinburgh Bus Tour – Museum of Childhood**

A beautiful, if cold, day for our **Edinburgh Bus Tours** trip. The staff were fantastic and quickly showed us to our bus, seating us in the open top deck section with headphones and gifts, before we embarked upon a tour of Edinburgh's City Centre. For the tour we were joined by Catherine & Jane from the **Edinburgh Evening News** who took lots of pictures and found out all about FOCC Edinburgh West and about our children.



We had our packed lunches in Princes Street Garden before racing up to the Royal Mile to visit the Museum of Childhood where the old rocking horse was a huge hit with all the children.

The trip was finished off with hot chocolate from **Scott's Cafe** in the Princes Street Gardens, where Inna had the children playing an energetic game of tag before we set off for the return bus to the Church.

**Fun Stuff:** The race to the top of the stairs from Waverley Station to the Royal Mile (well done to Simon & Angelina). The race to the bottom of the hill in Princes Street Gardens (bad luck Simon with the unconventional approach, but at least no child was hurt in the making!).



Lenny was driving Nikita home tonight when it became clear that one of his baby teeth had come out. Lenny was just racking his brain to work out how to explain about the tooth fairy, when Nikita put the window down and chucked his tooth out! Lenny was gobsmacked to say



the least, and poor Nikita, had he but known it, could have been a pound or two better off.



Who can guess where Masha Bishop was at the weekend?

**Stars of the day:** Masha Grant & Sasha for charming Katherine & Jane from the Edinburgh Evening News (article anticipated to be published on Fri 22<sup>nd</sup> Oct).





## Day 9: Thu 21<sup>st</sup> October ~ Swimming & Country Dancing

Our first swimming session with the children today. Most of them were pretty good in the water for their age, and any lack of ability was more than made up for by their courage! Katia and Inna (our multi-talented interpreters) started swimming lessons with some of the children, while the rest splashed about



with floats, balls and sinking hoops.

A very healthy Pizza and Greggs Cakes for lunch was followed by

arts and crafts lessons and then Scottish Country Dancing.

**Fun Stuff:** Poor Vadeem used the cold shower in the men's changing area and couldn't understand how everyone else was okay with their own showers. When we came out of the swimming pool he did it again. What a show off!

**Stars of the day:** Olga for her spectacular Country Dancing & Nikita for getting changed so quickly at the swimming!



## Day 10: Fri 22<sup>nd</sup> October ~ Our Dynamic Earth



Minibus from the Church Hall to ***Our Dynamic Earth*** where the children had a tremendous time. Favourite activities included creating seismic tremors, watching lava flows, playing with the ice glacier and the 3D Adventure show. Packed lunches were then devoured before a brief photo shoot outside the Scottish Parliament building and then returning over Arthur's Seat and back to Broxburn for lessons and concert practice.

A wonderful newspaper article was published in the Edinburgh Evening News following our meeting with Catherine & Jane earlier in the week.

**Fun Stuff:** Watching all of the children trying to touch the 3D effects at Our Dynamic Earth, and their screams when they were attacked by a giant scorpion!



**Stars of the day:** Our weekly prize winners as voted for by the children themselves (the girls vote for the best behaved boy over the week, and the boys for the girl!) ~ Kostya & Sasha for having a 100% good behaviour records, Andrei for good behaviour and starting to smile, and





Angelina for good behaviour, great concert preparation work, and having the best giggle in the world! Narrowly missing out this week were Pasha (who will be smiling more often) and Olga (who will be bolder about the food that she eats). And finally, a mention too for Vlad and his fantastic picture in the Edinburgh Evening News.



**Day 11/12: Weekend**

**Fun Stuff:** A wee story about Masha Bishop.

Anyone who's been abroad must have come across the looky looky man, well I've now got one at home! Masha had my jewellery box with it's contents on show last night trying to sell me and Leighann it's wares, obviously she was giving her sales pitch mostly in Russian but we got the jist of it, we had to haggle with her to get he goods we wanted and she was trying her best to sell us everything she had! if we refused to take the jewellery that had gems she would point out the fact that it had these gems by rubbing all over it and we assume describing it to us with such an expression on her face I've never seen on a 7 year old in my life! if we still refused she would put it up and put that "are you sure" expression on her face then put it back in the box with such amazement that we refused was unbelievable. She had me and Leighann in tears with her selling tactics (get her on the fundraising tasks), I think she's been here before!



Picture is of Masha Bishop in her new party frock. She'll never have owned anything as beautiful in her life and must have felt like a princess (she certainly looked like one).

**Day 13: Mon 25<sup>th</sup> October ~ Five Sisters Zoo & Concert Prep**

With all 14 children back together, we took the minibus in the morning to the Five Sisters Zoo, where we were the first to arrive, and had the whole zoo to ourselves at first. We watched many of the animals having their breakfast. The big favourites were the meerkats, the prairie dogs, the lemurs, the cockatoo and the crocodile. We finished with a handling session where the braver of our children got to meet a giant snail, millipede, bearded dragon & royal python close up.

Lunch was at Leaping Lemurs (soft play area next to the zoo)



where we were kindly given access to the party room before unleashing the children into the play area for an hour or so.



Returned to the Church Hall where the children has lessons followed by a brief concert prep session.

**Fun Stuff:** Watching Inna “chatting up” the cockatoo and all the children daring each other to handle the animals in the handling session.

**Stars of the day:** Olga for being the only girl to handle all the creepy crawlies & Kristina for lovely manners and fitting back into the group so well.

