

Date: 25th November 2022

Ark Victoria Academy welcomes education VIPs from Iraq

A delegation from Iraq visited Ark Victoria Academy this week to learn about the UK education system (22nd November).

The delegation included Handren Tofiq, local consultant and coordinator, Kurdistan Region of Iraq; Ammar Tariq, Programme Director, Iraqi capacity-building programme, based in Baghdad; Burhan Abdulla, senior adviser to the Minister of Education, Kurdistan Region of Iraq; Shilan Khalil, Director General of Planning, Ministry of Education, Kurdistan Region of Iraq; Mariam Madhat, Deputy Programme Director, Iraqi capacity-building programme, based in Baghdad; Birzo Abdulkader, local consultant and interpreter.

The team wanted to understand how Ark monitors and supports schools and how the school monitors and evaluates the quality of education. They also learned about the school's provision for students with SEND and the professional development offered to staff.

Visitors spent time with Principal Ela McSorley, Primary Headteacher Victoria Twort, and Regional Director Gail Peyton. They learned about the primary and secondary phases before meeting with the SENCOs and deputy head teachers responsible for professional development. The guests had a chance to meet with students, the school's Ark Teacher Training/Early Career Teacher coordinator and a group of staff who talked about their professional development journey.

International Education Consultant, Andy Reid, organised the visit and has worked with Ark's schools for several years. He explained that education in Iraq is going through a transformation. Previously, principals were not accountable for the standards of teaching in their schools, and a national body did lesson observations. Now schools in Iraq are looking at skilling up principals to evaluate the quality of teaching and learning.

Principal Ela McSorley said: "We were honoured to host the team and showcase what makes our school unique, as well as the benefits of being part of the Ark network. We are pleased that, following this visit, Ark Victoria will be connected with an all-through school in Iraq to share our experience and learn more about education in Iraq."

Andy Reid said: "The visit was well organised and matched the group's interests and needs. They took away an enormous amount of relevant information and insights – they were impressed by the school.

"Without exception, all the staff who met us made the school proud. The group of middle leaders and teachers were terrific. What struck the group were the individual testimonies and journeys and that all staff believe in the school's values and aspirations. It was an enriching day for my Iraqi and Kurdish colleagues."



Pictured: (back row) Andy Reid; Handren Tofiq, local consultant and coordinator, Kurdistan Region of Iraq; Ela McSorley, Principal; Ammar Tariq, Programme Director, Iraqi capacity-building programme, based in Baghdad.

(Front row) Burhan Abdulla, senior adviser to the Minister of Education, Kurdistan Region of Iraq; Victoria Twort, Primary Headteacher.