

## A news letter from Andrew Aikman, working in the Kitezh community

### of foster families in Russia.

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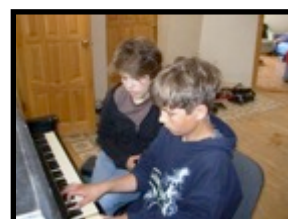
**Sunday is on Tuesday this week.** Don't worry about it, 'normality' will probably not be restored, and we're getting used to it. Let me explain. Kitezh school now has the official status of an "Experimental School", so why would you keep 'normality'? Max Anikeev, Director of the school, continues his research into how children learn, what motivates them and what opposes learning.



At 8.30 the children have half an hour of preparation and checking the previous day's work, then language for all; either English or Russian. After that it's breakfast followed by three sessions of two and a half hours, interspersed with activities or meal, until evening. No homework time – the school day can last until ten o'clock in the evening. These sessions aren't quite like lessons in the traditional sense, more like intensive study – one subject throughout the whole day so you can really get into it. The day isn't chopped up little bits so you have to stop just when it was getting interesting, time isn't wasted walking about from class to class (hat, gloves, coat, boots - and don't forget your pencil case!). If you're making a map or doing an experiment, you have the whole day to work on it and finish it. There is a menu of subjects on offer, depending on the specialists available, and the children choose three days in advance. Now add into this mixture groups of children of all ages arranged into three 'faculties' with an adult as a guide. Each faculty must come to a joint decision as to what they want to study. (In the language groups only, the groups are clearly defined according to ability, regardless of age.) Quite simple really – sort of.



So two days of intensive study are followed by one day of activities: harvesting carrots for three hours this week (well it's that or no carrots this winter). Other activities currently include dancing, sport, drama, athletics, yoga, English tea (no, I'm not going to try teaching Russians to play cricket! I tried that once), and maybe woodworking soon. Theoretically everyone is free to join in or not with the activities, but (there's always one of those), points are awarded for activities, and everything else, and points are gathered to the faculty. Working for the collective good is in the blood here.



After another two days of intensive study, it's time for a Sunday. ... on Tuesday this week. Got it? I'm struggling too. It's demanding on the preparation, but results in much more 'time off' for the adults, while the children are busy all day. It involves team teaching and the opportunity for the adults to share their passions with the children. The children can choose what interests them, and work with their friends, regardless of age, and taste the reality of group decision making – hopefully democratically. The whole project will be evaluated in January, developed and refined.



We have two new foster children and six children from Moscow (fee-paying). I'll write more about little Dasha and Danna next time. The children from Moscow are almost all teenagers, which is exactly what we need, a refreshed and larger teens community. It's wonderful (and quite amusing) to see our few teenagers not just "spruced up", but growing up, out of the 'child years'.

Andrew