



Press release

School community in shock

After successful two years the Sudbury school Ammersee, the first democratic school in Bavaria is to be closed.

45 students, staff and parents of the Sudbury school Ammersee are shocked! After two years of successful teaching practice, the government of Upper Bavaria has not approved the operation of the Sudbury School Ammersee. Since yesterday's first day of school, the school may not be opened!

Important: The final decision of the Administrative Court of Munich is still in the open! It is not yet known when the decision will be made.

Protest Demonstration on the First Day of School

With a large demonstration students, staff, parents and many supporters protested on Tuesday in front of the Ministry of Culture in Munich against the closure of their school and handed over to the representative of the Ministry of Education, Bernhard Butz, their protest. Speaking to Butz and his staff, they expressed their concern and their lack of understanding and asked for support. A 14-year-old student said: "For me it was not good at my previous school, I was often sick! Since I am on the Sudbury School, I feel really good. All my friends tell me that I look much better. I again really desire to learn, and then you learn but also in a much more intense way! Last year I did an internship in a pet store, where people were so enthusiastic about me that they have said that I could even have a job with them! "The closure of the school would be for them" the worst thing that can happen".

Students, Parents and Staff are Affected to the Core!

The school had received the negative decision of the government one day (!) before the start of the summer holidays. Immediately thereafter, the school filed a lawsuit against the decision. Now, shortly before the start of the school year, to the school's surprise the application was rejected for interim relief by the administrative court in Munich! The school found out about it again until the day before school's start. Then, the government told them under threat of a fine of €10 000 to resume operation - even while the trial is still pending!

Students, parents and staff are affected to the core! The students love their school, some learn happy and stress-free for the first time in their life because they are finally taken seriously, may bring their word in and are being treated as human beings. The school community is now awaiting an incredible challenge: It is absolutely unclear how the school could survive the pending trial financially. After all, since August any grants from the government were set already. Families have to live with the unclear legal situation, the employees still have no idea how to make ends meet. Sudbury-founder Gerlinde Rüdinger-Wagner says: "Giving up isn't any option for us! But alone we cannot do, that is quite clear to us. We can only ask for support now: Please help us all: Enables your networks using your contacts, please support us financially "!

The government's decision is completely incomprehensible for them, especially in these times when living democracy and democratic values are more important than ever. At the Sudbury school Ammersee democracy is not a subject but standard practice. Students and staff decide jointly on all the important things. Thus, democratic participation is being understood and in depth practiced.

Also, self-directed learning, as practiced at the Sudbury school Ammersee and worldwide at Sudbury schools with much success, is to be slowed down obviously by the government. Gerlinde Rüdinger Wagner: "We have always seen our school as an enrichment for Bavaria. At the Sudbury School new and innovative paths are taken, nevertheless internationally proven ways of education, of which the whole society can benefit." Elsewhere these signs are clearly understood. Thus, Sudbury schools in France are almost having a heyday. In any major city new Sudbury schools were and are being established, in total, there are more than 30 start-up initiatives for democratic schools.

The endeavor of the Government of Upper Bavaria, close the Sudbury School Ammersee, is considered a rebellion of the system to new ways of education by the staff of the school, as a structural undermining of a movement, because even in Bavaria some foundation initiatives were formed, which likewise prefer Sudbury Schools to be created! In history there are countless examples of how such innovations and new ideas should be held back - while ultimately prevailing against massive resistance.

Student Collapses after Offenses during Questionings by Government Officials

Preceding this decision, several incidents had taken place:

In April government officials had come to an inspection visit to the school, which ran completely out of hand: learning situations were completely ignored, instead the government officials were just looking for classic classes. There were phrases like "That was not a real class!" Or "Elsewhere you would learn so much better!" Derogatory comments were made about the school, the students were questioned in a derogatory manner to a point that a student finally even collapsed.

Although one of the representatives apologized immediately afterwards, the government denied their wrongdoing afterwards vehemently! The school immediately issued a ban to the official of concern in order to protect children. Many parents and school staff submitted a disciplinary complaint, partly so they went to the district president. Incredible: Almost all of these complaints were answered by the concerned authority itself - and blocked. The school wasn't once allowed to speak out officially referring to the incidents. Staff, parents and students were stunned, how things were handled as here with the rights of citizens! The government's strategy is reminiscent of those of a totalitarian state: It is persistently and repeatedly claimed that nothing happened - until anyone would believe it! Meanwhile a whole school community can confirm, how extremely rough and unacceptable the school visitation has been performing. Detailed statements of numerous students and staff are available to confirm this!

School inspector from England offers support

Until that time, the school representatives had repeatedly tried to build bridges as in their long, 9-year-old founding era and to seek compromises. The requirements as specified in the permit notification to allow scientific monitoring of the school's performance and to document the learning content and progress of the students, were met from the very beginning. The ever renewing and expanding demands of the government in terms of documentation has also yielded over again until finally the government told them that the documentation now finally would correspond to their ideas. Also competent experts have been repeatedly brought to the table that would have been helpful to the government's support, such as especially Derry Hannam, former school inspector from England, who has a lot of experience with democratic schools and already successfully supported the Summerhill School in England in its fight against its closure. At first the government representatives were open to such deals, a first meeting with Derry Hannam took place but unfortunately, was not further recourse to the offer.

After the catastrophic school the government tightened its style increasingly, suddenly wanted to test the students - without any preparation time, left the school to feel their power. The non-renewal of the authorization is provided by the government officials in the area from this time, while basis for this being one of the governments' reports on the school, which had appeared after the failed inspection and their while former offenses against their way of proceeding was still held under denial. It's no surprise that the report represents the school in conceivable bad light!

The government's duty would have been, they claimed, to examine whether the school's concept is being implemented at all. This was not even close to happening! Neither was the interest, nor the necessary technical expertise available. None of the government officials was ever in a democratic school! Among others Sudbury school Jerusalem had expressed an invitation where Sudbury school Ammersee has a substantial connection.

Schüler lernen mit Freude und aus innerer Motivation heraus

Hauptvorwurf ist jetzt, dass an der Sudbury Schule Ammersee nicht genug gelernt werde. Rüdinger-Wagner sagt: „Wir haben in den zwei Jahren ganz was anderes gesehen. Schüler, auch solche, die an ihren vorherigen Schulen große Probleme hatten, kommen zu sich, entwickeln wieder Freude am Lernen und lernen aus dieser Motivation heraus unglaublich viel. Wir erleben jeden Tag, welche Kraft das selbstbestimmte Lernen hat!“

The Sudbury-founder also points to another aspect, namely, the often forgotten Article 131 of the Bavarian Constitution, which says, among other things:

- (1) The schools should not only impart knowledge and skills, but also serve formation of heart and character.
- (2) Foremost objectives of education are reverence for God, respect for religious beliefs and the dignity of man, self-control, sense of responsibility and willingness and joy in taking responsibility, helpfulness, openness to everything true, good and beautiful
- (3) Students are to educate in the spirit of democracy, in the love of native Bavaria and the German people and for the purposes of international reconciliation

Gerlinde Rüdinger-Wagner asks: "Not once the government has looked to see if we meet this prime objective of education! Quite obviously, these sentences of the Bavarian Constitution are merely treated as phrases or humorous terms of an introduction. We accept these values and take them absolutely serious! "

Consul General of Israel and president of the Bavarian Teachers' Association are among the supporters

Parents, students, numerous scientists and qualified visitors to the school confirm that great work is done at the Sudbury school! Many parents have written to the government and described the positive development of their children over two years. Insightful, touching reports! Scientific support comes after two years of study, which also concludes that the education output is highly successful at school while national and international education experts face forcefully behind the school. The supporters include Simone Fleischmann, Chairman of the Bavarian Teachers Association, Dan Shaham, Consul General of Israel, who has called a democracy workshop for unaccompanied minors into being as a cooperation between the SOS Children's Village (Ammersee) and the school, the education expert Ulrich Klemm and Gregor Lang-Wojtasik, the Forum Education Policy, international experts as the scientist Peter Gray. The Forum Education Policy and the initiatives BFAS as well as "School on the Move" stand behind the Sudbury School Ammersee. The association Bavarian Private schools in Bayern supports the school very much! The international Sudbury movement was shocked by the news from Bavaria.

Despite everything: At today's first day of school, the Sudbury School Ammersee will be closed! Even if the whole school community will do everything possible for to it re-open as soon as possible. With a large demonstration students, parents, staff, friends and supporters are gathering today at noon (13.00) in front of the Ministry of Culture in Munich in order to protest (compare the invocation): For obtaining their school which many students have missed downright during the holidays; some could not wait to be finally back at school!

Perhaps indeed such statements are the true factor that scares the government!

Daily Meetings at the Fire

As of today on, the school community will gather daily at 18.30 to a meeting at the fire in the school garden, to discuss the way forward and to strengthen the community. Supporters and members of the media are invited to join the meeting! Please tell us if you want to come!

The Sudbury School Ammersee calls:

Please support us!

Enables your networks!

Donation us money!

Thank you!!

Further Info: www.sudbury-schule-ammersee.de

Simone Kosog, 0171 1906752, simone.kosog@sudbury-muenchen.de

Monika Wernz, 0176 32951459, monika.wernz@sudbury-muenchen.de