

Andreas (8) from Germany is just one of the family.



Very much one of the family - Andreas Wirth from Germany, second right, with the Revd Stephen Pearce, his wife Susanne and son David.

TWO little boys, one from Thornton near Horncastle and one from Germany, who were brought up in different worlds and did not speak each other's language when they first met, have become firm friends in a matter of months.

Eight-year-old David Pearce, son of the vicar of the Thornton group of parishes, the Revd Stephen Pearce, and his wife Susanne, and Andreas Wirth, also eight, from Ulm in Germany, are taking part in **En Famille International**, which organises foreign exchanges for primary school children.

The whole ethos of En Famille International is that the child is not a guest but a member of the family with "all that that implies in terms of love and affection, rights and duties, ups and downs".

Andreas has been living with the Pearce's for four months and will stay for a total of six months and David will then go back with him to Germany and spend six months with his family.

Stephen explained that great care was taken with the selection and matching of families and children and the visits were closely monitored throughout.

"For both families the advantages have proved to be far greater than we imagined they would be," he said.

Susanne added that she felt that, although very young, the boys were at an ideal age, young enough not to have too many prejudices or fears but old enough not to feel too homesick.

Both parents felt that David as an only child had probably the hardest time adjusting but reaped the most benefits. Andreas is from a large family being the oldest of four and has fitted in well with life at The Vicarage at Thornton and English village school life at Kirkby-on-Bain CE Primary School.

"Both have handled it extremely well and I feel the experience of a new culture and new life has so many spin-offs. Chil-

dren who have taken part in exchanges acquire a greater confidence and maturity," said Stephen.

Susanne agreed that there were many benefits in many different areas and added: "It has also taught me a great deal about being a parent."

As for the children they were too busy playing a new board game to answer too many questions but it was clear both were good pals and Andreas who hardly spoke any English when he first arrived was speaking the language fluently and said that one of the main things he liked about England was that there was less snow than in his country, exactly the opposite sentiments to most children in this country who long for 'real' snow.

When the two boys go to Germany in February David hopes there will be lots more snow than we get here. Both boys love ice skating and have been practising at Grimsby Leisure Centre.

The boys have enjoyed a traditional Christmas

which Andreas said was 'different but not very different' from Christmas at home. School too is different and when David returns to Germany with Andreas school will start at 8am and finish around lunchtime but with plenty of homework to keep them busy.

Contact :
En Famille International
Jacques Pinault
26 Savarias
33240 Salignac
France
www.enfamille.com
infos@enfamille.com