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If you have any questions about any of the detail in this report please do not hesitate to contact me at kate@travel-peopleandplaces.co.uk

Jane Lavery – A V Bukani – 23rd January to 1st April 2011

Final Report on A V Bukani

A V Bukani is a Primary School of over 950 pupils aged 4- 10 (Grades R-4), set in the township of Nomathamsanqa close to the town of Addo in the Sundays River Valley. There are 30 teachers, the majority of whom have class responsibility, and the school is ably managed by the Principal, Mr ZJ Thambo, who is supported by a Senior Management team of his deputy and the 5 HoDs.

The brief I was given at the beginning of the placement was to look at the teaching of English in Grades 3 & 4, and to offer assistance to Mr Thambo with administration. At the beginning of my placement I was accompanied by Mrs Diana Stern, an English teacher with Special Needs expertise, who was asked to look at the Special Needs provision in the school. I had also been in touch with the Kugler family who had had previous placements at AV Bukani; they had provided the school with a vast library, and had also introduced an English teaching method called 'think/pair/share', as well as encouraging the educators to participate in in-house Professional Development Programmes. They asked me to assess these programmes and further assist as necessary.

When we arrived at A V Bukani it became clear that the two things the educators needed most were assistance with were the Special Needs and the library –at that stage books in boxes!! The Special Needs provision was almost non-existent, although a special LSEN (learners with Special Educational Needs) class had been set up in Grade 4. All other Grades had several children in each class who were not able to do the work presented to them, a few of whom were repeating Grades and were therefore older than the majority of the class. There were little or no records of the problems encountered since the children had entered the school, and no special work was provided for them. There seemed to be very little support from the local Authority, and the teachers were very disheartened by the whole situation, realising that the learners were making no progress.

Diana visited the classes with Special Needs children, and suggested some ways to ensure they had a good learning programme. She spent a great deal of time working with Mrs Sam, the teacher of the Grade 4 LSEN class, who was most cooperative, and also with the relevant committee that had been set up by the school's Governing Body. Diana attempted to assess the needs of the slow learners and to give them appropriate learning programmes; she also completed a referral form for one girl in the class who had multiple special needs. While we

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were there a member of the special needs department from the Local Authority attended a meeting, gave the teachers some fresh ideas and promised to return to address the whole staff on the subject.

Meanwhile, the Library Committee and I concluded that as the container which had been set up as the library was not big enough to house all the books, I would concentrate on both types of picture books and the easier non-fiction. I also set up a 'Teachers Resource' room, with the books the staff could use within the classrooms as clearly identifiable resources. I also monitored English lessons in Grades 3 and 4; I found the 'think/pair/share' method firmly established, and teachers encouraging the children to speak in correct sentences. The Kuglers had obviously done a very good job.

Once Diana had left after four week it was agreed that I should concentrate on introducing differentiation into the classrooms. This would encourage the teachers to look at the children with Special Needs and provide them with work that was appropriate to their ability, and also to deliver additional work for the more able. I therefore did some model teaching in Grades 2, 3 and 4, and used differentiated worksheets for children of differing abilities.



Grade 4



classroom cleaning

I informed the relevant teachers that I wanted to see them deliver a similarly differentiated lesson (with an appropriate lesson-plan) before I left. At about the same time various members of staff went on separate workshops for differing subjects, and the Special Needs co-ordinator returned to speak to the whole staff, also giving them a workshop.

Each of these workshops talked about the importance of differentiation, and the AV Bukani staff started talking about 'your differentiation, Jane'!! I felt highly honoured, but also delighted that they had obviously understood and were prepared to try the method. The lessons I saw (about 10 in all) had indeed used differentiation (to a varying degree of success), and by the general talk in the staffroom and in the computer lab, I realised that differentiated work was now becoming the norm within the classroom. Staff commented on how much more progress their slow learners were making, and how they felt they had become better teachers.

The Special Needs committee is also making progress, and has begun to record all the learners in their classes who have Special Needs and to ensure their successes and failures are clearly noted by keeping a file on each child. The Grade 1 teachers have agreed to have special classes for some of the slow learners in Grades 3 and 4 once there own classes are finished, and on a very positive note, some of the learners in Mrs Sam's LSEN class are to return to the mainstream classes.

A separate by-product of my placement was the fact the Sister Breda, a Sacred Heart nun, came to give the staff computer lessons. These were very well received and will continue into the next term. I also spent some time assisting Mr Thambo in making pro-formers on his

computer.

I also managed to rid the library of boxes! The 'container' library is now stocked with picture books, with enough reading material in them for even the better learners, and with themed non-fiction books. I have trained around half-a-dozen of the more able Grade 4s, explaining the system and asking them to make sure the books stay neat and tidy. During the past week the local Authority teacher with responsibility for libraries visited AV Bukani; she couldn't believe what she saw, and was overjoyed that such a creation should be on her patch. It was suggested that she bring other schools to see what can be achieved. Well done, AV Bukani and the Kuglers!



the library – books unpacked and shelved

After such a successful placement, Diana and I are very keen that the impetus should be carried forward into the new term. There is still work to be done on Monitoring and Assessment of both the learners and the educators, and the best people to do it are the teachers themselves, under the direction of the Senior Management team. Progression needs to be assured in all curriculum areas and within each Grade. Learners must continue to take home the reading books, and educators must make full use of the library and the Resource room. And of course work still needs to continue in differentiation and Special Needs.

Note from *people and places*: and we shall work with the school and our local partners to ensure that the work done by Jane and Dianne is continued and built upon by future volunteers.

Other Recommendations

- The Resource room be properly equipped with a stand-alone computer with access to the internet, printer and photo-copier. This will mean electric sockets will need to be introduced.
- An additional Air-conditioning unit be placed in the library.
- The reception of the internet in the computer lab be thoroughly investigated. This will also mean that the security system/fire-wall will have to be brought up to date.
- The book shelves being purchased by our donation be extended through the whole school.
- More parents be asked to volunteer to help with school tasks. Those who helped me with the boxes were wonderful – as were Elizabeth and co.
- Finally, and possibly most importantly, the educators must realise that they themselves have the skills and the personal resources to improve the standard of education, not only at AV Bukani, but in all schools in South Africa. They must develop more self-belief and self-reliance. They should also try to address the problem of lack of financial resources from within, and not be so reliant of external assistance, which will not last for ever.

28.04.2011 - Further to my report:

I left quite a lot of stationery, including paper, pencils, a stapler & hole-punch etc. at AV Bukani, gave various books (both bought out there & some I had taken on teaching English ASL) to Lumka, and some memory sticks with Ben. Most of this was equipment I had taken with me. I also gave each educator who I had observed teaching a report, which could be used as a template when they do their own lesson observations, though I suspect Tandy has a form for everything in her folder.

Another recommendation I meant to make was that all templates that were being developed for management purposes within the school be put on one computer and one person be responsible for them all. This would save having to look through all the computers to find each document.

Note from people and places: something else that future volunteers can help with during their own placements.

The accommodation we had was good; our hosts had obviously been told how to treat us, and tried hard to comply. My name is now Jane Lamani-Lavery! Fifth Avenue Beach House was also good, and Anthea a great host.



the Lamani family home – home for me during the week



R&R at weekends in Port Elizabeth

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