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placement date and project - A.V.Bukani School 24.01.2011 - 18.02.2011

orientation and preparation at the start of the placement

The session at Calabash was useful with a background to the school, community and host families. The phones made me feel quite secure.

your experience and work – including what resources you may have left behind and with whom – please include any written resources

There was some resistance to talking about special needs which was one of the areas I was asked to look at. At first it was made clear to me that this was something that the Department of Education was responsible for. Gradually I found out what the documentation was from the Department of Education as one of the teachers had this and I looked at it. One learner was identified and we completed a form on her and interviewed her Mother. This is in the school and can be used as an example of what needs to be done.

I asked Mr Tambo to contact the Department and arrange a visit when I was there to see if our work on the form was going in the right direction. Somebody visited and I attended the meeting with her and teachers. This was very useful. She came again when I had left and Jane (**co-volunteer**) carried on the dialogue. So communication has been opened up and guidance given on the importance of keeping records as well as the idea of differentiated learning being reinforced. All the documentation pointed to the need for teachers to plan programmes for individual learners.

Also the whole area of record keeping was discussed and the importance of planning and recording work with pupils who are struggling. We also raised the idea that some able pupils could need extension work.

I was lucky to be working with Jane and we could work together. I know Jane has produced some templates building on this initial work.

Note from *people and places*: we will ask our local partners at Calabash to ensure they also have copies – then future volunteers will also have access to these templates

We did some unpacking and organising in the "library" and this is now more accessible. We set up 1 room as a Resource Centre in the main school building with sections for Maths, Xhosa, English etc.. This was physical hard work, clearing out the room and then sorting books out and labelling the shelves.

I introduced the idea that not all the children had to be doing the same thing at the same time and I know that Jane has carried this on with more detailed differentiated lessons.

what did we do well? Jane and I had similar backgrounds and views and so placing us together worked well

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for us and I hope the whole placement !

People and Places came over as caring and the link with Calabash made for a very worthwhile experience.

what could we do better? - It was unclear about paying for weekend accommodation. I think this and approximate costs for weekend stays could have been outlined. I asked for a smaller less expensive room which was very adequate. 5th Avenue was a delightful and friendly place to stay

Note from people and places: good point! We have now included information about optional weekends in PE on our accommodation information – and also explained that this option is at an additional cost.

your recommendations for the input of future volunteers

I took pens, a notebook, scissors, glue etc. and this was essential as there were few resources within the school. This would be advice to future volunteers just to have the basics for personal use straight away.

1. Continue to push the borrowing of reading books in the classrooms
2. Continue to compile information on learners with special needs, devising and monitoring programmes
3. Continue to lessen whole class teaching and increase differentiated lessons
4. Keep better records of learners progress particularly those who "fail" a grade and those struggling in Reception classes.
5. Develop materials and programmes to enhance the learning of learners who are struggling.

Note from people and places: all of the above in partnership / consultation with the local teachers!

successes and disappointments

I think I was successful in sowing seeds, despite some resistance at first, to change some teaching styles.

It was rewarding to open up dialogue with the local Department of Education and the school

The Resource Centre was I think a success and was being used.

I was disappointed not to be able to talk more Xhosa or really master the clicks!

how did you spend your leisure time?

The weekends in Port Elizabeth were great. The trips that Calabash organised were very well done, interesting and eye opening.

Evenings in the township were mostly spent sitting outside trying to keep cool, doing preparation, chatting to the family and watching TV.

Another comfy chair outside would have been welcome but that is a minor issue!

how was your accommodation?

It was warm and friendly and became more relaxed. It was spotlessly clean. The food was not exciting but OK and a sandwich, lots to drink and 3 pieces of fruit was just right for lunch.

Calabash had obviously done a lot of work in preparing for the placement. It was an amazing experience to live in the township and see the strong community spirit and to get to know such an amazing and well respected couple as the Nazos. I loved the idea that all the doors and windows were left open as opposed to the electric fencing and gates in town! It was sometimes difficult to relax with just 1 room but I had my own bathroom and bedroom.

P.S. - I realise that what I didn't say is that the school is amazing! The children so warm and friendly and well behaved and the staff made me feel so welcome. The welcome and leaving party was quite something!

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