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Yvonne Coulson – Gede, Kenya – September 16th to October 14th 2018

Pre departure was straight forward as this was a return visit, I was to work with the younger children as the older ones were in exam preparation time. I had a good idea about what to take and a very good luggage allowance from Kenya airways.

Orientation was minimal as I had been before. Ken took me to the school on Monday 17th. To meet with the head and look around at the new buildings most of the staff were still there from my previous visit. I was assigned to hi 2 (hearing impaired level 2), with Patience as the teacher. I remembered her well. There was no chance of a visit to the turtle project or snake farm this time because out of school activities are not allowed in term 3.

This is something for future volunteers to understand that term 3 September to November is best avoided as the main exams take place in late October even the year 2,3 and 4 have state set exams, hence the authority not allowing any time out.

However would be fine for physio therapists or experienced teachers of the physically handicapped.

Note from *people and places* – this information is now in the information we send to our future Gede volunteers

Work experience

I did get a fair amount of teaching in the first week, then even my young ones had 3 days of “mock exams”. The results from these decided what we taught the rest of my time, because of this my choice was restricted however if you look at my weekly reports (*see below*) you can see a fair amount was accomplished. During the 3 exam days I spent time with ph 1 and ph 2 Physically handicapped and some very severely, so it was rewarding and interesting working with Pauline Munga but not really where I felt at my most useful.

We also had a Public holiday very unexpected, we did not know until the day before it took everyone by surprise, these sort of occurrences are not unusual and volunteers should be prepared to go with the flow.

Resources

I took out the following books:

Monkey puzzle, 2 copies of The very hungry caterpillar, Handa's Hen and Handa's surprise. Lion hunt, We all went on safari, laughing Giraffe, Hello Mr. World and Room on a Broom. Also nonfiction Sea Turtles, 2 different books and learn about snakes and amazing snakes these were all left in hi 2 as Patience acts as librarian and she is keen to encourage reading for pleasure, children come during the quite long lunch break and change their books.

I also took out a world map and a tables chart which were up on the wall. The craft material I took were mainly used but 4 small scissors and 10 plastic mirrors were left with Patience.

I took a set of small magnets, and a compass which I left with Kafuhammer for use in science.

The craft materials I found most useful for future reference if taking the younger ones were coloured pipe cleaners, coloured pencils. Glitter, A5 coloured card, seeds for gardening eg. Cress, I took carrots, courgettes, tomatoes could not grow them this term because of long holiday coming up but in the Jan. onwards term there is a large garden area aubergine, French beans would grow.

Highlights the best highlight was the greetings from children I had taught 4 years ago now 12 years old. One in particular had advanced so well academically he was at the main school for lessons but returned to Gede for boarding he would come over at lunch time with an able bodied child pushing his wheel chair to see me, bringing a different child each time to see the English lady who had come to teach him!! I was disappointed that we couldn't go on a trip but the rules are very strict and the Head is only an acting head he needs to follow the protocol. If I return it would be in term 1 or 2 so I could do the trip.

Leisure

There is plenty to do at weekends or even after school. The facilities for swimming and water sports are good. There is a walk along the beach to Watamu village which is very touristy lots of cafes, stalls and 2 supermarkets you can also go and return by tuk-tuk. There is a snake farm worth a visit and the Turtle sanctuary which usually has no turtles in the Autumn term as they are rehabilitated and returned to the ocean. By the beginning of December they are rescuing again as the turtles return to lay their eggs and get injured in fishing nets etc. I visited the Gede ruins this trip they are very close to the school and quite extensive, run by the Government. There is also a snake farm and bird sanctuary in the grounds. The hotel can organise short safari trips to suit time off.

I would certainly recommend going to Gede especially for any one with experience of working with handicapped children especially those who are deaf. The sign language is different to ours but it is not too difficult to pick up the basics, the staff are helpful in translating especially if you try to learn a little.

They would also appreciate any one with knowledge of physiotherapy, also IT as they are now in possession of 7 laptop computers and the printer I bought them, but not all the staff are computer literate, though many of the staff have iphones. As yet the school does not have wifi but hopefully soon.

More details of day to events are to be found in my weekly reports (*see below*).

Ken At Turtle Bay is extremely supportive and goes out of his way to help. All the staff at the hotel are keen on helping and appreciate the work of the volunteers. Ken even altered his leave so as to be there for my entire visit. I had one tuk tuk driver organised by Ken who took me every morning and returned me after school. The back up is excellent you are well looked after.

WEEKLY REPORTS

Here is my report on the first week. The school seems to be flourishing even with a temporary head. they have had a big input of material goods in the form of new or extended classrooms. This have been funded by an Italian organisation. The class room I used 4 years ago is now designated a computer room, they have some laptops, not seen them yet, not up and running, I am no expert but hope to help out here if I can, many of the staff are not computer literate.(maybe an opening for a future volunteer).

I am teaching year 2 deaf children, I am learning sign language with and from the children. There are only 4, 2 bright boys and 2 slow learner girls, the girls seem to have multiple problems not just deafness. Some times class 3 deaf join us my word up to 8, their teacher is also deaf but very good. We have introduced craft work to illustrate, English, Religious studies, and have more planned for next week. I also help the girls with their maths and try extending the boys maths while we wait for the girls. My calculator was a great success, they also worked out how to use the camera hence the strange mini video I sent, little rogues.

The class teacher Paitence runs a library especially during lunch break, the children bring back a book they have finished and are allowed a new one. Children who have progressed to the main-stream school are allowed in also, a very useful way for me to catch up on pupils from last time. She is very keen to promote

reading for pleasure, which is still an unusual concept in Africa.

The end of another school week, successfully completed I hope. We have been plagued with examinations nearly 3 days of written exams, the poor children, they are just practise papers to see what needs covering before the real exams after I leave. I was not about to sit and invigilate such a waste of time so went to the really handicapped class run by Pauline. Although they vary in ages they are all in nappies and do mornings only in class. I helped with story telling and a number game I had bought in Morrisons. The next class up are slightly more able but don't do exams so took them in the afternoons for 2 days. Then we concentrated on strategies and work to cover the problem areas discovered in the tests. We managed some environmental work and related craft. A fairly positive week.

Discussed with Gabriel (acting head) what they had in mind from my contribution, they really want a large heavy duty photocopier, and or a printer for the new computers. Ken and I consulted with the head of IT here at Turtle Bay, he is a very intense young man but knows his stuff in a commercial environment but I am not convinced what he recommended is suitable for school. Certainly I can't afford a big photocopier much too expensive, printers over here are also much more expensive than at home. Not exactly sure what we will do but Ken is coming to school early next week to see what we can sort out. Dianne the computers, they have 8 and 2 teachers ones, are specially made can't find the manufacture any were on the machines but are made especially for the deaf by the Kenya education authority. They are called Digischool, I got in to the settings and there is facility to add a printer in PDF or Microsoft xps a bit odd no windows. Ken is more up to date than me so I will take advice from him. Glad I started early on this as I would like to get it sorted before I leave.

The weather has been interesting, some days of very heavy rain and detours around minor and major floods have been undertaken. the wind is very strong so don't think I will get bitten the critters can't fly in this. Please keep copies of this so I don't have to repeat in my report.

Well folks quite a busy week very warm and humid not as wet as previously. No disruption to the time table and we covered most of the areas as tabled. I have tried diplomatically to suggest the boys are not left idle while the girls finish, stretching them a little would be good, this has worked fairly well but the girls are still struggling. I wondered if they could do different work at an easier level, but this was greatly frowned on they Must cover the syllabus. Pointing out that doing an exercise a little less challenging could result in them gaining some marks in the exam rather than none. We have done some creative work, PE and are growing cress, this has gone down well as instant results popped up, Patience is going to come in and water over the weekend she was so pleased with the lesson.

Ken has been in and it looks as if we have got the printer lined up and also a new flag, I made them laugh by saying the one they are using looks older than me. Pauline looked up which printer is recommended to go with the Digischool computers and it is the one Ken and the IT manager had in mind, so we are all singing from the same hymn sheet. Mind you Gabriel is hoping they do a version which takes a bigger ink cartridge if not, he is happy with the original one. All being well we hope to take delivery early next week.

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