



Newsletter

30th June, 2008.

'Afritwin' trip to Durban Schools Great Success!

Mrs Eyden our Environmental Co-ordinator and myself have just returned from our exciting trip to Africa. Mrs Eyden will be preparing a more detailed account of the trip and we will jointly host an evening of photos and information for parents and children on Thursday 17th July at 7 pm in the school hall.

The trip was made possible by our three year British Council grant. This initiative has 'brought to life' our twinning project with our two contrasting schools in Durban, South Africa.

The highlights that I would like to mention are:

Cape Town – Although we did not have much time here, we did visit an Eco School set in a very difficult area. Levana Primary School, Lavender Hill, Cape Town may sound deceptively tranquil. The reality is that the amazingly motivated staff have worked wonders in the middle of a rundown area with high unemployment, drugs and alcohol abuse prevalent.

The Headteacher had actually had to close the school on two occasions due to gang shootings outside the school! He had personally negotiated a 'peace' settlement between the gangs which was signed by the gang leaders, at a meeting set up in the local church. In the middle of this, the staff and pupils, led by the Deputy Headteacher and Environmental Co-ordinator, had over many years, established 'Aids' 'Peace' and 'Waterwise' gardens, constructed by the pupils and local community. What an example to us all!



In Durban, what shocked us (apart from how unexpectedly cold it was!) was that you were unable to walk around freely due to safety issues.

At Gordon Road, our affluent, all girls' school, we were made to feel very welcome. The girls were very confident and multi-talented regarding the arts. The theme of 'Peace' really bonded us. They have the wonderful idea of a pupil 'Peace' council who help children work through disputes. We hope to set up the same idea here in September. The children wore beautiful Peace badges with a dove on! We shared ideas and they are going to replicate our idea of a 'Prayer Tree' covered in prayers for Global Peace. We presented both of our school with 'Peacemala' bracelets.

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At Vumokuhle, our deprived school in the township of Umlazi, we were privileged to spend two wonderful and emotional days, the highlight of which was when Mrs Eyden and I were treated to an assembly in our honour, with incredible Zulu singing and dancing – the rhythm of which echoed in your chest. At the end of the assembly, we were escorted up the hill behind the school buildings to our ‘surprise’.

With the funds that you, our school community, have raised, Mrs Mazubane (the new Head of Vumokuhle since Mrs Radebe has retired) and the director of Education for Durban, unveiled a plaque on a newly renovated building:

‘Woodheys Learning Centre – June 10th 2008’

There wasn’t a dry eye in the house! The centre is a pre-school in the mornings and an adult literacy centre in the afternoons. The slopes all around the building were ‘inspired’ by Mrs Mazubane’s visit to Woodheys last year.

The once barren area is now a thriving vegetable garden, maintained by the local community! Our school motto TEAM ‘Together Everyone Achieves More’ has been adopted by both schools and is the true basis for our work. Our themes of the ‘Environment’ and ‘Global Peace’ also run through all three schools.



St. Georges Cathedral, Cape Town

On Saturday 14th June at 10 am we started our long trip home via Cape Town and Dubai. We did not arrive back until 1 pm on the Sunday. However, we had a four hour wait in Cape Town. Amazingly, whilst chatting to a member of staff at Gordon Road about our Labyrinth, she told us that there is a beautiful ‘Chartres Cathedral’ labyrinth at Bishop Desmond Tutu’s Cathedral in Cape Town.



By sheer chance we arrived there at 1.45 pm during a presentation on the power and purpose of labyrinths, ready for a labyrinth walk at 2 pm! We both felt very moved during the walk, contemplating the memories of our two week trip. I looked up and, written on the side of a tall building behind the cathedral, were the words: ‘This place I call Home’ Cape Town is also known as ‘The Mother City’. After the walk, Mrs Eyden and I presented the new Dean with his own ‘Peacemala’ bracelet. A fitting end to a life changing experience!

Peacemala Awards 2008.

We are highly honoured to have been asked to enter this prestigious ‘Peace’ award. Mrs Bloor has created the most beautiful book about our Global Peace work, the central theme being ‘St. Francis with his dove’. A statue/ birdbath of St. Francis is situated in our J.P.Joule Positive Energy Labyrinth Garden. We will hear the results at the Peacemala Garden Party on 24th July in Wales.