

St Anthony's Catholic Primary School Headteacher's Report to Governors Reciprocal visit to Sierra Leone
February 10th-24th 2006

This was a visit looked forward to with immense anticipation. Joe Pyne, headteacher of St. Francis' School, Bo had spent a very successful fortnight with us during autumn term 2005. The return visit to Bo gave me therefore considerable opportunity to follow up many of the ideas discussed with Joe particularly as relevant to the development of curriculum resources which could be accessed and shared by both schools.

The visit, as you know, was sponsored by the British Council. However, the personal" costs of the visit were considerably in excess of any grant payable to the teachers' group travelling to Sierra Leone. This is an issue which would have to be carefully thought about if the project were to continue and involve exchanges of other teaching staff from our two schools.

We were given the greatest welcome to Bo with children and staff from several schools together with One World Link (OWL) representatives, meeting us in the newly built centre completely funded by contributions from OWL.

Most of my time in Bo was spent at S1, Francis' School observing different teaching styles and teaching a variety of age groups. Key impressions were of teachers working against the odds, particularly having to cope with few resources and very large classes, often over 50 children. In discussion with teachers, they would often highlight computers as a target resource. There would though, I believe, be much greater merit in the provision of the most basic tools - paper and pencils for instance.

The development of a teachers' resource area within the One World Link centre would be a significant step forward and one which is now considered a priority to enable teachers to share curriculum resources, particularly online access where the use of IT technology would be at its most useful. Certainly the development of our shared curriculum project would benefit significantly from this type of facility.

The headteachers of our twinned schools went to considerable time and trouble to enable us to make the best of our time. As well as working at St. Francis' school I was able to visit two secondary schools and additionally support One World Link's education advisor in his visit to other local primary schools who were interested in

becoming full linked members.

We were welcomed at local headteachers' meetings where all aspects of our visit were discussed including concerns about the resourcing of their schools.

Since I've returned, children at my own school have benefited :from being able to discuss, in class and at assemblies, issues which up until my visit we could only glean :from letters and photographs sent :from Bo. I've also spent time at other linked schools in Leamington, sharing my experiences in their assemblies.

So yes, and immensely productive visit and one we will build on to further develop our link. A big thank you as governors for supporting my visit and all staff and children at school for taking on board this global dimension to our work, of which we are proud.

Joseph Cannon

April 2006

Initial Thoughts following My International Study Visit

February 2006 Sarah Davies Head Teacher Ferncumbe School

What did I personally find valuable from the visit?

- So much of it was almost impossible to quantify
- The chance to have 14 days out of school to reflect on my own practice whilst observing others in circumstances similar but so different
- The chance to explore a contrasting culture of education and life in a continent I hadn't previously visited and make real links with the people
- The chance to observe at first hand a school system very different from our own to meet staff, students and education officials and ask and answer as many questions as I could think of
- The chance to discuss issues and ideas with teachers from my authority in different schools
- The chance to build a real relationship with a Head Teacher in a developing country and to share experiences and thoughts our friendship will go on
- A chance to reevaluate the links between all schools involved with OWL and come back with practical and realistic ideas of how best to grow the link- particularly focusing on the provision of a resource centre available to all schools in Bo
- My visit to Bo and Josephine's visit to Warwick have brought the whole link alive for the community
- To learn about and understand more about The British Council and their work
- A life changing experience
- Sharing experiences at staff meetings, Church services public meetings, teacher group meetings and with our 10 Young at Heart Group have meant that the value of the link and the learning it provides have gone far beyond the Ferncumbe School
- The resources I brought back with me which include photos, video, tapes, artefacts, curriculum documents e will allow lots to further embed the link in to our plans
- The Arts in particular Dance, Music and Art have been . enhanced by the link
- The school and governing body are committed to continue the link despite the fact that I am leaving to work in Bangalore India.
- Our small mostly white rural school has benefited greatly from the partnership.
- Links between the two staffs will continue firm friendships are being built

Sarah Davies Head Teacher 2006

Diary of Activities Bo Visit February 2006

Friday 10th

Leave Warwick Parkway for Gatwick 7 am

Plane delayed don't arrive in Freetown until 2:00 a.m. Saturday. welcoming committee was still there.

Saturday 11th

Arrive Mahera Beach Guest House 03:00 am

Journey to Bo on Ferry by 8:00 – If I described it you wouldn't believe it!!

Huge welcoming committee with streets lined with children and teachers from our link schools

Go to Countryside Guest house

Visited by Josephine Komeh H/T Kakua and David Ngombu Chair One World Link Bo and Joseph Bockarie Chair of Bo One World Link Teachers Group

Sunday 12th

Morning at Hotel to sort papers and prepare for visit

P.M Meeting to finalise an itinerary for the visiting teachers Monday 13th

Finally I meet staff and pupils of Kakua Primary. I attend Assembly and visit classes. 60 to a class only teaching aid a blackboard and 1 pieces of chalk daily. Talk with staff and pupils ask questions and answer lots. Walk around the area surrounding Kakua including

visit to CKC the Secondary Boys school it feeds. Visit a child rescue centre next door to the school. Greet parents and board members the local community. Walk in to Town with Josephine guided tour] the market.

Visit to tailors to be measured for clothes. Go to St Francis School where we are guests of honour at a Football Match Number 10 will play in the premiership one day. UBC won. Huge enthusiasm great talent. I got to kick off.

Tuesday 14th

Courtesy calls to local dignitaries and officials- Chief Education Officer Paul Lappia, Paramount Chief-Rashid Kamanda Bangay Chief of Police Mr Dabor, Hospital Administrator Dr Murana, Southern Regional Government Minister Dr Sumjah. We visited them at their places of work and therefore became familiar with layout and facilities in Do Town. We attended Joe Pyne's (H/T St Francis) Silver Wedding Celebration. Amazing African Music.

In Kakua Primary deliver maps of UK and World talk to classes about Ferncumbe, Warwick and England. I lead an assembly for

Lower School telling them about Ferncumbe, Warwick and England All the staff are dressed in African costume in Ferncumbe school colours, what a compliment- they have had them made especially 1 honour my visit.

We are treated to a Cultural Show of traditional singing and dance by three local schools. I am so proud of Kakua Primary as they lead the event. At Ferncumbe we really value the creative arts and it is great to see our sister school does too. I video the event to take back England. We all visit the house of Josephine Komeh

for refreshment before retiring to the Guest House.

Thursday 16th

At Kakua I am presented with a gift of an African costume to wear at Friday prayers at the Mosque tomorrow.

Josephine and I walk back in to Do collecting Head Teachers on the way from various school:

route. They all want to know about and become part of the link. " attend Do Head Teacher's Council. We speak about linking and equality of opportunity in English education. We answer question and take part in a group photo.

At 4:30 we have a meeting with the One World Link executive to discuss the link and our visit so far.

Josephine takes us to visit a local family, he is a policeman. They make us very welcome it turns out his brother was captain of Sierra Leone football team and now plays in the States. We are shown family photos and the discussion inevitably turns to the hardship the ten year civil war. They guide us to our hotel through the darkness of a real African night. Stars like you have never seen ill your life.

Friday 17th

Start at Kakua visiting classes and reading stories. The teachers f them as much as the children. I haven't seen a book in a classroom yet so my copy of the Selfish Crocodile is greeted with amazement 11 :00 we walk to the One World Link Community Centre to meet with the One World Link Teachers Group. We hold a workshop t() brainstorm ways in which the group can continue to support teach in Bo and provide curriculum materials to further support the link~ We walk to the Central Mosque and join other teachers for Friday prayers I am overwhelmed by my reception. I explain that it is important in England today to promote religious tolerance in our schools and I want to take back photos of the Mosque. They insist praying in the Christian way too.

We visit a local skills centre where I buy some African musical instruments to take back to Ferncumbe in order that we can have own African Band for assembly. I also video weaving to take home

Saturday 18th

We attend the launch of the Youth Wing of One World Link. This great pleasure to us all as George and Jane who visited Leamington last year on a visit sponsored by the Town Council are the main organisers and tell us the visit was the inspiration. Lots of speeches music, dancing and we have the chance to meet other youth group including Guides and Scouts. We take names and addresses and promise to try to promote a link between the groups on our return The afternoon is spent travelling outside Bo, this gives us a chance to view the countryside it really is green Africa. I take photos of the

landscape as that is what my teachers have asked for. We visit the beautiful Sew a River, gold panning, washing, fishing and many o~ activities to photograph. We also visit the Waterworks which we I will soon be supported by Warwickshire County Council as .it nee

money spending on it to upgrade it. A chance to collect information(and ideas to support our Science and Geography curriculum on water. We also visit Gondoma refugee camp. Once a camp for refugees from the civil war, it is now mostly home to refugees from Liberia.

We attend Kyoma Women's Group Meeting where I learn that the son of Esther Deputy Head of the Upper

School at Kakua has tragically lost her only son aged 30 to Typhoid.

We are kindly treated to dinner at the home of Father Peter Con1 the priest attached to St Francis Church and School.

Sunday 19th

Josephine and I attend mass and then I get my first chance to ride: Honda Taxi. I haven't been on a motorbike for many years, what a freedom. We are invited to the home of John Miana Head of Kakua Upper for lunch in his village. Many of the Kakua staff are there. We visit the local health centre where the nurse tells me malaria not Aids is their biggest problem and that the best way to help would be the provision of mosquito nets.

Josephine and I go to Esther's house to give our condolences, the house is full of family and friends who are gathering to grieve and prepare for the funeral.

Monday 20th

This morning Josephine and I visit New Gerihun Road School. This is a school linked with Emscote Infants in Warwick. We take gifts for the school of books and letters and visit classrooms taking video and photographs to take back for the school to help enhance their link.

will report back on my visit at an assembly at their school. They give us school uniform to take back. We then go to Kakua where we close the school on the sad occasion of Esther's son's funeral. 50 children and the staff walk to Esther's house to join the funeral. It is culturally very different from a funeral in England.

Tuesday 21st

My last day at Kakua. We hold an assembly outside of course where we share thoughts experiences and gifts. They play a football match in my honour. I video it I know Ferncumbe will love the match. We visit Holy Rosary School the girls secondary school which Josephine attended. The school is preparing for Sports Day. The Head treats us to lunch. A Farewell Party is held for us at the Comm Centre. Speeches, -gifts- letters to take back. Tomorrow the long journey back to Freetown.

Wednesday 22nd

We leave at 6:00 am and manage the trip to Freetown in four and a half hours, better than the ten on the way there. We visit the Headquarters of the Sierra Leone Teacher's Union and find our guest house on Lumley Beach the Atlantic coast- we swim in the Atlantic

Thursday 23rd

We visit Freetown Museum to collect curriculum support material and also a market to acquire more artefacts. We meet with the British Council Tom Walsh, Cordelia Davies and Wilmellia Okrafor and discuss our visit our findings and our ideas for future development. Once more some time for swimming

A long journey to Lungi airport via British Council, Astraeus Coach and Ferry. Meal at airport flight is on time. Arrive at Gatwick 5:00 in the morning it seems to be closed. At Warwick Parkway by 10:30. Older wiser exhausted but with so many tales to tell

Sarah Davies Head Teacher Ferncumbe School

Press Release March 6 06

Friends Across the World- Sharing Knowledge Breaking Down Barriers.

Three teachers from Warwick and Leamington have just completed a fourteen day visit to Bo Sierra Leone. Their task was to visit their partner schools and build on existing links developed through One World Link Teachers Group. This was the return visit, as three Head Teachers ft, Sierra Leone had visited Warwick and Leamington in October.

The schools involved were the Ferncumbe Primary represented by Head Teacher Sarah Davie linked with Kakua Primary School Njai Town Head Teacher Josephine Komeh.

Brookhurst School represented by class teacher Alison Bryan linked with U.B.C. School-He~ Teacher V. V. Bockarie and St Anthony's School Leamington Spa represented by Head Teach Joe Cannon linked with St Francis School Head Teacher Joe Pyne.

The main aims of the visit were to develop and consolidate personal and professional relationships To visit classrooms and meet with staff so as to further understand the education system and curriculum as it is in reality. To gather information resources and photographs to further enhance the curriculum of all the schools involved. They also visited churches, Mosques, rescue centre refugee camps as well as the homes of local teachers.

The welcome in Sierra Leone was incredible. Staff and students lined the streets of the second largest town in Sierra Leone and welcomed them at the One World Link Community Centre The teachers met many local officials at the education department and in Bo Town itself, they with the Head Teachers Council and the Teachers Group. They also attended an exciting laun4 a new One World Link Youth Group, cultural shows and football matches.

Partnership Agreements were signed to further develop friendships between staff and pupils ~ ensure the links continue to develop. Sarah Davies a member of the party, which was funded 1 British Council Global Partnerships Scheme, described the visit as

"The experience of a lifetime and one which will allow schools in Bo and Warwick to explore similarities and differences in way of life, race, culture, past history. Our links are helping to develop the global citizens of the future.

We travelled on the same plane as the party visiting the Blind School in Freetown which received a lot of exposure on BBC television last week. We have many stories, emotions and experiences share with our school and local communities.

There are many differences between education in England and education in one of the poorest countries in the world but there are also many similarities. In the end it is about ensuring all children get the education they deserve.

Plans for the future involve the setting up of a teachers' resource library in the new community centre Bo and developing resources for all schools to better teach about each others culture.

feel very privileged to have been given this opportunity and we hope this first reciprocal visit teachers will be the beginning of an ongoing friendship between schools here in Warwickshir4 those in Bo Southern Province of Sierra Leone. We all have so much we can learn from each other. "

For more details/ photos etc please contact Sarah Davies Head Teacher Ferncumbe School 01 484318

Dear Friends,

We hope it is a happy and sunny day in Bo.

It is a very happy day for us, as one of the girls in our class, Zoe, is five today. We sang happy birthday in assembly.

At that moment it is 11' o'clock and we are eating our fruit snack. Today we have bananas and tomatoes. Do you have a fruit snack at school?

We do lots of cooking in *out* class and recently we have made gingerbread~ men and iced biscuits. We have three playtimes outside everyday, to get fresh air. How many playtimes do you have?

Our topic that we are learning about is called 'Fairy Tales' . We have read lots of stories like 'Cinderella', 'The Gingerbread Man', 'Red Riding Hood' and 'The 3 Billy Goats Gruff'. We have sent you a copy of the book we made of 'Cinderella' . .

What games do you like playing at school? We like playing Bingo, Snakes and ladders, Hide and seek, Scarecrows and Tig. Maybe we could tell you how to play these games in our next letter.

Our next topic is 'Food'. Do you think you could write to us and tell us what foods you like to eat?

We sometimes use whiteboards to write on as well . as paper. What do you usually write on?

In our school we have a water cooler machine that we get our drinking water from. Do you like drinking water too? Where do you get your water in school from?

We really hope that you will have time to write back to us. Maybe you could send us some. photographs. We have sent you some photographs of us.

We think of you all the time and we hope you are all happy and well.

Your friends in the Reception Class,

The Ferncumbe School

Partnership Agreement Brookhurst Primary England
and U . B. C. School Bo Sierra Leone

Objectives

- . An understanding and sense of place in home, school local community, country and the wider world
- Exploration of similarities and differences in way of life, race, culture, past history, resources and religions, so contributing to mutual understand in respect for. others and self esteem.
- Introduction to environmental and development issues and their effect on the quality of life.

Aims and Objectives

- To provide students with an understanding of each other's culture
 - To engage staff and students in joint curriculum work
 - To demonstrate that each society has much to learn from each other
 - To help develop curriculum in schools
 - To develop friendship between staff and students . To challenge stereo types of Africa and England .
- To be part of the wider community friendship link between Bo and Warwick District

Signed

Alison Bryan

VV Bockarie

06 02 06

OUR LINK - THE WAY FORWARD

My name is Alison Bryan and I work as a class teacher and the PSHE coordinator at Brookhurst Primary School here in Leamington. I've been asked to talk briefly about the impact our school's reciprocal visit has had on the lives and learning of the children and staff in both schools. For you to truly understand the impact of this trip I have to fill you in on our link story so far.

In 2001 Teresa Bengali, a visiting teacher from Bo, visited Brookhurst and shared with the children horrifying stories of life during the recent civil war. Children as young as 5 were spellbound by an assembly that will stay in my memory for many years to come. Those 5 year olds are now 10 and on her return to Leamington in 2004 many children still remembered her as "that lady who told us about the horrible things that happened in the war". Since that 2001 visit our school has been linked to UBC School Moriba Town in Bo.

Until this reciprocal visit our link with UBC has involved letter writing, questions being asked and questions being answered and many visitors to school from Sierra Leone. All this in a continued effort to understand each other. It was during one of John's visit to our school that he casually said to me "you might go to Bo one day" and that is how this whole adventure started.

In the beginning of our link the children's understanding of it was limited or somewhat 2D. The children knew that we had friends from far away in

Africa and a little about how they lived their lives. However for small children this is quite a difficult and abstract idea for them to understand. It was also a challenge for us as teachers to bring to life something we had limited knowledge of.

However in September of last year this changed. The focus of our linking had shifted and this project had become learning for a purpose. The purpose being preparation for the imminent visit from our link head teacher. For the children the link had suddenly become very real.

Fact finding began, songs were learned, banners were made and even the teachers boned up on the political and economic status of Sierra Leone.

A short but very busy visit followed. To be able to ask questions and get answers, to discuss similarities and differences, to communicate and feel understood, to ask what their school toilets were like and for the smaller children to see someone who they had only really thought of as another name in a story book standing there right in front of them, proved to be an unforgettable experience for all of us. One I hope the children will go on to remember and recount to others as adults.

This was as you all know for me only the beginning of my unforgettable experience. This being a reciprocal visit I travelled in February with my colleagues here to Bo and spent time visiting and teaching in our link school UBC.

The reassuring part of my visit was that the feeling in their school seemed to reflect that of our school during VV's visit. There was an air of anticipation as I arrived. The same amount of preparation had been undertaken and the sheer fact of having me there in the flesh teaching seemed once again for staff and children to be the biggest lesson of all.

Whilst at UBC I tried to teach the very large classes of children about Leamington and their link school. The children asked questions about my life. VV had also insisted that we shoot a video of Brookhurst to show the children. So we bought petrol fired up the generator and all 900 children sat down to watch a small TV at the front of the church. The children were awestruck by lunchtime where the common theme of food struck a chord with them just as it would back home. The whoops of joy as the camera captured a passing train a sight I later learned the children had never seen before and as the children at Brookhurst waved to the camera the children at UBC waved back and a connection was made.

The teacher's at UBC also asked many questions and many education issues were discussed in particular that of discipline and our differing approaches. Some teachers were under the impression I was visiting from a school that would financially support them and this is an opinion I felt I had to challenge many times over to many people there. These discussions weren't always easy however as partner and a friend I felt I owed these colleagues my honest thoughts and views and that this would be the only path to move our link forward.

Being there in Bo seemed like a dream. I couldn't quite believe it. There is one moment that I'd like to share with you all. This moment meant our link was really working, our link was alive. During VV's visit to Brookhurst we sang a song the first line of which is You are my brother, you are my friend. When he left I gave him a tape

of this song and on my arrival to the school the children sang proudly this song back to me. At UBC and now at Brookhurst it is our link song.

Whilst in Bo we took pictures of many things. I discussed with Brian the looks of bemusement from people at my need to take photos of washing lines, people making bricks, wells, water purification plants, transport, traffic wardens and the like. Always with our teachers heads on we saw a learning opportunity at every turn collecting memorabilia and artefacts some of which the local people found highly amusing! We now intend to take photos of the equivalent scenes here in Leamington. Having visited Bo for ourselves as educationalists we find ourselves in a unique position to put together a comparative study pack of the two localities Bo and Leamington. This work will then not only have an impact on our schools here in Leamington and our link schools in Bo but all schools which are linked in Warwick District and those who may consider linking in the future.