

White Notley CE Primary school partnered with Kagio Primary school, Kenya

White Notley CE Primary School is a small village school in rural Essex. We have about 110 children in 4 classes. We embrace a Christian ethos and value individuals. As part of our aim to prepare children for a multi-cultural society and to take an active role as a global citizen we started our partnership with Kagio Primary in Kenya in 2007. We knew it was really important for our community to have a wider view of the world and the partnership via the Connecting Classrooms programme has certainly given us that.

Kagio Primary School has over 700 students. It is situated in a relatively rural area of Kenya, 108 km NNE of Nairobi. The school has no electricity or running water and children are taught in classes of up to 100. The children and staff follow a fairly rigid syllabus and annual tests are very important. The new Kenyan curriculum is being trialled in the pre school class and will be introduced to all schools in 2018.

Reciprocal annual visits continued until 2015 when the British Council changed funding arrangements. These visits are vital to both schools. Having a Kenyan teacher in school for 4 days taught our children so much and on our visits to Kagio we were able to introduce a range of activities and resources. Joint projects have included farming, the local environment, sports and games and storytelling. We were able to fund fish ponds in the school grounds at Kagio, providing vital protein for the children there. Pen friend letters, filmed storytelling and collaborative art work have enabled us to share work and experiences. The children in both schools have a greater understanding of life in a very different culture.

Contact between the schools has become easier due to technological advances. Now the Kenyan mobile phone network is much more reliable than signal at White Notley so we exchange emails and Whatsapp messages to keep in touch. We have used Skype on a few occasions, including when Priti Patel visited White Notley and was able, with some of our children, to Skype a group of Kagio students. However without electricity there and reliable Wi-Fi here this has proved problematic.

Children in both schools get so much out of the partnership. They know far more about the other country and life in the other school. It really motivates both schools to focus on global citizenship in ways that would not otherwise be possible. Pen friend letters are received with real enthusiasm by both groups of children as are the reciprocal staff visits.

As the partnership lead at White Notley I have learned so much from working with educators in a very different environment and really appreciate the friendships I have developed with them by visiting there and hosting staff here. As a SENCO it has been fascinating to see the development of education for children with Special Educational Needs in a culture where such children have been hidden away for so many years.

Without our partnership it would be much more difficult to bring an international dimension to teaching and learning at White Notley. It is vital that we encourage a much greater global awareness in the classroom as part of our teaching. We have photos and films which are regularly used in lessons and Assemblies and we work hard to ensure that the wider communities of parents, villages and link churches are as involved as possible too.

We cannot imagine life now without the partnership.



Children at Kagio Primary with the White Notley dolls who live there as a permanent reminder of our partnership.