

## **Education Link Report to Trustees and AGM 24th March 2018**

Isabel Hodger

Since the last report in June 2017, it has been a busy time for the education sector.

We now have 14 schools in and around Hastings UK linked to schools in and around Hastings Sierra Leone, (two more than last year) and for the first time we have a secondary school, Battle Abbey, with a sixth form. It was always a hope that we might be able to take some students over for a visit, and Battle Abbey are keen to pursue this. Battle Abbey is linked with Kelly's Vocational College, and Battle and Langton is linked with Jui Lower. We still have several schools in Sierra Leone who would like a link.

Having had some problems with visas last year, the return visit was delayed until October. Seven teachers, including Francis Mason, arrived on the evening of the Hastings Bonfire, a very different experience for them, and rather cold! St Mary Star of the Sea, West St Leonards, Guestling Bradshaw, The Baird and St Leonards CE all hosted a teacher, and Letitia Huggins was also invited by the link with her enthusiasm and expertise in Mathematics. A full week of activities took place, including a Maths Workshop, and when the teachers were not in school they were experiencing some of the local activities, such as Morris Dancing, Crazy Golf and a tour of the town led by Robin Gray.

Meanwhile, other schools were working on applying for a British Council grant to visit Sierra Leone in February 2018. Five were successful, The Baird, Hollington, Christchurch, Guestling Bradshaw and St Leonards Academy. Two teachers from each school were included in the grant. In addition, Mandy Hinxman, from All Saints came to support Isabel. She slotted into her role extremely well, playing an important part in ensuring the smooth running of the visit. Two others joined the group self funded: Chloe Hinxman, a teacher from Chantry Primary in Bexhill, and Jenna French, a running trainer with Hastings Runners. The visit took place between 9<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> February 2018 and was a great success. Most teachers were new to Africa, but all adjusted very well and were totally absorbed with the culture and life in Sierra Leone. Christine Boulton Lane, and Richard Lane also joined the group, and stayed in Hastings with Yvonne Johnson.

Teachers funded by British Council grants visited their schools each day during the week, and joint projects were set up to continue after the visit. The group attended a British Council Connecting Classrooms Conference on the first day with colleagues from Hull and Liverpool. Isabel ran another Maths Workshop, and 40 teachers attended, (23 last year).

Chloe Hinxman and Jenna French spent the week working in schools, teaching maths and sports. This was a very successful experiment and culminated in a fantastic sports afternoon involving all Hastings schools on the Friday of our visit. Chloe also helped Isabel with the Maths Workshop. Isabel and Mandy visited schools who didn't have teachers visiting this year to maintain contact and share gifts.

Sadly, this is the last opportunity to gain grants through this round of British Council Professional Partnerships. Hopefully, they will be setting up a new project for next year.

The group spent some leisure time at the beach and shopping as well as meals out at Francis Mason's residence, Yvonne Johnson's house and Simon Ingram Hill's residence. (Head of The British Council in Sierra Leone).

In addition to school visits, Isabel and Mandy visited several locations of charities looking after mudslide victims. A school in the mountains very close to the mudslide itself, a charity in Freetown that took in families and are gradually rehousing them, and an orphanage in Grafton. At each of these venues, some money collected by HSLFL and Hastings Organisation in London was donated. Updates on how the money was being spent were requested.

Also, Richard Lane and Isabel met with Dauda Wurie, the engineer who wrote the very comprehensive Sanitation Report for HSLFL. This was a useful meeting where he clarified his advice on the way forward. The HSLFL now has the information it needs to take this project forward.

And for the future we will be ....

- planning the return visit, which we are hoping will take place during the last week in June 2018, to give a bit more time to organise visas etc. There is no British Council funding for this, and the HSLFL has agreed, as last year, to part fund up to seven teachers, to relieve some of the financial pressures on schools and enable return visits to continue.
- on the look out for more schools in Hastings UK who would like to set up a partnership
- keeping in close contact with the British Council for further grants opportunities coming up in the future
- developing the Sanitation Project with the help of other members of the link.
- continuing our regular meetings and keeping in contact with new found friends in Hastings, Sierra Leone.

And longer term we will be ....

- looking for other people interested in becoming involved with the Education aspect of the link
- discussing with other interested parties how we could further develop our link for the mutual benefit of all