

SCHOOL LINKING REPORT – DEC 2013

Curriculum Sharing

We have continued to look for ways to develop our school linking programme to become more useful in the classroom and fun for both teachers and students. Through visits to schools and teachers to the office, the teachers are getting to understand what is required of them to produce more results and we have begun to engage our schools in producing Environmental Reviews, Action Plans and Case Studies. We have found that the schools who have been diligent in curriculum sharing activities or involved in exchange visits have been the ones who stand out in the way the programme has impacted their schools for good.

The picture is variable - some of the schools have had full community support and good communication between the links, while others are less engaged making the link a more difficult venture and challenging to sustain to any useful level. Having said that, I have witnessed a growing commitment by schools in planning shared activities and following through at classroom-level.

The following are examples of such work:



Trees planted with community support at Simayiwa Primary School as part of the Environmental Care Programme



Chikomambuzi School composting project, completed during teacher exchange visit - both schools are doing it!



Water harvesting tank at Kanthenga school, built with assistance from Weald School, UK.

The British Council

The British Council's major objective is to train and check how effectively linked schools implement a 'global' perspective in their curriculum. So in September, two of our linked schools – Msalura and Kanjendere - were chosen to attend a British Council training seminar in Malawi. During the training they were given an assignment to conduct a survey and to share their results with fellow teachers at a meeting at Domasi College in Zomba. The British Council now plan to visit Msalura Primary School as the results they presented were very encouraging and a good example to others. It is hoped that other schools will learn from the teachers that have gone through this training and be awarded with a Certificate in Global Education.

2013 UK Teacher's Exchange Visit

This year's teacher exchange visit in October, was very successful and played an integral part in achieving the purposes of Starfish Malawi in schools – building on relationships with both teachers and children; sharing perspectives and ideas on implementation, and even at times very moving. Thank you to all those who got on the plane and made it such a memorable trip for our schools and staff here.



Challenges

We are aware that there are areas that need to continue to be worked on i.e. though we have encouraged direct communication with their linked schools through emailing, using the website, etc., schools still need to be encouraged to take up training on how to use the computers that the UK schools have provided. As the Starfishers website is becoming the hub of all communication, schools need ample time to train and understand how to access the internet and use the Starfish website in order to achieve goals. For example, although we have been able to give training to teachers in the Salima District at our Starfish Resource Library, we have discovered that many teachers in the Kasungu District still lack the computer skills necessary. We therefore will be focusing on IT training in the New Year during our regular field trips there.

Also, whole school involvement is something that many schools need to develop and engage in - all teachers and their learners are necessary and able to contribute in sustaining the link. Sadly, where this does not happen, some of the links have died. This is largely due to where one committed school linking teacher moves schools, leaving no-one else to pick-up the baton in understanding the vision of linking and to maintain the relationships.

Furthermore, we want to see a growing understanding and confidence in how a school's many activities both in and outside the classroom can be shared with their link school – whole school life is both interesting and worthy of sharing.

And Finally... a Big Thanks!

We want to thank all our teachers in the UK who faithfully continue to visit, build and invest in our schools here in Malawi and we wish you all a very happy and blessed Christmas.

Emmanuel Chiumia
Schools Linking Officer