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**Connecting Classrooms through Global Learning Case Study: International Partnership between Dunclug Primary School and Hope Primary School, Kenya**

Dunclug Primary School is a small school in Ballymena, with 440 pupils. They were one of the first schools in Northern Ireland to embark on a Connecting Classrooms through Global Learning International School Partnership.

Alistair Beacom, the school principal, had visited Kenya in 2012 to volunteer with Kindfund, an organisation working on education and community projects in the north of the country. Immediately seeing the potential of school linking, a partnership was arranged with Hope Primary School in Wamba which has established connections with Kindfund. Hope Primary School has 70 pupils, all of whom reside in children’s homes in the area, either because they are orphaned or their parents are unable to look after them.

Collaborative work between the partner schools began in January 2019. While Alistair was communicating with the partner school, he was keen that one of the teachers from the school had the opportunity to lead the collaborative learning activities and benefit from the reciprocal visit to Kenya.

Lauren Spence, the P4 teacher was a natural fit. Having spent four months of her 3rd year of her teaching degree on a teaching placement in Zambia, Lauren was keen to take up the opportunity.

Initially, Lauren did some work with her own class to familiarise them with Kenya. The RSPB had been taking some bird watching sessions with her class, so they extended this work to look and build models of birds found in Northern Ireland and Kenya.

Pupils wrote letters to send out to the pupils in Kenya. Having explored how aspects of daily life are likely to be different for young people in Kenya, pupils decided to write letters to the pupils at Hope Primary School, introducing themselves and talking about their daily lives. The pupils were very motivated, conscious of the differences and keen to hear back from the pupils in Kenya. Fortunately, the replies came back very soon as someone had visited Kenya and couriered the letters! The Kenyan pupils had also sent pictures of themselves and drawing of some local flowers and animals.

Lauren use the British Council’s resources on Quality Education to help her pupils explore the importance of education. They focused on the right to education, and through the videos and resources began to understand that education is something we can take for granted. Understanding about how their partner school was founded to meet the needs of a community in a very rural area of Kenya helped Lauren’s pupils engage with these concepts more meaningfully.

Lauren visited Hope Primary School in the first week of July. She got involved in the daily life of the school, teaching classes and sharing photos of different places in Ballymena. She also shared teaching strategies with the Kenyan teachers, for example modelling team teaching approaches, and using wipeable whiteboards to support pupil engagement during lessons and sharing strategies for calculations.

She took some video footage of daily life in the school and surrounding area. She plans to use this back at Dunclug Primary School to help pupils throughout the school explore similarities and differences about school, play time and their local areas. Lauren also reflected that although you can plan for lots of collaboration, the visits are extremely important to understand realistically what will work and to make sure the teachers plan together.

Now just half-way through their project, the pupils in Dunlcug Primary are looking forward to hosting a teacher from Hope Primary School in Wamba. Lauren says that the children in her class are taking ownership of it, the connections are meaningful and the learning is responding to their questions.

Both Lauren and Alistair reflected on the partnership journey so far. For Lauren, the partnership has brought her ‘back to basics’ – the very limited access to IT in the Kenya school helped her focus on how she uses questioning approaches in teaching, and to make sure IT is used to support learning, rather than making it about the technology. She also remarked on the professionalism of the Kenyan teachers, they are so proud of their profession, in both state and private educations which both operate throughout Kenya.

Alistair had valued his experience teaching in Kenya in 2012, remarking that ‘it shaped me in terms of teaching, and you don’t lose that ever.’ Alistair sees the international school partnership with Hope Primary as a good opportunity for Dunclug Primary, emphasizing its importance of helping pupils understand that it’s not just about ‘this wee area’ of Ballymena – they can actually have global audience.

**For further information, please contact:**

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