



# Dihlabeng Christian School Newsletter



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## To All Sponsors and Friends of DCS

We're already half way through 2023! How did that happen so quickly? They say that time flies when you're having fun and in these first two terms we have certainly had much to make us smile. Alongside a full curriculum, we've had a number of exciting extras too. For example, we've been blessed by many visitors from all over the world, including Dubai, America, Germany, England and Slovakia (for the first time). We have also revamped our local fundraising, which has included a Sokkie (a special dance) and a Braai Day.

This has all been accomplished despite challenges that have included regularly having to cope without electricity or water (or both) and rapidly rising prices. Despite life feeling pressurised all over the world, we have many to thank for their support. These include one of our visitors, Chris (see below) who oversaw the installation of an inverter, meaning the school office can remain up and running with power and technology, even through prolonged electricity outages. Our dedicated staff team have also been brilliantly creative and kept us moving forward. Also, friends from all over the world have continued to support us through sponsorship, gifts and visits.

So, another huge thank you to everyone who has helped make this first half of 2023 a success. Let's pray for more fun for the rest of the year and beyond.

With a grateful heart, Andy Woodage (Principal).



### Anne Welsh and Chris Tuttiett UK Visitors - February 2023

**Anne Welsh** - *'I visited DCS for three weeks in February and to say that I enjoyed my time there is an understatement. I have been sponsoring Lebohang in Grade 6 since 2019 and had always wanted to meet her, so I jumped at the chance of volunteering at the school when my friend Chris Tuttiett, who has been travelling to Clarens since 2004, asked if I would like to join him on his visit this year. I was impressed with the school as soon as I arrived. The care shown to the children and their eagerness to learn is testimony to the hard work of Andy and his team.'*

*As a retired 'A' Level Psychology, Health and Social Care teacher, I discussed with Andy how I could help and I planned and delivered a series of lessons on Learning Strategies. Initially I worked with Grade 7, but the lessons were so successful that I also taught Grade 5 and 6. Through practical activities we explored how our memory works and then related this to how best to use our memory in learning. The children were a delight to teach and seemed to really enjoy what we did. I hope that they can make use of some of the strategies we discussed to help them in the future. I also really enjoyed getting involved with the younger children.*



Anne with Grade 7



Anne with Lebohang, her sponsored child

*It wasn't all work though. Chris and I took Lebohang and her friend Modiehi out after school, visiting Clarens and Golden Gate National Park. This gave me an opportunity to get to know her, which has made my sponsorship so much more personal. I also enjoyed social time with Andy and the other teachers, as well as attending the very lively worship at Dihlabeng Church on Sundays, where I helped with the Sunday School.*

*I will never forget the three weeks I spent at DCS and I hope to return very soon. My advice to anyone who is thinking that they might like to volunteer at the school is to go ahead and do it. It is an experience you will never regret'.*

Chris also made a very valuable contribution to the life of the school in the time he was with us. He gave our IT system a much needed overhaul, updating software and sorting many problems that had accumulated. He and Alan also installed an inverter battery system, as Andy has mentioned in his article above and Chris, worked with some of the older children on a photography/art project. We thoroughly enjoyed having them to visit and would like to thank them for all their hard work and support.



Working on the photography/art project



## DCS Pre-Primary - Caterpillars and Butterflies - Grade RR and R

In our DCS newsletters we often focus on the activities and achievements of the older children. We thought it would be good this time to do a special feature on the development, over the years, of our Pre-Primary classes, Caterpillars and Butterflies (Grades RR and R). Compulsory education in SA begins at Grade 1, ages 6 to 7 years, and funding for the Pre-Primary is not included in the subsidy that DCS receives from the government for Grades 1 to 7.



Carolyn Revill, a volunteer primary school teacher from the UK was with us from 2008 until 2021. Her heart and vision for the children was, *'To provide very young children, including the most vulnerable, with a safe place in which to grow and develop and to offer high quality play experiences allowing them to develop the necessary social, emotional and physical skills to be 'school ready'.* In 2006, before Carolyn joined us, we had a mixed age class, Grade R/Grade 1, but no separate Pre-Primary unit.

In 2010 Carolyn began fundraising to build two new classrooms which would house a dedicated Pre-Primary unit. By June 2011, with £15,000.00 in the bank we began building. Funds came from a variety of sources; churches and personal contacts, nurseries in the UK, a marathon run, cakes sales and a Christmas appeal, to mention a few. By October 2011 we had 14 applications for places, starting in January 2012, and were trusting God for the remaining £14,000 to complete the buildings. Carolyn says, *'£11,000 was provided in a 2 week window which enabled completion of the building, ready to be opened on 18 January 2012. It was touch and go and I think the building was actually finished in January 2012'* (see photos on the opposite page).



Initially, just the Grade RR class moved into the new building. Their teacher then was Gill Friend, and their assistant, Pontsho Koti. By February 2012, following a team visit from Red Oaks Primary School, in Swindon, and friends from Christchurch C of E Church, Bristol, the outside of the buildings had been painted with colourful illustrations from the story of 'The Very Hungry Caterpillar' to complement our class names of 'Caterpillars' and 'Butterflies'. Later on the Grade R class moved across to the



adjoining classroom with Carolyn as their teacher, and Elmarie Cameron came to lead the Caterpillars class.

In 2019 we received more funding to develop the outside play space. We managed to fence off the area before the Covid pandemic put everything on hold. However, before Carolyn left us at the end of 2021, a wonderful new area had been developed for outside learning and play. This was managed mainly by our friends Howard and Suzanne Kirby, with Roy Lokkers also building some of the installations.

The curriculum for Caterpillars class is taken from the Unicef NELDS (National Early Learning and Development) and the ECD Curriculum, published by ISASA, in SA. Butterflies class also follows the SA national curriculum. These curricula are supplemented by some best practice from the Early Years framework from the UK. Both classes enjoy rich learning environments.

Our wonderful Pre-Primary is now taught by Elmarie in Grade RR, and Elize Ferreira in Grade R, assisted by Anna Mofokeng and Mapuso Mofokeng. It provides an excellent foundation at DCS. The children experience learning through play and creative activities, with plenty of chances for physical and social development too. Emphasis is placed on phonics and early numeracy concepts, which are so important to the foundations of reading and maths. We are so very proud of them all.



**Our current Pre-primary classes led by Elmarie Cameron and Anna Mofokeng, and Elize Ferreira and Mapuso Mofokeng (not in photo).**



Building began in June 2011. The Pre-Primary unit consists of 2 inter-connecting classrooms with separate toilets and a small kitchen/prep room. Over the years they have been furnished and stocked with equipment and toys to ensure that a lot of fun is had whilst learning!



Our Pre-Primary purpose built outside play area has provided a separate, safe place for the children to learn and interact with each other whilst developing physically, socially and emotionally. If you were one of the many people who helped to make this happen, you should be immensely proud. Thank you!



### Events at DCS in Terms 1 and 2

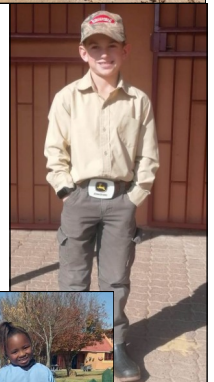
Our children have been working very hard in their academic subjects, with Term 2 finishing with mid-year examinations and assessments. But, as Andy mentioned in his article, we have also had a lot of fun. DCS has introduced the, **'Fabulous Fortnightly Friday Fundraising'** which provides a fun event for the children every two weeks and raises funds for end of term outings and treats for the children. Members of staff have taken turns in organising the days, some of which have involved dressing up, and most have provided food in some way! So far these events have included: **'Braai Day'** (barbeque to us Brits), **'Beach Day'** and **'Careers Day'**.



Braai Day and the Pre-Primary 'Bear Hunt' which finished with a visit from the Bear and honey sandwiches!



Beach Day (above) and Careers Day. What do you want to be when you grow up?



Below - The winners from each Grade of the Spell-a-thon



As well as these events, Grade 6 did a sponsored climb of our local Mt Horeb to raise funds for their residential trip to the Drakensburg, in Term 3. We have had a sponsored 'Spell-a-thon', Valentines Day, and our Pre-Primary children went on a 'Bear Hunt', and had a visit from a Bear! These few photos give you a flavour of some of the activities. Thank you to all the staff who have helped to make learning at DCS so much fun.

Below - Grade 6 climbed Mt Horeb



## A Visit from Nadia Schultz and friends from Slovakia

In early March we had a flying visit from our dear friend Nadia Schultz, who used to teach at DCS. She is now living and working as a teacher in Slovakia.

She brought with her four friends: Kristina, Tomas, Richard and Anton. They had all been on a 'whistle-stop' tour of many places in SA. None of them, apart from Nadia, had ever visited SA before. They were only with us for a couple of days but during that time they repainted some of our playground games, including a new large clock face for the children to use in their learning, and a chess board. It was lovely to see them and meet new friends. Thank you so much.



From left to right:

Thomas, Anton, Kristina, Richard and Nadia.



Letlotlo (left) and Prince (right) with Yolanda receiving their certificates and prizes



The winning entries

## Recycling Art Competition

A number of our students took part in a 'Recycling Bin' Art Competition run by the local Clarens Conservancy. The brief was to design a sticker to go on recycling bins of different sizes which would then be sold to local residents and visitors. Clarens, being a tourist town, has many guest houses. The owners try to encourage their guests to recycle their rubbish by placing it in the bins provided. DCS, as an Eco-School, showed a strong interest in this competition and we are delighted to say that Prince Kuria, Grade 5, came second in his age group, and Letlotlo Ntoko, Grade 7, came first in his age group. Their designs will now be printed and stuck on the bins to be sold. They each received a certificate, stickers and a cash prize. The winners and runners up were also offered some art classes with local artists.



Our Grade 3 children also made a visit to the local Recycling Shed before starting their technology project of making model insects from recycled packaging and papier mache.



## Toothbrushes From New Life Church - Carol Goodson

During term 1, our Foundation phase topic was all about 'Caring for Our Bodies'. Whilst Alan and I were home in the UK, we put out an appeal at New Life Church, Biggin Hill for donations of toothbrushes and toothpaste to enable the staff to practically teach about good dental hygiene. The response was wonderful and we had enough toothbrushes and toothpaste to supply every child in Grades RR to 3. The Pre-Primary classes made space for the children to keep their toothbrushes in their washroom at school, so that good habits could be established. Many of our children's families do not have the means to access dental care, nor can they afford toothpaste and toothbrushes. It was lovely to see the children's excitement and grateful response. Thank you to everyone at NLC who contributed and supported this venture.



**'Thank You' to all our Sponsors and Friends**

