

Ponteland Community Middle School, Northumberland and Wanga Primary School, Kenya

We have been linked with Wanga Primary School in Kenya for more than 3 years now and staff, pupils and parents have learned so much!

Wanga Primary School is in the Suba District of Western Kenya, about 1km from the shores of Lake Victoria. It is a mixed, day school with Grades 1 – 8 and a pre-school unit attached. It has two permanent classrooms and six semi-permanent classrooms. It has one permanent building which houses the headteacher's office, the deputy headteacher's office and the staff room. It has four male teachers and two female teachers. The school is on a four acre piece of land which is covered by green grass and scattered local trees. It is about 200 metres from the main road linking the towns of Mbita and Homa Bay.

The pupils take part in activities such as football, netball, volleyball, singing, dancing and playing other small games. They also like watching pictures.

Our pupils looked at this information and realised that they had much in common.

Both pupils have studied topics related to the curriculum, mainly based on Maths. We have exchanged data collected by both schools for use in data analysis and for data presentation, such as pie charts and graphs. Our most recent exchange has been examination papers. A group of Grade 8 pupils sat a KS3 maths paper (non-calculator) and our Year 8 pupils will shortly sit the Grade 8 exam for entry into secondary school. We plan to look at different teaching methods and the effectiveness of these within our different educational systems.

As a school, we maintain awareness of the diversity of cultures across the world through our curriculum, from Geography to Citizenship to the work of the Eco-Action team to the community links with a local medical group.

July 2007 saw 3 members of staff visit Wanga, funded by the TIPD grant (administered by the Specialist Schools and Academies Trust). The theme was 'Water' and complimented the work we had carried out in school on our Carbon Footprint. Aspects of the topic of 'Water' were discussed and lessons taught alongside Wanga teachers and included:

- a) measuring volume and the volume of water used each day
- b) The Water Cycle
- c) The importance of access to clean water from a health perspective

On our return, our pupils quickly realised that our use of water is excessive and a supply of safe drinking water is taken for granted here in the UK. Seeing images of pupils collecting water from Lake Victoria and carrying it 1.2km to school in plastic containers was for some incomprehensible. Our recent data collection on water usage (March 2009) in our school indicates that we could do more to reduce water wastage.

In January 2009, as part of PSHCE, our Year 8 pupils have taken part in a pilot scheme to use the Kenyan soap opera 'Makutano Junction' as the stimulus for discussion about health issues and this has been successful.

The school link has also inspired our pupils to raise money for specific projects. Wanga wanted to start their own school garden but all their efforts were wasted each time they tried to do this as the local sheep, goats and cattle would happily raid their plot. Our pupils raised money for the fencing around a plot and work on preparing the ground has started. Local as well as school fund raising through recycling, events, non-uniform days, local churches etc has meant that a new classroom is now being built.

Wanga Primary School grounds and pupils



'Waterguard' is used to ensure the water for handwashing and cooking is safe.



Learning about the importance of clean, safe water; malaria; HIV/AIDS



The community garden – the school want to grow their own vegetables and fruit for school dinners



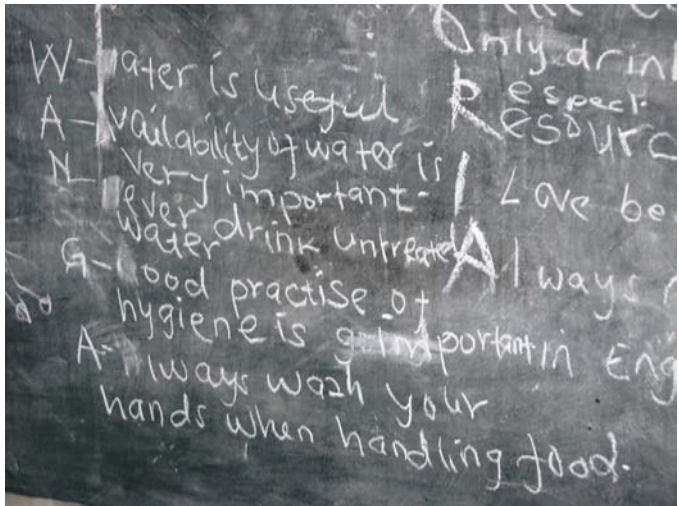
A local game played in the local village



With a new fence, work on the school garden can now begin



Design Technology is used to teach pupils skills they will need in adult life – boats for fishing and grain stores for the maize crop



An acrostic based on 'Water'