

**FELLOWSHIP BIBLE CHURCH
CHRISTIAN SCHOOL**

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On Tuesday 7th July 2009, 8 students and 2 staff members from Grace Academy, UK, Birmingham, visited Fellowship Bible Church Christian School (FBCCS) with the purpose of getting to know more about the school and of painting a bright mural on the Grade R wall. The latter was project-managed by South African NPO *NewKidz on the Block*.

The overall purpose of the Grace Academy group visiting Cape Town over a period of two weeks, was for the 17 year-olds to get involved in improving the social needs of those in a third world country. As they gave out to others, the hope was that they too would be positively impacted for their immediate and long-term future. In this light, trip co-ordinators Lynda James and Delia Stanhope organised a variety of activities and experiences for the group, such as gardening at an AIDS centre and visiting an old age home.

FBCCS is a school situated in Philippi on a previous metal scrap-yard. The obvious physical needs of the school and the little assistance by government to help with its running, made the school a definite choice of project to include in the itinerary of the trip. The excellent work being done by the teachers at the school and the manner in which the school is helping to transform the community for the better, were more reasons for the UK teens to get involved.

With a full program, the teens had but one afternoon, four hours to be exact, to make a meaningful difference to the look of the exterior of one large wall of the Grade R classroom. Having agreed to project manage our mural task, *NewKidz on the Block* had already visited the site and taken photos of the wall. They had then superimposed a mural design onto the photo, so the planning was all done.

This meant that the Grace Academy volunteers simply had to arrive on site on the allocated day and await instructions. After a briefing about the school from the deputy headmistress, the teens were ready to get stuck into the physical task. From start to finish, Hilda and Lauren from *NewKidz* were incredibly helpful, professional and encouraging in their approach. They donned everyone with *NewKidz* overalls, followed by giving the group a vision of the end product and a plan of how we were to achieve this. *Newkidz* had all the paints, paintbrushes and other needed items donated and already set

out for the group. This was very welcome, since the Grace Academy budget was very tight.

During the task itself, Hilda was fabulous at time-keeping and giving the group feedback about how they were doing. Both she and Lauren were involved in the painting too, without giving the sense that they were taking over. *NewKidz* was continually on their toes, cleaning up brushes, mixing paint and giving advice. Even at the end, they offered to do all the cleaning up. The photo session at the end with *NewKidz* made the group and its efforts feel celebrated and appreciated.

On feedback forms and a trip evaluation discussion back in the UK, the above reflection of *NewKidz* was confirmed in statements from Grace Academy staff who had been on the trip: “*NewKidz on the Block* was a real hit and made an impact...” and: “The love, willingness and commitment of Hilda and the team to transform lives was evident in all we saw and took part in. We all enjoyed being able to be part of something that we knew would bring a smile to the children’s faces, and for us to be able to see such tangible results so quickly in the project we took part in...”. Students who had been part of the program commented that the experience at FBCCS had been a “good challenge”, that they had “enjoyed being involved” and feeling like they were “making a real contribution”.

There is no doubt that Grace Academy UK would be honoured to be involved in future projects managed by *NewKidz*.

Delia Stanhope

On behalf of Grace Academy, Solihull & Coventry



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