



Schools project Update - July 2017

Schools Project Expands in 2017

Work in schools, which has grown ad hoc in recent years, is to become a key ministry focus in 2017 with its own dedicated project leader and teams of trained counsellors.

This pastoral care project will involve Grace & Light volunteer teams visiting 30 schools each year and talking to both girls and boys about the issues they face in their lives such as relationships, sex and HIV.

Grace & Light aims to reach 4,500 students a year with the teams visiting each school between three and five times per annum to give students ongoing support. This project will cost N3,375,000 a year (approx. £7,500) for literature, test kits and HIV screening materials, transport for the teams and a fund to support vulnerable students.

South Downs walk raises £4,600 towards target

Following our sponsored walk in Southern England we are more than halfway to the funding target for our Nigerian schools' project. Our funding gap for 2017 is £2,900.

The sponsored walk in early June raised £4,600 towards our £7,500 budget for the schools' project in 2017. Our circular walk took us up and over the north downs from Denbies in Dorking to Polesden Lacey where we enjoyed a picnic lunch.

In total 21 people walked with us for Grace & Light including five trustees and their partners – Isabelle and Mark Hopkins, Ed Greening, Sarah and Peter King, Fola and Akin Ogunyide and Jo Ann and Mike Eastgate – as well as AMEN trustees Trish and Chris Chatfield.

Trish Chatfield suggested the walk for fundraising during a Grace & Light trustees meeting she attended in 2016. Trish, Jo Ann and Mike Eastgate then organised the walk.

History of schools work

Grace & Light's work with schools began four years ago when the Jos team was invited to share the gospel and test pupils in a local school. The work has slowly grown through word of mouth since then with the Jos and Yola teams now visiting about eight schools a year.

As the teams have shared with pupils and begun to understand the issues they face, they have changed the content of their presentation. Now the theme is about how the choices students make today will affect their lives in the future.

The students are encouraged to live according to gospel values by excelling through hard work rather than cheating, being truthful rather than lying, showing respect for each other and for their teachers, caring for others rather than bullying, and by saying no to adults who would exploit them sexually for favours.

Students from poor families are particularly vulnerable to being forced to sleep with men close to their families in return for school fees being paid, school uniforms, shoes and books.



Additionally, the teams talk about HIV and AIDS with their social and health consequences. They counsel and test those students who wish to know their status then form life sharing groups to help students support each other as they strive to live gospel lives.

Activities in 2017

In the first six months of 2017 the Jos and Yola teams have visited eight schools, sharing the gospel and social righteousness with 2,935 students. Of these 1,217 chose to be tested for HIV/AIDS with two students testing positive.

During the visits 596 students rededicated their lives to God and 297 made a first commitment. The two teams will continue to visit secondary schools in their areas in the remaining months of 2017.

Testimonials

Below are some of the highlights Grace & Light international coordinator Tassie Ghata has shared of her visits to schools with the Jos team.

One child stands out for Tassie in a recent visit. He was born HIV positive 12 years ago and as he grew up his mother, unsure how to tell him, kept this to herself as well as that his father had died from AIDS. She had been collecting drugs for herself and her son, which he had been taking without knowing what they were for.

“He tested positive, went home and told his mum. She was happy we were able to break the news to her child. Now he understands his situation and is getting support from us for his school fees, books and uniform.”

“At one school, we came across a student sitting outside the school gates, he wanted to be in class but couldn’t afford the school fees. We paid his fees and bought him a uniform and shoes. A second boy could afford the fees but not uniform and felt intimidated because he stood out. We also bought a uniform for him. Feeling accepted is hugely important for teenagers.

“At another school, we concentrated on gender issues because we found the boys were disrespectful of the girls, saying they hated them. We shared that each person is made in God’s image and he loves girls and boys equally. Thus, we should also respect and care for each other.”

Further information and pictures can be found on our news pages at www.graceandlight.org