

Lord Provost shows South African pupils the Mandela Room



Two South African children received an unexpected treat during their recent visit to the capital as part of a student exchange between Forrester High and Amaoti No 3 Combined School, near Durban.

While teachers, Mr Philani Dlamini and Miss Mabongi Shange and their pupils Miss Nothando Hadehe and Miss Nikita Shangase, were being given a tour of the Royal Mile, including St Giles Cathedral, they arrived at the City Chambers just as Lord Provost Donald Wilson was leaving the building on his way home. When he learned of the visit, the Lord Provost insisted on giving the group a personal guided tour of the Chambers including the Mandela Room. He also put on his chain of office and posed for photographs with the visitors.

Amaoti No 3 Combined School is situated in a very poor area near Durban and has 940 pupils. So far, staff and pupils from Forrester have travelled to South Africa on two occasions, including a trip earlier this year when three teachers and two pupils visited the school. Previously, teachers from Amaoti No 3 have visited Edinburgh, but this time two pupils accompanied them.

Neither Nothando nor Nikita had been outside their home area before, or been on an airplane, and so during their time in Edinburgh they were able to sample family life in the capital, staying with the pupils who had visited their school earlier in the year.

Lord Provost Donald Wilson told The Edinburgh Reporter:- "It

was my great pleasure to show the children around the City Chambers and, in particular, the Mandela Room. As a Freeman of Edinburgh, Mr Mandela is held in the highest esteem by this city – as, of course, he is back in South Africa and across the world.

“During my five years as Lord Provost, I will continue to open up the City Chambers to people of all ages as well as to different groups, whether they be from home or abroad.”

Head teacher Derek Curran told The Edinburgh Reporter:- “Our link with Amaoti No. 3 combined school helps to bring the concept of global citizenship to life. Students in both schools are well aware of the vital need for us to develop a sustainable future together, and our links create opportunities for students to consider what that might mean in our very different environments. For students from Forrester, the clear gap in resources available is a stark reminder that unless the wealthy nations work to help overcome global poverty, we face dangers in developing a sustainable future. For students from Amaoti, the gap is a reminder of the way South African society has been undermined by apartheid and how much they have to travel to create a more just and equal society. The opportunity links present for students to discuss these issues is invaluable.

“South African students are tremendously aspirational in the face of dire poverty, they celebrate and grow strength from their culture and they highlight to Scottish students how much more they can do to make the best of their own resources. They also remind us that we too have a rich heritage that can provide a source of inspiration to students in motivating ourselves.”