

Kolkata 2018

Day 7 – Thursday 25th January 2018

My final day at Awami

Today signalled the last day visiting the children of Awami school although I will see the teacher, Sultana, at the training on Saturday. Therefore, it was with mixed emotions that I took the trip across Kolkata to the slum of Bibibagan to see the lovely children there. The school is situated in a completely Muslim area of the city and therefore all of the children at Awami were from a Muslim background. My understanding is that schools can be mixed faith but the geography of some of the areas means that they are not.



There were 22 children there today and Sultana tried out some of the phonics teaching and number line work from the training yesterday. The children seemed to like the resources and I really hope that they are well used over the coming days, weeks and months.

The children have a real thirst for learning and in that respect are a bit like sponges taking in as much learning as they can. They enjoy coming to school and constantly have a smile on their face. It has been a singular privilege to visit them and do a spot of teaching again.

I introduced the children to the game of Dice Cricket and that is the focus for my number work session on Saturday. Cricket is like a religion in India and the picture of the captain of the Indian team – Virat Kohli – can be seen on posters everywhere! Therefore, the children were keen to learn the game and did not even realise the counting and maths involved!

After our time at school, we visited the Naridana – a project based on Women’s empowerment. This allows women (mostly single mothers) who have very little to learn a skill (in most cases this is based on needlework) and gives them a year’s training. After this they can set up a small business for themselves and sell what they make allowing them to make enough money to support themselves and their children. We had a look at some of the things that they made and I even bought an Indian shirt, which I am sure that I will wear at school at some point!

Just beside the Naridana is a workplace for the mentally handicapped. While we were there a group of about six or seven were working hard making candles and threading beads to make jewellery that could also be sold by Naridana. Social care seems to be limited in India so it is heartening to see the Cathedral



Relief Services doing such a good job with others apart from the children in the schools.

The day was finished off by a walk around the market, which was a real experience.

As soon as you enter the vast marketplace, you are inundated by many people following you around trying to persuade you to come into their shops. I did not stay in the market for as long as I wanted because it made me feel (for the first time in Kolkata) a little uncomfortable. From there it was on to a lovely restaurant for our evening meal before returning to the hotel and the joy of Blog writing.

Tomorrow promises to be a really interesting day and I will finally get to see the project that I have heard so much about but didn't get to see on Tuesday. However, that is for another blog post!

