

It is now the middle of summer in South Africa. The lovely long school holidays mean that there is no pressure to teach students during COVID for a while. For everyone, there is thankfully some well-earned rest, which was also much needed. Teachers can recharge and students know that they will move on to the next grade, as the schools have failed almost nobody this year.

The headmaster of the primary school where our Learner Support Centre is located, Thabo Malatji, together with his teachers, does not have to perform any frantic tricks to teach as many pupils as possible for the time being. Last year, teaching was again quite a challenge, as 90 pupils per class was often no exception. For this reason, the local government has now installed ten additional container classes on the school premises.

Our teaching assistants Anna and Pinky helped screen students every school day last year, including taking temperatures and checking for hand washing. This was necessary to allow the more than 1,000 pupils at the primary school to attend school responsibly, although for most of the year pupils attended school spread out over the day (in shift).

Besides organisational headaches, coming to school in shift posed another problem, namely that pupils received school meals irregularly. For many pupils, this is the only proper meal of their day. After much protest, it was decided that all pupils could come to school but not everyone would be lectured, and they would be sent home after the meal. An unpleasant situation.

Apart from screening pupils, Anna and Pinky were fortunately able to carry out most of their work. Besides managing the library for the students, they have been able to guide small groups in English reading, especially in the first two school semesters. This is their core activity for which they have been trained by our foundation. Unfortunately, it must be added that in the last two semesters of the year, they were mainly deployed in overcrowded classes to maintain order and could only sporadically support with English lessons. The reason for this was that many teachers were sick and out for long periods of time.

However, with the new school year approaching, it is important to keep faith that COVID-19 and the measures will not play a decisive factor. Fortunately, some of the people in Ba-Phalaborwa have now been vaccinated and many have had the virus. So it is now to be hoped that the pupils of Refense Primary School will have a beautiful, but above all instructive school year. A school year in which our Anna and Pinky will again be able to give the pupils uninterrupted and intensive guidance with the English language in small groups, because this help is badly, badly needed! The backlog of pupils in the last two years is enormous, and this in turn has a major impact on all other subjects at school.

As a foundation, we would really appreciate it if you would help facilitate this endeavour again, including by sponsoring extra teaching materials such as dictionaries, pens and notebooks, so that Anna and Pinky will have all the resources they need this coming school year to start catching up with the deficits the children have suffered. Without your help, this will be very difficult.

As mentioned earlier, Pinky and Anna deserve our help, so please keep supporting us so that we can continue to support them!