

Ghana Partnership Trip 2019

Twelve Canford pupils and three teachers visited Ghana for the annual Partnership trip in July. During this adventure, the group was based at the Awutu-Winton Senior High School but also found time to visit Elmina Castle (Africa's oldest slave port), Kakum National Park, participating in a variety of activities. Two Canford pupils take up the story ...

On arrival at Awutu-Winton, Canford pupils quickly *"joined forces with Ghanaians, taught them some rugby and played football with them as well"*. Sport was to become a major feature of the trip. *"The famous volleyball match which was a close game but they took the win!"* was followed by a post-match celebration, during which *"the Ghanaian children joined in the Canford chants"*.

Another sporting highlight was to follow: *"The famous football match of Canford vs Awutu-Winton Senior High School"*. Canford pupils described how *"before the game we handed out some AFC Bourmemouth kit, which the Cherries kindly had donated, alongside boots and clothing from Canford families. There was much excitement as it was revealed and the students proudly sported this throughout the game"*.



Early in the trip, Canford pupils were *"challenged with leading the moral assembly: a daunting task, to say the least"*. They rose to the task very well, giving an insight into life at Canford and some of the school's traditions.



The group also *"went to the local health centre – also doubling as a maternity ward and A&E – which was really eye opening"*; here they *"saw the vast differences in healthcare standards compared to the UK"*.

The group also made good use of their stay helping to improve the facilities at Awutu Winton. They got *“very involved in the landscaping project that we are helping the school with. This involved making a gravel path for the garden”*.



“After this we learnt how to make sandals with Stanley, a pupil at Awutu Winton, who is trying to develop his craft skills into a business. He showed us his designs and the techniques he uses. He took our measurements and he is going to make us all a unique pair”.

Wherever the Canford pupils went, they were welcomed and the positive attitude of the Ghanaians really struck a chord. During a visit to a local primary school, they described their welcome as *“overwhelming. There were warm greetings galore”*. Meanwhile, on a big morning ‘health walk’, Canfordians spoke of how *“we got to know lots of the pupils and heard their stories which was eye opening. The Awutu pupils were dancing and singing the whole time which kept the walk fun and enjoyable.”*

They also helped the pupils develop their skills: *“When we arrived back at the school we immediately jumped in the pool. Lots of games were played and we taught Kwame, the security guard’s son, how to swim. He is very young and it was his first time in the water”*.

Later in the trip the group visited *“Elmina Castle (Africa’s oldest slave port)”*. They described the experience as *“very sobering to be toured around various different rooms (most of which were spatially limited and dark), in particular, the ‘room of no return’, it was fascinating to be introduced to such a significant part of African history – and important to have this reminder of man’s inhumanity to man”*.

The group also visited Kakum National Park, where they had a tour of the rainforest, learned about its origin and took part in a canopy walkway.

One day was particularly powerful, as it provided *“insights on how hard life can be for many – and how much can be done to help”*. On this day the group visited an orphanage which takes in *“children rescued from trafficking and other horrible fates, and the Awutu-Winton boys’ hostel, where many of the poorest in the area are given the opportunity to attend this wonderful school – and therefore have a good chance of successful lives”*. Canford pupils *“had the chance to meet some of the kids, some with severe mental disabilities”*. They documented that *“it was tough to hear about some of their tragic back stories. Still, it was very much a place of hope, and it was inspiring to see how much volunteering and financial support can contribute”*.

On return to Awutu-Winton the group received fantastic *“tailor-made Ghanaian outfits, ready to wear for the final assembly on Thursday”*.

“After lunch, we attended a maths lesson with some of the pupils, learning about powers. It was very interesting to see different teaching dynamics between Canford and Awutu Winton”.

To mark the end of the 2019 partnership trip was a speech day. Canford pupils described how *“the speech day was very different to the speech day we all know and love held by Mr. Vessey. It included a series of speeches and dances – some of which involved our participation, such as us singing the school song on our own in front of them all”.*



“We had a relaxed final night where we said our final goodbyes and received sandals from Stanley, which will be taken back to the UK as a wonderful memory of our time in Ghana.”

Additional reporting by Alice Martyr