

Breaking ground on the Parenta Trust's first preschool

Amanda Presland, a trustee of the Parenta Trust, went out to break ground on our first preschool in Uganda. She told us about her time there.



It's not often you get the chance to put something discussed over a glass or two into practice.

I'd been invited to join a four day fact-finding tour to Uganda in October 2013 – partly to get a feel for what is really needed out there, but mainly to visit the site of the first Parenta nursery.

Can you imagine arriving at a primary school after a tiring drive and, as you pull into the grounds, hearing the roar of around 500 children, unbelievably excited that you are there to visit them? We were now in Loweru, at Good Shepard primary school. A school unlike any I'd seen before – and this was one of the good ones.

The Headmaster, Joseph, allowed all the pupils to greet us, so the 9 of us were swamped by children of all ages. They were all dressed in their bright yellow uniforms – some with shoes, some without – and running towards us. It was awesome, and very emotional.

Joseph proudly introduced himself and his teaching staff, while the children, who were just staring at us, staying well behaved and quiet. We were then guided to the area designated for the preschool. By now, I had a small, happy, grinning child on each of my fingers, holding tight and not letting go!

The under 4's were currently being taught in the ruins of a building. There was just cement on the floor, no windows or covering. Breaking ground there was symbolic of the change we can make in the future of the children and the local community.

I loved this visit. Obviously, as a trustee of this charity, it felt fantastic to finally break ground, knowing we'd be creating a safer, kinder environment for these children to start their educational journey. It's so important to them and their families, and that's one of the lessons I learnt on the trip.

We took loads of photographs and I also have a video of all the small children behind me as they were encouraged to shout my name. I will always treasure that.

I would love to capture the excitement of that day to pass on to people who haven't been there. The other days on that trip were amazing but, seeing the school, seeing those open happy faces and seeing the start of our preschool, will always stay with me.

There were many notices in the Heads office, but one stood out for me:

"If you think education is expensive, just try ignorance!"