

## **Kit Baker's 1<sup>st</sup> Report**

Sam and I arrived at Colombo International airport on the 19<sup>th</sup> of January after an 11 hour flight from Heathrow. Celine Samarasinhe was kind enough to meet us at the airport and take us to her flat to rest and recuperate until Rev. Nihal Fernando came to pick us up to take us to St Thomas College Gurutalawa. The journey took 5 hours but was actually quite comfortable as Sam and I were shattered.

Our quarters are lovely and have the added bonus of a hot shower so we are both very comfortable. The scenery is idyllic and I really enjoy the wildlife that can be seen daily.

I am teaching grades 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 along with their regular English teachers so my job is mainly helping with pronunciation and grammar. Teaching alongside another teacher was very helpful in the beginning as I had no experience in teaching before coming to Sri Lanka. In the last two weeks the grade 3, 4 and 5 English teacher has been sick with a fever so I have been teaching the classes by myself. This has meant that I have to plan each lesson and come up with a fun, interesting way to teach it. This is very important; especially with the younger children as otherwise they get bored and do not want to learn. I have been teaching grade 3 body and animal parts as well as basic verbs such as read, run, and draw. I have been teaching grade 4 times, morning routine and describing people and with I have been teaching grade 5 about town, cities and various festivals as well as starting basic comprehension. They all have textbook and a syllabus that I follow. I have been helping the grade 1 teacher with the alphabet and the grade 2 teacher with basic vocabulary such as domestic animals and parts of a house. Teaching younger children also means I have to find a way to teach so that they understand as their English is only basic and I do not speak Sinhala. Although all of the teachers in the primary school have made it their mission to teach me which is very kind and I am learning. Albeit rather slowly!

I would recommend that any future volunteers who want to teach younger students should know some Sinhala. I have found it quite hard to get my instructions across in some cases such as when they are doing comprehension or when I have to explain a grammar rule. I would also recommend doing a longer TEFL course and learning different games that can be adapted to different subjects as I have found that this is the best way the younger students learn.

All the staff and students both in the upper and lower school have really made me feel at home and part of the school community. The students are all very friendly, they always say good morning and stop to talk to you. Especially when they're supposed to be somewhere else. At break times I play cricket with the lower school children. And after school I am always invited by the teachers to play cricket even though I am terrible. Before the Sports meet I was helping some upper school students train in their

various events but most of the time I was with the lower school helping with the group activities they do instead of the sports meet. The Sports meet was great fun and I must admit even I felt the tension when they were announcing the winner. The best event for me was the tug of war as all most all of the students participated in it which made the atmosphere amazing. Now after school the older students are studying for internal exams. The younger ones go home.

One weekend I was hoping to organize a 5 a side football tournament so I will see if I can do that. This weekend is the Gurutalawa Bandarawela big cricket match which both Sam and I are going to.