



The Bridlington School staff presented a plaque to their counterparts at Hope School in Kenema, Sierra Leone.



The new facilities will transform the lives of the 400 pupils who go to Hope School.

The gift of education from life-changing partnership

BY JOHN EDWARDS

john.edwards@JPIMedia.co.uk
Twitter: @FreePressJohn

Staff from Bridlington School have visited Sierra Leone to officially open an extension to a school, which was built with funds raised in East Yorkshire.

It has formed a close partnership with Hope School in the town of Kenema, and pupils and teachers worked to raise £23,000 towards a block of three classrooms.

Headteacher Kate Parker-Randall spent the Easter holidays in Africa, seeing the difference money from Bridlington has made to the lives of children 4,500 miles away.

At an opening ceremony, attended by Sierra Leone dignitaries, she said: "In England, Secondary School education is compulsory and every child has to go to school until they are 18 years old. The government pays for their education, so it is free.

"It is wonderful that your new president and his government have said that education should also now be free for the children of Sierra Leone.

"I believe this is very important as there should be opportunity for all and not just the few who can afford it."

The link between the two schools began in October 2013, when Mark Parker-Randall was leading a British Council Connecting Classrooms teacher exchange visit to Sierra Leone.

In Kenema, he saw 70 children sitting back-to-back,



Hundreds of penpal letters were taken from Bridlington to Kenema.

side-by-side, in a dark, unventilated workshop area, with no electricity, lighting, water nor toilets, and very little in the way of resources.

Mark, who is now the Global School Partnership lead teacher at Bridlington School, said: "This is when I had it in my heart and mind to make a difference in the lives of these amazing children, in one of Africa's poorest countries."

The first block of three classrooms was opened in October 2015 at the height of the country's Ebola crisis and

the school was named Hope. It had grown to just over 200 students and now has nearly 400 pupils.

At the opening ceremony for the extension, Mrs Parker-Randall presented a commemorative plaque to headteacher Patience Yambasu and delivered hundreds of penpal letters written by Bridlington students.

YMCA Sierra Leone East regional chairman, Francis Amodu, said: "With the support of Bridlington School as its partner, Hope School now

has beautiful learning facilities which have been officially approved by the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology.

"It has a total of six classrooms, office and storage space, good quality teaching and learning resources, a clean and conducive atmosphere for splendid learning, perfect quietness and ventilation, clean and carbonated toilet facilities for students and teachers.

"It also has a safe, chlorinated, clean and pure water well



Kate Parker-Randall cuts the ribbon to officially open the new classrooms.

for the school and community, with a flowered compound and a spacious playground area for other extra-curricular activities such as football and other sports.

"One of the greatest successes is that a number of students have sat the National Primary Selective Examination, and they all passed with flying colours."

Mrs Parker-Randall added: "Our school motto comes from the original latin 'Vide Lampada Tradunt' which translated into English means 'they

hand on the torch of life' and we very much believe that we should do all we can to ignite the spark in others and then work hard to fan that spark into flames and see it burn brightly for others.

"Bridlington School's partnership with Hope School is actually our school motto in action. Hope School's motto is 'That they all may be one'. Together, in partnership, we are one and together we are handing on the torch of life in all we do, not just for today but forever."