



Pupils in KwaZulu-Natal in South Africa taking part in the athletics challenge



Pupils in KwaZulu-Natal in South Africa with their certificates

Pupils take part in third challenge

By Claire Lomax

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THE third annual Bambisanani Partnership International Athletics Challenge, supported by the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Sport and Recreation, brought together 15 primary schools – 11 from rural KwaZulu-Natal in South Africa and four from the Leeds/Bradford area.

Three hundred and 35 students (aged nine and ten) participated in a range six of athletics challenges in their own schools and then compared performances “virtually” to create competition between the schools. More than 700 children from both countries have now participated in the challenge since its inception 2021.

The South African schools involved were: Vumanhlamvu, Makhanyezi, Mvayiza, Iwangu, Kwa-Mtshwili, Mome, Ntumbeni, Siganda, Mathiya, Iwangu and Ntolwane. The UK schools involved were all from the Bishop Wheeler Catholic Academy Trust and included St Joseph’s, Pudsey; St Mary’s, Horsforth; Holy Name, Cookridge; and Sacred Heart, Ilkley.

The challenge was originally

devised in response to various Covid restrictions by the Menston-based Bambisanani founder David Geldart.

The programme gives great importance to all participants working hard to improve their own personal performance over time in six different events for both boys and girls: 50m run, 200m run, standing long jump, three hop jump, tennis ball throw and football throw.

Students were initially taught the basic activity and then established their own “personal best” in each of the events. Over the following weeks and months, the children were given the opportunity to practise, rehearse and experiment in order to improve their performances.

Seventy-six per cent of all learners involved made significant progress in at least three different events and were awarded special certificates to recognise this. All schools held their own competitions which created 130 new school champions with the top three performers in each event receiving a certificate. In addition, 22 students were identified as being the best all-round performers across all events, 22 students were recognised as

making the most improvement over all events and 22 students were celebrated as exceptional leaders for their work during the programme “helping, supporting and encouraging others”.

Three ten-person x 40 metre relay events (boys, girls, mixed) were also added for the international competition, making it 15 international titles to be decided. Each school submitted their best three performance in each of the 15 events for the international competition between schools. Inclusive of the relay events, 126 international competition medals were presented to the top three performers/teams in each event.

David Geldart said: “My sincere thanks to all the schools, educators, volunteers and children involved in this growing event; we have had much to celebrate this year with some interesting new developments.

“Having student volunteers from Leeds and Eshowe to create an Athletics Festival for the South African primary schools was an outstanding success. Special thanks also the KZN Department of Sport and Recreation for their help and support; we look forward to further partnership work with them in the future.”



Pupils in the UK with their certificates