

Volunteering at

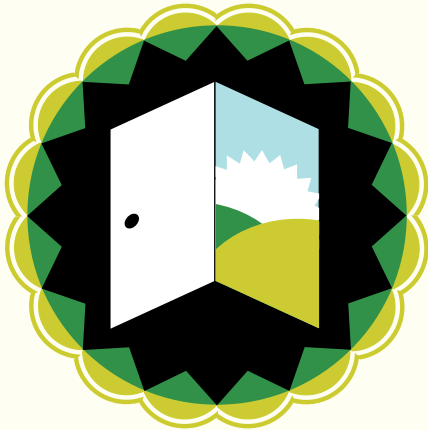


Amasango



Visiting the school

Each year volunteers visit South Africa to volunteer as classroom assistants at the Amasango Career School in Grahamstown, often combining this work with a holiday or family visit elsewhere in the country. The length of time spent at the school typically varies from three weeks to several months. Longer periods facilitate the building of closer relationships with staff and learners and can thus be more useful and more satisfying.



AMASANGO

“Volunteers play a tremendous role in the lives of our learners. Not only do they assist with school activities, but they also show the learners that their voices matter and that they are worthy of being loved and cared for.”

Linda Ngamlana, Principal

The school day

School starts at 7.45am with a staff briefing and continues until around 2pm. Volunteers spend the whole of the day at school and may occasionally stay longer for a particular task. The school is in the old railway station yard at the edge of the city centre and transport can be provided for travel at either end of the day.



Creating your own role

Each person has their own skills and aptitudes. A volunteering stint usually starts with a meeting with the school's volunteer committee and a tour of the school. After that it is up to you to develop your role. The members of the volunteer committee will help and advise and the principal will also guide you. Most visitors spend part of their time coaching individual learners, either within a class or one-to-one outside or in the school library. Some focus on a particular subject, such as encouraging reading in English, tutoring maths classes, teaching basic computing or music, or supporting the teaching of art and pottery. Concentrating your time with particular grade classes, say grades 1–3, or 4 and 5, or 6 and 7, has benefits for both you and the learners, as you get to know them well.

Less common tasks undertaken by volunteers have included organising the library, encouraging practical skills such as interior decorating, attending athletics practice, or undertaking minor maintenance on the buildings. There may also be opportunities to accompany groups on journeys out of school. During break times you can chat and play with learners. This improves their language skills, broadens their outlook, and boosts their confidence. It shows them that you care, and that they are worthy of that love and attention. At break time you can also get to know the staff in the staffroom.



Travel and accommodation

Volunteers organise their own flights, usually via Johannesburg and then Port Elizabeth. Shuttle buses link Port Elizabeth the 80 miles (130 km) to Grahamstown, or the school may be able to arrange collection from PE airport.

A variety of types of accommodation are available, perhaps staying with a friend of the school, at the local Anglican convent, in student accommodation or at an AirBnB. You are invited at an early stage to contact the volunteering coordinator of the Friends of Amasango, details below, to discuss the most suitable arrangement for your needs.

Grahamstown and its surroundings

Grahamstown is a small but attractive university city with a great deal going on, and its own spectacular arts festival each July. There is plenty to keep you busy beyond the school day, from sitting outside pleasant cafés, to visiting the botanical gardens, or (by subscription) joining public swimming sessions in the pool of a local school. There are also golf and tennis clubs.

The surrounding area offers access to the sea at Port Alfred and Kenton on Sea only 40 miles away, a wide variety of local game reserves including the famous Addo Elephant Park (60 miles), and attractive historic towns to visit such as Bathurst or Hogsback.

In preparation for your proposed visit

The first step is to visit our website and download an application form and information pack. You will then want to contact Oli Pattenden, our volunteer coordinator, to discuss your plans at an early stage. He will be able to help you decide how to proceed. If accepted, in order to meet our obligations to the Charity Commission here in the UK you will need to apply for a DBS check, and then plan your travel arrangements and organise adequate travel and health insurance. Oli can be contacted at: 30 Station Way, Buckhurst Hill, Essex, IG9 6LN. or via olipattenden@yahoo.co.uk

