

New e-learning hub to support Vergelegen's resident students

Vergelegen Wine Estate in Somerset West is home to a new state-of-the-art e-learning hub, providing educational support for learners residing on the estate.



Teacher Kathryn Couzens assists (left to right) Andrew-Lee Ninon, a Gr. 8 learner at Axios School of Skills; Natalie Lange, a Gr. 12 learner at Gordon High School; Micaela Jackson, in Gr. 12 at Gordon High School; and Chanelle Jonkers, Gr. 8 at Gordon High School.

A cottage at Harmony Village has been freshly refurbished to incorporate 10 learning stations, seven of which have computers. Additional facilities at the spic-and-span Hub include a printer, stationery, a small kitchen to prepare hot drinks, toilets, and a small library. Teacher Kathryn Couzens is on hand every afternoon to offer support and guidance.

The hub was opened in September and it is currently available to Grade 8 - 12 learners. Eighteen of the 24 eligible learners have used the facilities to date, with eight learners visiting regularly.

Development of the facility has been a team effort by committed members of the estate staff, with the enthusiastic support of managing director, Wayne Coetzer. Key participants have been IT manager, Warren Daniel; security manager, Carl Langenhoven; finance manager, Dean Carlse; and hospitality and HR manager, Sharon Hosking. Social media manager AJ van der Vyver also offers extra maths lessons weekly.

Says Langenhoven: “It is important to keep the kids busy and to ensure they have the necessary resources to make more choices. We want to prepare them for adulthood and tertiary education. Our dream is to facilitate from Grade R to Grade 12, with the kids having the tools to get ahead and enter university.”

Daniel, who brings facilitation skills from working at Damelin College, plus IT expertise, says the hub is intended to bridge the gap between school and home.

“Tech is ever-evolving, and we can’t let learners fall behind. This is the starting point and it is going to develop further. The hub lends itself to more uses in future such as adult literacy classes and holiday workshops.”

Kathryn Couzens, who has 16 years of high school experience, says: “The response from the children has been overwhelmingly positive, especially with the core group who attend regularly. You feel that you can make an impact by working with their strengths and weaknesses. It’s wonderful to be able to share my experience.”

The staff say that they do not want the hub to be a classroom environment, as the children already have this at school. Instead, children should feel comfortable and relaxed, and eager to learn new things.

The children are positive about their experiences. “It helps a lot when we study” and “our teacher helps us if we are struggling” were some of the comments from regular visitors Andrew-Lee Ninon, Natalie Lange, Miceala Jackson, and Chanelle Jonkers.

Daniel concurred: “You can see the spark in the children’s eyes.”

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