KEW HIGH SCHOOL
SISTER SCHOOL
EXCHANGE PROGRAM

July 20th - August 2nd. 2015
Sister School Exchange visit July 21st – August 2nd

On Tuesday July 21st I met the group at the airport and we were privileged to welcome 10 students led by their English teacher, Thùy Thuỳ Trinh. On arrival at Kew, a lunch was arranged and our Vietnamese students were introduced to their host buddies as well as the other Vietnamese students involved in our overseas program. There was plenty of lively discussion and we gave them a brief overview of the program. They were then taken on a tour of the school where they interacted with other students and formed an audience for students practising public speaking. On the bell they were tired but excited and happy to go home with their host families.

Unfortunately the other group of 6 students and 1 teacher, Thù Hương Giang was unable to arrive on the same flight and they were met at the airport on Thursday 23rd July.

On Wednesday this first group braved the cold and took the bus out to Latrobe Uni where they wandered around and joined in some of the activities such as the tour of the library.

Terry Ryan accompanied them into the city on Thursday where they jumped aboard the full circle tourist city tram and took in the sights. Meanwhile the second group was collected from the airport. The full cohort gathered together for lunch and were more than content to chat. Group one then led the second group around the school using the knowledge they had already gained.

Friday saw the whole group at school. They were engaged in Food Technology for the first 2 periods and eating their product was half the fun.

Kew High School was hosting the Regional Battle of the Bands and that made for lively entertainment at various stages of the day. In the afternoon, Lyndsey Thickins led an animation class with them in ICT. At the end of the day they were collected and set off for a weekend of fun with their host families. Some of the host buddies were involved in Volleyball for the weekend.

Monday morning arrived and individuals happily recounted tales of their weekend adventures. In the General Assembly they were introduced to the school and they were keen to tell of their new home, their exploits and discoveries. They were confident and ran a competition asking the school cohort a range of questions to test their knowledge of Vietnam. They were pleasantly surprised at the responses from the students which indicated they were familiar with a good deal. Students from both schools enjoyed the communication immensely.
During the day they again chose the subjects they wanted and visited a variety of classes. Penelope Cleghorn took them through an AFL class which they thoroughly enjoyed.

They finished with an Art class with Sophie Richards at the end of the day.

Tuesday we all departed for Healesville Sanctuary in the bus driven by Ben Abbott. They were shown some of the animals up close, enjoyed the Birds of Prey exhibition and had time to wander, take plenty of pictures, eat lunch together and see the Australian animals. The bus on the way home was extremely quiet!
On Wednesday we made our way to the Aquarium. After a couple of hours of free roaming around we gathered together and walked to the city centre. They were certainly treated to a real Melbourne Winter’s day once again. They thoroughly enjoyed the morning and arrived in the city ready to meander around at their own pace, enjoy lunch and spend time exploring and at their favourite pass time, shopping and buying souvenirs instead of visiting some of the other suggested sights.

On Thursday we alighted the tram to the Melbourne Museum. Again it was bitterly cold but the students were curious and interested as they went through the different exhibitions including the impressive centre for the Indigenous Australians. At night a large group of Vietnamese students and host families arranged to be together for dinner at Viet Pearl, Northcote. Thanks to Lynne Lawson for the organisation.

Friday it was a visit to Melbourne University for a self-guided tour for some or a guided tour with Professor John Haisken-De-New, a parent and host family member. Students were impressed and felt very informed after the event. Next we walked to Lygon Street and Brunetti’s, the home of chocolate and exotic and tasty delights, before the bus home.

We then gathered together for a farewell afternoon tea. Kew HS gave each student a bag with a sample of items connected to Kew or Australia at large and a gift was presented to each of the teachers. In return the school was given a commemorative plate and a poster with individual responses and reflections from each of the students.

The teachers, Thuy Thy Trinh and Thí Hương Giang were well cared for by Terry Ryan. They attended English classes, chatted to staff, accompanied their students to excursions and classes and gathered some resources especially in Chemistry to take home to Vietnam.
Saturday again it was time to be with host families and on Sunday morning at 6.15am they assembled sad, cold and with overstocked cases at Kew HS for the trip to the airport.

All the feedback was extremely positive. Students commented on the warmth and friendliness of those with whom they came in contact. They found their host families without exception, to be kind, caring and welcoming.

The exchange was successful because of the families who volunteered to be hosts and the fact that they gave freely of their time, really catered for the needs of the students in all ways. They put themselves out and ensured each student felt comfortable and at ease, had plenty to do, gained an insight into Australia, experienced Australian cuisine and traditions while visiting important landmarks and places of interest or participating in a range of events. The students too were extremely helpful and cared for their visitors both at school and outside. They made sure they arrived on time and were there to escort them home.

**What next?**

Friendships were forged and the students from Le Hong Phong are keen to host our students in 2016. We need to commence planning for this to happen. We will continue to communicate with the teachers and the school. We look forward to our continued relationship after what was a very successful exchange.