

## **Belarus Visit 23 February to 2 March 2020 Blog**

Sunday 23 February

After a long day of travelling and some delays we received a great welcome in Mogilev. Our friends had brought food and drink and then some pizza was delivered.

Our plans for the week are all sorted for now and our friends are all away home.

Time to unpack

Then bed very soon

Monday 24 February

Today was a lovely spring-like day.

We started with a trip to the supermarket to do some shopping for the families we were meeting today. Then the long drive to Daryna and Danila's house.

We met Dad, Daryna and Danila at their home they were excited to see us.

We got lots of hugs.

They were given the presents we had and loved them.

They showed us around their house.

They even took us to see their banya (bath house) at gran's house.

Then it was on to Nastya's house.

We met the family and lots of them.

A look around their new house was interesting, for a relatively new build 2 years old there was damp in the kid's bedrooms.

The kitchen was a bit sparse.

Nastya and Yanna got their letters.

Both asking questions about their new families in Scotland.

New Baby is almost here, number 8 for mum & dad.

A short journey to Vlad & Lera's home next.

Letters and measuring.

Vlad is curious to know more about Scotland he has heard a lot from big sister

Lera was showing us her English jotter she was very proud of it.

We had late lunch with Lena one of Ludas friends.

Then the long journey back to Mogilev and dinner with interpreter Zhenya and her lovely family.

Tuesday 25 February

More shopping for children and the long journey to Klimovichi

Anya is the only child in her village.  
She has a Cat, a dog, 9 hens and 3 geese.

In our group her village is the most remote and closest to the dead zone.  
She likes fishing.  
There are 3 kids in her class  
Kids and teachers at her school don't believe she is coming to Scotland

Arina is 1 of 4 children  
It's the 1st anniversary of dad's death on Sunday ☹️  
She is very good at sports, she likes running, gymnastics and loves hula hoop.  
Mum gave us a nice cup of tea and cake.

Ksusha Is Living with granny.  
She is a bit of a shy girl  
Big brother(11) was there.  
Big sister has been to Biggar group  
She has never been to McDonald's  
she is looking forward to her first one.

Dima's Mum expects baby number 4 at the end of March.  
They have a cat now.  
Dima has been the most cuddly so far.  
He has 1 brother and 1 sister.  
He was asking how he will get to Scotland.  
He is very sociable and enjoys reading and maths.

We finished the day with dinner with the selfie queen... Sasha, our helper in Cherikov - a great night was had

Wednesday 26 February

After the morning trip to do the shopping.  
We had breakfast with Alexey and his mum.  
Kenny brought a letter of thanks from the charity for his drawings for our calendar, which Alexey translated himself.  
He still gets taught at home with his teachers coming to his house.  
We discussed the new calendar for next year. Alexey is happy to do more drawings.

Slight change of plans as Sasha is in hospital with an infection (lichen).  
He was very excited to get his present but wanted to open it in his room by himself which is understandable as we had to meet him outside  
He wanted to come with us to Scotland right now.

Vika and Dima were very content and happy to see us.  
They have a new kitten. Dima is unsure of it at the moment.  
Mum was thankful for shopping.  
These kids are her life and she looks after them very well.

Lisa was excited to see us.

Mum made us some lunch and a lovely cake. Her brother and sister were home.

We even got a visit from Lera.

Dima and Stas were at their grans house.

They were happy to hear their Scottish family are coming to visit them.

They have hens, a rabbit and a dog.

They told us there is a swimming pool at their school.

Their uncle Sergei took a liking to Kathleen, she made a sharp exit to the car 😊

Day 4 was finished off at Katia and Andréi's home.

We were joined by Olya for a beautiful dinner with lots of good chats.

#### Thursday 27 February

Day started as usual with food shopping for children and then a long drive.

Kristina is a lovely girl and has a lovely family, mum made us pancakes.

Pancakes are to mark the end of winter and its a whole week of pancake days here.

She is looking forward to going to the zoo and the beach.

Someone had to use the outside loo!! Interesting experience

Artum is going to be a builder.

He has already started helping to mend the fence.

Mum said you have to hide the hammer and nails or your house will have a few extra when he leaves.

He is very artistic and loves crafts.

He likes stories about super heroes especially the hulk.

If you can't find him he'll be up a tree.

After a bit of back and forth and a few phone calls we finally tracked down Veranika.

Veranika is the performer of the group.

We got 2 dances and 2 songs.

She would love to go to Jo's dance school.

Her favourite colour is red.

She wants to go everywhere and see everything in Scotland 😊

Little sister was a little shy to start with but soon came round.

They even had a VW in the backyard.

#### Friday 28 February

Kenny - Today I spent a wonderful morning with Matvey in the SOS village where he now stays. He is settled, happy and being cared for very well in the new foster family with his brother Bogdan. I got lots of pictures and information for his host family.

Then I spent a very enjoyable time interacting with 2 different English classes in schools. The pupils

were great and time flew so quickly. I took the full lessons. 45 minutes each. At the end they were queuing up for a selfie.

Then we had a late lunch with my Belarusian mum and dad, where dad treated us to an afternoon of poetry he had written. I am assured it rhymed in Russian 😊

I was hoping to have a walk in the city centre but laden with gifts we headed early to the restaurant to meet my boy Pasha and his family. Bigger than me now and learning a trade. Its always good to catch up with them.

Kathleen/Martin - Private day with our girl and Danik.

We started off at the zoo. We had it all to ourselves as it was very cold.

Then we saw some historic houses before going into town for lunch and a heat.

We met up with Darynas aunt, uncle and cousin to go to soft play and trampolines.

Three hours later we decided we should prise them away and go for dinner.

Thanks to Katia for keeping us right and for not giving up on us as she lost her voice early in the day.

#### Saturday 29 February

Shopping for 1 family this morning so we shopped at a local store.

We met a local man in line he was a bit worse for wear.

Roma was waiting for us to arrive.

Mum had pancakes ready for us (did I say it was pancake week). He was telling us about his lessons, how he loves mathematics and is a straight A student.

Even though he is home schooled.

We went into school 18. A lot of our interpreters work there. It was Maslenitsa festival. Where you could buy a of variety of treats including lots of pancakes as it's pancake week.

We had a bit of time to kill so went to the memorial square.

It's time to meet with the June group kids for a party, meal and bowling. We all had a great time and lots of fun.

Off to Minsk for us and Olya. We checked in to our hotel then took a walk to get dinner.

#### Sunday 1 March

Kenny -Today I visited Tanya in hospital just outside Minsk. Thanks to Olya for helping. Tanya was in our group for 4 years finishing in 2015 but has had bone cancer the last 2 years. We have been helping her and her family during this period. I thought I wasnt going to get to see her after coming all this way as there were coronavirus restrictions in place. However mum and Tanya were able to come and meet me in the cafe at reception. We had a nice chat. It looks like Tanya will be in hospital til at least May as she is being built up to have the operation on her heel. She was delighted to receive all of the many gifts given by the Eadie family and friends. This will help to pass the time in hospital. Tanya also receives school lessons in hospital around 2 days a week when she is feeling up to it.

Tanya is not walking so easily now and is a little bit frail, but it was so nice to see her smile and give her a gentle hug. I hope and pray that things go well over the next few months and that she gets built up and there is a bit more of her to hug next time.

After the visit to hospital to see Tanya we enjoyed a wonderful tour of Minsk led by Olga the lady who came from Belarus to inspect our August group. The day included a lot of nice walks, a visit to the wonderful national library building where we went to 23rd floor after our tour. We also had 2 rides on the underground and various pit stops for food tea and vodka including one in a beautiful and colourful Uzbekistan restaurant

Monday 2 March

Taxi to the airport and all travel arrangements go well on the way home.

Another wonderful visit to see the children on our programme, other children we support and of course our interpreters and friends.

Huge thanks to everyone involved for all the help we receive in Belarus and at home to make these visits possible.

We look forward to seeing all children in summer especially our 11 new ones 😊