



Special Needs Therapy Centre & School

Where it all started...

Bloom was founded in obedience to a voice led by faith one evening in 2012 as founder Nicola Stirton felt a strong prompting to start a special needs school on the North Coast of KwaZulu Natal. As an Occupational Therapist, she had been treating a little girl with Down Syndrome and she felt the parents would be part of the Bloom journey. As she engaged Eric & Caroline Hardy the Bloom dream was birthed but it would only be 2 years later that the doors of Bloom would officially open with 6 children in an old cinema within an old building in Ballito Village. The building was far from what was needed but it was a starting point to which we were grateful. The first year of operation was tough and taught the team a lot about perseverance in the face of adversity. Being entrusted with 6 little lives that needed hope and provisions to be schooled, supported and loved gave the team the strength and passion to continue despite the cost. In South Africa we are not only under sourced but there is no support or assistance from government for those with disability and their long-term needs. This team could not sit and do nothing so it was here in a dark and musty old cinema building where our Non-Profit Therapy Centre and School was built.

A new home...

In late 2014 we were approached by local developers who had bought a property in Salt Rock and were starting a pre-primary school. They offered us a piece to move Bloom into. It had two run-down buildings situated on the property, but it had potential. We managed to put together a beautiful little space within 3 months and our doors opened to our new home in January 2015. It was at this point that we approached the founder Kimber Gould of a mainstream pre-primary school "Kingdom Kids" to possibly set up a classroom within our school to encourage integration between our special needs learners and her typically functioning learners. We started our school year with 6 Bloom Special Needs Learners and 6 typically functioning pre-school learners. These early days were incredibly beautiful, stretching and character developing. We did as much as we could with what we could afford and the beginning of our story was established.

The past 9 years have been nothing short of a miracle. Our local community have supported and loved Bloom into greater opportunities through their generosity and consistent support in fundraisers.

Bloom is a space where we believe all children should be given a space to be seen, heard, and understood. In that place we have the opportunity to release each child's potential regardless of their diagnosis or disability. We have seen miracles and we have experienced the pain of loss. We believe in the greatness that is locked into our children and how this can and will impact our community and world one day, if unlocked. We believe that the solutions for many of our communities, country and worlds problems could be locked up in our misunderstood learners' incredible minds and it is our job to do whatever we can to be the key to unlocking their potential.

Our forever home...

2021 was a year of seeking, praying and knocking on doors looking for a forever home for Bloom. We had outgrown our current premises and our long-term dreams required a bigger space and with greater freedom to house these dreams. In late 2021 the perfect property became available and one of our directors took the risky plunge on behalf of Blooms future. We have moved into the most incredible space that feels like home. Our children have settled and we have been able to give them a place that feels like a place of hope, acceptance and unlocking. With this big step of faith comes the reality of needing greater funding to cover the costs. It is here that we throw out the invitation of partnering with us financially to assist us in continuing to provide not only our current learners, but many more learners out there with a quality education that sets them up for independence and success.