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BY KERRA MADDERN  
EDUCATION REPORTER

# Youngsters thrilled as Camilla makes it fun on school visit

MOST Royals might be content to just shake hands and accept flowers — but the Duchess of Cornwall was so charmed by a group of blind and partially sighted Exeter students she ended up on the floor playing with them.

Camilla began a two-day visit to Exeter yesterday by visiting children at the West of England School and College for children with little or no sight, in Topsham Road.

The Duchess, looking slim in a fitted blue suit, seemed relaxed as she chatted to staff and students, even kneeling down to talk to younger children and letting them play with her jewellery.

She seemed touched as one severely disabled child called out "Camilla" as she toured a classroom.

Thrilled pupil Hannah Linfield, who was 17 on Tuesday, said meeting the Duchess was a "great late birthday present".

Camilla was particularly taken with Hannah's guide dog Bella, who she has had for three weeks.

"She told me how dogs can be great companions and how joyful they can be," said Hannah, who comes from Saltash.

The Duchess was handed a posy of pink flowers by 10-year-old William Parry, from Wells in Somerset, as his proud mum Elizabeth watched nearby.

"I did feel really nervous before I met her but she was really nice and also visited me in my classroom," William said.

William was pushed in his wheelchair to present the posy by 14-year-old Sophia Needs, from Watchet in Somerset.

"She just said thank you very much and asked me how long I'd been at the school and said the flowers were lovely."

Harryot Powell also met Camilla as she was being taught about archaeology.

"She was quite surprised about what we were learning about," Harryot said.

The Duchess was firstly shown to the school's hall to see an exhibition of its work in helping youngsters to live normal lives and become physically active.

She spoke to Tom West, a member of the skiing team, and was fascinated to hear about his successes.

"She found it amazing how I could change direction," said Tom, 15, who also told Camilla how he completed the recent Ten Tors Jubilee Challenge using a tricycle.

Pupils also demonstrated the way they are trained to cross roads.

Ian Morrison, 20, showed Camilla the specially designed kitchen for the West of England's college students. It has cupboards which move up and down, and talking appliances.

"She showed a very keen interest when I demonstrated it," Ian said.

The Duchess asked Mark Saunders, 19, another college student, about his work and life.

"She said 'it was very nice to meet you'. I was nervous at first but it was OK after a while," Mark said.

School and college principal Tracy de Bernhardt Dunkin said she thought Camilla was "absolutely lovely and charming".



The Duchess of Cornwall visits the West of England School and College  
MATT MINSHULL EE140508\_MM04\_05



The Duchess meeting pupil Mark Saunders  
EE140508\_MM04\_08

"She was very good with the children and they all loved her," she said.

"We chatted about our mutual acquaintance, her nephew, who I taught when I worked at another school."

The Duchess was met by local dignitaries — Lord Mayor Paul Smith and the Lady Mayoress; Tony Melville, deputy chief con-

stable of Devon and Cornwall police; and the Countess of Arran.

She unveiled a plaque marking her visit near an art project completed by the West of England pupils and teenagers from nearby Isca College of Media Arts, before spending around half an hour talking to children who had gathered outside to clap and wave flags.

Camilla also saw the school's



The new Lord Mayor of Exeter Paul Smith meets the Duchess  
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The Duchess unveiling a commemorative plaque  
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Youngsters at the school were happy to meet the Duchess  
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pool, which was being used for a water therapy session, and met its youngest pupils who were being taught in the primary unit.

Around a dozen police officers patrolled the school before and during her visit. Camilla stayed in Devon overnight and is visiting the County Show today.

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