

The Don McMath Foundation

The Don McMath Foundation Newsletter – December 2017

Charity number: 1100164

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Hi All

Following the last newsletter that had the depressing news of Mr Jeng's dishonesty it's nice to send out this one with more positive news.

This month Anne has written the newsletter:

[The 6th January 2018 will be the 15th Anniversary of the school opening](#). The school opened in a rented building with 31 pupils, a teacher, Malen Gaye and a teacher's helper, Elizabeth Cardos, who both still work at the school.

We were given land by the Government and with the help of many generous donations we built a classroom block of 6 classes with office, library and toilets and moved into that in 2005. This is now our Lower Basic and houses pupils from 8 to 13 years old.

As the school grew we then built what is now our Nursery block of 3 classes, playroom, offices and toilets for 5 to 7 years old. We then had to make a decision on whether to expand into Higher Education, as it involves more specialist teachers and offering 9 different subjects which meant more books, resources and higher salaries.

We now have an Upper Basic block of 3 classes, science lab, computer room, staff room, office and yes more toilets. Also we have built a hall from a generous donation from one of our sponsors. This is a BIG THANK YOU to all of you who donated, came to a fund raising event and helped in other ways, because all these classes were built from your generous help.

The running costs of the school are paid out of the money the charity receives from sponsorship. Your £5 each month or £60 annually is giving a child who would never had the chance to go to school a future. You may not realise what a difference you have made, but you should all be EXTREMELY PROUD that you have given a child a chance to have a better future. I would like to quote a mother, who told me through a translator: "My life was full of darkness, but the school has brought light into my children's life"

When the students finish Upper Basic, they take a West African exam, similar to GCSE's. Those that get high enough grades can get a place at Senior School where they do similar to "A" levels. We continue to pay fees for our students while they are at Senior School. In 2003 31 children were sponsored, today we have 377 children currently being sponsored.

Our aim at the school is to help each child to reach their full potential, which might mean for some children being able to read and write and having rudimentary arithmetic, but for others it has been a lot more. Some of the children who started in our first class in 2003 are now at University and College. Some of the subjects that they are studying are Nursing, Journalism, Teaching and Tourism. One of the students, Ebrima Sowe who is training to be a teacher, has already said he would like to come and teach at our school when he qualifies.

The last 15 years has not all been plain sailing, there have been times of despair and disappointment, tears for children who have died, mainly from Malaria, so we now give our children mosquito nets, we have also lost two young teachers through illness, but also the joy of seeing

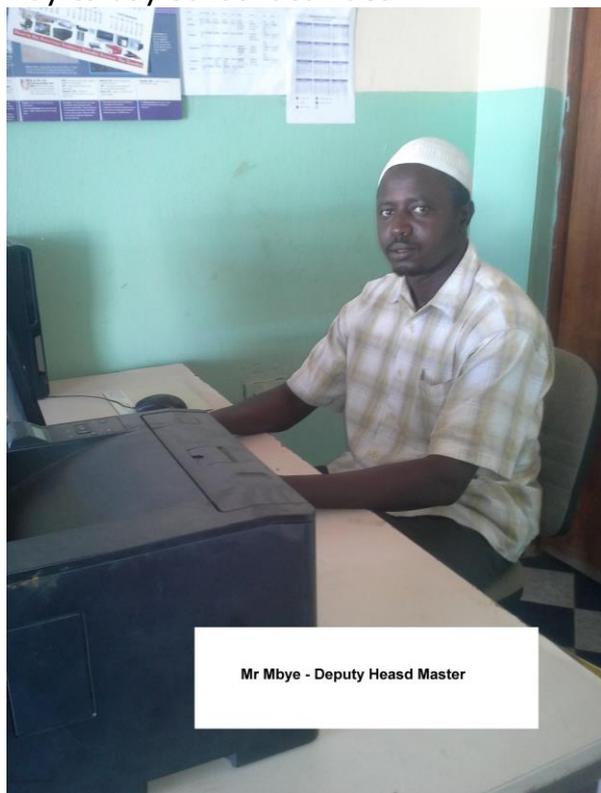
children in Nursery play with toys for the first time and learning all the words to Jungle Book – their favourite video. We also have the pleasure of knowing that they have been given choices for their future.

None of this could have been done without you.

I would also like to thank all our Trustees for their help and support over the years, especially Mick who has worked tirelessly for the Charity since it began. I could not have done it without you Mick. On the 18th October I had my replacement hip operation and after a few days in hospital was released with crutches and other aids to recuperate. After a couple of weeks spent with family and friends I went home. I did the exercises each day and built up walking from a quarter of a mile to this week I am doing at least one and half miles a day. Yesterday I got the all clear from the surgeon and so I can drive again and also fly. I still have a slight limp, but the surgeon said that would go, just a case of building at new muscle memory and I have to practise doing emergency stops in the car to make sure that the leg is strong enough.

I am hoping to fly out to Gambia in January.

Day to day school activities



Mr Mbye - Deputy Head Master

We have promoted two of the teachers to fill the head's role Mr Choye is now headmaster and Mr Mbye is deputy head.

Text Books

In my bid to replace all text books over 5 years old, I bought books for Upper Basic for about £160 and Lower Basic for about £450. I still have more to replace and hope to do that when I return in Jan. I estimate that this will be about £1000. However as another year goes by, I will have to replace more books that are over 5 years old. My eventual aim is that we won't have any text books that are over 4 years old.

Maintenance

We have had to replace electrical wiring in Upper Basic as some was burnt out in storms.

Plumbing

We replaced some of the underground pipe work that had started to leak as it was 12 years old.

Electrical Work

All checks were made on the electrics and some units were replaced. (Due to the heat, sockets deteriorate)

and we had a fan replaced.

Further Work

We have replaced the corrugate roof of Lower Basic as that is about 12 years old and was leaking. The cost was about £3000

Some of the classrooms badly need painting so hope to do that in the Christmas holidays.



Mr Camara Computer Studies teacher

Computers

We have spent about £500 on having computers mended and a new system wired in with breakers and stabilisers, so that they are protected from power surges and storms. All computers were cleaned and new anti-virus installed. They have recommended that all the computers at the school are networked together, which we hope to do next.

Field next door

Part of it was given to an Iman about 25 years ago to build a Nursery on, but he has not done anything so far. Fatou, in September as part of her Social Work course (projects for the community) was hoping to investigate the likelihood of us getting the field permanently allocated

to the school but the course stipulated that she had to do work for a different school or institution. Instead she spent the holidays working in SOS children's village which was nice as Patrick and Peter John (Mr John's sons) are there. Since Patrick (Mr John's eldest son) has left Nusrat, he has been working at the SOS clinic as a volunteer and I have reports that he is doing very well. He has decided he wants to be a nurse and has registered for the course where he is being generously sponsored by one of our sponsors Suzanne York.

Mr Barrie has returned part time for 2 days a week to cover mainly Grade 7 Social and Environment Studies for Mr Choye so he can have free time for Headmaster duties.

I have taken on an unqualified teacher to help in Mrs Jallow's class, as she has to spend so much time on pastoral work. Fatou will mentor her and if she gets on OK we will send her part time to the college to get her Primary Teachers Certificate next August. Mr John did this course and it is mainly done in school holiday time. Unfortunately he died before he completed the 3 year course.

Our children

Nusrat - 11 students started this Sept and now the total being sponsored at Nusrat is 32.

A couple of charity schools (Swallow and Seedlings Schools) approached us and said that they no longer could fund children to go to Upper Basic and could we help. We had a lot of children attend two days of our exams in the 4 core subjects, from both schools. I think we took 3 to Upper Basic, but we also had a lot of them with border line marks and if they were roughly in the right age group, we offered them places in Grade 6, the one exception to this is we took on an older boy who is disabled.

We would like to thank lots of people for their donations of mobile phones, pencils, rubbers etc, specifically The Oxbys, Mike Daymond and Adrian - Mick & Judy's postman. Also Suzanne York who sent a shipment of children's clothes, toys, phonic books etc.



Guy and Wendy Barry visited the school earlier in December armed with seeds and potting compost to talk to Grade 3, Mr Gaye reported that "It was really educative and interactive ,we all learned a lot from them as far as growing plant from seed is concerned. We all in grade three department thank you. Job well done. "We need more sponsors

We currently have about 60 children without sponsors. Please pass this newsletter on to all your friends to see if any are interested in sponsoring. It's still just £60 a year (Just £5 per month per child).

Please note the website address: www.donmcmath.org and the email address: info@donmcmath.org. You can also reach Anne and Mick via: anne@donmcmath.org and mick@donmcmath.org .

If anyone who currently receives this newsletter through the post is now on email could you please let us know your address so we can email you future newsletters as this will cut down on our costs. Thank you all for your support and we wish you a happy Christmas and a prosperous new year.

Anne, Judy and Mick McMath – December 2017