

Don McMath Foundation

Newsletter

www.donmcmath.org

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The Don McMath Foundation Newsletter – 1st December 2007

Hello All

It has been a busy period since the last newsletter in September. We have taken on the next new class and now have 210 children at the school, we have collected and delivered vast amounts of goods to the school (Anne actually thinks that we have several years worth of pencils now but they always get used quicker than we think) and of course we have held the opening ceremony for the new Nursery classroom block.



The opening ceremony was a fantastic event, as well as all the pupils and their families we had in excess of 30 sponsors and supporters who made their way from the UK especially for the occasion.

The classroom block was officially opened by the British High Commissioner Mr. Phil Sinkinson OBE who was very impressed with the school, the children and the staff and really entered into the spirit of the occasion. Some of Anne's friends were recruited as security for the day (everyone tries to get in for a free meal) we supplied them with DMF T-shirts in which they looked really smart!



Here are a couple of comments by people who attended the ceremony:

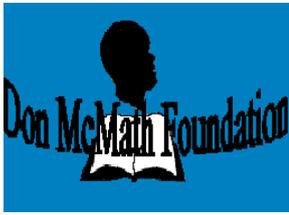
"It was a privilege to be at the school for the official opening of the Nursery Block on 14 November.

The children were so excited. That, however, did not influence their

extremely good behaviour.

Each child and teacher wore brand new uniforms, thanks to Fatou who burned the candle at both ends to meet the deadline to deliver the uniforms on time.

His Excellency Mr Phil Sinkinson, British Ambassador to the Gambia performed the opening ceremony. He appeared genuinely impressed by both the event and the achievement of the Trustees and Sponsors in such a short time.



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The children sang the National Anthem and school song then each class sang their favourite song. Always emotional, especially the performance of the youngest children who started school in September with no English, yet sang their song confidently.



At the end of the ceremony the children - all 210 - let rip with their very favourite, "the Music Man", taught to them by Paul McMath and his friends at the time of the opening of the 1st block.

The joy and appreciation of the children, their parents and all the staff is infectious.

Without the exhaustive efforts of Anne McMath and the Trustees, the project would be nowhere near the success it has become.

Anne's vision and energy deserves unstinting support. The Ambassador indicated he will promote the work of the charity, along with the work of 2 other charities, one maintaining a hospital children's ward and the other

sponsoring a village."

"Bruce and I would like to say how much we enjoyed our visit to the DMF school and how impressed we were with the buildings, the teachers and of course the children - never have we seen and heard such enthusiasm. It is wonderful to know that any effort we may make is so much appreciated by all. We will certainly try our hardest to

encourage friends and acquaintances to become sponsors, and we look forward to further visits in the future."



We would like to thank everyone who provided us with goods for the school, the store rooms are quite full now. We would specifically like to thank Tim Page of SBModelmakers for Anne's new PC, Tim and Luke McMath for the new signs,

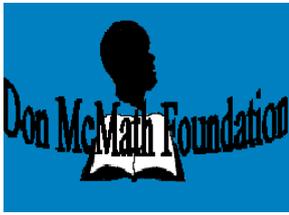
Grosmont Children's Church and Orchard Day Nursery who between them paid for all the exercise books, pencil sharpeners and most of the craft goods and sports equipment, Sue Hancock for the skipping ropes and all the sponsors who came to the opening ceremony for all the goods they brought with them. Thanks should also go to Paul Ferguson and Paul McMath for raising over £800 by running a golf day in aid of the school.



By now you should all have received a copy of the photo of your sponsored child's class, if you have not received one then please get in touch with Mick. Aside from the initial photo you get when you

start sponsoring a child we will now only be supplying annual class photos, the work involved in photographing each child once a year for the sponsors is a bit beyond us now, I hope everyone understands. The teachers had filled in forms this year so we knew exactly where each child would be for each photo, in spite of this it was an interesting exercise getting the chairs and blocks out for the children to sit or stand on and make sure all of them were in the correct order, the end results however were worth it.

We have also put signs up for two more named classrooms; The Clare Rimmer Classroom and the Doreen Jacombs Classroom for two of our sponsors who have raised large amounts of money for the school, thank you Clare and Bill Jacombs.



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We thought it would be useful to give a brief explanation of what classes we have at the school and the level the pupils have to attain before they move up to the next grade.

The classes are: Nursery 1, 2 and 3 and the Primary school classes are Grade 1, 2, 3 and 4. Grades 5 and 6 will be added in 2008 and 2009 at which point the school will be full.

Nursery 1 pupils are mainly learning English, the alphabet, how to write their own name and numbers 1 to 10. By the end of Nursery 3 they will be able to identify and write numbers up to 100 in a random order, add small numbers up to 20, subtract small numbers up to 10, read and write short words, identify colours, parts of the body and classroom objects and follow simple classroom commands in English.



When the children move into the primary school they gradually extend their knowledge of English in reading and writing and begin to learn the basics of English grammar. In Maths they start to use larger numbers, learning measurement and moving on to fractions and multiplication much as they do in English schools. They also learn integrated studies which is a mixture of science and humanities and they learn about themselves and their families, plants and animals, the environment, health and disease.

Roughly speaking the Nursery is like UK infants, Primary grades 1 to 6 is a bit like middle school. Upper Basic is Secondary school, where they take a National Exam & based on their results, they go on to High School where they take the equivalent of our A levels. We take children in at about age 5 and they leave us to go to Upper Basic at about age 14.

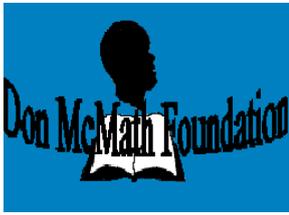
The head of the Primary school Mr. Colley and the head of the Nursery school Malin Gaye have provided us with brief information about themselves for the newsletter:

“ My name is Sang M. Colley & I am 42 years of age. I am married to Angelic Senghore & we have a son named David. I have been a teacher for 23 years & have mainly taught in Roman Catholic Schools in The Gambia, before becoming the newly appointed Headmaster of the DMF Primary School. “

“ My name is Malen M B Gaye & I am a Gambian lady of 34 years of age. I am a Wollof, the most famous tribe in the Gambia. (we don't know if Ous & Sisawo would agree with this!) I am the Head Teacher of the Don McMath Nursery School. I graduated at the Gambian College as an Early Childhood Development (E.C.D.) facilitator. I am married with a daughter & son & very happy with my family. My hobbies are reading, listening to music & playing with the children.”

So far we have sponsors for 11 out of 30 of the new children in Nursery 1 and are looking for sponsors for the rest, please pass this newsletter on to anyone you think might be interested in supporting us, it's through these contacts that we continue to grow.

Most of you will not be aware that the Gambian dalasi has increased in value over the pound sterling by nearly 20% this year. Last year (and for several years previous) we were getting 50 dalasies to £1. This year the exchange rate has been between 37 and 43 dalasies to £1. This means that we need to find approximately £8 more per child per year. We have some cash reserves at the moment earmarked for future projects which we could use to fund some of the increase but, if the dalasi stays the same, next year we might have to increase the sponsored amount per child per year. We hope that all the sponsors will understand.



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If anyone who currently receives this newsletter through the post is now on email could you please email us at the above email address so we can email you future newsletters as this will cut down considerably on our costs.

All the trustees of the school would like to wish a very happy Christmas to all our sponsors and supporters and to thank you all for your continued support over the last year, without you the school would not be there!

Anne, Judy and Mick McMath

December 2007