

The Don McMath Foundation Newsletter – 20th December 2011

The Don McMath Foundation



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Hi All



Once again Anne's garden party in September was a great success. In spite of the rain (fortunately Anne had a very large gazebo at her disposal) we made over £1,000 which included over £350 just from the raffle! Thanks to everyone who was involved in the organisation.

Judy and Mick had a stall at the Verwood Rustic Fayre that made a useful £150. Altogether it was a very successful summer of fundraising.

Everything at the school has been going well, one of the things of note was a Maths competition that Mr Dembajang (The Headmaster) entered two of the children into. The Gambian Regional Education Office held a maths competition for all the Lower Basic Schools in its area. This included State schools and private fee-paying schools. I am very pleased to tell you that our school scooped 1st and 2nd place in the competition. Both the pupils are in Grade 6. First place was taken by Pa Ansu Cham and Anna Badjan took 2nd place with scores of 100% and 96%. Well done to them both. This is especially pleasing to us as they are not the top maths pupils in the school.



We have been given a large sum of money by one of our supporters to construct a new building. We will be building 1 block of 2 rooms with solid enough foundations so that we could put another floor on later on. One of the rooms will be used as a general activities room for the whole school while the other will be used as a room for Islamic and Christian studies as well as other activities when needed. The rooms will have a dividing partition so they can be opened up to provide one large room that can be used for assemblies or class/school plays and other activities. Building work will start before Christmas as soon as the school breaks up.



We have started to clear an area of land next to the school for use as a football pitch, following the donation of football kit from Ferndown Sports and Wiltshire College we realised that the area we have for sports in the school playground was not big enough for proper football games so we decided to create a new area. The parents of the children have been spending their spare time starting to clear the pitch, there is still a long way to go, we need to import a lorry load of sand, but a good start has been made.

The children now have the opportunity to buy food at lunchtime. Several of the mothers are preparing simple food in the school playground which the pupils can buy for a few dalasies (less than 10p), this is proving very popular.

We have sent out new class photos for the school year 2011-2012. Please get in touch if you haven't received yours yet.





The school vegetable garden is progressing well, one of the teachers (Mr Jeng) is taking the task of growing food to sell for the school very seriously, he is even measuring the Ph content of the soil and adding the correct nutrients to get the best results.

Congratulations to the headmaster Mr Dembajang and his wife on the birth of their new daughter Fatoumatta who was born on 30th November.

We have had a couple of our teachers leave recently. Mr Jadama has left to complete his degree and Mr Ceesay has left to work for Christian Aid. We wish them both good luck for the future.

We have three new teachers, Mr Hassan Barry, English and English Literature, Mr Jeng, Science and Agricultural Science, Mr Baboucarr Bah Science and Amie Ceesay who will teach Nursery 2.

In November Dorothy Webster came over to the school and spent three weeks teaching, she comes each year and the teachers and Anne really appreciate her input, many thanks to Dorothy.

Unfortunately one of our pupils, Fatou Sanneh tragically died last month. The Cleric who conducted the funeral said that he had attended lots of children's funerals but never one where so many children had attended, all of her class and lots of pupils from other classes were there as well as most of the teachers.

We have experienced a higher number than usual of children leaving the school recently. A lot of families have had to return to the provinces as there is a great shortage of work in the area near the school.

Thanks to Shelley Grierson and Paul Nikolic who visited the school recently. As well as some very useful wall posters for the Nursery school Shelley donated two trophies that will be presented each year to the top and second pupil in the school.



We have just had end of term exams, and on the whole most of the children did well. Two children we decided to fast track from Grade 1 to Grade 3 managed after only one term to get joint first. Anyone who comes first in their class is taken to the ice cream parlour where they can choose an ice cream or a cake. Anne chose Mrs Boye to go with them as she had done extremely well with some children who were struggling last term. An ice cream or cake is a big treat for our children

A Christmas party was held for the Nursery children. The teachers made them Christmas hats and each child got a small gift. The teachers cooked food and after that the children all danced to African music.



Photos in this newsletter (and others) can be found at

<http://s1209.photobucket.com/albums/cc383/donmcmath/December%202011%20newsletter> if anyone wants copies of any of the pictures then let Mick know and he will email them. There are also four new videos that we took of the whole primary and upper basic school singing conducted by Mr John, they are really worth watching, specially The Hokey Cokey!

Although we have managed to get more sponsors over the last few months we still need more. 30 children started in September 2011 as the new intake in the Nursery 1 class. Please pass this on to anyone you think might like to sponsor a child, as Anne has mentioned in the past "£5 a month is only the cost of a bottle of wine!"

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 email us at the above email address so we can email you future newsletters as this will cut down considerably on our costs. thank you all for your support.

All the staff, children and trustees of the Don McMath Foundation wish you all a happy Christmas and a prosperous New Year.

Anne, Judy and Mick McMath - December 2011