



The Don McMath Foundation

## The Don McMath Foundation Newsletter – December 2016

Charity number: 1100164

76 Manor Road, Verwood, Dorset, BH31 6EA

Telephone: 01202 823317 Email: [info@donmcmath.org](mailto:info@donmcmath.org) Web site [www.donmcmath.org](http://www.donmcmath.org)

Hi All

It's been 7 months since the last newsletter was sent out, during that time everything at the school has been progressing smoothly. As you will probably know they held an election in The Gambia in early December, at the moment there is no indication of what the final result may be. Hopefully whatever the result the school will carry on as normal.

One of our most notable achievements since the school started 14 years ago is that we now have 6 pupils from our first intake in 2002 who have started at the University of the Gambia. We are tremendously pleased for and proud of the pupils who have achieved this. They are studying a range of subjects covering Development Studies, Political Science, Nursing and Journalism. One other pupil who left Nusrat this year has gone to college to study Architecture.

8 of our grade 9 children have passed the national exams and have gone up to Nusrat senior school. We now have 26 children at Nusrat. All of the other grade 9 pupils that left the Don McMath Foundation this summer have gained places in senior schools other than Nusrat. Nusrat is the top senior school in the area but there are others who have a less stringent entry level.

Two of our sponsors, Suzanne and Jessica York recently visited the school A report from Jessica:

"Mum and I visited The Gambia towards the end of November and as with previous visits we spent a couple of days at The Don McMath Foundation School. We managed to take a few items with us that we could give out to the students, including sweets for most of the classes and then pens for the more senior students and mum also gave Anne a bag of clothes to give to any students she thought were in particular need. In the UK I work for Grayling Communications, a public relations company. Grayling managed to donate a number of new digital cameras and also some



camcorders which they asked me to bring over for the students at the school. On the day we arrived at the school there was the inaugural meeting of the school's Press Club. This couldn't have worked out better, a PR company providing resources to support the Press Club – it will be interesting if, in future, the Press Club could contribute to school newsletters. What is always nice is that we can meet the children that we sponsor to see how our small contribution is making such a difference to a child's life and opportunities. The children were, as always, an absolute delight. They are motivated to learn, happy, respectful and polite – the happiness that radiates is what makes this school so special. We also sat with the nursery children, it never ceases to amaze us how you can

take a 5 year old that speaks no English into the school in September and by November they are talking and singing in English – it is truly remarkable. All in all it is a privilege to be a sponsor of such an important charity."

Helen Wray and her daughter Fran also visited the school recently, Fran wrote:

"My parents have been supporting and visiting the Don McMath Foundation School for 8 years and each year bring home impressive stories about their visit. This year I accompanied my parents to experience the school for myself. Walking into the compound I could see numbers of school children busy in their class rooms, quietly working away and listening to their teachers. We went into the main hall which was filled with pupils from age 10 years old all the way up to 17 years old. My Mum introduced me and my career as a Space Systems Engineer (or rocket scientist). I spoke with the pupils and teachers about my work and in general about the solar system. I was extremely impressed with the pupils' knowledge of science and especially about space; it was an honour to share my knowledge and experience to help expand their horizons especially with regard to careers in science.

Some of the pupils had volunteered to present experiments that they had been working on, including a remote control car made out of an old alarm clock, bits of polystyrene tile and bottle caps. Their confidence and presentation skills were way beyond what I had expected.

My work with the Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics Network (STEM) brings me into contact with schools in the UK where I meet many budding scientists; the McMath pupils I met last month were more than a match in terms of knowledge and enthusiasm.

After my talk we walked into the school yard during break time. It was wonderful to see all the pupils immaculately dressed in their uniform but what was even better to see was how happy the pupils were to be at the school."

In November we had an inspection from the Gambian Education Department where they decided that we were doing such a good job that they have made us a "mother" school! This means they advise other schools to come and learn how to run a school. We have had one head so far come for advice, Anne met her, she has a school very nearby which has classes up to G7.

We recently had the results of the Gambian National exams for grades 5 and 8. Grade 5 got an average of 84% across English, Maths, Science and SES with 100% pass in English and 96% pass across the other subjects. Grade 8 got an average of 75% across the same subjects with close to 100% passes in all subjects. Out of the 30 pupils sitting the exams there were only 4 who failed maths, everyone passed in the other subjects.

We have had a couple of changes of teachers recently, Mr Leigh - Lower Basic English and Int Studies and Mr Baldeh - Lower Basic Maths. We are also currently looking for a new French teacher.

Congratulations to Ous (our school administrator) on the birth of his first child, a daughter named Binta, after her mother.

Many thanks to the Church Council of All Saints' Church Guildford who gave us £857 to support the work of the Don McMath Foundation. The money will go a long way. Also to Di Pomeroy's estate for £500. Other notable donations were received from Sam Ahmed, East Dorset Scouts, Southport Rotary and Janie Evans.



Mick and Judy have recently had a clear out in their study and have approximately 1,000 paperbacks to dispose of. Rather than just give them to local charity shop they thought they might be able to raise some money for the school with them. We have had no luck so far in finding someone interested in



buying them so we would be grateful if any of you sponsors have any ideas on how we can raise some money for the school from them.

We have been receiving a monthly standing order payment from an "L. Turner" since September last year. Unfortunately we don't know who L. Turner is so haven't been able to thank them or include them in the newsletter circulation list. If anyone knows who they are could they ask them to get in touch with us.

Hopefully all sponsors of individual children at the Don McMath Foundation (not Nusrat) should have received a copy of their child's class photo in the last few days. If you were expecting one and haven't received it then please get in touch.

**Over the last 12 months we have had new sponsors for 35 children but have lost sponsors for 27 so we are just about holding our own for sponsors. However with the new intake in September we have 64 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](http://www.donmcmath.org) and the email address: [info@donmcmath.org](mailto:info@donmcmath.org). You can also reach Anne and Mick via: [anne@donmcmath.org](mailto:anne@donmcmath.org) and [mick@donmcmath.org](mailto: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 hope you all have a happy Christmas and a prosperous new year.

Anne, Judy and Mick McMath – December 2016

