

# Don McMath Foundation Newsletter

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The Don McMath Foundation Newsletter – 12th February 2004

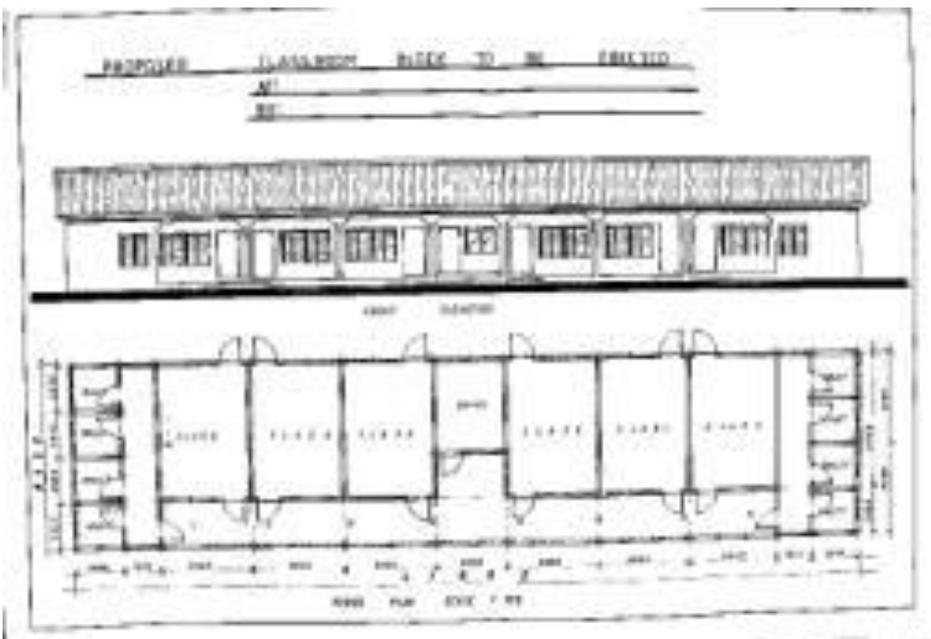
Hello All

Work on the new school has been very slow over the last two months, we are still waiting for the official building permit, the Gambian civil service is based on the UK system but works even slower than they do in the UK. While we have been waiting for the permit we have started making the bricks to build the perimeter wall, we have estimated that we need 15,500 and have made about 13,000 so far. The fathers of the children at the school are making all the bricks by hand. It's very manually intensive but they are able to turn out about 2 bricks a minute when they are working at full speed.



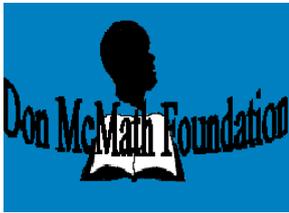
The next stage when we have built the wall is to start work on the first new school building, we estimate that this is going to cost over £20,000 of which we have collected about £5,000 so far. We need to collect another £15,000 over the next 12 months and to do this we once again need your help. There will be 6 class rooms in the first building which will take about 180 pupils (double our present capacity) and we have decided that any individual or company that donates or raises more than £3,000 by the end of the year can have a classroom named after them (or named after anyone else they want), some of you are well on the way to raising that

amount already. We will also be putting up name plaques in the school with sponsors names on to anyone who donates or raises more than £100 between now and January next year, If any of you have any fund raising ideas then please get in touch.



We ended the Christmas term with a party for the children. The teachers made hats for everyone including Anne, and decorated the room with balloons & streamers. Fatou & Anne went out and bought the food, and Anne wrapped over 50 presents, so that each child

could receive a present. The children all danced and played games and went home with their goody bags of food.



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The next evening Anne took the teachers & Fatou to Ali-Baba's for dinner. Abdul, a friend was singing there that night and the teachers were thrilled when he dedicated two songs to them & the school.

When Anne had registered the children she had so many that it was decided to start two new classes instead of one. So during the holidays Anne organised new teachers and found with the help of Barro the children who we would take. This was done on an age basis, the older ones getting a place first, however we still had more children than we could take.



The carpenter made all the new desks & re painted the blackboards & we were set to start the new term with four classes & 98 children. The first day was rather chaotic, but we eventually sorted it out. A small story about the start of term, we had one boy turn up who did not have a place, so we sent him home, however he still came every day so by the fourth day Anne decided that anyone that persistent deserved a place in the school.

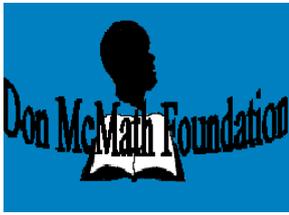
We now have 4 teachers & 2 teachers' helpers, as well as a maid & night watchman. The new staff are Aminata, Anna & Fatou, who join Malin, Teresse & Elizabeth. Malin is returning in two weeks after being on maternity leave. She had a baby girl who she has called Mamie on 10th January.

If it is possible we are hoping to bring Malin over to England, so that she can spend a couple of weeks in English schools to observe their teaching methods. We have had a couple of offers of placements in schools already.

We have been told by a local primary school teacher that our top class (the Blue class) is working at a primary one level, this is a year ahead of the top nursery level. We are really pleased with this achievement.

We are starting to gather together equipment for the school that we intend to ship out to The Gambia later in the year. If any of you are able to help with any of the equipment listed below then please get in touch with Mick and Judy who will arrange collection if necessary.





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The equipment we need includes:

1 Photocopier

2 Pentium PCs (one for the school and one for Anne's house)

1 Printer (Paul McMath is donating a laser jet printer but we will need a second one)

1 Scanner

1 Treadle sewing machine (this will enable us to have the uniforms made for free)

Outdoor play equipment

Leather footballs

Almost any musical instruments

A Globe

Another parachute

We are hoping to rent space in a container later in the year to enable us to transport the equipment and other items over to The Gambia, we have had an offer to help crate up the equipment at cost when we have collected it all but if any of our sponsors have any ties with shipping companies who may be able to help us with the shipping either for free or at reduced rates then can they get in touch with Mick please.

In December we managed to recoup more than £2,000 from the Inland Revenue using the gift aid scheme but we could recoup nearly another £1,000 if everyone returned their Gift Aid declaration form. If you have lost the form and need another one then let us know and we will send a new one. You can also print a new form off from our web site.

We now also have a 12-minute video about the school and what we are doing in The Gambia, if anyone would like a copy then please get in touch with Mick.

Anne, Mick and Judy McMath