

# The Don McMath Foundation Newsletter – 30th March 2011

## The Don McMath Foundation



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Hi All

### THE OPENING CEREMONY

The opening ceremony took place on Wednesday 9th February 2011 and went as well as it possibly could do. One of the teachers (Mr John) with the help of the other teachers organised the rehearsals and was in charge of carrying out the programme. Malen (Nursery head) and the teachers of Nursery and Grade 1 organised the display for their part of the programme.

The day before the opening the children were given the day off, so that the school could be made ready for the opening. The Nursery teachers and some mothers started to prepare the food, as we were feeding all the children and teachers.

On the day the children and teachers arrived early, so they could have a final rehearsal. Then they were all fed and made sure everything was tidy for the opening.



Mick met the British High Commissioner, Mr Sinkinson O.B.E. and showed him around the new building before the programme started. He then greeted all the parents (who were all dressed up in their best and brightest clothes) and sponsors.

The Gambian National Anthem was sung (see videos at <http://donmcmath.myphotoalbum.com/albums.php>)



followed by Muslim & Christian prayers.

The Nursery school and Grade 1 love the video of "The Jungle Book" so it was decided that two songs would be used from that. They then sung some of the songs from the phonics song book. Malen had made some animal masks for the children to wear and the whole performance was delightful.



The High Commissioner cut the ribbon and officially opened the school. He then handed out certificates to all the children who had graduated from Grade 6 to Upper Basic. The last certificate he presented was the Directors Certificate. This certificate has only been given once before and is given to a pupil who has shown behaviour that is an example to others. It was presented to Hamsa Jallow in recognition of the



courageous example and valuable contribution he has made to the school despite adversity. Hamsa is a pupil with many physical problems and has to write with his feet, but despite this is always

cheerful and will always join in all activities. Not many dry eyes among the sponsors.

The High Commissioner gave a speech about the links between Britain and The Gambia.

This was followed by the rest of the school singing some songs and then three pupils from Grade 7 spoke about how having the opportunity to go to school had given them the chance to realise their ambitions.

Then the whole school erupted with a display



of African dancing and singing, music supplied by Principle.

Mr Sanneh gave a vote of thanks from the parents and the head boy thanked everyone on behalf of the pupils. Sponsors and parents were then invited to join in the dancing and to meet each other, which they all joined in wholeheartedly.

Amazingly enough for the Gambia the original timetable was kept to and we finished on time!



The mandate Anne had given to the school was that this should be a joyful occasion and show the sponsors a bit of Gambian culture. I think they fully achieved this and we would like to thank all teachers, pupils, parents and helpers.

#### SPONSORS AND TRUSTEES.

A big thank you to all who flew out for the opening and also to the many sponsors who emailed best wishes for the day.

Thanks also go to the trustees and sponsors for

helping on the day. Thanks to Luke McMath for making the signs for the class rooms.

Thanks to Adam Howard, Andy Jeffries and Paul McMath, for painting the outside of the Upper Basic in the very hot sun before the opening.

Thanks also to Liz, Adam and Belinda who helped in many ways before the opening.



A couple of the sponsors have added their thoughts of the day:  
Catherine Cotterell

I was impressed with the quality of the buildings and the grounds of the school. They were well maintained and clean, and loved the vegetable patch!! The children were so happy to be at school and were always singing and smiling. They were so generous with the little they do have, for example the children offering to share their lunch with me!!!

I had such a fantastic time and I will be going again.

I feel proud to be a sponsor and now I have seen for myself how a small amount can make a difference - I feel even prouder!!

Shelley Oates

The opening of the Don Mcmath Upper Basic was my first time visiting The Gambia and the school. I have followed the progression of the school closely but actually attending the opening ceremony, meeting the children and all who are involved...well lets just say it took my breath away.

On our initial visit before the day of the opening, the children took pride in telling us that they had designed their own uniforms. The younger children showed us some subjects they had been working on and the nursery class sang us a song. One of the many things that impressed me was how much the children loved school! When it was time to go back to class the children cheered and organised themselves into orderly lines for their next lessons.

The children were absolutely lovely, and their manners impeccable. On the opening day the students put on a show and the performances were amazing. I personally loved hearing the children tell us all what they wanted to be when they grew up. After the ceremony we danced and met as many parents and families of the pupils as we could.

The school is so valuable to these students and their dreams for their own futures. Everyone involved in the running and continuation of The Don McMath Foundation should be proud of what they have achieved. I look forward to visiting again very soon.

#### BEGINNING OF TERM

We took on one full-time teacher and two part-time teachers in January, followed by a Math's teacher in February who replaced Mr. Camara who left in January.

This means that we now can offer nine subjects to Grade 7 – 9 (Upper Basic School)

The main headache we have had since September is that no school text books have been printed in The Gambia. This meant that we had to buy supplementary books when we could as a stop-gap. Teachers also searched our library for reading materials for the different subjects and made their own materials. This has been a time consuming and expensive operation. We are also short on some books in other grades and some of our books are over five years old and need replacing.

The latest news is that they are now being printed but are not expected to be for sale until June.

Liz Davies arrived from New Zealand to help in the school for a month. Liz is a teacher in N.Z. and several years ago came to help in the school for three months. Anne asked Liz to assess several children who were struggling in school. She identified what the problems were, and suggested ways these children could be helped. Apart from doing some classroom teaching she also took small groups to give them extra help in subjects that they found difficult. Many thanks Liz, sterling work and so helpful to the teachers and heads.



#### VERWOOD

As we have had so much support from the people of Verwood we have named a classroom after the town, thanks to all Verwood residents who read this, please pass it on to your friends.



#### NURSERY CLASS INTAKE FOR SEPTEMBER 2011

The School had about 170 applications for the intake for September 2011 and Anne has now visited many homes and has chosen those that have a place, which is not an easy task as so many need help.

We still need sponsors for those already attending school and the new intake. If you know any one who could be a sponsor please show them this newsletter and

tell them about us.

#### MOSQUITO NETS

We have been given several donations by sponsors to buy mosquito nets. In the next few weeks Anne will be buying nets, which will need dipping in insecticide. In The Gambia the hospital does this free for pregnant mothers and babies, Anne is hoping to persuade them to do the same for us. If not it will be on with the rubber gloves in the garden of her compound. These will be distributed to as many children as possible, starting with the Nursery. If you would like to contribute to this fund please send to Mick stating that it is for nets (you can also donate via Virgin Money Giving).

Hopefully everyone has received a copy of their child's class photo, if you haven't then please get in touch with Mick. We have added a couple of bits to the school's web site, you can now fill in a sponsorship form on line at <http://www.donmcmath.org/> and as an alternative to paying by cheque or standing order you can pay on line via the Virgin Money Giving website.

Photos and videos of the opening ceremony (and the ones in this newsletter) can be found at <http://donmcmath.myphotoalbum.com/albums.php> if anyone wants copies of any of the pictures then let Mick know and he will email them.

Dates for 2011 are:

Verwood Garden Party - Sunday 3rd July

The Charity Clay Pigeon Shoot at Verwood will be on the 31st July.

Mick and Judy will have a stall at the Verwood Rustic Fayre on Bank Holiday Monday 29th August

Bexhill Garden Party - Sunday 4th September.

Although we have managed to get more sponsors over the last few months we still need more. 30 children started last September 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](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 email us at the above email address so we can email you future newsletters as this will cut down considerably on our costs.

We hope to see lots of you at the summer garden parties, thank you all for your support.

Anne, Judy and Mick McMath

March 2011