

Dear Friends of St. Anthony's Nursery School, Malawi ☺ Dec 2007

In some ways it only seems like yesterday when we began building St Anthony's Nursery School but 2007 marked the 5th anniversary of the school. In October I visited Malawi for two weeks and I am pleased to say the staff and children are all well. I was delighted to be accompanied by my really good friend, Clare, for the visit – it was Clare's first time in Africa so a real eye-opener for her.

If I am honest, 2007 has been quite a challenging year but I am hopeful we are over the worst and 2008 will run more smoothly. In May there was a witchcraft scandal in the village which resulted in Mr Tupunya (the head teacher) being removed from the village as his wife was accused of practising witchcraft. I was also advised to dismiss one of my teachers, Grace, due to her involvement in the scandal. Sadly things didn't end there – Grace tried to claim for unfair dismissal which resulted in a court case. Thankfully, with the support of Jane and Colin Thorneycroft and the Malawian judge, who was on our side, we won the case and only had to pay £55 in costs. I am so grateful to Jane and Colin for representing me in court and resolving this issue.

On a much more positive note the children are really wonderful and doing so well. Their smiles, laughter and enthusiasm make it all worthwhile. Whilst there, Clare and I registered 40 new children for next year and they will start in Class B in the New Year. The school is now in the capable hands of Mariam Makwinja, who has stepped up as head teacher following Mr Tupunya's departure. Mariam has worked at the school since it began and I know she was thrilled to take over the reins. Ghreycioum William, who my father has sponsored through secondary school, replaces Grace and all other staff remain the same. On a really happy note, I was able to reinstate Charles (who is HIV positive) back into his full-time role as gardener as his health is so much stronger. He continues to receive free treatment at the local hospital.

Unfortunately the school also suffered a setback when it was broken into in September. Thankfully the internal security gates held up and the burglars left empty-handed. This is the first time the school has been targeted. I have made sure the insurance is up to date and briefed the night watchman so hope it was a one-off.

I am going to hand over to Clare now who has kindly agreed to write a paragraph on her impressions of the nursery and Malawi:

Having keenly followed the life of St Anthony's Nursery School from its inception 5 years ago, I was hugely excited and felt very privileged to be able to join Gina on her trip to Malawi this year. And I wasn't disappointed!

Malawi is a beautiful, diverse country and her people equally delightful; warm, welcoming and so keen to share their country and culture with you. And St Anthony's truly reflects this character. The building itself, so carefully designed and meticulously maintained can only be an inspiration to the teachers and children who bring the school to life only a daily basis. The teachers are very dedicated and genuinely seem to enjoy what they do and the children's laughter and whoops of delight echoing from every corner of the playground are a sure sign that they love every minute they spend at St Anthony's. It is testament to Gina's incredibly hard work and dedication that the nursery school really does make such a difference to so many lives. I can only thank you all, on behalf of the children, teachers and Gina, for your generosity in supporting St Anthony's – your donations really have given so many children a better and more optimistic start to life.

As a result of all the goings-on this year, I decided it was time to seek further support with the running of the school. In February I started work at Save the Children in London and have been working at the Head Office in the fundraising team. I thoroughly enjoy my job and feel strongly about the work of Save the Children. For this reason I got in touch with Save the Children (United States) who work in Malawi. Whilst in Malawi, I had three meetings with Save the Children US regarding helping to run the nursery

school and all looked promising as I returned to the UK. However they have subsequently decided not to get involved with the day to day operation of the nursery and so I am now seeking alternative support.

Jane and Colin who have kindly worked tirelessly as volunteers over the past 5 years have agreed to continue to pay the wages until an organisation or volunteer is found. I hope I can do this as soon as possible and this may require me to return to Malawi early next year.

Although this year has been challenging I have been overwhelmed with the continued support and gifts from you all. I would like to say a massive thank you to everyone for the donations and help throughout 2007. Your kindness really is making a difference in a very important way.
Wishing you all a wonderful Christmas and special New Year.

With very best wishes,

Gina x

Gina Rose, St. Anthony's Nursery School

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Please send any donations by cheque payable to 'The Nursery School'. Thank you ☺



The staff & children of St. Anthony's Nursery, October 2007

Andrew & I at breaktime



Aleesha & Gilberta



Clare makes friends



Shaikra



The team 2007



Class A in action



A huge.....

