

Dear Friends of St. Anthony's Nursery School, Malawi
December 2015



Well it's been a busy year, both in Malawi and here in the UK so lots to report on as we wrap up 2015!

Sadly the year got off to a bad start for the staff and children of the nursery school as Malawi was hit by severe flooding in January 2015. Many of my team lost parts of their homes (kitchens/toilet blocks etc.) and all lost their precious maize crop. I stepped in and gave all the team additional "emergency funds" to make repairs and rebuild. Thankfully the nursery building stood firm and there were only a few minor repairs to be made – we are grateful it was only cosmetic damage and we didn't experience any loss of life.

Since then the school and team have got back on track and we have had a great year, under the leadership of Martha and Ghreycioum. They are both keen to expand their skills and training and earlier in the year attended a meeting organised by the World Health Organisation regarding the Millennium Development Goals – it taught them about nutritional information and school feeding – it helps them to identify when a child is malnourished and information/advice is passed on to the parents. I asked Martha and Ghreycioum to decide if we should start a school feeding programme and at the moment they feel we do enough and they would like to see parents share this responsibility. It is something I will revisit and keep an eye on.

I topped up the supplies in Malawi by sending over a large box of toys, prizes, puzzles, crayons etc. – it was held up in Customs for a couple of weeks so I had feared it had gone missing but I am pleased to say it did finally make it to the team.

Unfortunately the 2 volunteers I had hoped would spend time at the school in July could no longer make it over but I am pleased to say Sally Feyi-Waboso from the charity Sight 2020 visited the nursery in July and kindly wrote up a little summary of her visit (as well as sending me some photos included later on):

The school is really clean and very organised. We visited without prior notice so nobody was expecting us. Your staff were fantastic and they received us and welcomed us. On our arrival, the children had all gone out on a planned school visit. However, a message was sent and the children returned with the other staff members. The pupils were well behaved and listened to instructions. Basically, the nursery school is a fantastic set up and you should be very proud of what you have achieved. Your Deputy Head Teacher gave us testimony about how wonderful you are and how you paid for his education.

A huge thank you to Sally for being my eyes and ears and spending time at the school, Sally also kindly paid for provisions for the end of year school party, I am so grateful.

We have bought our usual annual supply of mosquito nets for the new starters who joined the school in September. Ghreycioum informed me there were over 25 children on the waiting list for the nursery once all 40 places had been taken. I will keep this in mind as it would be nice to consider a way to ensure all the little ones in the village and surrounding areas get a place at nursery school.

Tragically as I write this I am aware that Malawi again faces a tough few months with 3 million people facing hunger and acute food shortages between now and March 2016. It is being reported that this is Malawi's most severe food crisis in a decade as a result of drought, late and erratic rains during the last farming season, and the extensive floods that occurred in January 2015. I have already given my staff double wages and I am reviewing their monthly wages to increase these from the start of 2016.

When you put into perspective the challenges and hurdles the people of Malawi face you realise just how fortunate and lucky we are. I paid for Ghreycioum's little son to be treated for malaria earlier in the year and I worked out it cost just £1.65, nothing to you or me and such a small amount to save a child's

life. It's moments like this when I remember the absolute need to continue my work and involvement in this fragile and very poor country.

Closer to home I have been very busy too. We moved to Wiltshire just last month (Mark's role is now based in Lyneham, Wiltshire) so I have been unpacking lots of boxes and getting Sebastian settled into our new home and his nursery school. Our new address is below - please don't worry if you have sent any post or Christmas cards to 30 Gillian Avenue, we have a post redirection set up. I am now also on maternity leave from Save the Children as baby number two is due in late January 2016 so I look forward to sharing news about the 4th member of the Saunders family next year ☺

Thank you to all who have given in the last year, the need to help those in Malawi is as important as ever and I am genuinely grateful for the support and donations that continue to come in, thank you so much! Wishing you a wonderful Christmas and a very happy start to 2016.

With all my best wishes, Gina x



Ghreycioum, Mariam and Noel with some of the children during Sally's visit, July 2015



The pupils of St. Anthony's Nursery School

Photos taken by my staff in 2015, this includes the graduation ceremony:



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