

## Dear Friends of St. Anthony's Nursery School, Malawi: December 2018



I hope this finds you well and 2018 has been kind - St. Anthony's Nursery School has had a great year and thankfully Brexit hasn't taken its toll in Malawi 😊

For the first time in years I feel very connected to my school as we are now communicating via WhatsApp which has been a really positive step forward. The staff can now send me longer updates, call me on the phone (for free!) and most importantly send over photos. The staff have sent me 40 photos in the last month which is wonderful to see. All of this has been made possible by Sally Feyi-Waboso from the charity Sight 2020 Direct who kindly spends time at my nursery during her trips to Malawi. On her last visit Sally took out 2 old mobile phones for the staff and got them set up on WhatsApp.

Communication has improved so much that for the first time I have asked the nursery school staff to write an update to include in this newsletter! So rather than hearing from me I will now hand over to the team in Malawi.....

*Hello, everyone! We hope this finds you all well and everything is OK. Well, it has been our pleasure & we thought it very much important to write an annual report to you as 2018 draws to a close.*

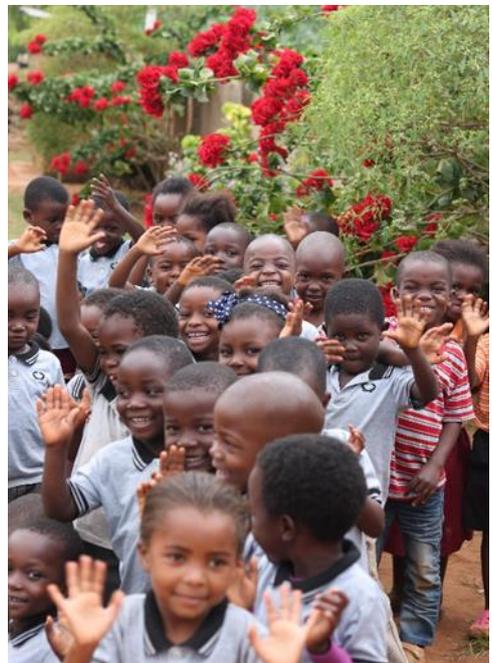
*The Nursery school is doing great job & in fact, it has a good reputation. When the Nursery school children start primary school, they are streets ahead of other pupils - it really does make a difference to their education and gives them a head start. The primary school teachers together with the community do appreciate the great work that St. Anthony's Nursery school through you is doing. This is so lovely indeed!! We thank the team for working very hard and tirelessly to ensure the Nursery school has such a good reputation.*

*So far, the Nursery school has produced a number of students - some of them are currently in the university of Malawi doing their 1st, 2nd, 3rd and 4th years.*

*On behalf of our beloved kids, and on our own behalf, we thank you and all the donors for the help that you shower us. Your super support has created our kids a way to the bright future and we mean it! It's so important to us and a big part to our lives. You provide the kids with porridge, buy them new polo shirts every year and of course they write their work in their new Writing and Number Books that you provide them every year. We are very grateful! We don't take it just for granted - we are deeply touched. MAY GOD BLESS ALL YOUR GOOD WORK!*

*However, there is an ever-increasing waiting list wanting to get into the Nursery school. So, one idea would be to run an afternoon school and have more children attend the Nursery school after lunch in the afternoon. Of course, this would mean working longer hours more particularly for teachers - preparing to run 2 sessions per day, a morning and an afternoon set of Nursery lessons but this does not matter because our target is to have more children attend the Nursery School and hopefully no waiting lists.*

*Finally, we all wish you a Merry Christmas and a prosperous new year. Take care and please, let's keep in touch! We are Martha, Ghreycioum and all the team at St. Anthony's Nursery School*



I am so pleased to be able to include this update from the staff, its lovely to be able to jointly write the newsletter this year.

As the team mention above there is an ever-increasing waiting list of children wanting to get into the nursery school. I am now working with the team to decide whether we increase class sizes by adding another 10 children to each class or whether we run afternoon classes and increase capacity that way (which I think is the preference of the staff and we can enrol many more children this way). I would need to increase my staff's salaries if we do this as they will be working much longer hours but thanks to all the wonderful people who support the school, we are in a good position financially so are fortunate that we can do this.

I am grateful my friend, and ex-Save the Children colleague, Siobhan and her husband visited the nursery in May as they were over in Malawi for a few months volunteering. Siobhan sent through a detailed update and I thought I would share a little extract:

*"Everyone seemed very happy and the school building looked great - really clean, tidy and well-kept as did the garden and plants. The new shutters at the back looked great too. The playground was also well kept although the slide looked like it could do with a lick of paint. There were lots of colourful displays on the walls and the classrooms were bright and lively. The 5-year-old class was learning all about sinking and floating when we arrived. We loved having the opportunity to see the school and meet the children, you've done an amazing job and the staff are really lovely".*

Siobhan also informed me there are a few mini building projects that the staff would like to do (build a storeroom for the kitchen utensils and firewood for making the porridge, cementing the toilet floors, building a sign post, extending the fence and providing a covered area from the rain) so I am working with the staff to get quotes and this work completed.

Throughout the year we have provided porridge on a daily basis and purchased new polo shirts and mosquito nets for the children. In July I sent over 4 boxes of First Step Books, pencils, balloons, bouncy balls, medals, stickers etc. → The staff received a mid-year bonus and in October I ensured all staff received money for fertiliser to grow their maize (they are growing extra for the nursery children too).



Vincent (who worked for Zomba Diocese and retired earlier this year) hasn't really stayed in touch or given my staff any support this year. He did agree to stay on to help with the nursery but this hasn't really happened. We have been informed a gentleman has finally taken over from Vincent at the Diocese, focusing on education in the community, so we will reach out to him to see if he is willing to give the nursery staff any extra support or advice, if and when they need it.

In the last few months I have connected with Major David Squirrel who lives about 45 mins from me in Suffolk. He is retired from the Salvation Army and also has projects/connections over in Malawi - he is due to go over to Malawi in Feb 2019 with his daughter Bethany (who is a nursery school teacher!) so they plan to visit the nursery school and report back which is brilliant.

Thank you to all who have given in the last year, I am genuinely grateful for the support and donations that have allowed the nursery to expand and grow. Special thanks this year must go to Debi Knight and St. Andrews Church in Clevedon, as well as the pupils of Green Lane Primary in Surrey.

Wishing you a really wonderful Christmas and a very happy and successful start to 2019.



With all my best wishes, **Gina** x



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Please make cheques payable to "The Nursery School" ☺ Thank you

