



Dear Friends

A round up of news from last term and a look forward into 2017.

Last term:

New students and staff arrived after the summer break in September. At the beginning of term there were 15 new hearing impaired students, mostly between the ages of 6 and 7 years, who began their education and were welcomed into the caring environment of St Joseph's School. There are more on a waiting list and it's hoped that some of these will be able to join the school over the next few months. The school also welcomed 4 new teachers, one in the tailoring department and the others contributing to the general school curriculum. They are already making a real difference to school life.

Finda is one of the teachers at the school and has a hearing impairment herself. She is responsible for most of the secondary science and maths teaching. She has been on maternity leave and has just had twins and we send congratulations to her and her husband. The school has missed her because it has been very difficult to cover her teaching but she is expected back in January. Everyone is looking forward to her return.



The students who took their BECE (Basic Education Certificate Examination) all passed. This was a fantastic achievement and a real tribute to the teachers.



All this success occurred despite the school having to contend with continuing problems with electricity. Violent storms disrupted the power supply, blowing an ancient fuse box and burning out wall sockets. And then the local hydro-electric power station shut down with technical problems leaving the school totally reliant on its own generator which is old and unreliable.

There was both sad and joyful news at the end of 2016.

The sad news was that the head teacher Mrs Umu Toure died after a short illness. She started teaching at the school in 1987 and has also been involved with the Department for Special Educational Needs at Makeni University. If you go to the school's website (www.stjosephshischool.com) and click on the tab for "staff" you will be able to hear a short interview with her from 2012. (The views she expresses are her own personal views). Her funeral was on 16 December. Our thoughts are with her family at this sad time.





The joyful news was that in December the Irish President Michael D Higgins presented Sister Mary with a Presidential Distinguished Service Award for her work with the disadvantaged in Sierra Leone over the last 44 years. She was also honoured by her home county of Donegal with a special reception the following week. Tribute was paid to her for her dedication to the hearing impaired children while battling with the ravages of civil war and then Ebola. In her usual modest way she refused to accept the credit for all her achievements and said she simply worked as a member of a team. She is truly an amazing person and an inspiration to us all.

Looking into 2017:

Kate is one of our newer trustees. She was Sister Mary's assistant for some time before returning to the UK and marrying Dixon who she met in Makeni! They both returned to the school for two weeks in November to carry out a feasibility study of Sister Mary's plans for the future of the school buildings. They drew up extensive plans, talked to local trades people and then with Sister Mary, and



came to the conclusion that the first phase of the redevelopment scheme (the toilet, showers and laundry block) should be achieved through the refurbishment of the existing building. The plans have been costed, security and safeguarding issues have been addressed and it is hoped that work will start very soon.



We are really grateful to all our individual supporters, schools, colleges and other organisations who have risen to the challenge and donated to the school. If you want to help support the school and Sister Mary's work please go to the Virgin Money Giving page: www.virginmoneygiving.com/charities/FriendsofStJosephs

If any of you would like to contribute an article that we can publish in a future edition of this newsletter we would love to hear from you. Please email us on forthehearingimpaired@gmail.com. We try and publish a regular newsletter but without any paid staff "regular" seems to translate to "irregular"! In between issues you can follow us on Facebook: (<http://www.facebook.com/stjoskids>) and Twitter: (www.twitter.com/Frnds_StJosKids) for all the up to date news.

All good wishes for 2017 from Linda Freestone (Chair) and all the trustees

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