



Dear Supporters and Friends of St Joseph's

People often wonder how the school is organised with such a huge age range, ability range and range of hearing impairment. The school is committed to providing education according to individual needs so a lot of work goes into assessing and placing each student appropriately. We thought you might like to have an idea about how this all works in practice so we asked the educational audiologist, Monica Tomlin, to give us an overview.

School Structure:

There are approximately 200 students ranging in age from 4 to 25 years. About half the children are boarders from all over Sierra Leone. The others attend daily.



Young boarders at play

First School (6 classes)

Age range: 4-8

Most young children arrive in school with little or no language of any kind. If their hearing loss is profound they are unlikely to be able to speak at all. Others may speak a little but mostly in Temne or another tribal language. Communication is mainly through signs and gestures until they receive hearing aids and learn to listen, watch and attend to their teachers. American finger signs are used for letters and numbers. (ASL). The English language is used throughout the Sierra Leonean education system so every effort is made to teach them to read and write in English.



Newly admitted pupils: November 2016

Middle School (8 classes)

Age range; 7-14 (or more)

As far as possible the middle school pupils are taught the normal mainstream primary curriculum with a great deal of extra work on language and communication skills.

After 4 to 6 years in middle school the majority of the children are entered for the National Primary School Examination (NPSE) which all children in Sierra Leone have to sit at the end of Year 6 in primary school. For some this is still too difficult even at the age of 15 or 16. These children will then move into the vocational department.

Junior Secondary Department (5 classes)

Age range: 12- 19

The normal time spent in Junior Secondary School is 3 years. Most of the deaf children need at least 4 years to reach the standard for the Basic Education Certificate Exam (BECE). In 2008 it was decided to try teaching the junior secondary curriculum to the first few children to succeed at the NPSE.

About a third of the Junior Secondary students are late admissions to St Joseph's having spent some years in mainstream primary schools. Many have become deaf after malaria or other illnesses such as measles, mumps or Ebola. They will naturally have better speech and language than children who were born deaf or became deaf before they learned to speak.



*Junior Secondary
maths class*

Senior Secondary Department (10 students)

Age range 18-25

If the students get sufficiently good grades at BECE they can continue their education a mainstream Senior Secondary School. Occasionally they enrol at a senior school near their home elsewhere in Sierra Leone. However most choose to remain at St Joseph's School for the Hearing Impaired and even the boys enrol for classes at the adjacent Secondary School for Girls!

Because of their deafness they require extra teaching after normal school hours and on Saturday mornings.

Two of the boys who started junior secondary work in 2008 have completed 4 years secondary course and sat for the West African Schools Secondary Certificate in Education (WASSCE) last summer. Both are currently acting as teaching assistants in the Junior Secondary School whilst



continuing their studies. They are planning to re-sit some subjects with the aim of improving their grades and progressing their education further.

Mr Samuel Sesay with Senior Secondary students

Vocational Department (28 students)

Age range 15 – 20

This section is for those students for whom a normal secondary curriculum would be inappropriate. They still need much teaching in basic language and communication skills. (very often with the assistance of Sign Language). The school offers instruction in agriculture, tailoring, catering, woodwork, IT, and hairdressing (at a local hairdressing salon). Where possible students go on work experience, develop entrepreneurial skills at school or develop skills which will allow them to be self employed.

Over the past years a number of these young people have been admitted to St Joseph's technical institute in Lunsar (about 20 miles from Makeni). They have earned certificates in joinery, agriculture or masonry. This year three boys have enrolled in a new technical college in Makeni



Hairdressing students in the vocational department. They are dressed in the uniform of the Hair Salon

Teacher Training;

Children with severe hearing difficulties need to be taught in small classes by well trained, dedicated teachers. Recruiting, training and keeping good teachers is a major problem. Prior to appointment all have teacher training certificates but the standard of education is often low. Once appointed, teachers receive basic training in the education of deaf children. Following completion of 2 years teaching, those who are able to do so, study for a degree or diploma in education for the hearing impaired at the University of Makeni (UNIMAK).

Teachers receive a meagre salary from the government to work weekdays from 8.00am to 1:30pm only. In St Joseph's, most classes continue to 3.00pm but students studying for the BECE or attending Senior Secondary School are taught until 4.00pm. Some extra classes also take place on Saturdays and evenings. It is only due to the generosity of donors that is possible to pay the teachers for this extra work.

This Academic Year 2017-18

Seven new teachers were appointed in September 2017. They have all recently completed their basic Teachers Certificate (TC). None had any previous teaching experience or any knowledge of deafness but they all seem keen to learn and so far we are pleased with the progress they are making. There are 4 teachers in the second year at UNIMAK and 2 more enrolled for the foundation year. Samuel Sesay and Siddie Kanu, who are experienced senior staff, are due to get their B.Ed. in Special Education in March 2018.

About 12 new children aged from 7 to 13 started in September 2017 and have been slotted into appropriate classes for the age and ability. Another intake of eight 4 to 7 year olds started in November 2017 and a new nursery class has been established.

Please pray that there are no more disasters like civil wars or Ebola outbreaks so that the school can move forward and continue to provide care and education to hearing impaired children in Sierra Leone.

Many thanks for your support without which the school would be unable to do this valuable work.

Monica Tomlin - January 2018

If you'd like to know any more about the work being done, or ask anything about the future projects we have planned at the school, please do get in touch by emailing: forthehearingimpaired@gmail.com. And like us on Facebook www.facebook.com/stjoskids or follow us on www.twitter.com/Frnds_StJosKids for all the up to date news.

Fund raising:

We'd love to hear from anyone who might be keen to help through fundraising – however big or small, your donations really do make a huge difference, and we know that Sister Mary and everyone in the school would like to thank all those who so kindly and generously support the Friends of St Joseph's. If you would like to donate in any way please email us or go to www.virginmoneygiving.com/charities/FriendsofStJosephs

Or alternatively please buy some tickets for our forthcoming charity dinner on Saturday 24 March at the Essex County Cricket Ground in Chelmsford. You will find a poster advertising this event as a separate attachment. Just email us to let us know you are coming and we will let you have full details.

Refurbishment of the sanitation block



We are pleased to report that this project is now up and running and all the facilities are now being used. We will give you more detailed information and more photos in our next newsletter. Kate Dixon, one of our trustees is travelling out to the school in April and will give a full report on the completion of this project. We will then make decisions about future projects to support after full discussions with Sister Mary.

The Toilet Twinning Project

Many thanks to all of you who supported this fundraising initiative. Some of you have received photos of your sponsored toilet but many apologies to those who haven't yet had them. They were being organised by Sister Mary's assistant but she has now left. When Kate visits in April she will make sure that all remaining plaques are in place and will photograph them. The photos will be sent out to the rest of the donors on her return to the UK.

New address:

Please note that the registered address of the Friends of St Joseph's School is now Teko House, Spring Lane, West Bergholt, Colchester, Essex, CO6 3HJ.

Data Protection:

If you have received this email by mistake or no longer wish to subscribe just reply to it and you will be taken off the list. Do remember to tell us if you change your email address.

New legislation is to be introduced in May 2018 strengthening the rights of individuals to protection of their personal data held by organisations. We are preparing a data protection policy and a privacy statement, which will be published on our website within the next few weeks. Please email us if you would like a copy.

With all good wishes from Linda Freestone and the trustees.