



NEWSLETTER

Letter from Helen Jones

Millennia ago a Chinese philosopher wrote “A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step.”

18 years ago, I travelled to Darjeeling in the foothills of the Himalayas for what would be the first of many adventures in the area. I was drawn back again and again by the beauty of the surroundings and the kindness of the local people, and lying in my tent one night I dared to dream of providing quality schooling for some of the region’s most disadvantaged children.

I found a willing partner in my scheme. Rachana, wife of my trekking guide, had always wanted to run a school, although she already had a full time job in the forestry department. It was soon established that we would open a school for which I would find the funds, and Rachana would do the rest: finding a building, appointing teachers... so not much really!

During the tiny school’s first year I watched a pre-school lesson in horror. Solemn little 3 year olds sat at tiny desks in a classroom that was little more than a dark cupboard in a once derelict building. The aim of the lesson was to learn the English names of 4 animals. They stood to recite L - I - O - N. Over and over again they chanted with glazed eyes (and the next day was just the same). Our two untrained teachers had nothing but the memories of their own inadequate teachers to guide them.

Fast forward to 2024, and we arrive in a large, bright, purpose built, colourful room, abuzz with activity. On a carpeted area the children sit on the floor in small groups each with a teacher who gently encourages every child, as they thread coloured pasta tubes on cords, make geometric shapes with playdoh, practise letters on tiny slates, or tell stories and dance to songs. In a carpet free area they paint, or fill buckets with sand, learning English words through repetition as they play or sing. 18 years after it opened, Roseberry School is now considered to have the best pre-school department in Darjeeling, staffed with loyal teachers and assistants who continue to learn as they work, guided by our enthusiastic senior teacher.

Whilst SAI has always provided what help and support it could, the fact is that the Roseberry staff have created this wonderful school through their own efforts. Their achievements are astonishing. Somehow they help their disadvantaged pupils to grow so much in life skills and confidence that they are very well placed to take their first steps in a competitive world.

We are delighted to see how much can be achieved with the support and encouragement our tiny charity is able to provide, and I’m so glad that we dared to take that first step.

P.S. Our oldest ex-pupils, college educated, will be ready to take up their first posts next year.

Banking matters

Our original account with Natwest is no longer in use.

Our current account is now with CAF Bank.
Acc. No 00034784
Sort code 40-52-40

Heartfelt thanks to all who managed to navigate the system and move regular donations by standing order across to the new account.

Contact

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