school aid India

NEWSLETTER

Letter from Helen Jones

March is a great time in Darjeeling. It is the 'dry' season, and on good days the snowy peaks of the Himalayas stand out sharp and clear on the horizon against a deep blue sky. The air is fresh, and the cuckoo can be heard far below across the tea gardens. By the end of February, teachers and pupils alike are already eager to get back to their lovely, bright school after spending the 12-week winter break cooped up in their little, dark homes. March is a time of exciting new beginnings for all the tiny 3-year-olds joining playgroup, but it is also a time of rounding off, when news filters in of the successes of ex-pupils as they move on to another phase of their lives.

This year, as always, the staff were busy in school a month before it re-opened, cleaning and decorating their classrooms so that they were well organised for the start of Roseberry's 19th year. The school has sadly lost a much-loved teacher who had to resign due to ill health. A replacement has been appointed.

Roseberry School now has 198 pupils, which means that the smaller classrooms are becoming rather crowded, but the teachers are managing the situation well. Here at School Aid India, we are working with the senior staff on various steps to maintain and improve the educational opportunities Roseberry offers during the next decade.

Pupil News

It has always been a cause of sadness that Roseberry is unable to admit pupils with significant mobility problems. Access is too difficult for some, with several flights of steep steps. The experience of 9-year-old Sagarika is therefore particularly good to hear. She, like both her parents, suffers from dwarfism, but she nevertheless manages to negotiate the access steps as well as the internal stairs. In the classroom, she has her own special desk and chair. It is hard to tell what the future may hold for her, as she is of only average ability, but she is a cheerful girl with lots of friends. Her teachers are concerned that she may struggle at secondary school and hope to help her with some extra tuition when the time comes.

Another unusual case is that of 3-year-old Divyansh (pictured right), who has just started pre-school. Both his parents are deaf and dumb, and the family communicates by signing, but Divyansh has normal speech and hearing, and is enjoying school life thanks to his uncle, who enrolled him and brings him every day. Divyansh loves playing with his friends, but he is happy working things out on his own too.

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 continue to support the work of Roseberry School with regular payments.

Contact

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Roseberry seems to have more than its fair share of troubled families, and the teachers are experienced at providing a supportive environment for every child. Nine-year-old Subham is a pleasant and conscientious boy who recently lost his father. The man worked as a waiter in a local café for a very low wage. To supplement the family income, the mother worked as a housekeeper in a hotel. It seems a particularly cruel blow that she has now lost her job because, as a Hindu widow, she was expected to take time off work to perform various rituals for her deceased husband. In spite of his home situation, Subham continues to work diligently at school and enjoys being with his friends, so school has become a place of refuge for him.

Our ex-pupils continue to delight everyone with their successes. This year, several have embarked on well-paid careers. The army is, as ever, a big draw because of its pay as well as medical cover for the whole family. If a boy gets into the army, the family can heave a big sigh of relief and look forward to a more prosperous future. So there were big celebrations this year when three ex-Roseberry boys obtained places.

Two of the girls landed equally sought-after posts as air stewards. Requirements included a high standard of spoken English as well as good social skills and confidence. Both girls are employed by Indigo Airlines and are now leading busy lives in the thick of it, travelling abroad as well as crisscrossing India. (Khushi Rai pictured right).

