

# St Edmund's Catholic Primary School

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Headteacher: Mrs E Higgins

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Dear Parents,

## **ST MICHAEL'S PRIMARY SCHOOL IN MANNI, BURKINA FASO**

As you know, over the course of the half-term holidays I paid a visit to a small Catholic primary school to the north east of Burkina Faso. St Michael's Catholic Primary School had made an appeal to me this time last year to find a school here in the UK which would be happy to befriend them.

And so I set off for what, in my imagination, would be a quiet visit to take a look at the school, meet the children and teachers, take a few photos and then leave.

As Fr Lambert and I entered the town in our car we were met by a great, jubilant and noisy crowd and I wondered if we had stumbled upon some big town celebration. With a shock it occurred to me that what seemed to me to be the whole town had turned out to welcome us. We travelled on through the town in a small cavalcade of cars, the route lined with rapturous crowds and then, for the last stretch, the children from St Michael's School. Climbing out of the car I was then swept along in a procession towards the church in Manni, led through the crowds by drummers and excited adults and children.

At the church I was met with yet more crowds, more children, a choir and .... the dreaded microphone. As soon as I saw the crowds and the microphone I knew that this was going to be an important hour or so of songs, dancing and drumming and speeches.

The first thing which happens when a visitor is welcomed to an event such as this in Burkina Faso is that they are given a bowl of 'white water' from which to drink. This is a bowl of water mixed with flour. As I suspected, after the white water, there alternated speeches, drumming, dancing and singing, all by way of welcoming me to their town. At last it was my turn to stand up and say something, and I heartily regretted not having had the foresight to imagine such a welcome and to therefore have prepared a speech (in the inevitable French) for such an occasion. I did reasonably well, thanking them for their warm (overwhelming!) welcome and telling them how delighted St Edmund's is to have this special friendship. I told them that I / we would do our very best for them all in the years to come.

I was presented with a large banner with the names of both "Ecole St Michel" and "Ecole St Edmund's" and also a beautifully wrapped present, both of which I have brought back to school with me to bring out at the assembly I will be giving to the children. Later on that day, and at the end of a meeting I had with the teachers of St Michael's, I had the opportunity to give the footballs and skipping ropes to them – they were *really* delighted.

My assembly for the children will be on Monday 9<sup>th</sup> March at 1.30pm. I will be happy to tell you, the parents, more about my trip at a presentation to parents at **3pm** that same day, **Monday 9<sup>th</sup> March**. Added to that is a page I will be setting up on our website where I will put all the photos and videos which were taken at Manni – watch this space!

Thank you, in advance, for getting behind this new friendship.

Mrs Nicholls