

# FOOD FOR THE POOR



## **SCHOOL CONSTRUCTION PROJECT** Riverside Basic School



**Kingsvale District, Dias P.O., Hanover**

***"As often as you did it to one of the least of my brothers  
and sisters, you did it to me."*** *Matthew 25:40*

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## **Overview/ Background**

Over the last four and half decades, the administrators at Riverside Basic School have experienced their own share of challenges. During the earlier years, students and staff were forced to 'move about' in order to continue classes.

- ❖ **Ms. Beulah Pryce, Principal** at the institution for the past forty-two (42) years, explained that, "The school originated from a verandah but was then moved to the Wesleyan Methodist Church. It wasn't long after, that it relocated to the Riverside Seventh Day Adventist Church, then to a bamboo building. Unfortunately, that structure was blown down and we had to move yet again to a verandah. In the 1970's, things started looking up for us and we finally had a building constructed for the school where we remained over the years."

As time went by, new challenges emerged including; lack of space due to an increasing population, deterioration of the physical structure and lack of all the amenities required for an early childhood facility, such as play equipment, sick bay, steady water supply and proper fencing. Administrators tried, but without success, to improve the challenges they faced.

Thanks to donors from the Caribbean Chinese Association, Food For The Poor was able to intervene and the generous support given by the friends and families of the Association far exceeded monetary contribution. They also gave of their time and efforts by participating in the construction of the new, self-contained and spacious school building.

The completed project includes three (3) classrooms outfitted with child friendly desks and chairs, lunchroom, office with sickbay, bathrooms for students and staff, kitchen equipped with stove, refrigerator and adequate storage cupboards, various play equipment, installation of security fence and water harvesting system with tank.



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*Riverside Basic School  
constructed by:  
Caribbean Chinese Association & Food For The Poor*





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Since the construction of the new school, “Things have been going great. This project is a huge upliftment for the community of Kingsvale and we are tremendously grateful. Having such a conducive school environment makes our work lighter and it feels as though a burden has been lifted from our shoulders. Gone are the days when Inspectors from the *Early Childhood Commission\** would tell us that we must fix ‘this and that’ (referring to areas that were unsuitable/lacking). Though we are still awaiting a visit from them (ECC Inspectors), I am confident that for the first time, we will be getting a positive review,” Ms. Pryce happily declared.

She continued to say “We can finally offer an eating area, sickbay, secured play area and play equipment to our students. We hoped and prayed for a play area because the children would just run all over, and at times, wandered off the school compound due to lack of proper fencing. The fence is really appreciated because in the past, after school was dismissed, individuals walked freely onto the premises and tied their animals on the compound for them to feed. As can be expected, animal excrements would be left for us (teachers) to clean up each morning. This was just not sanitary, but we didn’t have proper fencing.”

Ms. Pryce is also pleased to have a spacious and well-ventilated classroom, which, “The children are enjoying. I display various activity corners and the students love interacting with the items in those areas. It was difficult to have the areas displayed in the past because we had little to no space.”



**Now that she has sufficient classroom space, Ms. Pryce can better engage students during lessons by having various displays.**

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Another well needed and fully utilized component is the lunchroom. Ms. Pryce mentioned that, “We didn’t have a designated eating area before and the children had to eat inside their classroom, which would be very messy after lunch. As a result, extra time would be spent cleaning the desks and floors which reduced the time spent on teaching.”



*Lunchroom where children now have their meals daily. “After lunch, the children return to their class that would still be clean and they can continue their lesson immediately. The cook cleans the lunchroom after each meal,” Ms. Pryce commented.*

There are approximately fifty-nine (59) students enrolled at the Riverside Basic School. However, “We anticipate an increase in the population soon, as more parents are expressing an interest in registering their children at our school, now that we have a better and secure environment,” Ms. Pryce beamed.

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Pointing out the various improvement at the school, she also said, “I am happy that we got a water tank because we also had a water problem. We received little to no water from the main *National Water Commission* (NWC)\*\* pipes and as such, we resorted to purchasing and storing water in two tanks. However, on numerous occasions, the truck would be late with the delivery and we would eventually run-out of water and were forced to dismiss school earlier than the normal 3p.m. Teachers and parents would bring water from home and we also asked the Clinic that is next to the school. Unfortunately, school was only held half days because we could not keep the children at school without running water.”



***“Thanks to Food For The Poor and donors, we now have a third tank. We will still have to purchase water because of the challenge in the community but with the third tank we can store more water. This means that even when the truck is late we will have the supply from the third tank to use in the interim. What is great is that we also received a water harvesting system which should cut the cost and amount of water that we will purchase and those funds can be channeled to other areas,” Ms. Pryce added.***

Ms. Pryce expressed appreciation saying, “Thanks to all the donors of the Caribbean Chinese Association and Food For The Poor for this wonderful project. We have spacious and lovely amenities all of which we could not attain without your support. We will continue to pray for God’s richest blessing for you.”

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*\*The Early Childhood Commission (ECC) was established by the Early Childhood Commission Act (2003), in keeping with the strategic goal of the Government of Jamaica to improve the quality of early childhood care, education and development within the early childhood sector.*

*\*\*National Water Commission (NWC) is the governing body responsible for providing potable water across the island.*

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- ❖ **Ms. Sadie Barnes**, has been employed at the school approximately 35 years, teaching the class one students, those that are three (3) years old. Reminiscing about the challenges they faced over the years, she said, “I remember the heat and congestion I had to cope with in my class. As a matter of fact, it wasn’t a classroom. Instead, I was having classes in a passageway that could hardly hold (20) students at once. Sometimes, I was forced to select students who were advanced in the lessons and send them to the 4-year-old class. That way, the limited space I had would be somewhat better for those children who remained in my class. Though not the best solution, we had no alternate solution.”



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***Ms. Sadie Barnes now has her own, spacious class where learning charts are permanently displayed.***

Ms. Barnes added that, “Having my own classroom is a very big improvement. I can move around freely; the children are more comfortable and I get to display the learning areas which I could not do before. Back then, I would take the children outside at times because it was too clustered and they fussed. As a matter of fact, all my story time activities were held outside.”

Though the staff struggled to perform their daily activities, “As a team, we always prayed and hoped that one day someone would hear our cry. When we heard that Food For The Poor was going to build a school for us, I could not sleep that night and I prayed even harder. The first day that I started using my new classroom I was bubbling with joy. It was unbelievable. Imagine, I had my own class...I now have more time to interact with my students because I can move around and talk to them. I can tell that the children are loving the facility. They are so excited to see the charts and learning materials around them and because of that, they participate more in class which is attributed to the fact



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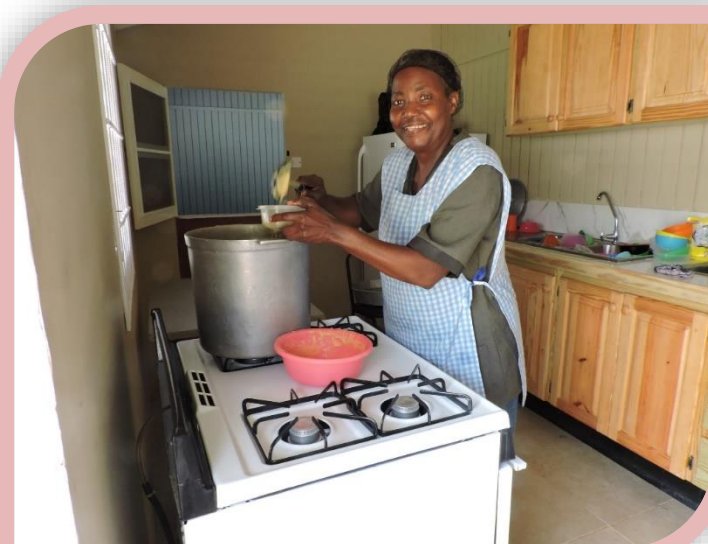
### **Kingsvale District, Dias P.O., Hanover**

that they now have a spacious and comfortable class of their own. It's joy to me, I can't stop talking about how comfortable I am. I testify that God has been so good to us, we prayed and he answered our prayer. Thank you Caribbean Chinese Association and Food For The Poor for really pushing and making this a reality for us. We can't stop praying for you and all those you help," Ms. Barnes responded gratefully.

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- ❖ Another member of the team since 2012 is the **Cook, Ms. Julie Sinclair**, who ensures that the children have hot nutritious meals daily, a task which was becoming very tiresome. Ms. Sinclair explained, "I had some very challenging situations to deal with. For starters, the kitchen was way too small. What was frustrating though was the stove, only two of the four burners worked and those were very slow. Which meant, lunches were always late, even though I started cooking meals very early. The standard lunch time is normally 11:30am and I would be about 15 minutes late. At times, it was even half an hour late."

*"Since we have been using our new stove, lunch is not late anymore and I am very happy for that," Ms. Sinclair said with a smile.*



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Due to lack of a proper kitchen facility, “We had a problem with rodents, roaches and ants. Sometimes, I am cooking and I would just see the rat running across the floor. In the evening, we set rat-traps and baits, but the problem never went away because we had no mesh at the door. In addition to that, the door was falling apart because of insect infestation,” Ms. Sinclair continued.

There was also insufficient storage in the kitchen. As a result, “Dishes and utensils were stored in plastic drums because we didn’t have sufficient, clean and hygienic areas.”



*“There was also no hand wash sink like what we now have. I used the same sink to wash hands, plates and for food preparation.”*

*Sink for food preparation utensils.*

*Hand wash sink.*

Ms. Sinclair expressed thanks saying, “I feel very good coming to work these days. When I look at the difference and convenience I now have, compared to the previous kitchen, it makes me more interested in my work. I am so happy that a kitchen was in the plan. I love the stove, and even the fridge that we now have is bigger than before and can store more items. It’s 100% better. We also didn’t have quality tiled floors like this, which is much easier to clean. To the Caribbean Chinese Association and Food For The Poor: I appreciate you and all the hard work that you have done.”

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**Ms. Arlene Mairs**, teaches the five (5) year old students at Riverside Basic School. She joined the team on January 8, 2018 but has been teaching in the Early Childhood profession for over twenty-five (25) years.

Being Familiar with the requirements of an early childhood facility, Ms. Mairs said, “I really think effective teaching and learning can take place in this environment. I really appreciate the fact that when I exhibit children’s work in the various corners, they can remain displayed throughout the entire period and I don’t have to take them down as I would at the pervious school that I taught.”

*Ms. Mairs and her students enjoy the comfort of their own, spacious and designated classroom.*



She continued, “I would like to say thank you for doing this for the community because although I was not teaching at Riverside before, I am from a neighbouring community where we do not have an early childhood facility and I think children from my community will be attending this school. Thank you to all those who participated in building this school for the community of Kingsvale. It is a well appreciated gesture.”



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- ❖ **Mrs. Melisha Kerr-Murray, five (5) year old daughter, Javanie Murray** is a student at the school. In addition to that, her two older children are past students of the institution. Like many parents, Mrs. Murray has always had a problem with the limited space at the school. “Every grade needs their own classroom but without space for separation, students would freely walk over to the other classes. I remember one class that didn’t have a separate entrance and people would walk through another class to get to that one. It was a concern for me because students would always be disturbed and distracted when people walked by.”



*“I am happy we now have spacious classrooms because I can stop and check on Javanie’s school work without disturbing other students. It’s an overwhelming feeling to know that my daughter now has her own classroom and people can’t just walk through whenever they want. Thanks, because she is in a better school, she has more space and she is in a more secure environment. She is learning more because they don’t have any interruptions as before.”*

**Mrs. Murray emphasized.**

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- ❖ Speaking of her absolute favourite things, **Javanie Murray** said, “I really, really love the swing, it’s the best. I swing everyday with my friends. I love my class, I love my teacher and my friends.”

*Javanie (right) is joined by one of her friends as they enjoy the swing.*



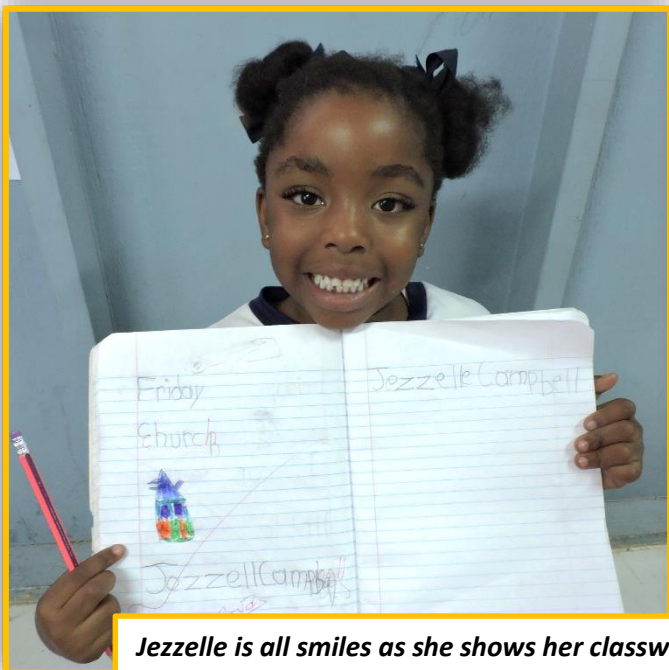
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- ❖ **Five (5) year old Jezzelle Campbell**, is excited about her new school. Cheerfully she said, "I love my new school, I love going outside to play as well. I also love playing with the toys inside my class and I love doing my work. I love my pretty chairs and desks."



*Jezzelle is all smiles as she shows her classwork and spends some time in the nature corner in class.*

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