



FOOD FOR THE POOR

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SCHOOL CONSTRUCTION PROJECT

Martin Primary and Infant School



Albany P.O., St. Mary

Final Feedback

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

Martin Primary and Infant School
Albany P.O., St. Mary, Jamaica

Overview

Having lost everything to a fire in October 1998, the then Martin Primary School was never the same. Due to this incident, the school downgraded from a grade three facility, with over three hundred (300) students, to a grade two institution with the current enrolment of one hundred and forty (140) students. Additionally, because of the added infant department, a number of the primary classes were converted into multi-graded classes which means that more grades are hosted in one classroom space.

Thanks to Food For The Poor and its donors, the school was gifted with an infant department, a guidance counselling office and a resource room, and is now one step closer to again becoming one of the most popular schools in rural St. Mary.



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Impact/Testimonials

- ❖ **Mrs. Sylvia Cameron Lennon, Principal of the Martin Primary and Infant School for the last 4 years and educator for the last 20 years, has experienced one of her proudest moments at the institution when Food For The Poor and donors extended their kindness to the school family by constructing an infant department for the nearly 40 infants at the school. “When we heard we were receiving an entire building and not just a few classrooms, we were over the moon.”**

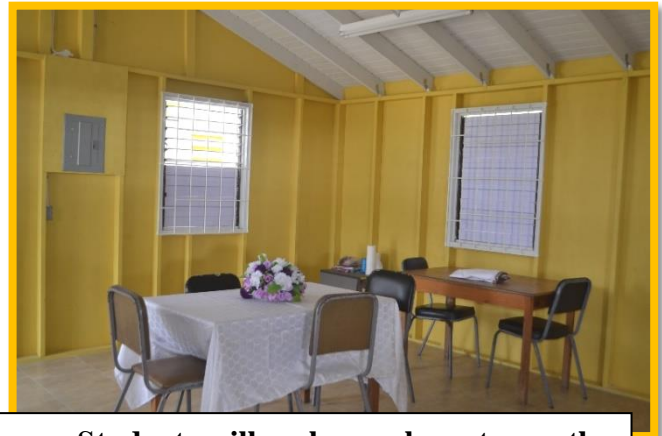
Mrs. Sylvia Cameron Lennon proudly stands in front of the sign at the newly constructed Infant Department.



According to the Mrs. Cameron Lennon, the Infant Department of Martin Primary started in 2013. However, without their own space, administrators were forced to host the infants in two of the primary school classrooms, which curtailed the learning and teaching experience for the entire school population. “We started out with 15 students and we tried our best to work around not having separate amenities for the infants. As the infant enrolment numbers increased, we recognized that we were actually running out of space. The bathrooms, in particular, posed a challenge as the infants would be picked on by the older children. The needs magnified when we found ourselves with 40 infants, crowded classrooms, which forced some of the classes outside on the corridor. When it rained, we encountered additional challenges because everyone had to be huddled together in a small space.”

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Also, we were really in need of a guidance counsellor's office. We have a lot of sensitive cases handling at our school, which calls for privacy. Our guidance counsellor had sessions in the staff room, sometimes a classroom and at other times, in the principal's office. For her line of work and a population of 145, a private area was needed as these areas were all unsuitable. We have had students who are rape victims for example and in such instances, a private area is necessary, so having this office is well-appreciated."



Photos showing the school's new Resource Room. Students will no longer have to use the lunchroom as a resource room, thanks to the generous donors.

It was as a result of experiencing these challenges that the school sought help from Food For The Poor. "We asked Food For The Poor for additional classrooms but we had no idea that we would receive an entire building for the infants, plus the guidance counselling office and a resource room. We are the envy of the community and other schools in and around the area. Everyone is picking their brains trying to figure out how we got so lucky."

Sharing the impact of the buildings, Mrs. Cameron Lennon, stated, "To date, the Covid-19 pandemic has restricted us from having our usual physical face-to-face class sessions. Instead we've been having classes online. However, we are hoping to get clearance from the Ministry of Education to have physical classes. With your help, we now have adequate space to maintain social distancing. We have already started to place social distancing markers inside and outside of the buildings and have also erected hand washstands. Our resource centre has been in use and as we have even been able to facilitate other institutions. For example, some schools have been using our facility to conduct meetings and interviews. Before the Covid-19 pandemic, we had 40 plus infants enrolled. Since the construction of the building, although we are still experiencing a pandemic, I have parents

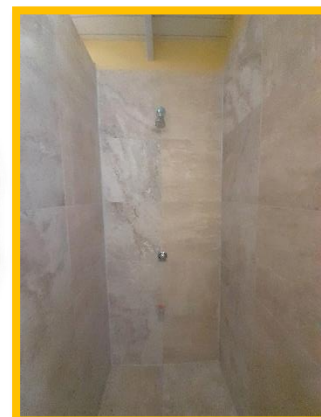
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requesting to have their children registered at the institution. Parents whose children are 2-years and under are disappointed that their children cannot be registered because the required age to start school is age 3. This interest speaks volumes to the great work we are doing and the high esteem with which the community sees us.”

Mrs. Cameron Lennon explained that students enrolled at the Martin Primary and Infant School live in other areas as far as 30 minutes out, but parents have chosen the institution. “There is one specific infant department that is fifteen minutes away in another community, but we have majority of the children from that community. So, I am thankful for these additional buildings because they will continue to help us to educate the children in and around the community of Martin, in St. Mary.”

Once given the green light to fully operate with students on the campus, the newly-constructed infant department will be able to accommodate up to sixty students. With the restrictions, however, the minimum of 10 students per teacher is even more than possible because one additional teacher was hired as a result of having the new, spacious building. “Once we don’t take on any additional students, we will have more than enough space to begin classes again,” Mrs. Cameron Lennon remarked.

Students being more comfortably seated, having access to age-appropriate bathrooms, the provision of a play area, adequate space to carry out face-to-face and hands on exercises, were highlights of the project for Mrs. Cameron Lennon.



Age-appropriate handwash sinks and toilet along with a shower were part of the structure the school received.

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“Additionally, the entire population will have access to computers, so thank you (donors). It’s an honour to be a part of this life changing experience. Helping Hands Jamaica and the Cupidore family decided to honour the legacy of Rupert Cupidore and Cislén Sinclair Cupidore in a great way and it is such a blessing to be the recipients. You have left an impeccable impact on the children of Martin Primary and Infant School. For those who have matriculated to grade one, I am sure that they will wish to have school by the infant department. Some have even shared that they no longer want to start primary school,” Mrs. Cameron Lennon said with a smile.

“You all have a heart of gold and I know this because of our first encounter. The parents, also love the buildings and always use the opportunity to take photos when they visit. The taxi drivers and community members are also impressed, and I really couldn’t be prouder. This donation is amazing and now we can truly represent as the ‘beacon on the hill’. Again, thank you for making us this proud and in turn, we will make good use, and take proper care, of the buildings.”

In closing she said, “How could I forget the hardworking and respectful construction team. They did an excellent job and they worked so fast as a team. THANK YOU! It's such an amazing feeling, thanks to everybody who made this possible.”

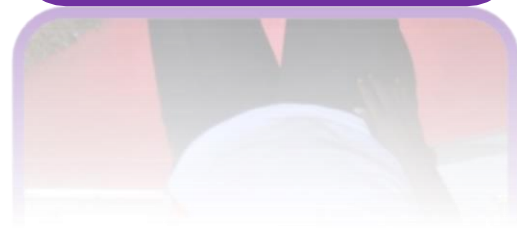
❖ Donald Baker has been affiliated with the Martin Primary and Infant School for many years; first as a student, then later volunteering his time, to now being the Vice Chairman. “It is such an honour to see improvements being done to the school; making it a greater institution. I was on site from the ground-breaking to when the building was completed and handed over to us. It has been an amazing, amazing experience and I look forward to the day when all the children using it,” Mr. Baker shared.

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To the donors, Mr. Baker said, “My heart is filled with gratitude. There are not enough words that can be extended to you, to show my appreciation. I hope that you will keep the spirit of giving alive in other communities. What we have experienced here at Martin Primary and Infant School has been a joy and possibly the biggest gift we’ve ever received. The community is overjoyed and those who had negative things to say are quite impressed. It is pure joy all around! I pray that you will never stop spreading this joy. To all those who came on board, ‘thank you’. Special thanks to the construction team who worked properly and professionally. I’m very, very grateful.”



Mr. Baker stands proudly in front of the building constructed by Food For The Poor and donors.



- ❖ Reverend Seymour Hutchinson, Chairman of the school’s board, and also representing the Anglican Diocese of Jamaica, which oversees the school, is more than happy and appreciative for the building. “The school’s finances are not where it ought to be if we were to ever tackle such a project on our own. I doubt the Ministry of Education would be able to assist at this time as well. If we were to take on such a project, it would have taken a longer period of time. So, we are grateful to Food For The Poor and donors for this gesture.”

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Continuing he said, “We are elated and thankful because the way forward is education. Unless we educate our children, we will be in so much trouble. I just want to say thanks to you all for stepping in and helping. The building was constructed in short order and was professionally done. It was a team effort and they worked well together. It’s a beautiful building.”

Rev. Hutchinson (left) the school board chairman, is elated that the school received assistance. He indicated that meetings are now hosted in the resource room, which is more comfortable.

For the students, he said, “I think the children will be more excited about the ambience of the entire project, especially the classrooms and the play area. My guess is that the colours will play a big role. I know the children will take proper care of the property and we will ensure that they do by instilling in them from early, that they should care for their school building.”

To the donors, he said, “All stakeholders are happy and pleased. Once again, it's beautiful, it's beautiful! We're so happy, we wish for Food For The Poor and donors strength, so they can continue to serve our country.

Volunteerism is a thing of the past. Now when you ask someone for help, the first question is how much they are getting paid. So we want to tell the donors thanks because it's not what it used to be and you decided to step out to help us, so we just want to thank you so much.”



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❖ Dawn Broomfield, the Cook at the school, said she was also happy for the gift.

“Cooking for both infants and primary school students in one kitchen was sometimes a little difficult. So, I am very happy that I now have access to two kitchens to use, which will make things easier.”

Giving her overall thoughts, Ms. Broomfield said, “The new building looks really good and I'm looking forward to using the fixtures in the kitchen. I love the cupboard design and I really love the fact that we have a stove and refrigerator.”

Sharing the challenges, she faced, Ms. Broomfield said, “Space was my main issue. The kitchen was small and crowded, which made it uncomfortable and hard to cook or move around. The size of the countertop space was also an issue. As a result, whenever it was time to serve the lunches, I was only able to have 20 lunches shared and placed on the countertop. This limitation was very time consuming and it would take me approximately 30 mins to serve the lunch for the entire school. There were days when I had to share the lunches, serve them to the children, then head back into the kitchen and repeat the process. Before school closed due to the Coronavirus, I got help from another individual, which made it easier. However, it was still challenging. Thankfully, we now have two kitchens and I am positive that things will be better.”



Ms. Broomfield (extreme right) is looking forward to cooking in the newly-constructed kitchen.

To the donor, “I just want you to know that we appreciate it a lot and you did a good job. The infants will have their lunch prepared over their section once school reopens. I just want to say that we appreciate this building, so thank you very much.”

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