



Ganja International School newsletter, April 2007

Local staff: Vagif Memmedov



Vagif, pictured here with some of the Year 3 and 4 children, is our *Administrative Assistant*. The school wouldn't be the same without him! He makes everyone feel welcome and he's always got a smile to share. Vagif has a degree from the

Azerbaijan Agricultural Academy, but he's not directly using his education in the job. At GIS he takes care of many practical tasks to keep the school running smoothly.

When I ask him if he finds his job difficult, he tells me that he spent four years in the army, so whatever he's doing at the school isn't difficult compared to that. So how did he learn to treat children the way he does? He's an uncle of nine children! No wonder he's called "Uncle Vagif" at GIS too! His wish for the school is a nicer playground for the children.

Children at the school: Metanet Yaqubova

Let me present to you a wonderful little lady, as sweet as anyone can be! Her name is Metanet and she's in Year 1. All her life, she has had problems with her eyes, and at the age of eight months, she was sponsored by CARD (a UK charity which operates in Azerbaijan) to have an operation in England.

I'm talking with Dilshad Guliyeva, our SEN teacher, who has been following Metanet for more than 6 years, from the children's hospital, through the start in the GIS kindergarten and now in Year 1. Dilshad



tells me that if it wasn't been for her poor sight, Metanet would be able to go far. And what I witnessed in the Numeracy lesson convinced me. She was adding numbers in English, and she's not yet 7 years! This is a girl who can

only see with one eye, and her sight isn't good. But she's very sociable and doesn't like Saturdays and Sundays, because then she can't go to school.

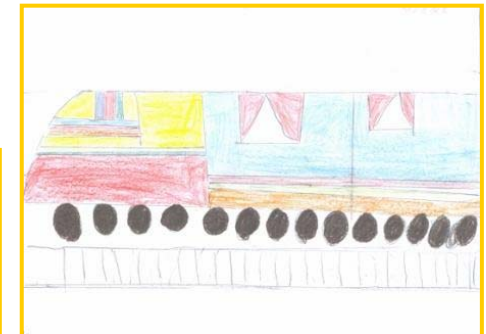
Dilshad smiles a lot when she talks about Metanet, but when I ask her how life would be for the girl if she hadn't had GIS to go to, she becomes serious. "If GIS hadn't been here, it would have been hard for her."

And if Metanet hadn't been at GIS, the school would have had one less sunshine.

Vagif and Metanet were introduced by Margrethe Hjellum.



We're off! Bilal Hasanov (6) in Year 1 drew this train following a GIS School Outing to the Railway Station at the end of April.



News and events:

Board Meetings

A sign of the steady maturing of GIS as an institution is that on April 10th and 11th we had our first ever 'AGM'. The AGM is required by the GIS Bylaws. The meeting started with an open presentation of reports and accounts on the first day, and discussion of many issues on the next day. The AGM is also an occasion for election of key Board members. Priscilla Bartlett was elected to be Chairman, to her very great surprise. The picture below is from the last GIS Board Meeting. From left: Ragnhild Thori (Norway), Zeynab Hajiyeva (Azerbaijan), Priscilla Bartlett (Sri Lanka), Trond Langen (Norway) and Israel Young (USA). Simon Bartlett (UK) took the picture.



Charity

In the March newsletter I wrote that, "Friends in the UK are in the process of registering a charity..." The Charity is now registered!



Visitors

We had two important people visiting us during April, Shirley Weston and Sarah Chua. Shirley is a UK Primary School teacher. Last year she visited in August to conduct some teacher training. This year she visited us over the Easter break to consider whether GIS might be a good place to commit more time to. After returning to the UK she has decided that it is! She will join us from September for a one-year period, although this could possibly be extended. This is wonderful news for us; Shirley has much to contribute from her experience of UK primary education.

Sarah Chua is an internal auditor with a large accountancy firm. She is also the treasurer of the newly-formed AzEd. As such she must be satisfied that any money passed to the charity on behalf of Ganja International School will only be used for Ganja International School and there can be full financial accountability.

Problems...Painting, Staffing issues

We would wish that life at GIS were all fun and no problems but unfortunately that is not quite the case. Over the past month we have faced some tense moments. The mayor of Ganja was determined that part of our building should be painted. We thought the owner of the building should pay. The owner disagreed. The mayor decreed: if it's not painted, close them down! Fortunately the matter was resolved: we paid with agreement that the amount would be deducted from a future rent payment.

During the year we have had a reduction in the number of children. This also happened last year and seems to be a normal process. But as a result we have had to reduce our staff by two – a difficult task at both the emotional and legal level.

Plans and things for you to think about

We have to provide a place for GIS for the coming year. Sometimes a person or a group of people doing a task have to simply acknowledge that they need help. We are in that situation. To become a serious school with a long-term future GIS needs a building of its own, and for this, it needs significant financial support.

This is the subject of a separate letter which is enclosed with this newsletter.

Thank you for all your interest.

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