



# Ganja International School

newsletter, October 2007

**The GIS newsletter took a break during the summer. But GIS did not...**

## **A new school building!**

On 25 September we collected the documents for our new building! This is a major step forward and we believe will go a long way to solving the problem of having to move every few years as landlords steadily increase the rent.

The building is a two-storey former kindergarten. It has about 1000 sq.m of rooms, the total land area, including the building, is about 3400 sq.m (= 0.84 acres) and it is in a very central location.

Many people worked very hard and gave very generously to make this a reality. We are sincerely grateful to you. In the pictures below you can see a view of one side of the building and one of the GIS rooms where repairs have started. The background of the page shows the general plan of the site and of the building.



Since the purchase of the new building was delayed, GIS's three higher classes have started in a private home. Although not ideal, this is working.

## **Teacher training**

*By Margrethe Hjellum*

GIS usually arranges training before the start of the school year. This year it was conducted by a retired primary school teacher, Penny Smith, who is from Indiana, USA. She came at very short notice to help. Thank you, Penny! Penny has worked at The Caspian Academy in Baku for a short period. She has also visited schools in Nicaragua.

Q to Penny: What are your impressions of the teachers?

A: They are very excited about teaching, willing to learn and try new things and really interested. Now we are talking mostly about how to put into action what they already know from the theory.

Q to Penny: What have you been discussing?

A: We have been talking about classroom discipline, building character into the children and how to organize the classroom. Further on we have been talking about challenges in the classroom, special needs children, how to plan themes in your lesson plan and how to motivate the students. Teaching is an art! Many of these things are repetition for the teachers, but as with all other learning, it needs to be repeated and methods discussed to find better ways.

Q to the teachers: What is the most important you have learned so far?

A: (three speak at once) Character education! Also behaviour and discipline. And we should lead *all* the children to success, not just some of them.





## **Shirley Weston**

*By Margrethe Hjellum*

Shirley arrived towards the end of the teachers' training. She will be working at GIS for the coming year.

Q: Shirley, tell us a little about yourself, please.

A: Well, I come from England, where I have been a teacher for seven years. I like to do sports and crazy things. For instance, I did parachute jumping this summer! I didn't sleep the night before. It was a bit like the night before I went to Azerbaijan...But I love to travel and to meet new people! I am really happy

to be here and to be part of the school at this exciting start of a new school year.

Q: What is your motivation for coming to live here in Ganja, and what are your plans for the stay?

A: I have come to Ganja for a year to work at GIS and to share my experiences and ideas. I also want to learn from the people here. It will be a new teaching experience for me. And I am looking forward to learn the language and culture of this country.

Q: What do you enjoy the most about training the teachers?

A: The thing I enjoy the most is that we are learning together as a group. We learn from each other and we all wish to become better teachers for our students. So far we have mainly been talking about assessment and discipline.

## **Reidun Aabrekk**

*By Margrethe Hjellum*

Reidun Aabrekk is another volunteer at GIS. Reidun comes from the beautiful west coast of Norway. She is 27 years, likes singing, music and walking in the mountain. Hopefully she will get a chance to climb some mountains while she's here too. But mainly she will be teaching at GIS. She has taught in Norway for 1½ years.

Q: How have the first few days at GIS been?

A: A bit hectic, since we don't have a school building yet. Everything new takes time. I really like to teach, and my first impression has been good after all.

Q: What do you think about working at GIS, and for how long are you planning on staying?

A: I am sure it will be exciting and different from what I am used to. Here I will be teaching in English, the culture is different, the classes are smaller; I will have less than 10 pupils. But that is a good thing for me and the pupils, since I can follow up each child better than I could do with many children. I am planning to stay till Christmas, then I see if I will be staying longer.

Q: What are you teaching?

A: English, numbers, science, ICT, art & design, design & technology, geography and the SEN-children.

Q: For those wondering if they should take the chance of doing the same as you are doing now; going abroad for a while teaching at GIS, what would you say?

A: I think it's a good to try out new things, get new ideas and new impulses. Just do it! I feel that it gives me a lot to be here and do this job!



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If you know of anyone else who might be interested in following GIS's progress through these newsletters, please pass on a copy, or invite them to contact us. We would like to extend GIS's circle of friends.

Thank you for all your interest.

Ganja International School  
Z. Memmedov kuchesi 1, Ganja  
Republic of Azerbaijan AZ 2002  
+994 22 56-96-74 / 56-72-23

General enquiries: [gisadmin@azonline.com](mailto:gisadmin@azonline.com),  
Newsletter editor: [simon@ganja-international-school.org](mailto:simon@ganja-international-school.org)  
[www.ganja-international-school.org](http://www.ganja-international-school.org)