

Dhamma School Coordinator's Report - 2024



2024 has been a very good year for the Dhamma School. Enrolments have increased and attendance has been regular.

We have sailed smoothly with most of our regular programmes accomplished.

Our thanks to the excellent committee that sees to all administrative needs. They see to enrolments, sale of books and uniforms leaving the teachers free to get on with their work. The classrooms are always set up and the shrine room ready for the Buddha Puja in time. They are at hand to photocopy lessons and always have a cup of tea ready for the teachers when they finish. At the end the day, things are kept away and rooms cleaned.

The DS extends a very warm welcome to the new committee. We see many of the previous committee continuing and thank them for their dedication and service. However, the DS would appreciate greatly more parents attending meetings and coming forward to help. It is for the sake of our children, for their welfare and happiness now and in the future that we commit ourselves. The gift of Dhamma is greater than everything else, the education the comforts, that we can give them.

For the first time, The Dhamma School is having the Mawu Piya Upahara in November and not at the end of the academic year as before. December is a very busy time for everyone and with exams, holiday plans, end of year office functions and the like, and there many who are unable to attend the MPU. Response from parents has been good and we have a full hall with most children participating.

This year Vesak celebrations at the temple were on a grand scale as the adjacent property had finally been acquired and there was plenty of space for activities. The children sang bhakthi gee as they have been doing from the first Vesak at the temple. Parents organised a dansala as they have for over two decades. However, with increasing numbers of people attending Vesak celebrations, the Dhamma School finds it difficult to cater for the dansela on its own and have others help in the preparation of food. On the first day there had been well over 2000 plates served! Once upon a time, 200 plates served was a cause for wonder!

For Posen, the Dhamma School constructed a model of the Arahat Mahinda meeting King Devanampiyatissa at Mihintale.

In July we made a collection for the Food Bank as our dana project. In a country where there are no beggars to be seen [we are noticing homeless people here and there though] we must remember that there is poverty and food insecurity in the wider community. More and more families find it hard to have three good meals a day. We talk to the children about this and encourage them to give and share.

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The Vas season ended last month with the katina ceremony and celebrations. Every year the children lead the perahera carrying flags and sesath and riding their decorated bicycles. It is good to see so many parents make the effort to bring the children along so early in the morning.

Next year the Dhamma School hopes to invite venerable monks to spend their rains retreat at the temple [vas Aaradhana]. When the community was small and there were far fewer members, The Dhamma School was able to sponsor the Vas more regularly. For the first few years it was every other year – then it was once in three years and now it's moved to five years! It is an opportunity for many young families to gain experience in carrying out our traditional practises. Some day you might be doing it on your own!

When the property next door was acquired last year, there was great excitement that the Dhamma School would be able to move to the building there. At least the classes conducted in the dana sala, we hoped. The teachers of L 3,4 and 5 work under very difficult conditions as the acoustics there are terrible. Noise echoes and reverberates and it's not easy to keep young children quiet. Also, they need to talk and have discussions as part of their lesson. Sadly, we found that the rooms were too small, and it was not possible to make them larger as the walls were load bearing and couldn't be brought down. So, the school continues as before till someday proper classrooms can be built.

Our staff has remained stable for the most part. We reluctantly let Malika Fernando resign after 10 years of loyal, dedicated and excellent service to the Dhamma School. Like others who have left due to pressure of work, Malika remains very much part of the Dhamma School family and comes in to help when required.

Chathu Jayawardena offered her services and has been coming in as relief teacher.

One of our senior students Nethuli Sirikumara volunteered to continue coming after three years in the senior class, to help the teachers of the junior classes.

We still need more relief teachers and hope that there are parents reading this who would like to volunteer. It is not a hard job, only needing dedication. Lessons are in place and all of you have enough knowledge to be able to teach. You will get all the support you need. Please do come forward, especially if you have experience teaching. We look forward to hearing from you!

To end we pay our respects to our Nayaka Hamuduruwo and patron, Ven. Beruwala Siri Sobhitha Maha thero, and thank him for his support and guidance.

With metta

Ramani Gunasekara

Coordinator-Perth Dhamma School

