

A Cornerstone of Upcountry Education

Bandaravala St. Joseph's National School (St. Joseph's College) is one of the leading schools that pioneered the uplift of education in the Uva Province.

The school was founded on February 1, 1909 to cater for British students, and as a religious institution of Christianity with 17 students. The founders of the school were Br. Leo Benedict and Br. Leo Bartholomew. The first principal of the school was Rev. Bro. Simon Mathew, an Irish brother. Stephan Peris was the first student of the school.

In 1961, the College was declared a government school, after prevailing as a private school for several decades. In 1974, the Primary section was added, enabling girls to enter the College, and the school became a mixed school. In 1981, the power of vested Catholic priests was handed over to Ven. Kanumudeniye Gnanaratna Thera, adding another significant event to the School's history, as they were recognised as a National School by the Ministry of Education. Finally, in 1999, St. Joseph's National School was graded a 1 AB school by the Department of Education. In 2009, St. Joseph's celebrated a century of education.

St. Joseph's has produced many exceptional personalities such as, a Scientist at NASA, Anura Terrance Wickramanayake, Minister M. Sachchudananan, Member of Parliament Dr. G.Y.A. Pushpakumara, former Mayor of Bandaravala Urban Council Nalin Priyantha Sooriyaje and former Solicitor General Upawansa Yapa. Especially the former Principal of the School and Uva Province Sports Director K.H.P. Jayatissa, who was a student at this School, then was a teacher and ended up becoming the Principal of the School, which is an extraordinary record.

At present, the student population is over 2300, the academic staff exceeds 110 and non academic staff about 20. Their commit-



The Board of prefect, 2011



The School Girls National Cadet Corp placed 3rd in 'The National Championship' for the Sozva Trophy on 21st of October 2011.



The Librarian K.M. Sumanasena (BA) who won the Best Librarian Award in 2008



St Joseph's College Bandaravala Principal Mr. Y.M. Amarasingha



St Joseph's College Bandaravala Primary Head Mrs. H.M.D. Damayanthi Manike



School by getting through the exam with excellent marks, while Sahar Naranagoda (184) and Herinda Sirenal Fernando (183) securing 1st and 2nd among them.

The Primary section has a very interesting record as their Junior Rugby Football girls' team won the Championship and boys' team came 1st runners-up in the Genus Record Rugby Football festival this year.



The School started its English medium section from Grade 6 in 2003, and in 2008, the first batch sat for the GCE (OL) Examination. Since then, the School has enjoyed 100% results in the English medium section. Each year, the School improved its GCE (AL) results, with the Commerce stream always ranking high in the district. The number of university entrants increased yearly.

The girls and boys Cadet corps brought fame to the School for several years. They obtained several first places during the Cadet Corps Training Centre, Rantambe for the All Island 'Hermann Loos' Challenge Trophy. This year the National Cadet Corp Girls were placed 2nd in the above camp in August and placed 3rd in the National Championship on October 21, 2011, for the Sozva Trophy, under the leadership of platoon commander T.K. Rajapaksha and Lady Officers Dulika Wijesinghe and Vinodini Senarathna. Sport is another area where the Josephians have shone from the beginning. In the early years, they shined in

Boxing and Football. But history says that the journey in Sports began in 1940, as Ceylon Wonder Boy, A.S.M. Khan came 1st at the All Island Youth Athletics meet and participated in the Athletics championship held in India. It was a great honour to the school. From that, the Josephians excelled in all types of Sports in the province with many victories.

Golden Battle of Uva: the annual Big Match played against Madya Maha Vidyalaya

Sujitha Miranda

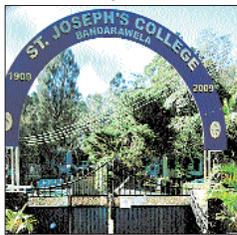
ment and dedication has contributed in no small measure to the development of the School to a high standard. The present principal of the School is Y.M. Amarasingha.

The Primary section of the school is an asset to the School, which brings outstanding achievements at the Grade 5 scholarship examinations, under the leadership of the

Primary sectional head Mrs. H.M.D.G. Damayanthi Manike Herath and the dedication of the teachers. In 2006, Kevin Kanchara Gunawardena was placed 2nd in the district at the Grade 5 scholarship examination, and at present, he is a student of Royal College, Colombo. At the 2011 examination, 34 students brought credit to the



Students who got through the Grade 5 Scholarship Examination 2011



The hills are alive with Thomian Grit

St. Thomas' College (STC), Gurutalawa, is a Government Approved, Private, Fee-Levying, Anglican Boarding School, situated in a beautiful and almost remote part of the Uva Province, amidst a beautiful, green 45-acre campus, which enables the children to breathe clean and unpolluted air, and thrive in a natural environment.

During World War II, along with other leading schools, St. Thomas' College, Mt Lavinia too, decided to shift inland, following a decision by the State Council. In the aftermath of the Japanese air raid on Colombo in April 1942, Mr. & Mrs. Leslie De Saram made the generous offer of their Farm at Gurutalawa, and that very month St. Thomas' College was re-started there by Canon R.S. de Saram (Warden) with Dr W.R.L. Hayman, the Sub Warden and 1st Headmaster. Although the Mt Lavinia school was opened at the end of the War, the Gurutalawa branch was continued.

The links with the parent School at Mt Lavinia are very strong even today. While the School went through a very difficult period, that almost resulted in its closure at the end of 2007, with the timely intervention of Mr. Jacques Huyghebaert, a financial expert living in Bandaravala, the School was saved and placed on an even keel, and has been on the ascendancy ever since. "Our children come from all parts of the country, and learn to live together as one family without distinctions of ethnicity, gender, class, caste or creed. This is part of the ethos of this School" said the present Headmaster, Rev. Marc Billmoria.

STC Gurutalawa is managed by the STC Board of Governors chaired by the Anglican Bishop of Colombo and headed by a Priest-



Headmaster. It follows the National Programme of Education leading up to the GCE Ordinary Level Examination with teaching in all three media (Bilingual from Grade 6 to 11). Presently, there are over 500 students on roll, receiving an all-round education.

The majority of the students are in the Hostel, and since 2007, the College provides hostel facilities for girls too. The Boarding is the backbone of the School, and offers facilities that are very basic but clean, safe and comfortable. "The students themselves are responsible for the cleanliness of their residential facilities as part of their education and formation in self reliance and responsible independence" the Headmaster stressed.

The academic life of the School is doing satisfactorily well, with a dedicated band of around 42 teachers, and the records indicate that the standard of public exam results have been improving over the past few years. 32 students sat for the GCE Ordinary Level Examination in 2010, of whom 78% qualified to follow Advanced Level courses. One of the boys, the Head Prefect and Cricket Captain of the School, K.N.K. Gamage (Sinhala Medium) obtained 9A passes, while two other boys K.C.M. Tillekeratne (Bilingual Medium) and G. Deepdeharshan (Tamil Medium) obtained 8A passes and 1B pass each. "Considering the fact that the boys in the hostel are not permitted to attend tuition classes outside the School, and depend almost entirely on the work of the teachers of the School and their own

efforts, these results were very satisfying indeed" the Headmaster said. STC, Gurutalawa provides facilities for nearly all Sports, including Athletics, Cricket, Rugby, Tennis, Basketball, Squash, Volleyball, Soccer, Hockey, Table Tennis, Badminton, and Swimming. It was the second School in the country to have a Swimming Pool (donated by Dr R.L. Hayman, who also donated the Pool at Mt Lavinia) and the first School to have a Squash Court. This School is probably the only school in the country to offer Horse Riding, and their young equestrians have done well at the National Dressage Competitions organised by the National Equestrian Society at the Premadasa Riding School in Colombo.

Their Karate boys have done well with silver and gold medals at both

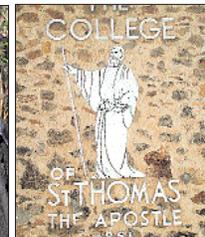
national and international events, while their swimmers, ruggies and athletes have also excelled at various competitions and tournaments during the past year. Their senior Volleyball team emerged Zonal Champions this year, while the Under-17 Cricket team won the traditional Uva Thomian Cricket Encounter with STC, Bandaravala in May.

There is also encouragement for societies and clubs. The School Oriental Dancers, Band and Musicians have participated with great success at the All Island Competitions. A number of students have also fared well at the inter-school literary competitions in all three languages.

The 65-year-old School Chapel of St Francis of Assisi is valued by children of all faiths. While the

Christian children attend Chapel each morning and on Sundays, children of other communities have their own morning meditations and prayers as well as religious programmes on their special holy days. The College Farm, though much older than the School, is an integral part of the School. Today, the children of the School get fresh vegetables, milk, eggs and chicken for their consumption from their own Farm. Recently, on an initiative of the Parents' Support Group, the Farm has joined hands with MONLAR to introduce a systematic organic farming project for the benefit of the School. All these facilities and a warm family atmosphere are provided in order that the children thrive and develop into good citizens.

- Sujitha Miranda



For those schools which are interested in being featured in the Education Times, Please contact us on 2479503 or 0773-958514