

Former Ramsey Ailwyn headmaster David Wallwork receives MBE

20th January By Louise Hepburn Senior Reporter



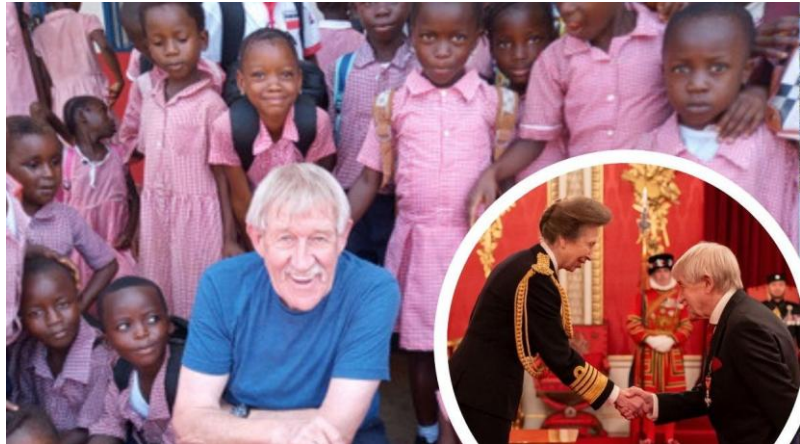
The former headmaster of a Ramsey secondary school has formally received his MBE for setting up a successful school in Africa.

David Wallwork MBE was head of Ramsey Ailwyn until 2006 when the school merged with Ramsey Abbey.

Two years later, he went on to build a school in rural Sierra Leone when the country was still recovering from the devastating civil war.

It first opened with 120 pupils aged between five and seven.

There are now 550 pupils, with around 450 attending the lower school and 100 in the upper school.



David Wallwork MBE received his honour from The Princess Royal at Buckingham Palace.



Former headmaster receives MBE for building a school in Africa

Known as The David School, David says it is considered one of the best in the country and education has unlocked huge potential for its community.

He said: “After being a headteacher, I wanted to do something meaningful with my time and visited Africa which is where this journey began.

“I went to a place in Sierra Leone called Mile 36, which is called that because it is 36 miles from the capital Freetown.



David Wallwork being awarded his MBE by The Princess Royal at Buckingham Palace



David Wallwork MBE with pupils at The David School in rural Sierra Leone.

“It was a difficult visit because the area was incredibly poor, but I decided we could build a school there to help the community.

“The region remains incredibly poor: the children sleep on the floor, many are orphans and seniors walk for miles to get to their lessons.

“But the school has grown significantly over the years and our pupils have progressed and gone on to amazing achievements.

“Some have gone into healthcare and are nurses and three are currently

training to be teachers at the school.

“Another is a barrister in Freetown. He is currently on a deployment in Washington DC.

“We also know the government is also now interested in investing in the region because it knows there is an educated workforce here.

"The power of education is remarkable and has truly opened doors for this community."

David admits there have been challenges on the way, including initial resistance to the school and the feeling it could interfere with the community's cultural beliefs.



The David School when it was first opened in 2008

But the school has managed to respectfully reassure everyone that it would be a positive addition and has now been established for 18 years.

As well as providing an education, The David School also tries to offer the pupils a meal and a US donor funds a daily multivitamin tablet for them.

Treats and trips are also organised for pupils in recognition of their achievements and to inspire their peers.

The school's December newsletter features a fun day out organised for Year 6 pupils who passed the equivalent of their 11+ exams.

The group travelled by bus to a hotel 15 miles away where they danced, swam, played games and enjoyed a meal.

“The children said it was the best day of their lives,” the newsletter said.



David Wallwork at the site of The David School in 2007.

David’s commitment and dedication to the project led to him receiving the MBE for Services to Education in Sierra Leone.

His name was featured in The King’s Birthday Honours List in June of last year and his investiture took place just before Christmas.

He received his medal from The Princess Royal at Buckingham Palace and was joined by his wife Janet, daughter Catherine Thomas and project volunteer Michael Houlden

It was important for him and his guests to wear something red for the occasion because it is the school’s colour.

David regards the MBE as “recognition of the massive effort made by a large team of wonderful people over a number of years”

The Rotary club in Ramsey has been a huge supporter of David’s work over the years, and he gives talks about his journey to other groups.

David says he tries to visit The David School twice a year, with his next trip to Sierra Leone planned for next month.



David Wallwork MBE received his honour at Buckingham Palace. Pictured (L-R): Michael Houlden, a volunteer for The David Project; Janet Wallwork, David's wife; David; Catherine Thomas, David's daughter.