

CHLOE'S SAKER STORY CONTINUED ... (November 2014)

2 MONTHS & 2 WEEKS IN SAKER

The first few days must have been hard for Chloe, I could only imagine as I had no way of knowing what she was going through but was contented that with all what I had taught her she was well armed. As a parent, it was very difficult, I wandered around in her room, I touched her clothing; I pulled out her photos; They became my screen savers but nothing could soothe the pain. I missed her; I still miss her; Her absence was also felt by her brother, by her father. Some days were very painful, almost like a I had lost her but I held on with the courage I had acquired during my time at Saker, and with prayers and support from friends and family, days turned to weeks and weeks to the first month -the D-day: first visiting Saturday. At last I could talk to her. My hands were shaking when I dialed my sister's number – her aunty. "Here Chloe", I heard my sister say – "your mum on the phone". Then I heard that voice, strong and vibrant, full of life! She had many questions for me... It started almost immediately after I asked "How are you?" The response was: "Fine – very fine actually." Immediately she jumped in – "Did you have the handover in your time? Immediately I thought, "Some man don di want frighten my pikin... Next question: "Did you have the Saker Olympics?" "Of course" I said; We called it "Inter-House" and of course, I was a major participant and organizer. "Really!" was her reply. Da my pikin no like sports at all. So I asked, "What will you be participating in?" She said, "Maybe chess competition or drawing competition." Ah praise am dassoh, but I bi di wonder if na correct sports that...

She went on – "Mum I have joined the Drama Club and hope to act in the Christmas play." Na man dat wey ye bi always be in ye shell... "I hate standing out Mummy" ... now na drama club she dey announce! I asked if the teachers' accent was a problem, she said, at the start, but now she thinks she gets it and quickly told me that her best subject was Chemistry. She told me she had made friends and made me speak to her best friend Sharon from the USA – I could tell from the accent. She said the good thing about Saker is that people are not "mean" ...so I tell ye say, well brought up people have to be kind and supportive but firm.

She told me she had to attend to her visitors- nearly 10 in number and off she went!

My sisters, this was the first night since I had dropped her off at Saker, that I slept like a baby.

Second Visiting November 1st 2014: I was there live, she smiled, she laughed, jumped on me! Her list was short but fundamentally transformed. On it she wrote "Sardines" not "Tuna"; "Tartina" not "Nutella"; "Ground nuts" not "Peanuts"; and there I saw the magic "requirement" – "WHITE GARRI"! I had to send someone to the market to buy roasted peanuts and Garri to meet up with this rapid but fundamental transformation. She brought her friends from all classes one by one to say hello. She hugged her brother, touched his head... then some of her friends quickly came up to Ben and said "We have heard a lot about you, you must be Ben" ... He smiled and disappeared, wandered off, flirted with the girls; They loved him; Chloe was happy that her friends finally got to put a face to the name "Benjamin". She brought her first test results; She passed in all subjects but for Citizenship. I asked how come? She said the

names of the places/cities/governors are very complex... several consonants – few vowels. Looking at the test paper made me laugh. It seems to me the only place she remembered was Littoral, as this was her answer to the first five questions....

Chloe's beautiful beginning came not only because of the training/preparation she had at home but mostly because she was blessed with a wonderful Big/Dulong who happens to be her friend, her mentor, her sister and her mother. They are sooooo close that when I ask a question, they look at each other wink, smile or frown and respond almost at the same time saying almost the same thing... It brought joy to my heart and laughter to my face. They understand each other and even plotted something against me; at least, so I thought. As a mother, it was funny but enjoyable to watch both of them.

I knew I was in for a winner – when Chloe asked me very clearly and frankly: “Mummy, do you think I will be in Saker after form 5?” This question said it all, she is not thinking: “Will I be back in this God forsaken place next term? Or, next year?” The kind of question a child who is not coping well will ask. Two months, and two weeks in Saker, many things are clearer – she is adapting well, she is happy, her personality is changing positively, academically she is okay, and she is healthy – knock on wood.

I will end here and thank God who continues to guide her and bless her with good health... I thank you all for your prayers and hope that Chloe has an even brighter story to tell during the Christmas holidays.

Dr. Doreen McGough

