Rushey Mead School, Leicester and the surrounding community has a large population who originate from the Gujarat Region of India. In 2001 there was a devastating earthquake in that Region and understandably the school and community wanted to do something to help. Ex Rushey Mead student and BBC Cameraman, Bhasker Solanki, was in the Region filming and on his return, linked in with the school and the Rushey Mead Foundation was formed. Money was pouring in from all over to help rebuild the Region, so the foundation decided to provide something more long lasting to improve the lives of some of the poorest. In the villages, it was discovered that families were reluctant to send girls to the towns to continue their education once they left Primary School. To this end, Rushey Mead School, Nagor, Bhuj was opened in 2004.

This August we took the fourth party of students out to visit the school. Four adults and 9 students set out laden down with books, computers, pens, pencils, clothes and of course, 4 netballs, a ball pump, whistle and a Loughborough Lightning dress! Whilst our main aim was to teach them to read and understand English, (essential for the exams they need to get a job) and to get their computers and internet working, I couldn’t help feeling that no girl’s education is complete without netball!

The students all worked hard with their books and dictionaries but the joy on their faces when out came the netballs. We sent the boys off the play cricket and whilst Tim marked out a makeshift court with a stick, our girls set about teaching the fundamentals of ‘footwork’ and how to execute the perfect chest and shoulder pass. There may have been some language difficulties, but with hand signals you can overcome anything! They also learnt that everything stops on the umpires whistle and the umpire’s decision is final. The villagers are quite inventive so hopefully they will soon have some posts of a fashion.

Without the generous donations which keep coming in, the school would not survive. We will keep fundraising and hopefully I’ll be able to go back and encourage some more netball. One day I may even train their own umpire! [www.rusheymeadfoundation.com](http://www.rusheymeadfoundation.com)

Jo Stephenson