



# Uganda Humanist Schools Trust (UK)

## Report on Isaac Newton High School Visit Wednesday 11<sup>th</sup> and Thursday 12<sup>th</sup> November 2009

Steve Hurd and Chris Wright





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### Introduction

This visit to the Isaac Newton High School was to undertake International Friendship Week activities in collaboration with the staff and students. The two days of activities involved three outside visitors, Steve Hurd and Chris Wright from UHST and Chris Smith, a Humanist from Shropshire who is working at Bushenyi Primary Teachers' College on Voluntary Service Overseas.

### Student Numbers

About 80 students were in attendance at the school during the two days of the Friendship Week. They included students from Senior 1, 2, 3 and 5. Those in Senior 4 had left to take O-level examinations at another centre. About 110 students have been enrolled in the school during 2009.



### Staff present

In the two days at the school we met 5 of the teaching staff. Peter Kisirinya met us at the school and worked with us throughout in the delivery of the activities. Tom Mutebi, who teaches Geography, History and Luganda was present for most of the time, as was the school's newly qualified Economics teacher Claire Kizza, who trained at Makerere. They helped organise the group work. We also met Mohammad Lugobe, who teaches Biology and Agriculture. The school bursar, Winni Nasirinya, who is Peter's step-sister, was also there.

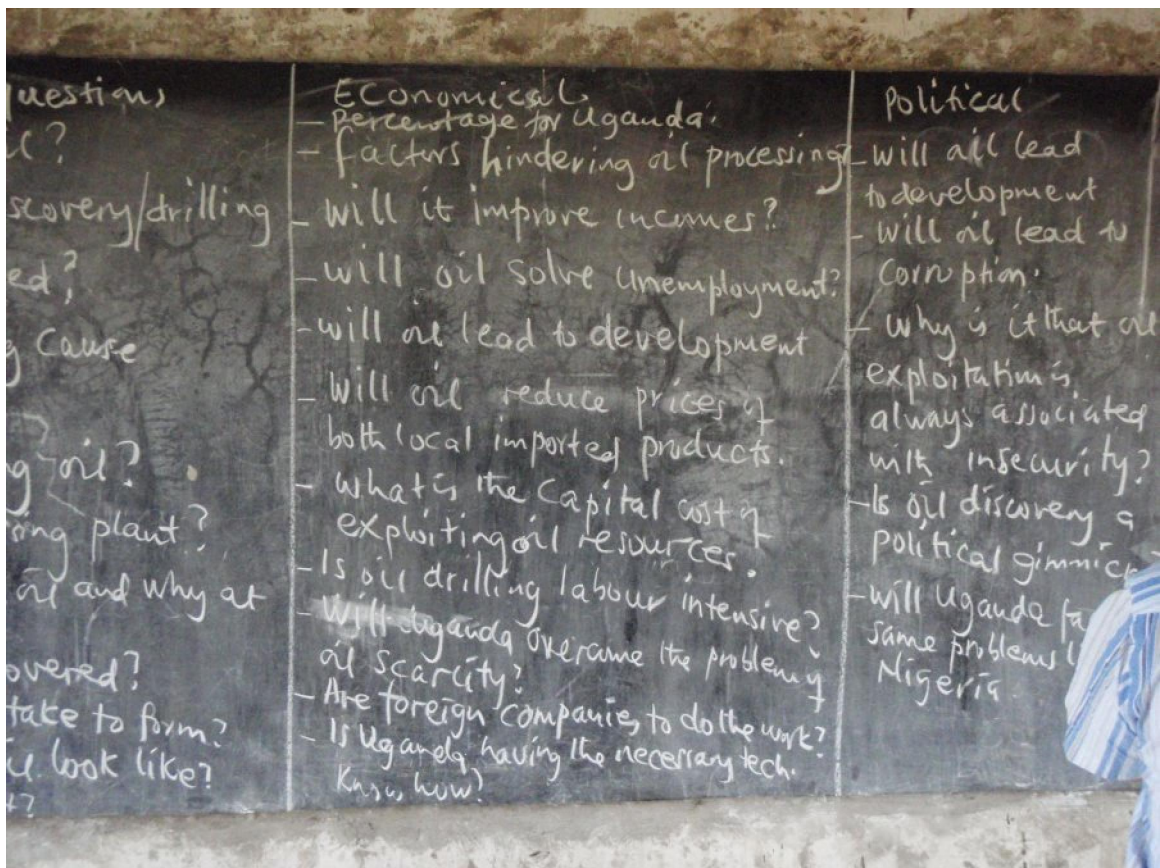
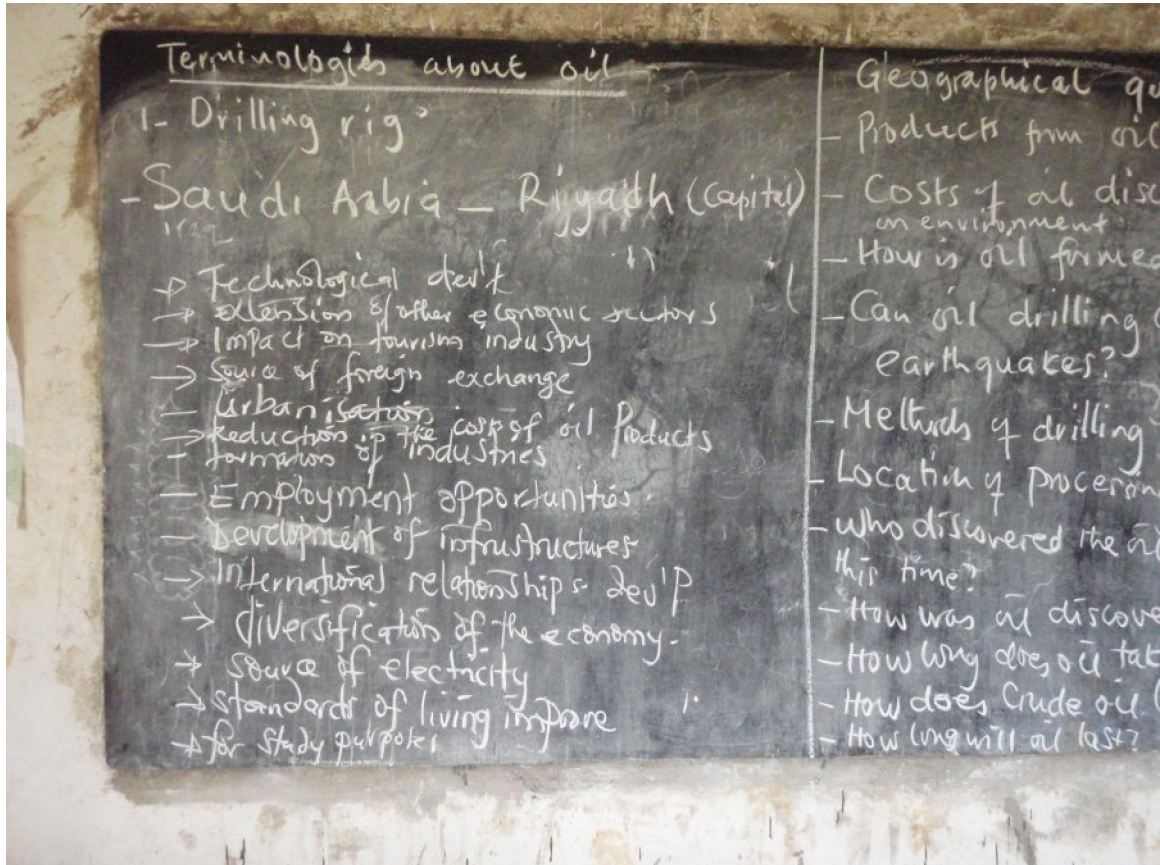
### Educational progress

Over the course of the past year students at Isaac Newton High School have made huge strides in their comprehension of spoken and written English. Their standard of writing and general vocabulary was impressive.

We were struck by the very strong community spirit in the school. The students behaved appropriately at all times. When required they listened, concentrated, responded to and asked questions and they were very polite. At the same time there was a strong sense of social cohesion and a willingness to smile, laugh and generally enjoy the experience of being in school.

The students were very comfortable working and discussing in groups and had no problem nominating a spokesperson to report their views to the class. In groups they identified questions they would like to

have answered about the impact of the discovery of oil on Uganda. Below are just a few of the questions that they wanted answers to:





On the second day, the students held an impromptu formal debate on the motion “*Is the discovery of oil in Uganda likely to be more of an advantage than a disadvantage.*” It was clear that they were used to conducting formal debates. Peter Kisirinya asked for nominations for the positions of: Chairman (a girl was chosen), time-keeper, critic and recorder. Five speakers were chosen to propose the debate and 5 to oppose. There was a complete gender balance in the choice of people and also in interjections from the floor of the debating room. Main speakers were given 6 minutes, with a one-minute warning towards the end of their time. Members of the audience could propose points of information from the floor but to ensure the debate was conducted in a civil manner the students were required to refer to each other as the “honourable...”. Although the students had scarcely 20 minutes to prepare, the debate was conducted to a very high standard.

**The Chairwoman, time keeper, critic and recorder of the debate**



## One of the debate proposers speaking



Peter Kisirinya and the staff of Isaac Newton High School had prepared well for the International Friendship Week. Everyone was punctual and all the equipment that was needed was ready and working. This allowed us to complete the planned programme and to show the students videos, including the Jungle Book and the best goals by Stoke City, both of which they thoroughly enjoyed.

## School Site and Premises

**The Site:** The school is in an attractive location on the side of a valley. The actual site is a little difficult as the buildings have been constructed on a hill side and access involves negotiating a steep but short hill, but this does free up the remaining flatter land for growing food for school meals.

The school has a number of buildings. The first and oldest houses three classrooms and a small staffroom and storeroom. The second is the school hall and examination room. This building will eventually have a temporary partition giving two classrooms.



On the side of the hall the school has used money from UHST to build a secure book storeroom and a room for a security guard. The store is complete apart from glazing the windows.

The final building is the school science laboratory. This fine looking building was constructed using a grant from IHEU. It comprises a large laboratory space and prep room but, for the time being, it has no furniture. All the buildings use bricks that have been made and fired by people from the local community.



In addition to the three brick buildings the schools has a small brick kitchen, where the food is prepared each day.

I walked the perimeter of the site with Peter. The school has a large plot of land for growing food for school meals. They grow their own matooke (green bananas), cassava, maize, sweet potatoes, beans and peas. I was shown two places on opposite sides of the site where Peter would like to add two small boarding blocks for boys and girls. The students would be housed in rooms with 40 students in double bunk beds and each would be within its own walled enclosure. I was also shown where they would like to construct some staff housing.

**Toilets:** The school has two perfectly adequate and clean toilet blocks for boys and girls – each with 4 cubicles.

### School water supply

**Water:** In the bottom of the valley, 15 minutes from the school buildings, there is a fresh water point, which draws from a spring. The students have a rota to fetch water each day. Peter has recently spoken to a water engineer who says that he could have a borehole and pump on the site of the school, which would give clean drinking water on site. The estimated cost is £1500 and this is something that UHST is willing to cover from a recent large donation.



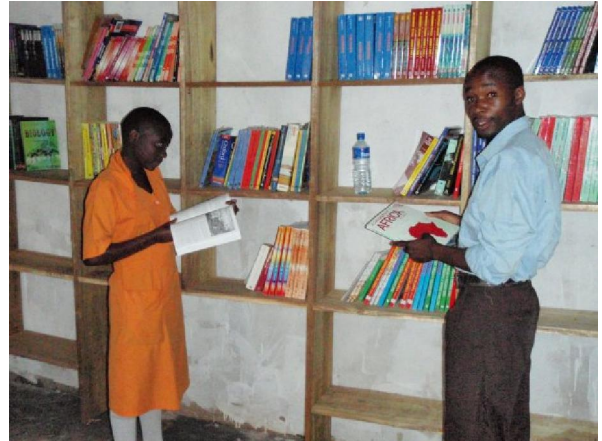
**New materials from UHST:** During our visit we presented the school with 3 binocular microscopes, glass and plastic ware for science (including measuring cylinders, test tubes and holders, pipettes, syringes, rules, pencils, pens), science wall charts, a team set of Stoke City football strip (shirts, shorts, stockings), 5 simple calculators and one scientific calculator.

A recent UHST grant has also allowed the school to have bookshelves fitted in the new storeroom. This provides a secure place to store the new books that UHST has purchased for the school.

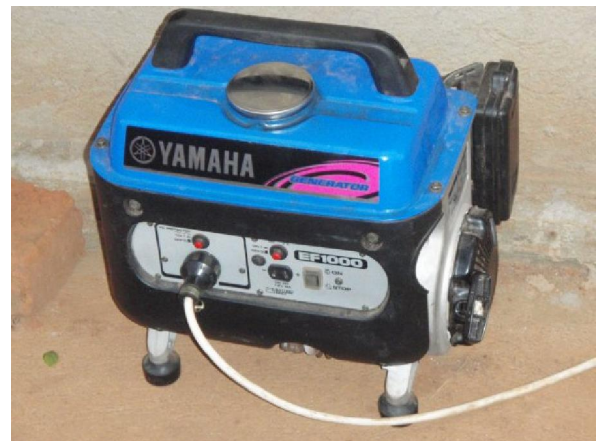
### Unpacking new books



### Book storeroom (donated by Florian Oppenheimer)



### Petrol-powered generator



Another UHST grant has been for the purchase of a small petrol generator.

This enables the school to use their laptop computer and the new data projector to show DVDs and e-learning materials in lessons.

The pictures below show the students' enthusiastic response to the footballs and strip donated by Stoke City Football Club.



NEW STOKE CITY SUPPORTERS







## Spending priorities for 2010

Some of the most pressing needs at the Isaac Newton High School are:

1. Improving the on-site provision of water for drinking, cooking and washing. A bore hole and pump would cost £1500. It would also be good to line and cover the hole that has already been dug to store rain water and to supplement this with at least one tank to take rain water from a roof.
2. Providing educational resources and teaching effort to improve the examination results at Senior 4. In last year's examinations at O-level most of the students entered passed but most of the grades were in the mid to lower range.
3. Painting the walls of classrooms and providing furniture for storage, including lockable metal cupboards.
4. Improving the pay and conditions of teaching staff.
5. There is a case for providing two computers and a laser printer.
6. A girls boarding block divided into two rooms for 80 girls with on site accommodation for a school matron.
7. Providing solar electricity.
8. Help to improve the standard of one classroom and the gardens so the school would be able to offer its facilities to host local functions and generate an additional income stream.

Steve Hurd and Chris Wright

21 November, 2009

**Additional photographs from the International Friendship week at the Isaac Newton High School, November, 2009**

**Watching Jungle Book using data Projector from UHST**



**Dancing the twist !?**



**Serving lunch**



**Light lunch ?**



**Footballers in Stoke City strip**



**Morning break**

