



Uganda Humanist Schools Trust (UK)

Supplementary Visit to Isaac Newton High School Saturday 20th March 2010

Introduction

This short impromptu visit came at the request of Peter Kisirinya, the school manager. Peter was keen to show the effects of grants that we have made to the school and discuss the next set of priorities. The photographs below show Peter in front of the school, and with his sister examining computer records of the students.



Although my visit was on a Saturday, there were a number of teaching and other staff in the school. Some day students were having extra classes and doing private study. The new development was the presence of 26 boarding students – 10 girls in one room looked after by Winnie Nasirinya, Peter's sister, who sleeps with them; and 16 boys in another room next to the book store. The boarding students pay a termly fee of 150,000/= (£50), compared with 55,000/= (£18) for day students. The day fees include a breakfast of porridge and lunch of something like ugali (a maize flour dough). Boarding students are also given an evening meal with a protein source such as beans, peas or groundnut sauce.



Peter is having a new wash house/bathroom built for the girl boarders (above right). He has also made progress improving the look of the buildings by whitewashing the walls.

The school recruited 32 new Senior 1 students at the start of the school year in February. It has 25 students in Senior 2, 28 in Senior 3 and 20 in Senior 4, making a total of 109 students in all. The numbers fall off in Senior 4 because students have to transfer to a school which is an authorised examination centre to take their O-levels and some students leave because they cannot afford to pay examination fees.

Teachers

Isaac Newton High School has 2 full-time and 16 part-time teachers. The part timers each teach 10 lessons of 40 minutes over two days. 8 of the teachers are fully qualified and registered, which is the minimum requirement for the school to become registered. The school has already met the local education authority standards to become a licensed school and it is well on the way towards meeting the requirements to become a fully registered school.

Pay levels in the school are in line with local norms. Part time teachers are paid 2,500/= (83p) a lesson, so in two days they will earn 25,000/= (or £8.30) a week. The two full-time teachers earn 420,000/= (£140) per month. This is comparable to other private schools, but a little less than pay in a government school which is 468,940/= (£156) a month, after tax.

Book provision and electricity

Peter was proud to show off the now fully completed book store that was built with a grant of £1000 from Florian Oppenheimer's OSG records management company in China with a further £750 of funds channelled through our Trust. The building looks great. It has a dividing wall splitting it into two rooms. One half, fitted with shelves from floor to ceiling, houses the new books funded by the Trust. The other half was intended for a security guard, but is being used to house the 16 male boarding students.



The school has appointed a young lady, a recent graduate of the school, to act as librarian. The signing out record shows that the books are being well used by students, who can borrow them for use in school and to take home for private study.

With our latest grant, the school has bought textbooks for all Senior 4 students coming up to their O-level examinations. I spoke with Tom Mutebi, who teaches Geography, History and Luganda, and Mohammad Lugobe, who teaches Biology and Agriculture. They were both surprised and impressed by the transformation in the attitudes of staff and students and in the rate of learning that the flood of new books has brought about. The presence of large numbers of books has probably doubled the total study time of the students. They are now able to follow up a lesson in class by reading the topic in textbooks and working through exercises and activities.

The Senior 4 O-level Project that the Trust embarked on with the school has not only given every student a book in every subject, it has also given the school money to provide additional teaching inputs. The petrol generator has also allowed lessons to be taught in the hours of dark. As a result, Senior 4 students can begin private study from 6am using electric lights and they have an additional

formal lesson from 7 to 8am. They also have an extra lesson after school and can stay in school in the evenings, to read using the new lighting.

Improving educational facilities in the Isaac Newton School is enhancing its reputation in the area. A local authority inspector who visited the school recently said he was very impressed by the number of books in the school and said that the school was beginning to stand out from other local schools.

Progress on priorities for 2010

Since the last visit to the school in November 2009 the Trust has allocated the following funds:

1. Scholarships for 12 students (half of these guaranteed for four years) - £1,440.
2. Improvements to on-site provision of water for drinking, cooking and washing. The Trust has provided £1,750 to buy two large water tanks and guttering to collect rainwater from the classroom roofs. At a later date, when the local authority drilling rig returns, we will also pay for a bore hole to tap ground water.
3. £1,200 for additional O-level books plus £1350 to pay for additional tuition for Senior 4 students preparing for their O-level examinations.
4. £1000 to buy windows and doors and finish the floor of the school hall, which is also used as classrooms.
5. £1,700 to build a new room to house a computer laboratory. This will be constructed by closing the space between the science lab and the hall (see below).



In addition we have pledged money to the school to provide:

- Roof-mounted solar electricity panels
- A network of 8 computers and a laser printer
- Additional books especially for Geography and History.