



## Uganda Humanist Schools Trust

### Isaac Newton High School, Katera, Masaka November 2013



Isaac Newton's World Bank supported Health Education Performers

#### Take-off for Katera in 2013?

Isaac Newton High School at Katera has moved in 2013 towards its short-term financial goal of covering basic running costs from local fees and scholarship income. This has only been possible by staff agreeing to work for low wages and salaries while the school is becoming established. As the school moves towards longer term sustainability allowance will need to be made for higher salaries to motivate and reward staff for their loyalty.

The number of students attending the school has increased substantially from 120 in 2012 to 346 in 2013. This shows growing confidence in the school within the local community. Families that were keeping children at home after primary school are starting to enrol them at Isaac Newton for secondary education. The school provides hope of a better future for the children and

their families. Those families, already committed to education, who had been sending their children to more distant schools are moving them to Isaac Newton. Most noticeable has been the large number of children transferring from the government supported Moslem High School 5 km down the road.

A number of factors have contributed to this change. The progressive development of an attractive site with the addition of well-designed new buildings, creates a good first impression for visitors. Growing pride in the school is reflected in the clean, painted buildings, regularly cut grass and maturing specimen trees and hedges. There is growing appreciation of the fact that the school welcomes students from all religions and none and fosters an open, liberal and harmonious culture. It accepts the life choices made by individual students and their families, and enables all students to live and work in an atmosphere of mutual respect.

We have commented in earlier reports on the remarkable dedication of staff and the efforts we have made to increase the provision of learning resources such as books, science materials and computers. The result has been a substantial, sustained improvement in student performance in national examinations. All these factors together are beginning to make Isaac Newton High School, Katera the school of choice for families within the District.

The rise in school income from local fees has improved overall cash flow such that 2013 is the first year that the school has not needed to come to UHST for emergency help to cover a shortfall in funds to cover teachers' pay or to provide extra money for the purchase of food for school meals.

With increased student numbers the school has had to devote more resources to improving student welfare. In order to improve school meals the new kitchen with efficient wood-burning stoves are finally operational. With the ability to heat three

cooking pots at a time, dinners are being prepared on time, while fuel consumption has more than halved. Below is a picture of the new kitchen stoves.



From the school's own resources a canteen is being constructed, which will provide students with a dry and shaded indoor space to eat their meals. The new building will also house a small shop where students will be able to buy additional personal items such as fruit, snacks, toiletries and stationery.



Senior 1, 2 and 3 students holding UHST scholarships

## Students

In 2013 UHST supporters provided scholarships for 40 students at Isaac Newton School. Senior 4 students were taking examinations during my visit to the school but I was able to talk to those students in Senior 1, 2 and 3 classes (in the photograph above).

Their details are as follows:

Boys 16                      Girls 24

The overwhelming majority of students live in subsistence farming households, a handful supplement farming with some form of trading (e.g. market stall), one father earns money for school fees by doing labouring work for others and one is a policeman and his wife has a small village hotel. Income is earned intermittently by the farmers and comes generally from the sale of surplus foodstuffs. 8 of these students are orphans. Many day students are within 30 minutes' walk of the school. However some students walk for 2 to 2½ hours to get to and from school each day.



Many students have high ambitions such as becoming medical workers (doctor, nurse or ancillary), veterinary doctor, lawyer, teacher, radio presenter, engineer, tourist guide. None aim for the more likely outcomes of becoming farmers, boda-boda (motor bike taxi) drivers, shop workers, petty trades people, secretaries

or craftsmen.

The scholarship students said they liked their school because:

*It has a good compound*

*I like computers, debates, football and netball and good teachers who handle us in a good way*

*I like music, dance and drama and the reading rooms*

*The school has good pumped water and a science laboratory*

*It has a well arranged library and chemistry laboratory*

*It has well trained teachers and a good environment*

*The way how our girls' dormitory was constructed was good*

*The school being able to allow people of different religions*

*The school has done a lot in improving education through helping the poor*

*I like the school because it has friends from other countries*

*It has good musical instruments like drums*

*I like the debates on Thursdays after lunch*

*I like the security*

*My school is a good looking school because it has good buildings and also computers and also it has a sick bay where we are treated from.*

*My school has a well-stocked library with relevant books*

*I like the teachers, the equipments we are having and how we share with the love with our Director and students*

*I like the entertainment done on Sundays after lunch and evening, the good feeding, conducive learning environment and organised school hierarchy*

While there is obvious appreciation for the

school from the students they are well aware of how they would like to see their school improved:

*By construction of football pitch, school bus and more computers*

*A more varied diet*

*More apparatus for practical classes*

*The boys need a hostel like the girls one*

*We need another computer laboratory*

*More textbooks in Luganda*

*The draining of the school compound because when it rains the water enters our classrooms*

*We need a school farms where we can rear animals like cows and hens*

*More musical instruments*

*We need to be an examination centre for O and A level and we need printing machines for exam papers*

*Teachers' hostels need to be built*

*Things could be made better by putting up a school garden full of flowers which can add beauty to the school*

*We need electricity from mains*

*Need to finish the school canteen so we can eat indoors*

*We need more textbooks and wall charts*

If we compare the students list with the requirements set out by the school administrators at the end of this report we can see just how perceptive the students are of the real needs of the school.

### **When students leave school**

We have been asking for some time for information about what happens to students after they leave school. There is no formal way to collect this data. Follow-up surveys are not feasible as many students lack postal addresses and there is no effective local postal service anyway. The school does know about those continuing their education and hears about many others by word of mouth. A thoughtful discussion with Peter Kisirinya, the

school Director, and Tom Mutebi, the Director of Studies, yielded the following guestimates of what happens to school leavers after they have completed their O-level examinations.

<b>Percentage of leavers</b>	<b>Destination of students after O-level</b>
45%	A-level courses at Isaac Newton or other schools
25%	Vocational courses e.g. building, carpentry, catering, hairdressing
25%	Unskilled jobs in shops, cafés, cleaners in offices and admin buildings, or petty trades e.g. market stalls, motorbike taxis
5%	Return to help out at home and on subsistence farms

The first students completed A-level courses at the school in 2011. Since that time two students have gone on to Kymbogo University to take medical degrees in Nutrition and Dietetics, two have moved on the B.Sc degrees in Agriculture at Makerere University, 2 have moved to National Teachers Colleges and 2 have gone on to Nursing Schools. It is clear that the schooling provided by Isaac Newton School is beginning to have a transforming effect on the lives of successions of young people.

### **Medical House**

The most important infrastructure development at Isaac Newton this year has been the construction of a Medical House at a cost of £5,500. The main structure is substantially finished and the aim is to complete and decorate the interior in time for the new school year in February 2014.

The school has interviewed a nurse who is completing her training and will work full time in the school from February. It will make an important contribution to health and welfare of the entire community of 346 students and over 30 teachers and ancillary staff. Up to now the cost of medical treatment for students and staff has had to be paid for on a

private basis in local clinics. When students have a protracted illness or something infectious they have had to be sent home for care and they miss schooling as a consequence.

The nurse in the new medical house will be linked to and overseen by a local doctor's practice which will enable the following services to be provided within the school:

1. Treatment for cuts, bruises and other minor injuries.
2. Dispensing of analgesics for headaches and other pains, and treatment for colds and upper respiratory infections.
3. There will be on-site treatment for parasitic infections including worms, jiggers and malaria.
4. Students with fevers will be able to sleep in the 4 beds in the medical house, so they do not disturb the sleep or risk infecting other students in the dormitories.
5. The nurse will be involved in health education for the school community – including such issues as disease control, parasitic diseases including malaria, tuberculosis, sexually transmitted diseases, HIV/AIDS and birth control.
6. The nurse will liaise with the Local Health Department to involve the school and community in national programmes of health intervention such as inoculation and male circumcision (to reduce HIV transmission). Earlier in the year 40 boys from the school chose to be circumcised by visiting surgeons after local health workers explained the benefits to them).

The medical house has been designed in full consultation with the Local Health Department and has been approved by them.

The World Bank has adopted the house as a centre for its own community health initiatives. World Bank workers have already been into the school to train a group of students to deliver health education using song and dance to the school and local communities. The photograph at the front of this report shows the School's Health Education Players with the instruments and costumes that have been bought for them by the World Bank programme. Through these activities health education in the school will be enhanced and the health promotion activities will strengthen ties between the school and the local community. To recognise the contribution that the school's medical house will make to health promotion in the area officials from the Local Health Department and the World Bank will come together in the school early in 2014 for an official opening ceremony. This in itself will make a major contribution towards enhancing the school's standing in the local community.

The picture below shows the entrance and waiting area with treatment and dispensing rooms to the left and space for the future fitting of flush toilets behind.



The next picture shows workmen glazing the windows of one of the twin-bedded wards.



The final picture gives the external view of the building as it nears completion.



### Future priorities

Our aim is to develop the schools to the stage where they can be essentially self-sustaining by 2016. In the February 2013 reports on the schools we outlined a number of infrastructure improvements that were needed towards this goal, and in June 2013 at the BHA Conference in Leeds we launched an infrastructure appeal fund. The first target was to raise £27,000 towards a boys’ hostel at Isaac Newton High School. In the first 5 months the appeal has raised £3000 but, at this rate, it will take some years before we will be able to fund another hostel. The first two girls’ hostels were built using funds donated from family bequests. In recognition of the generous bequest to Isaac Newton School the girls’ hostel has now been named, the [Lily van Haelen Hostel](#), after the donor – a life-long humanist who lived in South Africa.

In view of the slow rate of donations to the

infrastructure appeal we are considering sending funds to the school in stages so that, in the first instance, the foundations and floor raft can be laid, and then the walls and so on. At the moment the school has 40 male students sleeping in classrooms, which were not designed for sleeping. It is a high priority to rectify this position.

The current requirements to complete the school by 2016 are:

Boys hostel for 96 students	£27,000
Playing Field (land purchase and grading for football & netball)	£10,500
Refurbishment and completion of first building and the main hall	£3,000
Furniture for the National Examination hall	£2,000
Metallic water tank 25,000 litres	£3,500
Work on site drainage and paths	£2,500
Extension of mains electricity to school (Long term need)	£27,500

If you feel you or your group would like to contribute to meeting any of these needs then please contact [stevehurd@uhst.org](mailto:stevehurd@uhst.org) (01782 750338).

Donation and standing order forms can be found at:

<http://www.ugandahumanistschoolstrust.org/donate/>