



Uganda Humanist Schools Trust

Isaac Newton Schools, Kateera, Masaka

Report by Peter Kisirinya, School Director, July 2024



Isaac Newton Humanist Club members placing inspirational signs

Message to UHST supporters and Friends from Peter Kisirinya, Director of the Isaac Newton Humanist Schools

I take this opportunity to thank you all for the support you have given our schools over the years. You enable us to provide decent, liberal, Humanist education to 1,215 children and young people. We also provide jobs to 74 teachers and non-teaching staff – mostly drawn from the local community and 25% of them former Isaac Newton students.

The school has been instrumental in the socio-economic transformation of our local community. In 2005, we were in the throes of the HIV/AIDS epidemic and over a half of the working age population died. The school was set up in one building to provide basic education to 30 AIDS orphans. We have come a long way since then. The school has grown and improved to the extent that it is now the best school in our District.

ISAAC NEWTON HIGH SCHOOL -MASAKA

**Senior One
students
REPORTING**



**SUNDAY 11TH
FEB, 2024**



**ENROLL
NOW**

**Contact
0752653146/ 0752522452**

School recruitment poster

World Bank and UHST support to connect our schools and neighbouring villages to the national power grid has seen the emergence of new forms of business which provide employment to many people. Local taxes paid by the school have become the major source of revenue to our local council. Food and other items purchased by the school from local farmers and traders and wages spent by our staff spreads income through the local community and, in turn, helps families to pay their school fees. The school shares its piped water resource with the surrounding community.

We promote the social development of children by avoiding compulsory worship and religious inscription and instead promote freedom of conscience. Our children learn about democratic processes by electing their class and year representatives and choosing prefects and head boy and girl in free and fair elections. We offer a wide range of co-curricular activities including a range of sports and social activities such as talent shows, music competitions and many more. The humanist club of the school makes charity visits to help

the elderly and single mothers who have no immediate family to support them. Recently they have been putting signposts around the school with inspirational Humanist messages.



Isaac Newton School motto

Kindergarten & Primary School

During the Covid epidemic in 2021, money raised by UHST supporters enabled us to purchase and restore His Grace's Evangelical primary school. With your support this failed and educationally inadequate school has become Isaac Newton's vibrant Kindergarten and Primary school. We have rescued children from forced indoctrination into radical Christianity and provided a lifeline to local families by offering educational opportunities to their children.



New Junior Annex of Primary School



Children waiting to enter the Infant Annex

Since the school became inclusive and secular it has seen enrolment rise from 47 children in 2020 to 430 in 2024. Due to the support of UHST and its supporters we have transformed the old school by constructing:

- A Kindergarten unit, which provides pre-school education to children from the age of 3.
- A modern kitchen with three wood burning stoves and a food store.
- A Blair ventilated toilet with 10 stances.
- Plastered useable existing buildings and repaired floors.
- Fenced the school area.
- Made school furniture.
- Extended piped water and electricity to the school. This has saved the pupils from going to fetch water from a distant contaminated source.
- Set up a room with 5 computers where teachers and children can get up-to-date information.
- In the past year we received donations from Humanist supporters in Crete and the Ethical Society of St Louis to construct two classroom blocks (one with 4 Junior classrooms and another with 3 Infant classrooms), an additional Blair toilet block and walls and landscaping to prevent land slips and flooding.

The new primary school employs teachers who are willing to embrace our Humanist ethos. Improvements in staff morale have brought about a huge improvement in the quality of education and in exam results.

As an Evangelical Christian school, no children gained top grades in examinations. However, in 2021, our first full year as a Humanist school, 7 children gained the top Division 1 grade across their subjects. In 2022 this rose to 11 children and last year, in 2023 we gained 14 Division 1s. This raised the morale of parents and encouraged a growth in community involvement in decision making, through an active Parent-Teachers' Association.



Finishing work on the Teachers' House – a community initiative

A current Community-Alumni initiative is raising funds for the construction of a three-unit teachers' house to accommodate the headteacher, the deputy headteacher and a mathematics teacher – essential if we are to attract good candidates.



Soil stabilisation & drainage work between the new Junior and Infant Annexes

The whole community is proud of the new Isaac Newton Humanist Primary School, though we still have a few remaining needs:

- Security fencing around the new Junior and Infant classrooms.
- Additional furniture to cope with the rising school enrolment.
- An additional kitchen and a hall for dining, exams and for school events.
- Rooms where teachers can do preparation and marking and where parents can pay school fees.
- Refurbishment of useable rooms from the old school.
- Rainwater harvesting from roofs using gutters and plastic tanks.
- More textbooks and computers.



Infant children with new football

High School

The most challenging time was during Covid-19. The lockdown left many schools here in a very desperate situation as many teachers left to seek alternative sources of income. After Covid-19 schools struggled to find teachers. We are grateful to UHST supporters for providing us with teachers' hardship payments during that time. This allowed us to retain most of our teachers. Because of the collapse of many schools, we have experienced an upsurge in applications to join our school and enrolment has risen to 785.



Happily walking to school

I am pleased to report that the high school is now one of the best performing schools in the country and was ranked 186th out of 4324 examination centres in the country at 'O' level in the 2023 national exams. At 'A' level the school was ranked 66th in science subjects and 149th in the arts. We are proud of the UHST supporters for making this improvement possible.

Over the past year we have received funds from UHST to:

- Level land next to the school to create a sports field, which will serve both the high school and the primary school.



Levelling land for sports field

- Construct 3 large rooms for private study and group work.
- Make a new pit-latrine at the girls' hostel to replace the one that collapsed during heavy rains.

Remaining needs include:

- In-service training workshops to give our teachers the knowledge and skills they need to deliver the new competency-based national curriculum.
- The new curriculum demands many more books, computer resources, stationery and science and art materials.
- Materials for Performing Arts which is being introduced as a compulsory vocational subject.
- Funds to facilitate transport for field work, which is an essential element of the new curriculum.

Other school challenges include:

- High cost of energy to cook. The source of energy for cooking is wood, which has become scarce and expensive.
- Malaria is becoming harder to manage as new strains resistant to the conventional treatment drugs emerge. The cost of

treatment has more than doubled. Mosquito repelling paint is very expensive to buy.

- The Competency-Based Curriculum requires more printed materials and sometimes in colour. We need more printers to facilitate this.
- Growing student numbers are putting pressure on our water supply. We need to expand the water source reservoir in the valley and replace the water pump.

Once again, I wish to thank UHST and its supporters for giving our community hope. Life has changed beyond recognition since the HIV/AIDS days of 2005. The long-running partnership between Isaac Newton School and UHST has been the catalyst for a social transformation, for which we should all feel proud.

Peter Kisirinya

Director, Isaac Newton Schools

Supporting the Humanist Schools

If you feel you or your group would like to help us to support the Isaac Newton Schools and the other Humanist Schools in Uganda, or to sponsor a student then please contact stevehurd@uhst.org (07773 972601).

Donation forms can be found at:

<https://ugandahumanistschoolstrust.org/donate/>

SCHOOL ENROLMENT 2024

Primary School

Kindergarten

Class	Boys	Girls	Total
Baby	23	29	52
Middle	19	21	40
Top	26	32	58
TOTALS	68	82	150

Infants & Juniors

Class	Boys	Girls	Total
Primary 1	26	28	49
Primary 2	19	29	38
Primary 3	22	30	52
Primary 4	26	23	49
Primary 5	15	16	31
Primary 6	10	14	24
Primary 7	13	14	27
TOTALS	131	149	280

High School

Class	Boys	Girls	Totals
Senior 1	78	83	161
Senior 2	71	76	147
Senior 3	67	79	146
Senior 4	64	70	134
S5 (Sciences)	25	11	36
S5 (Arts)	32	26	58
S6 (Sciences)	28	15	43
S6 (Arts)	28	32	60
TOTALS	393	392	785

Staffing

The school employs 16 full-time teachers, 22 part-time teachers and 10 non-teaching staff.