



# Uganda Humanist Schools Trust (UK)

## Report on Humanist Academy Visit Monday 9<sup>th</sup> and Tuesday 10<sup>th</sup> November 2009

Steve Hurd and Chris Wright



Deo Seekitooleko, Manager of the Humanist Academy



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#### Introduction

The context of this visit was the first International Friendship Week of the Uganda Humanist Schools Association, which involved Chris Wright, Steve Hurd and Chris Smith, who is a Humanist on VSO in Uganda, undertaking educational and fun activities with the staff and students at both the Humanist Academy and Isaac Newton High School.

We prepared a draft programme some weeks ahead of our visit to Uganda and sent it to both Deo and Peter, so they could discuss with their teachers how they could share in the delivery. We met them both on Thursday 29<sup>th</sup> October to sort out final arrangements for running two days of activities in each school. There is a separate report on the Friendship Week programme, which proved to be a huge success.

The notes summarise our impressions of the current situation in the Humanist Academy.



#### Student Numbers

Attendance at the school during the two days of the Friendship Week was between 55 and 60 students in Senior 1, 2 and 3, which were combined for the activities. This is less than the total school enrolment of over 70. However, this level of attendance was typical given normal daily absence due to illness and the needs of the families for help with home chores including farming.

#### School Funding

During the year fee income from paying local students was low and in this final term fewer than 10 students had paid even partial fees and only a handful had paid the full fee expected. Grants received from Uganda Humanist Schools Trust constituted the main source of income for the school- amounting to over £12,000, including scholarships for 42 students. The school also received a small sum of money for books from World Vision. Despite the substantial grants we have made, the school is finding it a struggle to provide adequate salaries for teachers and support staff and to maintain the school buildings and grounds.

## Meetings with Staff

In the two days at the school we met 5 of the teaching staff.



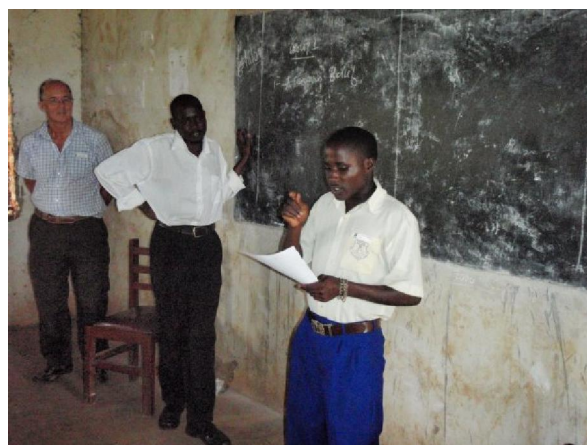
This included the new Headteacher, **Annette Kisake**, whose salary is funded this year by the Italian Humanists, through IHEU. Annette has a BA (Education) from Makerere University, specialising in History and Luganda – and was taught by some of Steve Hurd's ELATE Project colleagues. She taught in a small private school in Wandegaya, Kampala before joining the Humanist Academy. Although she was still finding her feet, Annette played a constructive role throughout the Friendship Week activities.

The school had recruited another newly qualified part-time teacher of History and Luganda, Betty

Nandawula, who shares her classes with the headteacher. Betty was also qualified through the Makerere BA(Education) course.

**Tom Oponya**, the teacher of Physics, Maths and the Director of Studies, played, as always, an active and supportive role over the two days. Tom used the chalk board to draw together key points of discussion and helped the students to clarify their arguments.

On the first day we were also helped by Jackson Okwera, the English teacher. Jackson played an important role in the group discussion of "*What a Humanist Community would be like*". The agriculture teacher, Augustine Kamy, was also there to help with groups on the first day.



Deo, the school manager, responded to the students' points in a very impressive manner – and presented a clear African vision of liberal-humanism. He made it clear to the students that he did not mind whether they were Catholic, Protestant, 7<sup>th</sup> day Adventists or Moslems. These were private matters for home. Once they came to school, however, they must leave their religion behind. He argued that school is a place for rational reasoning and science, where everyone is treated equally as a human being. The students should remember that in school they are part of a new community - if anyone of them has a problem then we all work together to help them solve it.

## Educational progress

Normal teaching was suspended for the two days of the Friendship Week and students from Seniors 1, 2 and 3 were brought together for shared activities. We designed activities which encouraged the students to practice their communication skills in English, notably speaking and listening. Delivery was on a team teaching basis with visitors and regular teachers working together to make presentations, support the students in group discussion, respond to plenary talks by students, play netball, football, bat and ball games, and sing and dance.



Over the past year the students have made marked progress in their:

- Comprehension of spoken English
- Use of general and specific vocabulary
- Ability to work and discuss constructively in groups and cooperate in teams
- Confidence and clarity in speaking within a small group and to a large group of people.

We discussed the general progress of the students with Annette, the Headteacher. She said the school still faces many challenges but she is happy that it is making steady progress. The first cohort of 12 students will take their O-level exams next year. It is important for future recruitment that this first group does well and the Trust offered to provide the school with money for any additional teaching time and resources, including individual copies of textbooks, they need. Deo and Annette were very pleased with the offer.

## School Premises

**The Road:** The £2000 grant for road improvements had enabled the school to bring in a bulldozer to remove some steps and boulders that were making access difficult. A grader had also been used to smooth the surface. Cars can now reach the site in dry conditions, but only 4-wheel drive vehicles can reach the school in all weather conditions. Some further work will be required to reduce the gradient at the short top section of the road.

**Toilets:** There are still only two long-drop toilets, shared by boys, girls and staff. This is already proving to be inadequate, so digging more latrines has become a priority.

**Water:** This remains a major problem. There is a water butt in one of the classrooms with a tap for dispensing boiled water for drinking. The water, however, has to be carried in jerry cans from the village at the bottom of the hill. Deo is hoping to have some money soon from IHEU to buy tanks and conduits so that rain water can be collected and stored from the roof. This is clearly a top priority.



*View from classroom door*



*Break time*

money to finish this block and to furnish it.

**Classrooms:** The walls of the three existing classrooms are largely bare and desperately needed freshening up with a coat of paint. An additional classroom will be needed for Senior 4 in 2010, though the current plan is to use the new staff room as a stop gap.

**Staffroom Block:** Work was in progress on the staffroom block. The walls and roof are complete. Walls were being plastered, but the building still has no windows or secure doors. If Senior 4 have to use the room then the staff will have to share the two small offices constructed for the Headteacher and Director of Studies. The school urgently needs a relatively small amount of

**Secure storage:** One of the classrooms has two enclosed bookshelves with rudimentary locks. However, a few weeks ago someone was chased away after climbing into the classroom between the top of the wall and the roof. Consequently lack of adequate security is a major worry. As a consequence most of the books and laboratory equipment that we have bought for the school this year are being kept off the premises and not, therefore, available for use by students. Completing the staffroom block to provide secure storage is therefore a priority.

***New materials:***

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 a scientific calculator.

## **Spending priorities for 2010**

1. Improving the on-site provision of water for drinking, cooking and washing.
2. Increasing the toilet facilities and making separate arrangements for boys and girls – including hand washing and soap.
3. Providing educational resources and additional teaching to improve the examination prospects of Senior 4.
4. Completing the staffroom block by providing windows, doors, furniture.
5. Building a secure storeroom for books, laboratory, audio-visual equipment, the generator and computers.
6. Painting the walls of classrooms and providing furniture for storage, including lockable metal cupboards.
7. Improving the pay and conditions of teaching staff.
8. Providing an additional computer with a DVD drive and a laser printer, so that teachers can prepare handouts.
9. Further work is needed to complete the access road.
10. Work towards creating a small boarding facility for girls.
11. Help to establish bee-keeping and honey as an income stream for the school working with local farmers.

## Visit to the homes of children receiving scholarships from UHST donors

**Herman's mum and grandchildren**



**Herman's home**



**Mary with her headteacher**



**Local food crop matooke**

