



HIGHGATE

Sponsored Walk 2011

In aid of The Great Lakes High School, Kirima, Uganda



After weeks of meetings, preparing lesson plans and fundraising for Uganda, 18 pupils and 3 teachers from Highgate School had the most incredible and eye-opening experience teaching and touring Southern Uganda for twelve days this summer.

Upon arrival, the blazing heat of the 9.00am equatorial sun was a welcome change to London. The first sight of our transportation - a crammed minibus with central aisle seats - did lift a few eyebrows. Our driver, Moses, was fun to be with throughout the hours of driving around bumpy, un-tarmacked roads that cut through both fertile and arid areas.



The teaching began after we met our host, The Reverend Hamlet Mbabazi. Splitting off into three groups for rotation around three schools - Kirima, Niamburra and of course the Great Lakes High School - we began our lessons.

The Ugandan children, from all the schools we visited, were incredibly welcoming and excited to meet us. We were struck by the old fashioned layout in the classrooms with the traditional hardwood desks and blackboards and with very little evidence of books or stationery.

We all enjoyed the challenge of planning lessons and delivering them, and met the difficulties and surprises with good humour and initiative.



Photo above: Elina teaching at The Great Lakes
The coloured pencils suggest that this must be a Geography lesson!

After a church service - memorable for its inspiring singing - there followed a spectacular display of traditional dancing from the Ugandan children. Highgate pupils and staff reciprocated with a surprisingly rousing rendition of Jerusalem and an even more surprising demonstration of the moves to that perennial European dance-floor favourite, the Macarena. Some of the Ugandan children later requested extra tuition from Olivia, Katie, Elena and Elina (see photo right).

It was a proud moment to see and walk down 'Highgate Road', a dusty track some 4,000 miles away from our school. Below you can see the new Coffee Plantations at the High School, nesting in the middle of an empty, uninhabited landscape (see photo below).





Photo left: Dominic making an educational point at Great Lakes.

All the resources required for the lessons were prepared by the Highgate pupils before the trip. Rather than covering material from the Ugandan school curriculum, that is taught by their regular teachers, many of the Highgate lessons featured activities the Ugandans do not normally encounter at school, such as Drama and Dancing lessons. Indeed, some Highgate pupils remembered songs from their primary schools and put these to good use once the hard work in the classroom was complete!

All in all, the teaching experience at Great Lakes is something that will linger long in our memories.

by Alex Tansey, 13HG

Photo right: Joke time

Q: "What happened to the vegetable in the mathematics class?"

A: "It grew square roots"

This was just one of the many jokes offered by the Ugandan children in response to Nicky's Jokes project. The filming of the Ugandan jokes can be seen here; the girl is about to sit down and make her contribution. Not all of the jokes were so easy to understand: "I'm going to tell you something you'll never forget - a cold banana" was met with roars of laughter. Although we weren't quite sure why; she was right, we've never forgotten it!



Photo left: Highgate's Freddie, Josh, Dom and Max and three boys from the Great Lakes High School.

All the boys seem to have spotted something of interest here; unfortunately however, no-one can remember what it was. Perhaps they spotted a flock of Crowned Cranes, the national symbol of Uganda, small parties of which could sometimes be seen flying over the school.



Photo below: A Farewell photo from the Great Lakes High School.

Freddie, Henry, David, Dom, Josh and Max demonstrating the camaraderie and warm friendly relationships that blossomed so easily between the two very different groups of young people.

Photo right: The plaque commemorating the Head Master's visit in 2009.



Photo below: Team Uganda! with one of our guides, Henry sporting an Arsenal shirt.

