

REPORT OF THE VISIT TO EASTLEIGH HIGH SCHOOL NAIROBI
28th January 2017 to 12th February 2017

On behalf of ESS Alumni, Nisar Butt, our Treasurer and I went to Eastleigh High School, Nairobi from 28th January 2017 to 12th February 2017. We were accompanied by one of our members Bashir Butt. We had a very busy, exciting and rewarding experience which I outline below.

The IT Room, network and Internet access: The school has a large computer room on the first floor in the 'newer' block above the current staff room. The current provision is 30 computers. Pupils studying IT as an examination subject in Form 3 and 4 have ready access to the computers as a part of their school IT curriculum programme. Others use the facilities after school classes and at weekends. The access to the internet is often slow and intermittent. This is because the signals are weaker in the area as there are no tall buildings in the vicinity to put up the equipment. The overall progress in IT is good but a little hampered by the main IT teacher being on maternity leave. The school eagerly awaits her return.

Maintenance: We spent nearly £30K in total (including £10K from ESS Alumni) getting the whole school repainted in 2014. However, we were disappointed by the lack of maintenance and the poor state of repair of the buildings, particularly inside some classrooms, corridors and toilets. The windows all have a layer of dust which is a constant cleaning problem arising from the dusty and dirty environment the school is surrounded by. Rain is seeping through the newer ceiling boards having a huge number of holes. The wall cupboards in classrooms that teachers used to stock exercise and textbooks were bare spaces with doors either missing or damaged. The school has had only a limited budget for repairs and maintenance and cannot afford to refurbish the buildings and classroom in one go. I pointed these deficiencies and our disappointment at their lack of care and maintenance in the whole school assembly. The school promised to take action. Gurcharan Singh Gill, our resident alumni, has also been made aware. He has agreed to help as much as he can.

New buildings: The school has two new additions to its buildings. There a newly built block of changing rooms for sports and games. It has about six set of toilets and showers. There is also a newly built dormitory block with three rooms which will take up to 50 boarders. The school has already applied for boarding facilities to the Ministry with plans for 3 buildings in a 'U' shape on the old Hockey pitch area. This is planned in stages over a number of years. It will be funded partly by the government and partly by the parents and friends of the school, including past students. The school Principal and governors have appealed to us to raise funds for this venture. They have very good evidence of good pupil achievement and progress from other schools that have gone residential. We need to discuss what we can offer.

New furniture: The new desks and chairs towards which we donated £10K were robust and of good quality. The frames from the old chairs were good enough to be made into laboratory stools with new timber seats and backs. In the same way, other old frames were reused to make new chairs for the library. Each student in the library can now have access to an individual booth for quiet reading. Similarly, these reconditioned chairs were used in the computer room, replacing the old benches. The school had already received 350 new chairs and 270 new desks by 10th February 2017. The balance of 350 chairs and 430 desks will be delivered by Gurcharan Singh Gill as soon as they are ready.

Lesson visits and video sessions: Mathematics under achievement is a major concern of the school and standards in examinations have been very low. As a part of my agreed programme, I visited lessons of all members of the mathematics department and gave them feedback. Teachers were very appreciative of comments on their strengths and areas for development. In the training sessions later, I highlighted some of the areas for development and features of a good lesson. The videos of lessons in UK lessons exemplified vividly the main points I was making.

The school, at my request, carried out a comparison between pupils' mathematics performance at entry in Form 1 and on leaving in Form 4. It showed a very large number of pupils had in fact regressed rather than make progress over the four years! I hope with the help of some new ideas and mathematics resources and materials worth about £100 that we supplied, the mathematics teaching and learning will improve. The Ministry has also agreed to provide support in this area. Mathematics teaching and learning is a major area of concern in a number of secondary schools in Kenya and the government is aware of it. Let us hope they put things right as soon as possible.

Economic aspects of the school and pupils: The annual tuition fees are about £176 per year of which the government pays £100 and the parents pay £76. Parents pay about £132 per year for a hot lunch. In addition, the parents have to pay about £32 towards a boarding fund for the future. So the total comes to £240 for each pupil.

Many of the pupils come from very poor backgrounds and are not able to pay their fees. Many had built up debts from previous years. One of our members, Shakoora Ahmed (1965), generously donated £1500. We were able to pay off the outstanding dues of 10 of these pupils – a sum of KSh. 162,920/-. However, the needy pupils will continue to need support with fees again in the future. The Principal Mr Awuor made an appeal at our Reunion in October 2016 for sponsors to pay the fees of more needy pupils. The amount comes to roughly £200 per student per year - £800 over the four years. I will be very grateful to receive your pledges of support @ £200 per child per year.

Meeting with Nairobi Ex-ESS colleagues: ESS Alumni Kenya hosted an excellent Dinner meeting at a lovely new venue in Parklands – Concorde Hotel - on Tuesday 7th February 2017 from 7 pm. The President, Satpal Singh Jowhal, made an entertaining speech. I was given the opportunity to talk about our work in the UK, the 2016 Reunion in London and our visit to EHS in Nairobi. The Treasurer Jas Babra talked about the progress made by ESS Alumni since their formation and the need to make the organisation more lively and active. There were about 30 participants in all and we enjoyed meeting each other and exchanged news about our personal and social lives.

We also were lucky to meet some of the younger African alumni of EHS who were very keen to be a part of the alumni to help the school. They were Sila Sulwey, Vijedi Muhando Wicks, Dennis Ndalo, Paul Mugi Kiguta, Bernard Njau Waruiru and our first African Life Member, Reginald Okumu. It was a pleasure to meet them and to exchange ideas and suggestions for the future.

Meeting with the Department of Education Inspectors/Quality Assurance Officers, Nairobi
We were invited to Jogoo House to meet with the Ministry of Education officials and professionals in the Quality Assurance department to discuss our work and to listen to their plans for Kenya schools in the future. I was later invited to join the Quality Assurance team to make a presentation on how we organise and support our schools in the UK as well as how school inspections are conducted by OFSTED. They were all very keen and enthusiastic to learn about the UK system and appreciated our efforts most warmly.

Meeting with the governors, parents, staff and students: The school organised a meeting with the staff, governors and parents in our honour. We met the parents of the 10 'Needy Pupils' we supported as well. We all went for a lovely lunch at the local restaurant and came back for the whole school assembly. Some excellent speeches were made by the Chair of Governors, Parents' group, local politicians and the school Head Boy. I was given an opportunity to talk about our work with the governors as well as in the school assembly. They were all full of appreciation and praise for the work that ESS Alumni had done for the school.

It was here that everyone was told officially about the change of the Principal. Fred Awuor, the current Principal was transferred to Jamhuri High School. The new Principal appointed for EHS was Mr Peter Manundu. The Vice Principal was also leaving to take up as Principal at another school. So the school will see a big change at the top and it all happened very quickly. We thank Fred

Awuor for all he has done for the school in the last 7/8 years wish him the very best at Jamhuri! We welcome Peter Manundu to EHS and look forward to working with him and his new Deputy closely.

In conclusion...we thoroughly enjoyed our 2 weeks in Nairobi, staying together in self-catering accommodation. We were lucky with the weather which was very warm but pleasant. Our hosts were all superb, including Fred Awuor, Gurcharan Singh Gill, Jaspal Singh Babra, Hellen Boruette, Nazir Lone and Duncan Juma. In a short space of 2 weeks, we were able to do quite a lot. However, a lot more needs to be done and we hope that the next group of committee members will take up the challenge.

I hope I have covered all the main points. Please have a look at the photographs as well which will soon be on our website. www.essalumni.org.uk I would welcome your questions, queries and suggestions. Please do not hesitate to get in touch with me at jntanna@aol.com

Jayant Tanna
Chairman
ESS Alumni
April 2017