

BibleLands

..... Overseas Partner Fact Sheet..... Hope Secondary School

How it all started

Hope Secondary School was founded by the Mennonite community in 1962, mainly for the many refugee children and orphans in the Bethlehem area. Many of the children at the school still come from the poorer families in the community and some are also orphans, both from the local area and from further afield.

The school began with 40 boys aged between 12 and 15 and with four teachers. The school not only provided an education, but also food, clothing and a home for these boys. Soon it expanded and, by 1970, pupils up to the age of 18 were accepted.

When the school began it was just for boys, but after 10 years girls were accepted too. There are now about 140 children at the school, aged between 12 and 18 years, of which around 25 are girls. There are also a few disabled children at the school, and the building has been adapted accordingly to enable them to get around it more easily. The Principal, Solomon Nour, has been a teacher at the school for over 35 years, and Headmaster for almost 15 of these. Many of the children come to the school at the age of 12 have had little or no primary education, making it more difficult to share a higher level of education with them as they have had no basic schooling.

The name 'Hope School' was chosen by the pupils themselves in 1977 and it has as its motto the biblical verse: *For you have been my hope, O Sovereign LORD, my confidence since my youth.* (Psalm 71:5)

Key facts

Founded: 1961

Location: Bethlehem, West Bank

First Grant from BibleLands: 1988

BibleLands' Grant: £15,600 p.a.



Current Activities

Christian and Muslim students, from across the West Bank, study and live side-by-side at Hope School. All the children begin their day with prayers in the Chapel. However, when the children have Religious Education lessons, they have to separate to learn about their own religion, as it is illegal to teach non-Christian children about the Bible at school. Teachers could be imprisoned, or schools closed down, if these laws were disobeyed. A Club for Christian students helps to support them in their lives and witness at a time when the number of Christians in the Holy Land is decreasing dramatically.

Below: Praying hands, the school's logo.



Students study the Government curriculum, including Arabic, Hebrew and English, and undertake the usual exams at the appropriate times in their school career.

Senior students specialise in Business Studies, including Accounting, Economics and Computing. This more vocational approach helps them to prepare better for their lives after school.

Due to high unemployment, endemic illness and the ban on travel into Israel and Jerusalem, fathers are often unable to get work to support their families. Many of the students come from single parent homes, where there is even less money to support the family adequately. A lot of families therefore cannot afford even the school's modest fees. As the school wants to help as many children as it can, no student is ever turned away because the family cannot pay.



Above: A class graduates from the school

Up to 40 of the boys board at the school, either because they live far away, or because they are unable to live at home due to family difficulties. In addition to necessities, such as meals and beds, the school provides clothing and study materials to these boys. A team of house fathers help to care for their emotional and spiritual needs.

Some of the boys come from very difficult home environments and prefer to stay at Hope School even during the holidays. Although the school tries to encourage these children to maintain their family relationships, accommodation is never refused to any boy who needs a place to stay. Hope School tries to make it 'home', while giving students hope for a brighter future.



A pupil receives a free routine medical check

For over 40 years, Hope School has been educating, nurturing and inspiring young people. It is much more than simply an educational institution – it is a Christian witness in the land of Christ's birth, offering love and hope to those who would otherwise have none. Solomon Nour writes:

"Our responsibility for the students in our care is great. Our means are so little, but our faith in the Lord is strong. We believe that it was by the grace of God that the school was started and by His love and care the school will continue, spreading the teachings of our Lord Jesus Christ and glorifying His Holy Name."

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