



THE REPUBLIC OF UGANDA

Ministry of Education and
Sports

Status of Bridge Academies in Uganda

As of April, 2020

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Acronyms:

BIA	Bridge International Academies
BoG	Board of Governors
BRMS	Basic Requirements and Minimum Standards
DEO	District Education Officer
DIS	District Inspector of Schools
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
NCDC	National Curriculum Development Centre
PSI	Private Schools and Institutions
PTA	Parents and Teachers Association
SMC	School Management Committee

Introduction:

Over the last five years, the Government of Uganda (Ministry of Education and Sports) has been engaged in protracted efforts to effectively regulate the expansion and operations of Bridge International academies in the country. At the beginning of 2018, after several notices, the Ministry moved to close all the 63 Bridge Internal Academies (BIA)¹ in Uganda for operating without licenses². In response, the management of BIA applied to the High Court for an interim injunction against the closure. The High Court ruled against BIA's application and affirmed the Government's mandate to ensure education quality through effective regulation.

Initially Bridge appealed to the Court of Appeal but before the case could take off, BIA opted for a negotiated solution with Government. A number of engagements with the Ministry, through Basic Education department and Directorate of Education Standards, among others, culminated in a resolution that Ministry of Education would not license BIA schools en masse. Instead, and in accordance with Section 31 of the Education (Pre-primary, Primary and Post-primary) Act 2008, the Ministry would review each BIA school's application for license as an individual case and grant or deny it license on individual merit. Consequently, a team of Ministry officers, led by the Directorate of Education Standards, visited ten BIA schools to verify the level of compliance with the regulatory instruments before their applications for licenses could be processed. The verification team submitted a report of findings, which recognized noticeable attempts by BIA to comply with Basic Requirements and Minimum Standards (BRMS). However, it highlighted significant weaknesses in areas of school management and leadership, structures and facilities, teachers' professional development, curriculum management and instructional materials. Accordingly, the report made nineteen recommendations for improvement in these areas.

Following this report, the Ministry promised to review the updated license applications of the ten visited schools so that whichever satisfied the requirements would get a provisional license to open and operate from 1st term 2019. The ministry further tasked BIA to ensure that no other school, other than the ten, should open and operate without the express written authorization of the Permanent Secretary. BIA was also required to commit in writing to run and manage each school, including its financial operations, as a separate entity, which is integrated within the local community it serves, as envisaged in Section 28 and Second Schedule of the Education Act (Pre-primary, Primary and Post-primary) 2008.

Currently, ten (10) BIA schools (See Table 1.) have been licensed. The Ministry's position is that only these ten licensed Bridge Schools are supposed to be open and operating. After a period of two years and if BIA manages the ten in compliance with BRMS and relevant laws, each of the ten may apply for registration. It is after the successful registration of the ten that BIA may be permitted to open and operate additional schools.

¹ Following Ministry of Education and Sports objection to calling the schools academies, they have all been renamed as Bridge Schools

² See Annex 1 for a full list of both closed and operating Bridge schools in Uganda

Table 1. Bridge Schools with Provisional Licenses to operate in Uganda

District	Sub-County	Parish	Bridge School
1. Arua MC		Adulafu	Bridge School - Adalafu
2. Bugiri	Bugiri TC	Idudi	Bridge School – Idudi
3. Buikwe	Njeru MC	Kyabagu Zone	Bridge School – Mbiko
4. Lwengo	Kiseka	Kinoni	Bridge School – Kinoni
5. Mbale MC	Northern Division	Namakwekwe	Bridge School - Namakwekwe
6. Wakiso	Kawempe	Kagoma	Bridge School - Kagoma
7. Wakiso	Busiro	Nakuwadde	Bridge School - Nakuwadde
8. Wakiso	Ssisa	Kajansi	Bridge School - Kajansi
9. Wakiso	Nabweru	Ochenge Zone	Bridge School – Nsubi
10. Wakiso	Nansana MC	Nansana	Bridge School - Yesu Amala

In the meantime, Ministry of Education and Sports, through Private Schools and Institutions (PSI) department, has initiated the process of developing a National Policy on Private Provision of Education. One of the key issues that the policy seeks to address is providing for effective regulation of large networks of schools established and operated by organizations, especially international agencies.

It is against this background that we constituted a team to make a rapid review of the status of Bridge schools in Uganda, with specific references to: (1) how many are operating (2) how many are closed (3) what are the reasons for closure (4) what is the enrolment in each operating schools (5) how the schools are being managed and (6) how the curriculum is being implemented.

This is a report of the findings of the team’s visit to forty-eight Bridge schools in twenty-one districts between 24th February and 6th March 2020.

The team adopted a methodology consisting of the following.

- a. Desk review of documents relating to BIA establishment and operations
- b. Consulting local government officials, including concerned Municipal Education officers and Inspectors of schools
- c. Development of a field tool for assessment of compliance with Basic Requirements and Minimum Standards (BRMS)
- d. Field visits to 48 sampled BIA schools for firsthand assessment of compliance with BRMS
- e. In the field, the team:
 - i. Carried out physical assessment of school infrastructure and scholastic materials/equipment
 - ii. Reviewed management records/documents at the school level
 - iii. Interviewed the school heads and available teachers
 - iv. Interacted with members of the communities surrounding the schools

The Schools Visited

Table 2. below show the schools visited, their enrolment where applicable and the status.

Table 2 Details of the schools visited

District	Bridge School	Enrol.	Status
1. Bugiri	Bridge School – Bugiri	46	Unlicensed, operating
2. Bugweri	Bridge School – Idudi	NA	Licensed, operating
3. Buikwe	Bridge School – Nakibizi	101	Unlicensed, operating
4. Buikwe	Bridge School – Mbiko	62	Unlicensed, operating
5. Busia MC	Bridge School – Sofia	00	Unlicensed, closed by owner
6. Busia MC	Bridge School – Madibira	48	Unlicensed, operating
7. Hoima MC	Bridge School – Bujumbura	83	Unlicensed, operating
8. Hoima MC	Bridge School – Kiryatete	00	Unlicensed, closed by owner
9. Jinja MC	Bridge School – Buwenge	00	Unlicensed, closed by owner
10. Jinja MC	Bridge School - Wanyange Lake	78	Unlicensed, operating
11. Jinja MC	Bridge School - Wanyange Hill	103	Unlicensed, operating
12. Jinja MC	Bridge School – Mafubira	126	Unlicensed, operating
13. Jinja MC	Bridge School – Katende	92	Unlicensed, operating
14. Kalungu	Bridge School – Lukaya	44	Unlicensed, operating
15. Kasese MC	Bridge School – Kamulikwizi	00	Unlicensed, closed by LG
16. Kasese MC	Bridge School – Nyakasanga	00	Unlicensed, closed by LG
17. Kayunga	Bridge School – Kayunga	00	Unlicensed, closed by owner
18. Kiboga	Bridge School – Kiboga	110	Unlicensed, operating
19. Kumi MC	Bridge School – Kumi	00	Unlicensed, closed by LG
20. Luweero	Bridge School – Bombo	00	Unlicensed, closed by LG
21. Luweero	Bridge School - Wobulenzi	00	Unlicensed, closed by owner
22. Lwengo	Bridge School – Kinoni	155	Licensed, operating
23. Masaka MC	Bridge School - Nyendo	00	Unlicensed, closed by owner
24. Mbale MC	Bridge School – Bugema	00	Unlicensed, closed by owner
25. Mbale MC	Bridge School – Namakwekwe	149	Licensed, operating
26. Mityana MC	Bridge School – Mityana	00	Unlicensed, operating
27. Mpigi	Bridge School – Mpigi	340	Unlicensed, operating
28. Mpigi	Bridge School – Buwama	140	Unlicensed, operating
29. Mubende MC	Bridge School – Kisekende	130	Unlicensed, operating
30. Mukono MC	Bridge School – Kauga	160	Unlicensed, operating
31. Namayingo	Bridge School – Namayingo	00	Unlicensed, closed by LG
32. Tororo	Bridge School – Malaba	130	Unlicensed, operating
33. Tororo MC	Bridge School – Rubongi	171	Unlicensed, operating
34. Wakiso	Bridge School – Katooke	91	Unlicensed, operating
35. Wakiso	Bridge School - Abaita Ababiri	164	Unlicensed, operating
36. Wakiso	Bridge School - Jinja Karoli	323	Unlicensed, operating
37. Wakiso	Bridge School – Namulanda	00	Unlicensed, closed by owner
38. Wakiso	Bridge School – Nkumba	00	Unlicensed, closed by owner
39. Wakiso	Bridge School – Matugga	00	Unlicensed, closed by owner

40. Wakiso	Bridge School – Kagoma	NA	Licensed, operating
41. Wakiso	Bridge School – Kakiri	00	Unlicensed, closed by owner
42. Wakiso	Bridge School – Kawanda	00	Unlicensed, closed by owner
43. Wakiso	Bridge School – Nakuwadde	NA	Licensed, operating
44. Wakiso	Bridge School – Kajansi	131	Unlicensed, operating
45. Wakiso	Bridge School – Nsubi	NA	Licensed, operating
46. Wakiso	Bridge School – Gganda	00	Unlicensed, closed by owner
47. Wakiso	Bridge School - Yesu Amala	367	Licensed, operating
48. Wakiso	Bridge School – Nansana	NA	Unlicensed, operating

Closed or Operating without licences:

At the Peak, BIA had sixty-three (63) schools operating in Uganda, although the majority of them were unknown to Ministry of Education and Sports. Indeed, as indicated in the introduction above, the Ministry of Education and Sports is officially aware of only ten that are supposed to be operational on provisional licenses.

The team visited twenty-two³ (22) schools that are operating without licenses from the Ministry of Education and Sports. In the 2018 ruling, Justice Lydia Mugambe delivered her judgment in the matter of Bridge International Academies (K) Ltd Vs Attorney General Misc Application No. 70 of 2018 (Arising from Misc. Cause No. 23 of 2018 (Marked B) stating that the applicant's (Bridge Schools) conduct of coming to Uganda at pleasure, start schools all over the country without any registration with any conformity to the relevant government department speaks to a high level of reckless disregard of national institutions set up to ensure quality education in the country.

The team also visited eighteen (18) Bridge schools that have been closed, majority of them by the owner due to low enrolment. The team learnt that the management of BIA has been closing some of the schools due to failure to attract adequate numbers of learners. Only six (6) schools in Luweero, Kasese, Kumi and Namayingo were closed by local governments following a directive from the Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Education and Sports.

Table 3 Closed Schools Visited by the Team

District	Bridge School	Enrol.	Status
1. Kasese MC	Bridge School – Kamulikwizi	0	Unlicensed, closed by LG
2. Kasese MC	Bridge School – Nyakasanga	0	Unlicensed, closed by LG
3. Kumi MC	Bridge School – Kumi	0	Unlicensed, closed by LG
4. Namayingo	Bridge School – Namayingo	0	Unlicensed, closed by LG
5. Busia MC	Bridge School – Sofia	0	Unlicensed, closed by owner
6. Hoima MC	Bridge School – Kiryatete	0	Unlicensed, closed by owner
7. Jinja MC	Bridge School – Buwenge	0	Unlicensed, closed by owner
8. Kayunga	Bridge School – Kayunga	0	Unlicensed, closed by owner

³ When contacted, BIA Kampala headquarters put the number of closed schools to 25, this would put the number of schools operating without a license at twenty-eight, when the ten on provision license are taken into consideration.

9. Luweero	Bridge School – Bombo	0	Unlicensed, closed by LG
10. Luweero	Bridge School - Wobulenzi	0	Unlicensed, closed by LG
11. Masaka MC	Bridge School - Nyendo	0	Unlicensed, closed by owner
12. Mbale MC	Bridge School – Bugema	0	Unlicensed, closed by owner
13. Wakiso	Bridge School - Namulanda	0	Unlicensed, closed by owner
14. Wakiso	Bridge School – Nkumba	0	Unlicensed, closed by owner
15. Wakiso	Bridge School – Matugga	0	Unlicensed, closed by owner
16. Wakiso	Bridge School – Kakiri	0	Unlicensed, closed by owner
17. Wakiso	Bridge School – Kawanda	0	Unlicensed, closed by owner
18. Wakiso	Bridge School – Gganda	0	Unlicensed, closed by owner

There are more schools closed by BIA due to unsustainable enrolment than by Government authorities for operating illegally. Nevertheless, interviews with members of the communities in neighborhood of the schools revealed that the pressure exerted on the unlicensed schools by Government, including the constant threat of closure, played a significant role in dissuading parents from taking their children to Bridge Schools. A lady living next to a closed bridge school in Kayunga district, explained as follows:

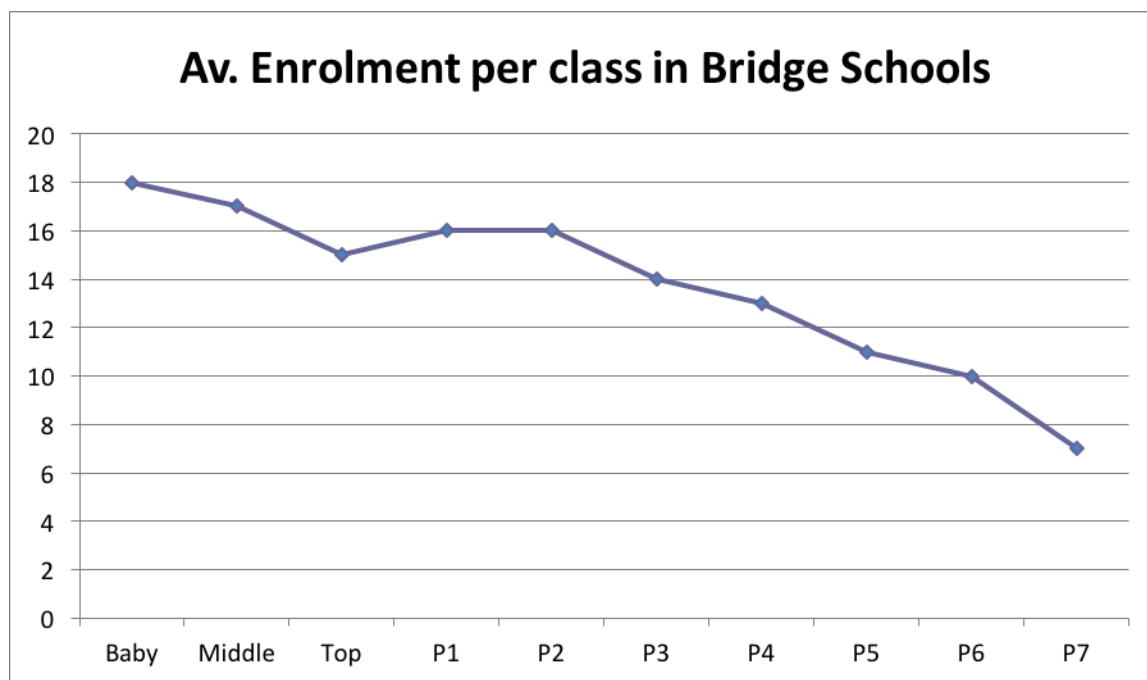
“It is difficult. Even if the school is good, but when you hear that the government does not want them and may close the school anytime, you cannot take there your child.”

A number of academy managers, as Bridge Schools head teachers are called, acknowledged the uphill task in trying to persuade parents to bring their children to Bridge Schools when there is still the threat of Government coming in to close the school at any time.

A number of head teachers who are under a lot of pressure from BIA management to increase enrolment in their respective schools, pointed to the fees and the insistence on full payment before learners are allowed in class as the major reason for dwindling enrolment. They explained that they are not given latitude to engage parents at the local level and arrange a more manageable way of paying fees in installments. Whenever they do this and BIA learns of it, their salaries are “docked”.

As a result of a combination of these factors, enrolment in a large majority of Bridge schools is very low and obviously unsustainable. Indeed, without the nursery sections (Baby, Middle and Top classes), which have a combined average enrolment of fifty (50) learners per school in twenty-three (23) of the schools visited, the average combined enrolment in the primary classes (P1 – P7) is just eighty-eight (88) learners per school. The upper primary classes are particularly poorly enrolled with the class average of 11 for P5, 10 for P6 and 7 learners for P7. Of these schools, one did not have a single learner in P5, two did not have any learner in P6 and three did not have any enrolled learner in P7 for 2020.

Clearly, these numbers cannot sustain the operations of the schools. All the head teachers asked about the enrolment numbers vis-à-vis the operational cost confessed that without funds from somewhere else, their schools cannot operate. Given that even the highest enrolled schools are below the 350 mark, it is not feasible that they can sustain the poorly enrolled ones. It is no surprise then that so many schools have been closed by BIA itself, which is a for-profit organization.



Community Perspectives on Bridge Schools:

The team noted a mixture of opinions among the communities where Bridge schools are located. To make sense of the apparently conflicting opinions in the communities on Bridge schools, it is necessary to understand the setup and business model of BIAs. Each of the Bridge schools is situated in the dense low-cost peri-urban settlements of the major municipalities. Unlike the traditional schools, which are usually set apart on a clearly marked piece of land to provide ample space for co-curricular activities, Bridge schools are inserted in the middle of the hustle and bustle of the largely slum settlements. This serves two obvious purposes to suit BIA's interests. First, they create a feeling of belonging and a sense that the school is part of us. Secondly, the schools are a lot more accessible and for the majority of parents who do not have money to transport their children to schools that are set apart from the settlements, this is a great relief. This community integration also allows administrators and teachers of Bridge schools to be in constant touch with the parents and to continually market the school to them. As a result, there are many positive voices about Bridge schools among community members. There are also community members eager to defend Bridge schools for what is perceived as recognizable learning achievements in terms of English language acquisition. "Our children have learnt to speak English with Bridge" is a common statement.

However, there are also negative views about Bridge schools within the hosting communities, especially about the caliber of teachers. Community members severally noted that the school does not have teachers and they “keep bringing very young people” to teach our children.

The other common concern expressed by the community members was the uncertainty surrounding the school. They noted that because the school owners are not working well with both district authorities and Ministry of Education and Sports, there is always a fear that the school may close any time.

The strongest negative voices come from the local government officials, especially the education department officers. The inspectors of schools in almost all the districts visited quickly pointed to the failure to adhere to the national curriculum and manage the schools in accordance with the Ugandan law. They also point to the schools employing unqualified and unregistered teachers and absence of teacher-made schemes of work and lesson plans as a major weakness.

Compliance with Basic Requirements and Minimum Standards:

The last two reports by Ministry of Education and Sports⁴ faulted Bridge Schools in Uganda on non-compliance with basic requirements and minimum standards, especially in the following areas:

- i. School management and Governance,
- ii. Teacher qualification and professional development,
- iii. Curriculum content and delivery
- iv. Instructional materials
- v. infrastructure and facilities

This section highlights the team’s findings on whether any or all Bridge schools have made significant improvements in these areas.

School Management and Governance:

The report of 2016, although based on visits to only four schools in Mukono and Wakiso, observed as follows regarding management and governance:

“Contrary to provisions of the Education (Pre-primary, Primary and Post-primary) Act 2008, there is no School Management Committee (SMC) in any of the four schools visited. However, all the visited schools claim to have PTAs although there are no records of meeting minutes or their election/appointment. The BIA schools are headed by an Academy Manager, who in all the four schools visited has no appropriate qualification.”⁵ The report of 2018 noted that although

⁴ The first report of 2016, was a Report of Fact Finding Visit to Selected Bridge International Academies (BIA) in Mukono and Wakiso Districts and the second was the 2018 Report on the Verification of Bridge Schools in Uganda

⁵ MoES, 2016. Report of Fact Finding Visit to Selected Bridge International Academies (BIA) in Mukono and Wakiso Districts, Page 3.

there are SMCs in all the schools visited, these are not constituted as per the law or approved by the DEOs. The report summarizes the headship of the visited schools as follows:

School	Qualification	Remarks
Nakuwadde	Grade III and Diploma in Teacher Education	Qualified to head
Kinoni	Diploma in secondary	Not qualified to head
Idudi	Diploma in secondary	Not qualified to head
Yesu Amala	Diploma in secondary	Not qualified to head
Mbiko	Diploma in secondary	Not qualified to head
Kagoma	Diploma in secondary	Not qualified to head
Kajjansi	Diploma in secondary	Not qualified to head
Adalfa	Diploma in secondary	Not qualified to head
Nsumbi	Diploma in secondary	Not qualified to head
Namakwekwe	Diploma in secondary	Not qualified to head ⁶

Our team established that BIA still has a long way to go to comply fully with the requirement to recruit qualified and experienced teachers to head the schools. It is also important to note that because of lack of comprehensive records on staff at school level, in terms of personal files, and the unwillingness of the head teachers to provide information, it is difficult to independently verify the qualifications of the staff. Only four (18%) of the operating schools visited (22), had in place suitably qualified (Diploma in Primary Teacher Education and registered at that level) although in some cases not adequately experienced (5years) head teacher. A number of persons heading the schools are neither appropriately qualified nor are they professional teachers. The team noted a rather high head teacher turnover as almost all the head teachers in the visited schools indicated that they had only recently joined the schools they were heading.

Table 4. Qualifications of Headteachers in Bridge Schools

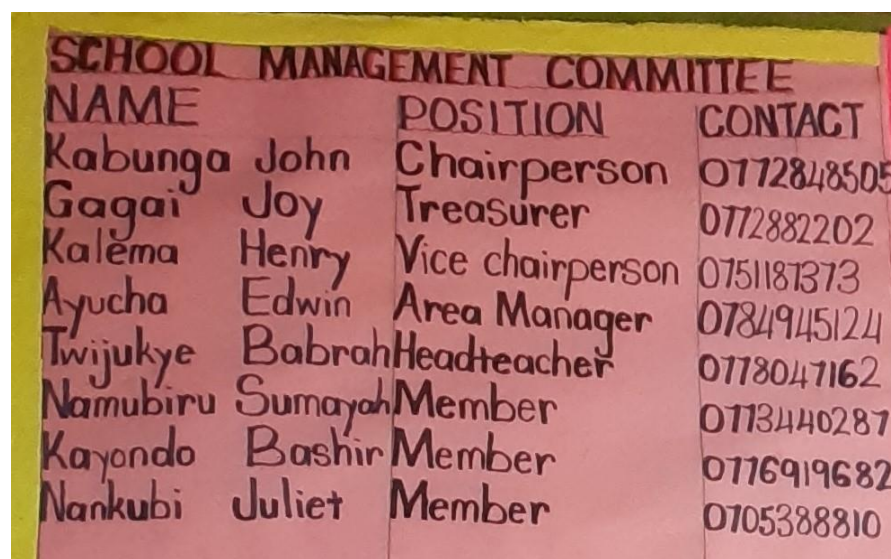
District	Bridge School	Headteacher's name	Headteacher Qualifications	Comment
1. Bugiri	Bridge School - Idudi	Josephine	unspecified	Not Qualified
2. Buikwe	Bridge School - Nakibizi	Aitewala Emmanuel	Dip. Sec. Educ	Not Qualified
3. Buikwe	Bridge School – Mbiko	Kakaire Samuel	Dip. Pri. Educ	Qualified
4. Busia MC	Bridge School – Madibira	Nabwire Mourine	Grade III	Not Qualified
5. Hoima MC	Bridge School - Bujumbura	Baluku Cosmas	BA ED SEC	Not Qualified
6. Jinja MC	Bridge School - Wanyange Lake	Ekirapu Brian	Grade III	Not Qualified
7. Jinja MC	Bridge School - Wanyange Hill	Mwanika Francis	Unspecified	Not Qualified
8. Jinja MC	Bridge School – Mafubira	Ndase Fahad	Unspecified	Not Qualified
9. Jinja MC	Bridge School – Katende	Ssibyangi Samuel	Grade III	Not Qualified
10. Kalungu	Bridge School – Lukaya	Timbo David	Dip. Pri. Educ.	Qualified
11. Lwengo	Bridge School – Kinoni	Kihembo Haggery	Grade III (UR)	Not Qualified
12. Mbale MC	Bridge School - Namakwekwe	Mbawobye Banur	Dip. Pri. Educ	Qualified
13. Mpigi	Bridge School – Mpigi	Kamede Justine	BA	Not Qualified

⁶ MoES, 2018. Report on the Verification of Bridge Schools in Uganda, Page 9

14. Mpigi	Bridge School – Buwama	Sophie Muhammad	Unspecified	Not Qualified
15. Mubende	Bridge School - Kisekende	Bingi Everlyne	Unspecified	Not Qualified
16. Mukono	Bridge School – Kauga	Kiiza Josephine	Grade III	Not Qualified
17. Tororo	Bridge School – Malaba	Kambale Kirima	Dip. ICT	Not Qualified
18. Tororo MC	Bridge School – Rubongi	Okolimong Musa	Grade III (UR)*	Not Qualified
19. Wakiso	Bridge School – Katooke	Busingye Fiona	BA	Not Qualified
20. Wakiso	Bridge School - Abaita Ababiri	Ayebazibwe Irene	BA Ed	Not Qualified
21. Wakiso	Bridge School - Jinja Karoli	Nalika Minsa	Dip. Pri. Educ	Qualified
22. Wakiso	Bridge School – Kajansi	Nansereko Josephine	BA. Procurement	Not Qualified

*UR – Unregistered with MoES

In terms of school management, there was no appropriately constituted or active School Management Committees (SMCs) in all the schools visited. While all the schools had lists of names pinned up on the wall in the head teachers' offices headlined SMC, the members, in terms of number and composition, did not correspond to the statutory regulations of the Second Schedule of the Education (Pre-primary, Primary and Post-primary) Act 2008.⁷ Similarly, there are no records of the SMCs having met to discuss the school management issues.



SCHOOL MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE		
NAME	POSITION	CONTACT
Kabunga John	Chairperson	0772848505
Gagai Joy	Treasurer	0772882202
Kalema Henry	Vice chairperson	0751181373
Ayucha Edwin	Area Manager	0784945124
Twijukye Babrah	Headteacher	0778047162
Namubiru Sumayah	Member	0713440287
Kayondo Bashir	Member	0776919682
Nankubi Juliet	Member	0705388810

Figure 1. A Typical Example of a Bridge School SMC

The centralized management of Bridge Schools has been one of the issues that Ministry of Education and Sports is concerned about. In all the schools visited, it was very apparent that BIA has not yet ceded much control of the schools to the local school management structures. Head

⁷ Regulation 3 indicates that the School management committee should have 13 members including the head teacher. The regulation further categorizes the members including 6 representatives from the foundation body, 1 local government representative nominated by the district, 1 representative of the local council executive, 1 representative elected by the sub-county or city division or municipal, 1 representative of the parents, 1 representative of staff, 1 representative of former students. Plus the head teacher as the secretary to the committee.

teachers have very limited control of school management as evidenced by the almost universal reference to BIA headquarters whenever a request for management records is made. Basic records such as staff personal files, appraisal reports, financial management, minutes of management meetings are all said to be with headquarters. The obvious challenge here is that the school heads are not empowered to grow as education managers.

Teacher Qualification and Professional Development:

This remains an area of major concern in all the Bridge Schools visited. There are inadequate numbers of qualified teachers to cover all the classes. While on average the head teachers report ten (10) teachers on the staff list, there were no more than six (6) teachers present in any of the schools visited. The majority of the teachers present tended to be young ECD caregivers, fresh from nursery teacher training colleges.

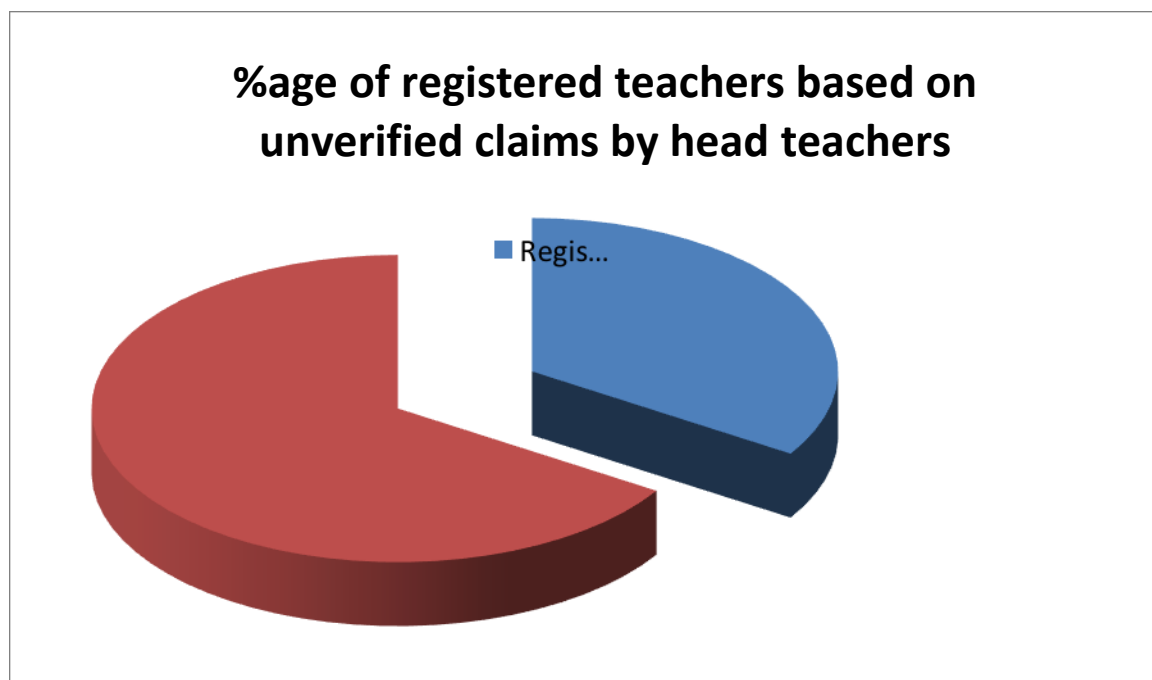


Figure 2 A Young Female Teacher Taking a Class at a Bridge School

The ECD caregivers were found taking charge of primary school classes in the absence of appropriately qualified teachers for that level. For example, at Bridge school Rubongi in Tororo district, Chakwa Brenda, ECD Caregiver, was teaching P2 class. At Bridge School Lukaya, Kalungu district, Rachel, an ECD Caregiver, was teaching P1 and at Bridge School Kisekende in Mubende district, Violate Kahwa, ECD caregiver was teaching P2 class.

There are other cases of teachers found in classes for which they are not qualified to teach. In Bridge School Mpigi, the teacher taking P4 in SST was a Kyambogo University first year BA Education dropout. A S6 dropout was found teaching P1 at Bridge School Buwama, where almost all the teachers were new in the school.

Given that staff records, such as teachers' personal files, are not readily accessible at the school, it was not possible to establish the veracity of all the claims about teacher qualifications and registration with the Ministry of education and Sports. However, even from brief conversations with the teachers present at the schools, it was apparent that most of the teachers in the visited schools had not only just left teacher training colleges, but were also not registered, which is a requirement for one to teach.



Staff Working Conditions and Motivation

As already indicated, the team found that there was very high staff turnover in all the schools visited. In over half of the schools, over 80% of the staff had joined the school only that term. Many of them were young and recently out of college.

Failure to retain and develop staff for sometime is usually an indication of unsatisfactory working conditions and low morale. The team established that the majority of teachers are not happy with the way they are remunerated and managed. Indeed, some expressed very strong feelings about the lack of appropriate compensation for their work. One teacher went on to state, “we are just gambling here.”

The team noted that BIA has a commendable record of paying the staff promptly before the month ends. On 27th February 2020, when we were in some of the schools, the teachers had either received their pay or were expecting it that day. All the teachers we spoke to appreciated this commitment to pay them on time. BIA also makes contributions to NSSF for the staff's social security savings. However, the teachers were unhappy with the amount, which on average stands at about UGX200,000 (Approx.50USD) gross pay. Note that this is conveniently below the minimum threshold for Pay As You Earn (PAYE) taxes in Uganda, which is UGX 235,000.

They also took particular exception to the common practice by BIA management of deducting their salaries for all sorts of purported contract infringements. The deductions, which are popularly known as “docking”, are for reasons ranging from absenteeism to letting into class a pupil who has not completed fees payment. According to one academy manager (head teacher), the practice is so common that there is hardly any staff member who gets their full pay every month. To compound the situation, there is no disciplinary or appeal mechanism where a teacher could seek redress if he/she does not agree with the docking of salary.

According to the District Inspector of Schools, Namayingo district, the reason why Bridge schools have such a young and predominantly female teaching staff is the low pay. The young girls are just out of college and looking for something to do. Consequently, they will accept any terms for a job, but will soon be on the lookout for greener pastures, leading to the high staff turnover.

In the *Guidelines for Staff Employment in Private Schools and Institutions in Uganda*, the Ministry of Education and Sports, under Guideline No. 7. Guides on Staff Development and Retention, requires schools to ensure that the staff work under terms and conditions that promote professional growth and to minimize staff turnover and attrition.⁸ Specifically, schools are required to ensure that there is retention of high quality staff through mentorship, professional development and fair appraisal and disciplinary processes handled by the school management committee.

The team noted that Bridge schools visited did not have a clear system of managing teachers to ensure retention and professional growth, and to appraise and discipline them as per the guidelines.

Curriculum Content and Delivery:

In Uganda, the mandate of developing curricula and instructional materials, especially for basic and secondary education, lies with the National Curriculum Development Centre (NCDC).⁹ It is also NCDC that approves and recommends specific textbooks to be used in schools at different levels. Concerns have been raised about both the curriculum being implemented in Bridge schools and the textbooks used to deliver it.¹⁰ Even more critically, the use of readymade lesson plans, electronically transmitted to teachers on computer tablets for class delivery has been of serious concern to Ministry of Education and Sports, as well as to other stakeholders¹¹.

In view of the above, the team set out purposively to determine whether Bridge schools have since adopted the Ugandan curriculum as recommended by the two Ministry of Education

⁸ MoES, 2017. *Guidelines for Staff Employment in Private Schools and Institutions in Uganda*

⁹ NCDC website <https://www.ncdc.go.ug/services>

¹⁰ The first MoES report of Bridge schools (2016) noted that “The claim that they implement Ugandan Curriculum is not backed by any evidence. There are no copies (soft or hard) of the national curriculum at the school” and the second report (2018) concluded that “40% of the schools did not have a complete set of the required curriculum”

¹¹ <https://observer.ug/news/headlines/57318-we-re-simply-teaching-robots-bridge-schools-teachers-admit>

reports and whether the recommendation of the second report that, “there is need to procure both text books and non-text book materials which have been approved by Ministry of Education and NCDC has been acted upon. The team also sought to establish whether teachers in Bridge schools plan and design lessons for their classes as expected under best practices pedagogy.

The team found that while copies of some of the Ugandan curriculum books have been procured and are in schools, they are not actively used to design and deliver lessons on a regular basis. Rather, it appears these materials have been assembled to show any visiting education officers or school inspector that Bridge schools are responding to the requirement. In practice, however, Bridge schools continue to rely on the textbooks designed by their own teams and bearing their own logos.

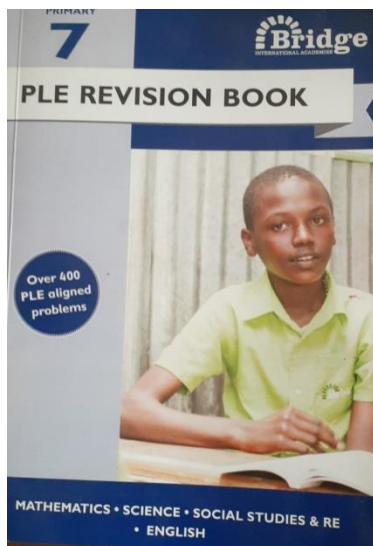




Figure 3. Sample of Bridge developed textbooks in the schools

In effective pedagogy, planning for a lesson is strongly predicated on the experiences from the previous lesson(s) with particular classes and learners. This, it appears, is not an appreciated principle in Bridge schools' approach.

Interactions with the teachers revealed that they are required to strictly follow the scripted lessons on the tablet and that these lessons are sent on a daily basis. When the lesson is opened / started, there are automated timings for each step in the lesson and the tablet screen will automatically move to the next step when the time is up, even when the teacher was still explaining something. The teachers revealed that the trainings they get from BIA upon recruitment is largely on how to use the tablets and follow the scripted lessons.

Cost of Education in Bridge Schools:

Table 5 below gives an indication of the cost of education in sampled Bridge Schools in Uganda. The fees differ from class to class and there are also slight differences in the fees paid in different schools.

Table 5. Details of the schools visited

District	Bridge School	Admn.	ECD	P1-P3	P4-P6	P7	Meals	Uniform ¹²
1. Buikwe	Bridge School – Nakibizi	10,000	79,000	91,000,	100,000	116,000	50,000	57,000
2. Busia MC	Bridge School - Madibira	10,000	74,000	85,000	93,000	113,000	50,000	57,000
3. Jinja MC	Bridge School - Wanyange	10,000	77,000	88,000	97,000	109,000	50,000	57,000
4. Jinja MC	Bridge School - Mafubira	10,000	77,000	97,000	97,000	97,000	50,000	57,000
5. Lwengo	Bridge School – Kinoni	10,000	87,000	99,000	110,000	121,000	50,000	57,000
6. Mbale MC	Bridge School-Namakwekwe	10,000	84,000	96,000	106,000	117,000	50,000	57,000
7. Mpigi	Bridge School - Buwama	10,000	69,000	79,000	87,000	101,400	50,000	57,000
8. Mubende MC	Bridge School - Kisekende	10,000	77,000	88,000	97,000	109,000	50,000	57,000

¹² This is the average cost of uniform which includes a dress/shirts and shorts for girls and boys respectively, at an average of 31,000shs, stockings at an average of 5,000shs and a jumper (21,000shs), which is optional, although no other types of jumpers are allowed in the school.

9. Mukono MC	Bridge School – Kauga	10,000	90,000	103,000	114,000	133,000	50,000	57,000
10. Tororo	Bridge School – Malaba	10,000	72,000	82,000	91,000	105,000	50,000	57,000
11. Tororo MC	Bridge School - Rubongi	10,000	72,000	82,000	91,000	105,000	50,000	57,000
12. Wakiso	Bridge School – Katooke	10,000	98,000	112,000	123,000	136,000	50,000	57,000
13. Wakiso	Bridge School - Abaita	10,000	92,000	105,000	116,000	128,000	50,000	57,000
14. Wakiso	Bridge School - Jinja Karoli	10,000	98,100	102,000	123,000	136,000	50,000	57,000
15. Wakiso	Bridge School – Kajansi	10,000	92,000	105,000	116,000	128,000	50,000	57,000
Average		10,000	82,540	94,500	104,067	116,960	50,000	57,000

On average, a parent of a child in a Bridge school pays UGX132,540 per term, excluding a one-off admission fee of UGX10,000 and uniform at an average of UGX57,000. In addition, P7 pupils are required to buy a PLE revision book each term. At a glance, this may appear to be affordable. However, considering the economic status of the majority of parents in the communities where the Bridge schools are located, and the number of children per family, the fees are substantial. It is important to note that most of the Bridge schools are within less than two kilometres of Government Universal Primary Education (UPE) schools, where parents are exempted from paying tuition fees for their children. In UPE schools, parents may be requested to contribute for the midday meal of their children at about 10,000shillings or even less; even then, they usually struggle to do so. Therefore, education in a Bridge school is not a cheaper quality option as BIA promotion literature claims. Only a few parents in the target communities can afford to have their children there as indicated by the low enrolment figures, despite the aggressive and glamorous advertisement.

BRIDGE INTERNATIONAL ACADEMY WELCOME YOU	
FEES STRUCTURE	
	AMOUNT
NURSERY (BABY - TOP)	92,000 shs
PRIMARY ONE - THREE	105,000 shs
PRIMARY FOUR - SIX	116,000 shs
PRIMARY SEVEN	128,000 shs
FEEDING FEE (BREAK & LUNCH)	50,000 shs
DEVELOPMENTAL FEE	10,000 shs

"EARLY PAYMENT FACILITATES THE SMOOTH RUNNING OF THE CHILD'S EDUCATION" Management

SCHOOL FEES STRUCTURE	
ADMISSION FEE	10000 ₦
NURSARY	79000 ₦
P.1 - P.3	91000 ₦
P.4 - P.6	100000 ₦
P.7	116000 ₦
Feeding fee	break fast 15000 ₦
	lunch 35000 ₦

BRIDGE NAKURU

BRIDGE INTERNATIONAL ACADEMY WELCOMES YOU ALL			
BOYS NURSERY UNIFORM		BOYS PRIMARY JUMPER	
SIZE	ORIGINAL PRICE	SIZE	OFFER PRICE
4	19,400 ₦	8-8	20,200 ₦
6-8	21,000 ₦	10-12	21,700 ₦
		14-16	23,300 ₦
GIRLS NURSERY UNIFORM		GIRLS PRIMARY JUMPER	
SIZE	ORIGINAL PRICE	SIZE	OFFER PRICE
4	19,400 ₦	8-8	20,200 ₦
6-8	23,300 ₦	10-12	21,700 ₦
		14-16	23,300 ₦
BOYS PRIMARY UNIFORM		BOYS SOCKS	
SIZE	ORIGINAL PRICE	SIZE	ORIGINAL PRICE
8	29,050 ₦	4	4,700 ₦
12	34,850 ₦	6-8	5,000 ₦
16	38,700 ₦	10-12	5,300 ₦
18	42,550 ₦	14-16	5,600 ₦
GIRLS PRIMARY UNIFORM		GIRLS SOCKS	
SIZE	ORIGINAL PRICE	SIZE	ORIGINAL PRICE
8	27,150 ₦	4	4,700 ₦
12	31,000 ₦	6-8	5,000 ₦
16	35,050 ₦	10-12	5,300 ₦
18	42,550 ₦	14-16	5,600 ₦
BOYS NURSERY JUMPER		GIRLS NURSERY JUMPER	
SIZE	OFFER PRICE	SIZE	OFFER PRICE
4	18,600 ₦	4	18,600 ₦
6	20,200 ₦	6	20,200 ₦

TEACHERS & IDS

RHODA TOP 191797

BAYANDA T91689

ESEZA M91419

MERCY P3T91803

ODRICK P6 T91770

JUSTINE T91804

JULIET P2 T90911

HELLEN P1 T91765

MARION P4 T91733

SARAH T90331

FIDELIS P4 T91709

2020 School Fees

Bridge International Academy, Nakuru
P.O. Box 1000, Nakuru
Kenya
Tel: 020 255 1000
Fax: 020 255 1001
Email: info@bridge.ac.ke

Admissions Fees

New Bridge pupils must pay a one-time admissions fee before they can be allowed in class. If a Bridge pupil transfers to another Bridge School at a later date, a new admissions fee will not be required.

Admissions Fee: 10,000 US\$

Termly Fees

A pupil's termly fee and exams fee are due before the first day of class in a term. These fees cover the cost of all materials used in class including textbooks and practical learning aids.

Level	Fees per term	77,000 US\$
Early Childhood Education		
Lower Primary		86,000 US\$
Middle Primary & PS		97,000 US\$
P7		109,000 US\$

P.L.E. Revision Book Fee

Pupils in P7 are required to purchase a P.L.E. Revision Book for use in class each term.

P.L.E. REVISION BOOK

Replacement Books

If a Homework Book, Classroom Book, or Report Book are lost or spent, replacements are available at the cost of 1,800 US\$ per term.

Payments Accepted

Fees should be paid through MTN Mobile Money, or Airtel Money or Centenary Bank (Account Number: 2710300075). Bridge Schools does not accept cash under any circumstance.

Uniform Fees

Uniforms are compulsory at Bridge. All pupils must wear a basic set and socks. If a child chooses to wear a jumper, it must be a Bridge jumper. PE kits will be added in the future.

Category	Item	Price
Boys Nursery Uniform	Includes shirt and shorts	
	Size 4	19,400
	Size 6-8	21,000
Boys Primary Uniform	Includes shirt, shorts and tie	
	Size 8	29,050
	Size 12	34,850
	Size 16	38,700
Boys Nursery Jumper	Light green on top, red green on bottom	
	Size 4	18,600
Boys Primary Jumper	Light green on top, red green on bottom	
	Size 8-12	20,200
Boys Socks	Size 4-6	4,700
	Size 8-10	5,000
	Size 12-14	5,300
	Size 16-18	5,600
Girls Nursery Uniform	Includes dress	
	Size 4	19,400
Girls Primary Uniform	Includes shirt and dress	
	Size 8	27,150
Girls Nursery Jumper	Light green on top, red green on bottom	
	Size 4	18,600
Girls Primary Jumper	Light green on top, red green on bottom	
	Size 8-12	20,200
Girls Socks	Size 4-6	4,700
	Size 8-10	5,000
	Size 12-14	5,300
	Size 16-18	5,600
Girls Undershirt Pants	Size 4	10,000
	Size 16	12,000
Hjabs	Size 8-10	8,800
	Size 12-14	7,800

Conclusions:

The team makes three main conclusions regarding the status of Bridge schools in Uganda, compliance with BRMS and sustainability of the model.

The Status of Bridge Schools in Uganda:

A large majority of Bridge school continues to operate in disregard, not only to the law and policies guiding regulation of education provision in Uganda, but also to Ministry of Education express written notices to close those that are not licensed.

The provisional licenses given to ten of the schools is somehow used by BIA to validate the existence and operations of all the others, even when the conditions under which these were licensed expressly require, among other things, that BIA does not continue to operate the other schools, awaiting validation processes.

Compliance with BRMS:

It is clear that by the nature of the model adopted, Bridge Schools cannot comprehensively comply with the BRMS as regards management of schools, curriculum implementation and staff employment and development. The fundamental principle of bridge schools is to cut costs and make a profit through economies of scale. This requires that numerous schools have to be centrally controlled beyond the communities that host them, which is against the principle and spirit of the Education Act 2008. Similarly, recruitment and development of teaching staff will continue to be compromised and staff turnover will remain high. Meanwhile, curriculum delivery under the Bridge model will continue to undermine the profession creativity and innovation of the teacher and disadvantage the learners who would have benefitted from the reflections of the teachers and from authentic experiences.

Sustainability:

As pointed out above, the sustainability of the Bridge schools is invariably hinged on a model that flouts existing legal and policy regime on governance, management and standards. Where these are effectively implemented, the schools will struggle to attract and retain learners. It is, therefore, no surprise that as Government of Uganda strengthens the regulation of Bridge schools to ensure compliance with BRMS, the schools are losing enrolment and closing down. With about ten of the visited schools unable to raise more than 100 learners, many more will be closing down.

Recommendations:

1. Bridge Schools should desist from aggressive and largely misleading promotion, especially as regards the quality education they provide and affordability for the poor in the Ugandan context.
2. Bridge schools' management should adhere with all the BRMS and other policies that govern education provision in the country and comply with the lawful directives issued by the education authorities.

3. The Ministry of Education and Sports should strengthen its enforcement of regulations and standards as regards all schools, including Bridge schools.
4. In developing the National Policy on Private Provision of Education, Ministry of Education and Sports should ensure that private involvement in education does not result in marketization of the sector to benefit investors and does not negatively impact the right to education for especially poor and vulnerable groups. The Abidjan Principles on the Human Rights Obligations of States to Provide Public Education and to Regulate Private Involvement in Education provide useful guidance on how to regulate private actors such as Bridge in compliance with international human rights standards.

Annex 1. List of both Operating and Closed Bridge Schools in Uganda with Enrollment Statistics for the Visited Schools

District	Sub-County	Parish	Bridge School	Enrolment										
				Baby	Middle	Top	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7	Total
Arua MC	Western Division	Adalafu	Bridge School - Adalafu											0
BUGIRI	Bugiri TC	kampyang	Bridge School - Bugiri	8	10	9	14	7	6	6	0	8	4	72
Bugweri	Idudi TC	Idudi	Bridge School - Idudi											0
BUIKWE	Njeru MC	Wampala Zone	Bridge School - Nakibizi	13	15	13	9	9	5	6	10	9	12	101
BUIKWE	Njeru MC	Kyabagu Zone	Bridge School - Mbiko	11	3	4	2	3	1	9	9	12	8	62
Busia MC	Northern	Sofia	Bridge School - Sofia											
Busia MC	Western Division	Madibira	Bridge School - Madibira	10	9	18	10	15	8	5	2	2	6	85
Hoima MC	Northern Division	Bunjumbura	Bridge School - Bujumbura	21	15	16	13	17	18	14	9	9	3	135
Hoima MC	Central Division	Kiryatete	Bridge School - Kiryatete											
Iganga	Iganga MC	Bugumba	Bridge School - Bugumba											
Jinja	Wandago	Magamaga	Bridge School - Magamaga											
Jinja MC	Buwenge	Buwenge	Bridge School - Buwenge											0
Jinja MC	Mafubira	Wanyange	Bridge School-Wanyange	12	11	10	5	8	15	20	22	8	0	111
Jinja MC	Mafubira	Wanyange	Bridge School - Wanyange Hill	11	9	14	11	22	16	22	12	15	5	137
Jinja MC	Butembe	Mafubira	Bridge School - Mafubira	20	13	6	10	15	7	15	15	20	5	126
Jinja MC	Bugembe	Katende	Bridge School - Katende				11	12	13	18	11	13	14	92
Kalungu	Lukaya T.C	Magizi	Bridge School - Lukaya	15	6	3	6	4	5	0	5	0	0	44
Kasese MC	Kagore	Kamulikwizi	Bridge School - Kamulikwizi											0
Kasese MC	Nyamwamba	Nyakasanga	Bridge School - Nyakasanga											
KAYUNGA	Kayunga TC		Bridge School - Kayunga											0
KIBOGA	Kiboga TC		Bridge School - Kiboga	19	13	11	17	14	11	8	7	6	4	110
KIRYANDONGO	Bweyale TC	Kichwabugingo	Bridge School - Bweyale											0
Kumi MC	Southern Division		Bridge School - Kumi											0
Luweero	Bombo TC		Bridge School - Bombo											0
Luweero	Wobulenzi TC		Bridge School - Wobulenzi											0
LWENGO	Kiseka	Kinoni	Bridge School - Kinoni	21	17	25	21	16	12	10	12	8	13	155
Lyantonde	Lyantonde TC	Kuuki	Bridge School - Lyantonde											
Masaka MC	Nyendo	Nyendo	Bridge School - Nyendo											0
Masaka MC	Katwe		Bridge School - Katwe											

Mbale MC	Industrial Dvn	Namatala	Bridge School - Namatala											
Mbale MC	Wanale Division	Bugema	Bridge School - Bugema											0
Mbale MC	Northern Division	Namakwekwe	Bridge School - Namakwekwe	16	17	21	20	18	15	13	10	11	8	149
Mityana MC	Mityana	Mityana	Bridge School - Mityana											0
MPIGI	Mpigi Town Council	Prisons Word	Bridge School - Mpigi	46	40	39	48	43	45	39	22	12	6	340
MPIGI	Buwama	Mbizzinya	Bridge School - Buwama	18	14	14	16	19	16	15	10	9	9	140
Mubende MC	South Division	Kirungi	Bridge School - Kisekende	19	14	11	12	19	23	16	9	0	7	130
Mukono MC	Central Division	Kauga	Bridge School - Kauga	11	16	18	17	20	20	10	17	19	12	160
NAMAYINGO	NAMAYINGO	NAMAYINGO	Bridge School											0
Pallisa	Pallisa TC		Bridge School - Pallisa											
Sororti MC		Kengere	Bridge School - Kengere											
Tororo	Malaba TC	Malaba	Bridge School - Malaba	21	22	18	18	10	8	11	7	11	4	130
Tororo MC	Soko	Akiriti	Bridge School - Rubongi	26	31	21	16	18	21	14	5	9	10	171
WAKISO	Nansana MC	Nabweru	Bridge School - Katooke	12	13	16	21	10	6	6	4	3	0	91
WAKISO	Katabi	Katabi	Bridge School - Abaita Ababiri	29	23	17	17	20	16	13	12	10	7	164
WAKISO	Nabweru	Kawempe	Bridge School - Jinja Karoli	24	45	22	40	48	28	34	38	21	23	323
WAKISO	Katabi	Namulanda	Bridge School - Namulanda											
WAKISO	Katabi	Nkumba	Bridge School - Nkumba											0
WAKISO	Matugga	Matugga	Bridge School - Matugga											
WAKISO	Kawempe	Kagoma	Bridge School - Kagoma											0
WAKISO	Kakiri TC	Kakiri	Bridge School - Kakiri											0
WAKISO		Kawanda	Bridge School - Kawanda											0
WAKISO	Busiro	Nakuwadde	Bridge School - Nakuwadde											0
WAKISO	Ssisa	Kajansi	Bridge School - Kajansi	27	13	14	15	17	13	12	9	4	7	131
WAKISO	Wakiso	Ochenge Zone	Bridge School - Nsubi											0
WAKISO	Wakiso	Ochenge Zone	Bridge School - Gganda											0
WAKISO		Kyengera	Bridge School - Nabaziza											
WAKISO		Kasenge	Bridge School - Kyengera											
WAKISO	Kawempe	Ganjo	Bridge School - Ttula											
WAKISO	Nansana MC	Nansana	Bridge School - Yesu Amala											
WAKISO	Nansana MC	Nansana	Bridge School - Nansana											
WAKISO	Kiira MC	Kireka	Bridge School - Kasokoso											

