



St Mary's students, left, who were due to visit South Africa in June of 2020 – the visit was cancelled due to lockdown; above, student Aisling Hendron is among the fundraisers

# From Menston to Mnyakanya: school fundraises for vital water

By Claire Lomax

01943 607022

FOURTEEN years ago, Mnyakanya High School in rural KwaZulu-Natal in South Africa, together with St Mary's School, Menston, established the now multi award winning Bambisanani Partnership which uses sport to promote education, health, global citizenship and leadership.

A few weeks ago Mnyakanya School contacted the Bambisanani Partnership charity with the terrible news that they had no water supply which meant that the school could not reopen safely after the coronavirus lockdown of schools in South Africa, as basic hygiene requirements such as hand washing could not be carried out.

The Acting Principal of the school, Mrs Thulie Mkhize, spoke of young people 'starting to lose hope' in a school that offers hope above all else in one of the country's most remote and deprived areas.

In order to get running water reinstated at the school, students and staff from St Marys have started a fundraising campaign which involves members of the



The route from St Mary's to South Africa

school community collectively running, walking or cycling the equivalent distance from Menston to Mnyakanya – 8,709 miles! Led by teacher Miss Charlotte Wood, the initial challenge

involved 21 students and staff from the school who are directly involved in the partnership's work in South Africa, including current and former members of staff: Charlotte Wood, Catherine

Chattoe, Matt Harvey, Brad Dobson, David Geldart and Year 12 students: Joseph Nicol, Archie Bange, Ellie Woffenden, Gabriel Beaumont, Millie Carroll, Theo Humphreys, Joe Newman, Oscar Helliwell, Catherine Westhead, Caitlin Copsey, Kizzy Tremlett, Sabrina Spilker, Aisling Hendron, Dion Barber, Emma Kerrigan and Luca Volpe.

Last weekend, a 10k run, cycle or walk event was completed by all the team which also saw many more teachers from the school join the challenge including: Mr Hearle, Mrs Hayes, Mrs Rix, Mr Pringle, Mrs Wilson, Miss Chrispin, Mrs Beesting, Miss Anderson, Mrs Thornton, Miss Rogers, Mrs Thomas, Mrs Findlay, Mrs Harrison, Ms Pettifer, Mr Dennett, Mr Steingold, Mrs Hanson, Mr Thornton, Miss Mason and Mrs Doyle.

Collectively, the team have now completed over 1,665 miles, which on the long road to South Africa, takes them to Almeria in Spain. With all team members clocking up the miles on a daily basis, the destination will hopefully be reached by November which, will culminate in many of them competing in the Leeds 10k. The aim is to raise over £5,000

which will not only reinstate clean water to the school but also increase the number of taps and improve plumbing.

David Geldart, Founder and Chair of the Bambisanani Partnership, said: "This is a fantastic initiative which will hopefully get Mnyakanya students back into school safely so they can start improving their life chances again. "We take washing our hands and having clean water to drink for granted; it is difficult to comprehend life without access to water, particularly in these unprecedented and challenging times.

"The only guaranteed meal that many of these youngsters get is when they are at school – during the lockdown. This has obviously not been happening so it is essential to get the school open again as soon as possible.

"I thank everyone involved in this challenge and indeed those supporting it – you really will make a difference."

To donate to the charity to support this initiative please visit [www.bambisananipartnership.org](http://www.bambisananipartnership.org) or contact Bambisanani Coordinator at St Mary's, Mrs Catherine Chattoe: [c.chattoe@stmarysmenston.org](mailto:c.chattoe@stmarysmenston.org)