

Some students fall sick only a week after returning to school

By Arthur Katabalwa

Is your child in a boarding facility? If so, then they must have given him or her a medical form, which must be filled and signed by a medical doctor after a thorough medical check up.

"If you did not receive this medical form at the end of the year from your boarding school, this is a mistake. You should talk to your school about its importance and ask them to offer you one," Dr John Muyingo, the state minister for higher education says.

"This form helps parents and the school gets aware of the medical status of the students to avoid eventualities which could have been avoided, by being aware."

He, however, says even students in day schools, deserve to get these medical checks wherever possible.

"Having medical checks is important for everyone, and in this case to your child," Alice Ajuna, a Clinical Officer in Kyenjojo, says.

Teachers too believe all students deserve to undergo medical tests, for their own safety.

Edwin Kibuuka, a teacher at St. Savio Junior School on Entebbe Road says: "Medical checks should be a must for every student in a boarding school."

However, the practice in most families is that parents just take the forms to get stamped at the nearby clinics.

Dr Joel Serubanja, a general practitioner in Kampala, says this is a terrible move.

"As a parent, you must take your child's health seriously. Do not forge medical reports," he says.

Why medical checks are very paramount



Medical checks for children should be done at least once a year

If a child has been in school for three months, it is imperative you de-worm, check for malaria and any condition that needs attention

Why care?

They also check for reproductive health issues because growing up comes with complexities, especially for the girl-child.

A medical check-up should be done at least once a year.

The reason the school is strict on a medical check-up is because some students fall sick only a week after returning to school, while others

ask to go back home to see a doctor. Diseases such as typhoid, fever, cough as well as communicable disease such as chicken pox, STIs and measles can be a setback for the child and the school.

The headteacher of Trinity College Nabbingo, Cotilda Kikomeko, says "Mandatory tests have improved our health budget. Knowing the complications children have makes it possible to help them in due time."

"Unfortunately, many parents are not enthusiastic about the check-up. They tend to insist on one clinic or doctor. If one doctor is supposed to check all the students from our school, he is likely to ask questions hurriedly just to get paid," Mandy Atwine, a parent says.

Kikomeko advises parents to spread the medical visits throughout the holiday, though many wait till the last minute.

Fagil Mandy, an education consultant, says many people only go for check ups when they are sick. But it should be different because we are in charge of our lives. A parent entrusts a school with their child, and the school is liable to be sued in case of any mishap. Besides, some diseases are not easily diagnosed.

Is there a ministry policy?

There is no set policy by the ministry on medical checks. Schools set their own policies.

But some parents appreciate the procedure. If a child has been in school for three months, it is imperative that you de-worm, check for malaria and ask if there is any health condition that needs attention.