

Schools must meet basic requirements

As the new school year begins, the plight of hundreds of learners in primary and secondary schools is at stake after the ministry of Education put a big number of private schools on notice that they will not be allowed to re-open for first term unless they institute basic requirements set by the government.

A nationwide survey carried out by *Daily Monitor* ahead of the reopening of first term on February 6 found that some schools are operating in non-designated substandard structures such as commercial buildings and bars while many do not meet the minimum health standards expected of a school environment.

The attempt to have institutions that do not meet the basics of school life closed would be a welcome move only if the

The issue:
School standards.

Our view: All stakeholders must work together to improve the standards of our schools.

decision was going to affect both private and government schools. Much as many private schools operate in very unorthodox environments, it is indeed equally true the same number of government-aided schools, especially in the countryside operate in bizarre conditions.

Generally, schools are expected to be hygienic, with enough teachers and other staff responsive to the needs of the learners, but also with a social

climate that is inclusive and comfortable. A secure environment would mean that a given school's safety procedures and policies are in line with the guidelines set out by the Education ministry.

All stakeholders must work together to improve the standards of our schools. Government must take the lead in continuously educating the learners, parents, teachers, and the local leadership on what constitutes a good school, and why it is necessary to conform to national standards. Term three, and not one, is when intensive campaigns to support schools in bad shape should be carried out. Such campaigns should look at how to improve school safety security, academic environment and physical structures with particular attention to the sanitary requirements of the girl child.

We must also focus on the need to secure the lives of students and teachers, and other people who work and relate with the schools in marginalised rural schools, hard-to-reach-areas and the urban poor, and also uphold education practices such as the Alternative Basic Education for Karamoja.

For children to benefit in an education setting, and achieve the required academic grades, they need to study under acceptable standards.

Personal security of a learner is a great factor in attraction, enrollment and retention of students in any given school. This does not only help them learn, perform well and complete a given cycle of education but also shapes them into responsible leaders and citizens of our country.

Our commitment to you

We pledge: