

Getting the right nursery school

Before enrolling your child into kindergarten, carry out a background check on the school

BY CONAN BUSINGE

I I do not want to stress my child with counting and tough reading sessions in nursery school,"

remarks Patricia Atwine, a parent with a four-year-old child, in kindergarten. She has a point. A good kindergarten should know what to teach children, and parents should be able to tell if the children are learning or not.

Nursery teachers have at times spending long hours on teaching pupils how to count and write, instead of allowing them enough time to explore their thoughts and surroundings.

Daisy Nyambura, a retired nursery school teacher, says if a parent is to gain from the time and resources spent on nursery education, they should monitor the teaching and learning process of the child.

Teachers for toddlers are expected to interact with them, play with them or observe their progress and engage them in activities. Toddlers should not be drilled on tough calculations and memorising stuff.

Nyambura says nursery schools are supposed to cover general areas. "These range from personal, social and emotional development, to language and literacy,



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knowledge of the world," Nyambura says.

She adds that by age five, children should be able to count from zero to 10.

Parents should ensure that the child recognises different quantities and understands, 'taking away', talk and use of gestures to communicate, re-tell stories in the right sequence, name and sound the letters of the alphabet and write simple regular words such as cup, basin and plate

Official view

Hope Kasimbazi, the outreach and partnerships officer in the Early Steps Programme-Building a Strong Foundation at the Private Sector Foundation Uganda, says children are adaptable to different situations and when it comes to school, they will warm up in a friendly environment with good caring teachers.

among others.

Learning through play Nyambura says learning through play should be common practice in nursery schools.

A good kindergarten must have a wide range of age-appropriate toys, to help and stimulate creativity and imaginative play. A good nursery school must have an outdoor play area that encourages running, jumping and skipping, which helps the child develop physically, mentally and socially.

Nyambura notes that there are various ways a parent can assess if their child is learning or not.

The assessment, she says, can be done, through observation with minimal or no intrusion into children's activities.

She says one can pay attention to linguistic, social, emotional, and physical development, on a regular basis.

"Parents are encouraged

caring setting. The good thing is that parents can smoke out the fakes by finding out if their children are taught the right way.

Dr Nabila Farhat, a senior educationist, says: "A good pre-school should have a welcoming, friendly atmosphere and be known for its nurturing environment and stimulating curriculum."

Farhat, adds: "Choosing a school is one of the most important decisions you will make for your child, which needs a lot of planning." "The choice of kindergarten or pre-school will be the first step in making you the main

to observe and listen to their children. "This helps detect important milestones and behaviour in the child's development," she says.

With such observations, a parent will not be fooled by the seemingly perfect kindergarten picture, with the children playing on manicured grounds with flowers as the backdrop and warm yellow sun lighting their smiley faces. The picture is complete with two or three caring teachers pushing them.

Far from the beautiful structures is the reality that not all kindergartens have such attentive teachers and an environment conducive for learning. Sadly, kindergarten teachers have a knack for putting on an act when parents come to pick their children; which purports learning in a

person who influences the kind of learner your child will be in future," she adds.

As a parent, you want the best for your child. And one does not realise until that moment, how difficult the choice of finding a good school can be.

"We all want confident, happy and caring children, who will be responsible citizens of the community," she adds.

"We expect our children to grow into young men and women, who are successful in their careers, caring towards the older generation and loving to youngsters. The kind of schools our children go to, certainly helps in shaping them into the type of adults our children will grow into."

She also notes that nowadays, schools offer a lot and each school is unique and tend to be competitive. It is, therefore, important to start your search early enough.

"In many schools, families need to get on a waiting list, months and years ahead of time, in order to get a vacancy in a school of their choice. Hence, it is important to start the search early," Farhat explains.

She also notes that a good kindergarten or pre-school should have a welcoming, friendly and warm atmosphere. It should be known for its nurturing environment and a stimulating curriculum. A school with a well-designed curriculum and timetable stimulates your child's development in all areas," she adds.

Hope Kasimbazi, the outreach and partnerships officer in the Early Steps Programme-Building a Strong Foundation at the Private Sector Foundation Uganda, says children are generally adaptable to different situations and when it comes to school, they will warm up in a friendly environment with caring teachers.

"Your child's mood is another indicator of whether your child is being taught right or something is amiss. A child facing hostility at school will have his mood changing drastically," she says.

It is, therefore, important according to Kasimbazi, for parents to probe any changes in their child's behaviour.

"If a child is losing interest in school or becoming timid, is reason for a parent to get concerned and engage the school administration," Kasimbazi says.

A good kindergarten should have toys for play



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