

Govt bans automatic learner promotion to boost performance

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KAMPALA. The government has directed all schools to stop the policy of automatic promotion of learners, effective immediately, in a bid to improve academic performance and reduce failure rates.

The State Minister for Primary Education, Dr Joyce Moriku Kaducu, criticised teachers for promoting learners with weak grades, a practice she partly blamed for poor results in the Primary Leaving Examinations (PLE).

While meeting headteachers from Kampala Capital City Authority (KCCA) at Nakasero Primary School on February 27, Dr Kaducu said there is no policy that supports automatic promotion.

"Where is the policy? We don't have any written policy that supports automatic promotion of learners; they are supposed to be promoted on merit," she

said, noting that advancing students who cannot grasp content for the next level leads to high failure rates.

Ministry records indicate that 65,000 candidates who sat for the 2025 PLE failed to secure placement into Senior One. Dr Kaducu said many teachers misinterpreted verbal instructions to avoid failing learners, particularly in schools struggling with limited capital grants under Universal Primary Education (UPE).

The minister also urged parents to contribute to school feeding programmes, saying effective learning cannot happen when children study on empty stomachs. She stressed that contributions should be affordable and transparent to prevent school dropouts.

"We want to engage parents to pay for feeding but it has to be done in a transparent manner and should be in a manageable range. Our vision is to see that quality education is deliv-



Justification. Where is the policy? We don't have any written policy that supports automatic promotion of learners; learners are supposed to be promoted on merit," **Dr Joyce Moriku Kaducu, State Minister for Primary Education**

ered," she explained. President Museveni has previously warned UPE schools against charging illegal fees, which he says fuel dropouts. Some headteachers at the meeting said school administrators had previously been arrested for allegedly demanding parental contributions for feeding programmes.

The ministry warned individuals against intimidating teachers, noting that their efforts should be appreciated. Under the 2008 Education Act, parents are responsible for feeding learners while at school.

Dr Cleophus Mugenyi, the commissioner of Basic Education, urged schools to prioritise remedial lessons to boost learning and criticised the misconception around automatic promotion.

"You cannot automatically push a child who cannot write his or her name, count from one to 100, or recite the alphabet," Dr Mugenyi emphasised.

Headteachers welcomed the directive. Mr Gerald Mijasi of Nakasero Primary said the move is a "healthy idea" that could improve education quality. Ms Rosemary Among of Kuwamba Primary School described the engagement as "wonderful," noting that her school already encourages parents to have learners repeat if necessary.

Ms Jaliat Yawa, headteacher of Wandegaya Muslim Primary School, said parental support for meals would help address low retention rates.