

school that should be put in place before you start to run a school," Mr Hasadu Kirabira, the chairperson of the Nation-

objects. "If the school is big, hire enough guards, intensify checks before entry to safeguard from intruders."

Ms Kawada...
the schools to follow these

BY SHABIBAH NAKIRIGYA

KAMPALA. As more Ugandan parents join the workforce, the demand for reliable childcare has grown by leaps and bounds, turning daycare centres into both a social lifeline and a budding business opportunity.

Yet experts caution that opening a daycare is no walk in the park. It requires careful planning, strict adherence to safety standards, and a heartfelt commitment to child development.

Early childhood care, focusing on children from birth to four years, is the bedrock of cognitive, motor, and behavioural growth, according to educationists.

According to Mr Eddie Kayinda, an Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) specialist at Children's Foundation Uganda, quality care during the first 1,000 days of a child's life is worth its weight in gold.

"Early childhood care encompasses comprehensive support and nurturing for toddlers. Its main goal is to stimulate development across all aspects of growth," he explains.

Despite its importance, much of Uganda's daycare sector still operates under

the radar, with many centres run from residential homes without proper structures or legal recognition. While often started with good intentions, these set-ups can open a Pandora's box of safety and health risks.

Mr Kayinda stresses that starting a daycare business means dotting the i's and crossing the t's, understanding licensing requirements, obtaining first aid certification, and securing a safe location. Operators must pass inspections and craft a detailed business plan.

"Key investments include conducting background checks, acquiring child-friendly equipment, obtaining insurance, and implementing a structured, engaging curriculum that supports early childhood development," he says.

Licensing and regulation

Mr Kayinda notes that operators must meet licensing requirements set by local authorities, including inspections to assess safety, hygiene, and environmental conditions.

"Although Uganda does not yet have

fully established daycare-specific regulations, operators currently rely on kindergarten guidelines provided by the Min-

istry of Education, alongside direction from the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development," he says.

UPDATED GUIDELINES

The Ministry of Education has rolled out updated guidelines for kindergarten (2025/2026) to streamline early childhood learning, with emphasis on child development, safety, and affordability.

• **Curriculum and Instruction:** Play-based learning is the cornerstone, promoting holistic growth through exploration and guided activity. Key areas include health, safety, motor skills, self-awareness, and creativity. School hours run from 8am to 12:30pm, with no homework and continuous assessment instead of exams.

• **Structure and Teacher-Child Ratio:** Maximum of 25 learners

per teacher, with class sizes capped at 25.

• **Infrastructure and Safety:** Secure, fenced premises with safe drinking water, well-lit classrooms, proper ventilation, and at least 1.5 square metres per child. Firefighting equipment, green outdoor spaces, and safe play areas are mandatory.

• **Licensing and Staffing:** All centres must be licensed, and teachers certified in Early Childhood Development.

• **School Activities and Regulations:** Extravagant spending is curbed—no luxury vehicles, costly ceremonies, or late-night trips. School outings must end by 6pm, with one supervised visitation day per term.

Security

Mr Kayinda emphasises that security is the name of the game and comes on top of everything. Facilities should be enclosed, access controlled, and ideally supported by trained security personnel.

"Incidents of theft, vandalism, and even child endangerment have been reported in poorly managed centres, highlighting the need for vigilance. Fire safety systems and emergency procedures are also essential," he says.

Infrastructure and environment

A suitable daycare must be child-friendly, spacious, and well-equipped, with safe play areas, resting rooms, and proper sanitation.

"Children should not be confined to small spaces, as this increases the risk of infections. Centres must ensure proper ventilation, access to clean water, and effective waste disposal," he adds.

Inclusivity is also key. Facilities should accommodate children with disabilities, ensuring equal access to care and play.

Ms Manuela Mulondo, the chairperson of the Kindergarten Owners Association, says new standards tailored specifically for daycare centres are in the pipeline. "A daycare is a structured care environ-