

Justification. With the increasing permissiveness in schools, security has become a priority in international schools.

BY GODFREY LUGAAJU
glugaaju@ug.nationmedia.com

A school is a place where all children should feel safe. Like any other school, there are school rules and regulations put in place for students to follow in international schools. A student signs the school rules and agrees to comply with them.

Ms Isabelle de Mello, the marketing director International School of Uganda (ISU), says they have a child protection policy which guides their practices.

"All staff are required to have a police/LC check to work at ISU. All parents are required to read and sign the policy to show that they have read and understood the policy which is in place to ensure students' physical, social, emotional and sexual safety," says Ms De Mello.

She adds that the school provides lessons on child protection to help students develop skills and strategies to deal with threatening or dangerous situations that they may be exposed to.

"We have two counsellors who we encourage students to talk to if they have problems. Students often also choose to talk to a trusted teachers and these work in partnership with parents to ensure students' safety," she explains.

Mr Emmanuel Opuwa, the head teacher Kabojja International School, says child safeguarding is internal and external.

"If you look at our setting, we have military, police and private security companies and school guards who are here day and night. These people monitor the safety of the people, personnel and property both in and outside the school premises (in the boarding houses) and they ensure that there is safety," he says.

Mr Opuwa adds that internally, they have other procedures that they always front such as putting

Keeping children safe in international schools



Students of Kabojja International School Kampala on their sports day recently. Students are naturally adventurous and their safety must be guaranteed. PHOTO BY COLLEEN MUGUME

up fire extinguishers.

"We also use different avenues to communicate to students and we are moving to the step of installing security surveillance cameras because this will increase vigilance and you can always back play before and after to know what happened," he says.

The Kabojja head teacher explains that one of their strengths is zero tolerance to indiscipline.

"People think students in international schools are free to do what they want and are not controlled, which is actually not true. For us it is not about the numbers, it is

about having the few that can fully cope with our rules. We have a fully-fledged department of discipline involving class teachers, wardens, matrons, class representatives and a prefectural body to check, monitor and take action on any indiscipline cases."

Mr Opuwa says whenever they get cases of indiscipline among the students, they expose it as much as possible to make it clear for other students to deter.

"We also suspend and offer internal punishments like having students get extra work to keep them busy. We aim at administering a

punishment that is beneficial for the students."

"We also have a science week which happens once every term and we invite fire masters for drills. We also have a discipline week where we involve police which has a whole department of community policing that talk to our students."

Isabelle says at ISU they teach students to monitor their own behaviour and try to use a positive approach to behaviour management. Teachers and students develop class agreements at the beginning of each year and students are expected to abide by these.

"If they are deviating from them, teachers remind them of the guidelines they collectively wrote. If an issue is more serious, the Dean of Students or Principal works with the student in question and an appropriate consequence to the student's poor behaviour is put in place," she explains.

The gadget question

Many students in international schools are allowed to pose their gadgets. This is so much questioned by the public on how administrators can be able to monitor and check the students' discipline.

"We allow students have their mobile phones, tablets and laptops and we provide them with wi-fi for purposes of research to foster the student centred approach of teaching. However we regulate these gadgets; they hand them over when going to class and only get them in the evening and in case of lessons like ICT and debates where they need them for research," he says.

KEY QUESTIONS

Does the school have a crisis response plan?

Does it regularly practice safety drills?

What should parents do if there is an emergency at the school?

Have both staff and students received training on what to do during an active shooter incident?

Has the school partnered with its local law enforcement agency to practice emergency response procedures?