

Masaka schools face closure

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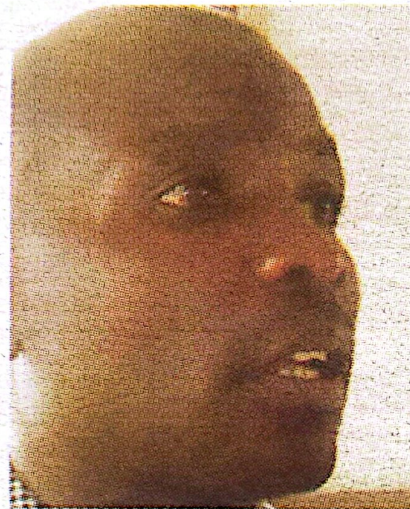
MASAKA. Masaka Municipality education authorities have given a one-week ultimatum to over 15 schools that are operating below the set standards to improve or face closure.

According to Mr Joseph Kakeeto, the Masaka Municipality principal education officer, the schools should not have opened for the new term but since the proprietors pleaded for more time to avoid inconveniencing the continuing pupils.

"Had it not been for the candidate classes, a big number of schools whose facilities are wanting could have been closed by now, but since we are also parents, we put on a human face and allowed them to open after getting assurance from proprietors that they will put in place what is lacking by the end of second week of the new term," Mr Kakeeto said in an interview yesterday.

Masaka Municipality has 13 government-aided schools and more than 50 registered private schools. According to Mr Kakeeto, more than 20 private schools, especially in Nyendo, a Masaka suburb, and Kimanya/Kyabakuza Division, are operating illegally.

He said the Municipality Town Clerk, Joseph Kimbowa, issued circulars to all schools in the municipality outlining guidelines that are supposed to be followed by school operators.



Mr Joesph Kakeeto

Some of the guidelines include equipping matrons and security guards with fire fighting skills, fencing off school premises, limiting outsiders from accessing dormitories and

REQUIREMENTS

The Education Basic Requirements and Minimum Education Standards require every school dormitory to have an emergency exit door, well-spaced beds, smoke detectors or fire-fighting equipment. Schools must also have incinerators, well-separated sanitary facilities for girls, boys and teachers of opposite sex as well as a security guard manning the premises.

improving of communication systems at school.

Mr Kakeeto said the education department has disbursed funds to inspectors of school to enable them visit all schools to ensure that they meet the minimum operational, safety and security standards as stipulated in the Education Act, 2008, before resuming classes.

He, however, said a big numbers of schools have since complied with the set safety standards, adding that the number of registered schools has increased in the last six months.

"More than 60 nursery schools both public and private have been registered and this implies the quality of education in Masaka will continue to improve," he added.

Last year, a deadly school fire gutted a dormitory at Nyendo Modern Primary School and claimed the life of one pupil and another sustained serious burns.

Three years ago, fire also gutted two dormitories of Leo's Junior Academy, located in the same town and killed five pupils.

These tragedies could have been averted if schools were adhering to the set safety standards.

In 2007, education and public health authorities in Masaka Municipality recommended the closure of two secondary schools; Central College SS and Spiritan College SS due to lack of proper facilities.

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