NEW STRICT STANDARDS FOR SCHOOLS RELEASED

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TENANCY AGREEMENTS
There have been incidents of schools being evicted from premises over rent arrears.

A case in point is the International American College of Health Sciences, which was evicted from a building in which they had been operating for close to five years over a sh200m rent debt.

Consequently, under the reviewed guidelines, institutions in rented premises should have tenancy agreements.

They should run for at least one complete cycle for their level. While those on the proprietor's land are expected to have land titles for the land on which they are located.

The institutions are also expected to have plans and architectural drawings that are approved by relevant authorities. They should also have clearly demarcated boundaries and properly marked areas for sports.

SANITATION
Institutions must have waste disposal pits, accessible safe water supply, separate toilets for male and female learners and staff.

OFFICIAL CALENDAR
The ministry noted that private schools sometimes close early, teach during holidays and skip topics to teach them during holidays to earn extra money.

Under the new guidelines, lessons will have to be taught between 8:00am and 5:00pm.

> **"All storeyed buildings should have emergency exits and fire fighting gadgets. Each dormitory is expected to have two emergency exits**

FIRE DRILLS
Over 50 school fire outbreaks have destroyed lives and property of students in the past five years. The most disastrous include one at Kabarole Islamic Primary School, Fort Portal in 2006. The fire claimed 13 lives. Another at Budo Junior School in 2009 claimed 18 pupils.

Now, each institution is expected to organise fire drills at the beginning of each term, have firefighting equipment outside each building and trained guards day and night.

All storeyed buildings should have emergency exits and firefighting gadgets. Each dormitory is expected to have two emergency exits.

NON-TEACHING STAFF
The minimum age of a matron was set at 30 years, with a minimum qualification of Primary Seven.

They should also undergo medical examinations every six months. Cooks are expected to undergo medical check-up every six months as well. The medical examinations are aimed at guarding against the spread of infectious diseases.

DEFIANT SCHOOLS
The state minister of education, Rosemary Sseninde, warned that any school that does not meet the standards shall be closed.

"Similar regulations have been issued in the past, but were ignored by a number of schools," Sseninde said.

"This time, the ministry has scaled up its monitoring and supervisory system to shut down schools that do not meet the required standards," she added. The minister said they are working closely with the local government to ensure that all schools meet the requirements.

"All schools have received the circular. Those which do not meet the minimum standards should not dare open in 2018," Sseninde explained.

"Before parents and guardians pay school fees, they should ensure that the schools have our certificate to operate," she added.

The minister wants school heads to pin up the certificate in their offices where parents can easily access them.

"If you do not see this certificate, ask for it. If the school does not have it, do not pay school fees because we may close it," Seninde warned.

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