Top secondary schools to maintain S1 cut-off points

Minister Kaducu says the Education ministry will conduct a research to establish the reasons behind the dropping number of candidates scoring Aggregate 4.

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Despite a reported slight increase in the number of candidates obtaining first grades in last year's Primary Leaving Examinations (PLE), the drop in the number of candidates scoring Aggregate 4 will push top-performing schools to maintain or relax cut-off points for Senior One entrants, *Sunday Monitor* has established.

Traditional well-performing schools like Kings College Budo, Kibuli SS, Gayaza High School, Kawempe Muslim SS, Mt St Mary's Namagunga, St Mary's College Kisubi, Ntare School and Namilyango College are expected to set their cut-off points between Aggregate 4 for boys and 7 for girls. Yet, according to the 2025 PLE results released on Friday by the Uganda National Examinations Board (Uneb), only 338 candidates managed to score Aggregate 4 across the country. Most top schools had fewer candidates with Aggregate 4 while others did not get at all. Of the 338 candidates who got Aggregate 4, a total of 220 are from schools in Wakiso, Mukono and Kampala. The three districts have many of the top schools. In the 2024 cohort, 400 candidates attained Aggregate 4 compared to more than 700 who got the same score in 2023.

Stuck in a rut?

Available statistics from Uneb show that of the 807,313 candidates who sat for the exams from 15,388 examination centres, 91,990 (11.39 percent) passed with first grade compared to 84,301 in 2024. Worth noting is that the number of candidates increased by 20,332 over the last year.

Of the total number of candidates (807,313) who sat the exams, 730,233 (90.45 percent) passed and can proceed to Senior One. Amongst the 2024 cohort, 722,730 (91.8 percent) candidates gave them themselves a chance of proceeding to secondary school after securing the requisite grades.

Another 388,293 candidates passed in Division Two from the 2025 cohort compared to 397,589 who wrote their final papers in 2024. A total of 165,226 candidates were in Division Three, while 84,724 passed in Division Four.



Headteachers from different secondary schools take part in the Senior One selection exercise at UMA multipurpose hall in Lugogo, Kampala City, last February. PHOTO/ MICHAEL KAKUMIRIZI

2025 SENIOR ONE CUTOFF POINTS FOR SOME SCHOOLS

SCHOOL	BOYS	GIRLS
Ntare School	7	
Nabisunsa Girls		7
Kings College,Budo	5	5
Kawempe Muslims SS	7	8
Makerere College	6	6
St Mary's College-Kisubi	5	
Namilyago College	7	
St Mary's Kitende	5	6
Mt. St. Mary's Namagunga		7
Gayaza High School		6
Trinity College, Nabbingo		6
Jinja SS	7	8
Immaculate Heart Girls, Rul.		6
Kibuli SS	6	7
Ndeje SS	7	7
Mary Hill High School		6
St Peters Nsambya	9	9
Bweranyangi Girls SS		8
Gombe SS	8	8
Kitunga High School	8	
St Leo's Kyegobe	8	
St Henry 's College ,Kitovu	7	
St. Joseph's College Layibi	8	
Muntuyera High School	8	
Kyeizooba Girls		9
Busoga College , Mwiri	8	
Dr Obote College	9	
Sacred Heart SS		9

SCHOOL	BOYS	GIRLS
St Mary's College Rushoroza	8	10
Masaka SS	12	14
St Kalemba SS Kayunga	10	12
Harmony High School,Semuto		
Y.Y Okot Memorial College	19	
Wanyange Girls		10
Masheruka Girls		10
Nabumali High School	11	13
Teso College Aloet	12	
Budini SS Kaliro		15
St. Peter's College,Tororo	10	
St Paul College	11	12
Iganga High School	12	14
Mengo SS	7	7
Kisoko HS Tororo	17	18
Kamonkoli College Budaka		15
St Paul's College Mbale	12	13
Luzinga SS Kamuli	20	22
Katikamu SDA SS	12	12
Madinah Islamic SS,Nsangi		
Tororo Girls SS		10
Mbale SS-	15	17
Masaba SS	13	15
Bukedi College Kachonga	15	18
Kigezi High School	12	
Mbale College	11	12
Kashaka Girls		12
Kigezi College Butobere	19	

SCHOOL	BOYS	GIRLS
Kibubura Girls		12
St Paul's SS Bukinda	19	20
Kinyasano Girls Rukungiri		12
Bwogyera Girls S Ntungamo		15
Nyakasura School	10	11
Kakungulu Memorial -Kibuli	10	10
Lubiri SS	9	10
Ruyonza School	11	13
Nyabubale SS	11	14
Bukoyo SS	11	13
Makobore High School	12	
Old Kampala SS	11	13
Nganiwa High School	12	
Mityana Town SS	15	16
St Joseph SS Kyankwazi	13	13
St Joseph's College,Ombachi	13	
Iganga SS	9	9
Ngora Girls		15
Lango College	16	
Kotido SS	16	27
St Charles Lwanga,Koboko	19	
Kotido SS	28	28
Target College	20	22
Kitgum HS	23	23
Arivu SS	21	26
St. Mary's College, Lacor	20	28
Kennedy SS,Kawuku	15	15
Butaleja SS	15	20

A total of 77,080 (9.55 percent) candidates completely failed the exams, compared to 64,252 (8.2 percent) in the previous year, indicating an increase of 12,829. This means that all these candidates who failed the exams do not qualify for government sponsorship under the free secondary education scheme, which is in its 19th year of implementation. Although more candidates passed in Division One in 2025 than in 2024, indicating an increase of 7,689, many of these didn't score Aggregate 4 and Aggregate 5 to be able to join top secondary schools, according to Mr George Bamuleseyo, a veteran educationist.

"When the number of candidates who have scored Aggregate 4 is low, the top schools are usually forced to take even those with Aggregates 5 and 6, but they don't exceed their admission capacities. This means the excess [candidates who put their first choices there] are 'sold' to other schools," said Mr Bamuleseyo, who also doubles as director of Harmony High School, Semuto.

"But other schools like mine that performed well, but don't fall in the top 50 category, will relax their entry points, absorbing more candidates even those with second grade," he added.

A Primary Seven candidate is deemed to have passed the exams if he/she garners between Aggregate 4 and 28. Usually, government schools implementing free education programmes take all candidates with aggregates between 4 and 28.

"Academic excellence is not all about getting Aggregate 4 or 5. For a child to excel in this competitive world, he [or she] must have different competences which even those who scored second grades could be having but need to be nurtured to reach their full potential," Mr Ishaka Mbalirwa, head teacher of Madinah Islamic SS, Nsangi.

State minister for Primary Education Dr Joyce Moriku Kaducu said the performance generally increased due to various inventions and initiatives.

However, on the issue of dropping number of candidates scoring Aggregate 4, Minister Kaducu said the technical team at the ministry will conduct a research study to establish the reasons behind this.

"No changes in curriculum were made and the papers were set according to the curriculum the country has been following," she said.

Ms Kaducu added: "We can't rush to make conclusions, but our technical team will analyse the performance to find out what really caused this. I also urge the schools' administrators to study critically the setting trend of Uneb because no changes in curriculum were made and the papers were set according to the existing curriculum."

Cut-off points for any given school are determined by the Ministry of Education and Sports based on the number of candidates who sat for the exams. The ministry sets the cut-off points using an automatic computerised system that allocates students according to general performance and first choice preference of pupils.

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