



How safe is your child at school?



Pupils of Kaddugala UPE School assemble for an early morning prayer. Parents and guardians are urged to pick up their own children after classes.

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Parents often worry about many things during their child's school going life. Security is just one of them. A case in point, most parents with children studying in the day section are usually concerned about the kind of people who are allowed to access the school premises. For them, some of such people may have ill intentions towards the children.

For instance, Proscovia Amuge, a mother of one narrates a 2014 incident where one of her cousins accessed the Kindergarten premises where her son studied and took him without the prior knowledge of the teachers.

"I realised something was wrong when I went to pick up Gabriel at 4pm that day and the school administrators failed to find him," Amuge says, adding, "We looked everywhere including the toilets and classrooms but our joint efforts on finding him remained unsuccessful."

The business woman exploded into tears. And just when they had made a decision to report the "missing child" incident to police, Amuge's cousin called her explaining that the child was with him after previously promising the youngster an ice

cream date.

"I remember abusing my cousin for picking up Gabriel without my knowledge. How dare he?"

I would have remained at ease had he earlier informed me about taking him on an ice cream date," Amuge says.

After receiving the phone call, Amuge drove at neck speed to her cousin's place and picked up her child. She warned him never to repeat the same mistake. Amuge also went ahead to caution the school as well as ask them to be more vigilant.

What are some of the schools doing to ensure children are safe?

At Wava Nursery School and Day care located in Mugongo village in Kyengera Township, there are a number of precautionary measures the administration has in place to ensure the safety of children.

Dr. Maria Bawubya Senkezi, the director of the school says for starters, once all children have entered the premises of the school, the guard closes the gate to prevent any other intruders from accessing the premises.

The school also has a policy emphasizing that parents and guardians pick up their own children after classes.

"Sometimes caretakers may not be able to pick up their child probably of their busy work schedules. In such circumstances, we normally urge the parents to get someone they trust to be picking up the child. But that person must be brought to the school by the parent and introduced to the administration," Senkezi says.

The director emphasises that they do not allow anyone to pick up any child from school.

"Even if one came with an identification explaining that they have been sent by the parents, we never allow them to take away the child. This person must have been introduced to us by the parent. Short of this, we remain with the child until either the parent or guardian comes to the school," she says.

Wava Nursery school and Daycare enrolls children between the ages of three months and five years.

Similarly, Margaret Kafeero, the head teacher of Lohana Academy in Kololo says 96 percent of the school's going children at the school are picked up by their parents or guardians.

"We have a waiting area where the pupils assemble and it's where the parents find them," Kafeero says.

Private arrangements

For parents who make arrange-

ments with private car owners commonly known as shuttles, Kafeero says they usually urge the parents to introduce the drivers to the child's class teacher.

"It becomes easy for the teachers to know who is exactly going away with the child," Kafeero says.

In addition, Kafeero says parents are often issued with pickup cards. Therefore, in circumstances they are unable to pick up a child from school, the parent gives the pickup card to the person they entrust to get the child from school.

"That person will come to the school and present this pick up card to the school administration. Afterwards, we call up the parent to confirm if this was the person they sent to pick up the child from son," she says.

Safety in boarding schools

Some of the head teachers of the boarding sections that Daily Monitor spoke to mostly highlighted that they ensure children's safety through imposing restrictions. For instance, when the child is to leave the school, they must be escorted with a parent or any authorised person with written permission from the school administration.