

Absenteeism leaves leaders searching for answers

BY TOBBIAS JOLLY OWINY

NWOYA. Persistently low attendance in primary schools across Nwoya District has alarmed education officials, who are struggling to reverse the trend.

Investigations by *Daily Monitor* indicate that three weeks into the first term, several schools are still registering low numbers of returning pupils.

At Corom, Camguru, Te-dam, and Kochlii primary schools, fewer than 40 percent of learners had resumed classes by the end of last Friday.

"Teachers are present, but we are grappling with serious absenteeism because children are not coming to school. A teacher walks into a class of 80 on the register and finds only five pupils," Ms Rosemary Ajok, a teacher at Te-dam Primary School, said.

The matter was raised during a ceremony organised by TotalEnergies at the district headquarters to award beneficiaries of its annual education sponsorship programme in Nwoya.

Mr James Boniface Achellam, the District Inspector of Schools, described the situation as deeply troubling.

"There are many factors affecting learning in the district, and poor attendance is one of them. Three weeks into the term, when you visit our schools, learners are simply not there. In the first week, we recorded many schools that did not register a single pupil," he said.

Mr Achellam noted that inquiries revealed many parents were keeping their children at home to work in gardens rather than sending them to class.

Scholarships awarded

On Friday, under its Girls' Education Programme, TotalEnergies awarded scholarships to 10 top-performing but underprivileged girls who sat the 2025 Primary Leaving Examinations (PLE).

Launched in 2015 as part of the company's corporate social responsibility initiatives in Nwoya, the programme is intended to promote girls' education in the district. Since its inception, the programme has enrolled 123 students.

Mr Achellam said the education department has begun engaging parents directly, moving from school to school to sensitise communities on the importance of consistent attendance.

"We want to involve the community because these children live among them. If they are absent, parents must be held accountable. We intend to make absenteeism a risky undertaking for both parents and pupils so that attendance improves," he said.

Last week, the District Education Department launched a community mobilisation drive aimed at encouraging parents to send their children to school.

Poor results

In the 2025 PLE results released in January, Nwoya ranked 143rd nationally, with fewer than 50 candidates achieving Division One.

Mr Moses Ojok, the district vice chairperson, said poor performance in primary schools is closely linked to persistent absenteeism.