



A student during a prom party. PHOTO/FILE

Did schools forget govt rules on prom parties?

Above the law? Schools across the county are defying prom restrictions as flashy parties persist, exposing gaps in enforcement and reigniting debate over discipline and parental pressure.

BY SYLVIA KATUSHABE

On May 16, 2025, the Ministry of Education and Sports issued what were deemed strict guidelines regulating school social functions, prom parties and entertainment activities as well as elections in schools, across the country. The guidelines sought to restrict extravagant prom parties characterised by luxury cars, expensive outfits and lavish spending. Signed by the ministry permanent secretary, Ms Kedrace Turyagyenda, the guidelines followed growing public concern over the increasing commercialisation of school events, especially prom parties, student elections, which many said were promoting indiscipline and unnecessary financial pressure on par-

ents across the country. "We have observed with concern the growing exposure of learners to inappropriate, exploitative, and unsafe entertainment co-curricular activities and election of student leaders," she wrote in the circular. "Reported incidents include vulgar performances, sexually suggestive content, inadequately supervised excursions, and the engagement of unvetted individuals and organizations with learners," she said. Ms Turyagyenda maintained that the restrictions apply to all public and private institutions. Unchecked, she insists that such practices pose significant risks to the moral, psychological, and academic development of learners and contravene the principles of child protection and values-based education. She also barred schools from allowing students to hire luxury vehicles, motorcycles and helicopters for prom parties and other school functions. The Ministry emphasised the ban on "coupling" (romantic behaviour among students), indecent dressing, adding that all social events must end by 6:00pm. The move also forbids the ostentatious display of wealth.

"Encouraging or allowing learners to pair up or make couples during the entertainment events, in imitation of marriage or romantic relationships, is strictly forbidden," the circular reads. According to the guidelines, schools are supposed to ensure all entertainment activities are supervised by management and conducted in a manner that promotes discipline and safety among learners. Reacting to these guidelines, Mbarara High School banned male-female prom parties replacing them with candidate trips/picnic. In a letter issued by Mr Allan Nkurunziza, the patron teacher in charge of entertainment, each candidate was required to pay Shs120,000 towards the candidates Trip from 20th -21st February 2026. "We wish to inform you dear parents that going forward; the culture of holding joint male-female parties has been stopped. The work SOSH or PROM is no more hence the phase Candidates trip/ picnic," Mr Nkurunziza stated.

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GOVT DROPS THE BALL

Break the rules. Several schools have been holding glamorous prom parties, with students arriving in luxury vehicles and wearing expensive outfits.

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The head teacher Gayaza High School, Ms Robinah Katongole Kizito, said the school followed the ministry's guidelines and they did not hold their prom party last term. "As Gayaza High School, we have followed the guidelines, as directed by the Ministry of Education and Sports," Ms Kizito said. Ms Diana Twesigye, a parent at one of the schools in Kampala backed the guidelines, insisting that they would avoid unnecessary pressure on parents who struggle to meet school expenses. However, not all schools followed the guidelines this year. Several schools have been holding glamorous prom parties, students arriving in luxury vehicles, and coupling, wearing expensive outfits among others, in avoidance of the ministry's restrictions. "The ministry should regularly monitor these schools, some have already gone against them, there is need to take action against the institutions that have ignored the guidelines," Ms Twesigye said. But in an indication that the matter is not firmly concluded, there are also calls for parents and school administrators to promote affordable and disciplined school activities that do not expose students to unnecessary spending and pressure. It may explain why the ministry's permanent secretary has not yet taken action against schools that avoided the ministry's guidance. "We have systems through the Directorate of Education Standards, they are the ones who follow our policies to make sure that they are being implemented, so I am sure they are active in their regions," Ms Turyagyenda said.

Schools in the spotlight over lavish prom parties



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A student in Victorian-themed fashion during a prom party. PHOTO/COURTESY

"[Where] institutions violate the guidelines, the head teacher will be held accountable and there are different ways of holding them accountable, depending on the gravity of the offense."

Background about prom parties Prom parties had become one of the most talked-about trends in secondary schools over the last few years. Borrowed largely from American high-school culture, the events have been organised mainly for Senior Four and Senior Six finalists as a celebration before they leave school. The prom culture is often called a "sosh" (short for social) or prom night. Students dress in expensive suits and gowns, arrive in luxury cars, dance, take photographs, and sometimes invite musicians or MCs. Some schools even organise red-carpet entrances and awards. The trend became especially popular in elite and urban schools around Kampala, Entebbe and Mbarara districts.

2024 prom Schools such as Elite High School gained national attention in 2024 after students arrived at prom events in helicopters and luxury vehicles. That sparked debate across the country about morality, class pressure and extravagance. By 2025, the Ugandan government stepped in. The Ministry of Education and Sports introduced strict guidelines aimed at controlling what it called excessive and inappropriate behaviour during school social events. In some traditional schools, especially single-sex schools in western Uganda, "joint sosh" events between boys' and girls' schools were common. But some institutions have now cancelled them entirely and replaced them with supervised trips or picnics following government guidelines.