

Health Checks at The School of St Jude – Information Pack

Health Checks at The School of St Jude have been occurring on an annual basis for over 10 years. Initially commenced because the Tanzanian Government requires the height and weight of all students, the school has sought to have a volunteer Health Check team to assist with the process and to check on the overall health of the students. The checks have evolved over the years based on feedback from the school, the Health Check team volunteers and knowledge of available health services in the region.

Guided by the shared understanding that healthy students learn more effectively, the focus of health checks is to identify any student with health and wellbeing issues that may affect their ability to learn – both as individuals and as a collective group. To this end, the Health Check team provide advice to parents for specific students but also general advice on the patterns of issues seen by the team that can be addressed by the school for their student population as a whole.

The international team members are only present for two weeks of the year and not registered to practise in Tanzania, so no treatment is provided. For sustainability and continuity of care, advice is provided to assist parents and the school to link with the most relevant local health service providers.

In the early days of the school, all students had a relatively comprehensive health check but our growth to 1,800 students has now exceeded the capacity of the volunteer team. Now the approach is slightly different – not every student is seen every year. Students at key stages of their school life and development have a full check which has enabled the team to spend more time with specific students, such as those that are new to the school, those that require follow up from previous years, and those that teachers and boarding staff are concerned about.

At St Jude's, we maintain that parents/guardians are responsible for their child regarding any medical issues that may occur. If the school does all the work regarding a medical issue, it leaves our parents disempowered and inactive in the future which will cause a big problem for the school.

It is therefore very important for you to know that the school has a specific set of procedures on how to respond to issues identified during the health checks. These procedures need to be followed in order for the school to continue to maintain support for the students' physical and emotional wellbeing whilst empowering parents and guardians in their roles. We understand that as a health professional who identifies a problem it is your duty to act on it, but please be aware that it can take time here in Tanzania, so if it doesn't get done while you are here, then be assured that it will be followed up after the health checks finish.

Schools and Health Check Teams:

There are three St Jude's schools– St Jude's Primary School, St Jude's Girls' Secondary School (O Level) and St Jude's Secondary School (boys O Level and co-educational A Level). The primary school and girls' secondary school are based at Sisia Campus in Moshono, Arusha while St Jude's Secondary School is located at Smith Campus in Usa River, which is around 30

kilometres from Arusha. For the purpose of the health checks, we refer to Primary, Girls and Smith.

Over the last few years we have aimed to have three teams to do the medical checks – one for each school. Due to the increasing number of students joining the school, we aim for four teams in 2024 to ensure smooth operation during the checks. Each team will be made up of four doctors, a health professional experienced in eye checks and two assistants. The hearing team may work with these teams or separately depending on the timetable and requirements. Having allied health professionals such as physiotherapists, occupational therapists and orthoptists is highly-valued, particularly for their input and advice for students with specific health issues such as vision impairment and cerebral palsy. Nurses, particularly those experienced in child health, provide valuable input including supporting the school nurses in their professional development.

The Community Relations team, including the school nurses and Community Service volunteers, will also help, particularly for interpreting, when they have free time from their other obligations.

A normal medical check day:

Primary and Girls teams generally start at 8.30 am while the Smith team usually catch an early morning bus to see the students at Smith Campus.

The health checks usually end at about 3:15pm and then there is paperwork and computer work to complete. Generally, the work day finishes at around 5pm, but often the documentation and preparations for the next day must be done in the evening. There is usually a briefing after dinner each night.

A timetable is supplied upon arrival, when you meet the other team members. Teams are usually allocated at this stage but will change over the fortnight.

In the past, records of students' heights, weights and health issues have been recorded in a variety of ways so the school has ongoing access after the team leaves. This enables the school to create reports, follow up those students with issues during the year, and collate information for the health check team to follow up on the next year.

We now use an online database called REDCap (a mature, secure web application for building and managing online surveys and databases). The team plays an important role by assisting with data entry throughout the two weeks. An introduction to REDCap will be given to those who have never used it. The time needed for this data entry will be scheduled in your timetables during the two weeks you are here.

Job descriptions for the Health checkers:

Doctors:

- Doctors are expected to undertake a basic check only e.g. ears, ask about hearing, eyes, nose, mouth, throat, heart and respiratory system, and the skin. Make note of rashes, fungal infections, and wounds on the rest of the body, especially the feet.
- Issues identified are to be written down in the student record and recall forms so that we have the information for further follow up. The student record includes notes from

previous years so you can check progress and see if further follow up is required. The Team Leader will give you instructions on how to fill out the student record and recall forms. The terminology and follow up recommended should follow St Jude's standardised policies and procedures as much as possible.

- It is very important that the information you have on the forms IS NOT visible to the students to maintain confidentiality. We have students with HIV here at school who are receiving support and counselling, but it is not something the other students know about and therefore we need to ensure that this information is not visible to the other students.
- If you identify a student with a special problem that you want to look into further while you are here, write down the student's name and class, and a member of the Community Relations team or our nurses will find the student during break or lunch so you can conduct a further check on them.
- We also request that doctors to review our special cases (a brief history will be provided) as we would value a second opinion.
- If there are any emergency cases, please immediately notify a member in the Community Relations team so we can arrange the relevant follow up with the school leaders and nurses.
- Doctors must bring their own stethoscopes and auroscopes.

Apart from doctors we need the following per team:

- One person to do eye sight check. It is best that the volunteers undertaking eye checks bring their own specialized equipment. More information will be given regarding this closer to the time.
- Two people to weigh and measure the height of the students. They also need to make sure that the students take off their shoes, socks and sweaters before entering the room to have their eye and doctor check. To increase local capacity and future sustainability, St Jude's alumni are now able to assist so the number of helpers required may be less.

As you can imagine it can get noisy and a bit chaotic, so the Team Leader can help explain systems that have worked in past years that have helped. Over the last few years we have kindly been donated basic eye charts, stadiometers (to measure height) and scales.

Hearing team

The hearing check team will usually work independently of the other three teams due to the time it takes to undertake a hearing check and environmental conditions required. There is some equipment available at the school that has previously been donated. More information regarding this will be given closer to the time and discussions concerning people bringing their own equipment and recording methods can be had.

Heath Checks FAQ:

What are the main health conditions the students have?

The more common things the students have problems with are: ear wax build up, eye allergies, refractive errors with eyesight, rashes, fungal infections, tooth decay, URI (upper respiratory infections), sores, wounds and abdominal pain.

Our more special cases include: muscular dystrophy, asthma, hearing problems, anemia, sickle cell, epilepsy, bed wetting, and albinism with vision impairment.

Do the students undergo routine immunisations?

Not through the school. Accessing vaccination via the country immunisation program is the parents' responsibility. Since 2017, all new students in primary are required to provide a copy of their immunisation cards to be put in their medical files.

Is there a program for treating intestinal worms?

Since 2011, all students, cooks and cleaners are have been provided with a deworming regimen of Albendazole 400 mg twice a year.

Is there a standard school health screening program run in Tanzanian government schools? If so, do you have any information on what is done there?

The standard health checks provided at government schools involves checking weight and height as required by the government. Government schools also test for pregnancy (UPT). Other health checks are not done.

Are students being taught about dental hygiene?

In previous years, visiting dental students and other organisations (such as toothbrush and toothpaste companies) have given the students education about teeth and dental hygiene. Generous donations of toothbrushes and toothpaste to the primary school has provided us with the opportunity to organise workshops and demonstrations with the younger students, and distribution of toothbrushes and toothpaste to primary school students. Boarding students are required to have toothbrushes and toothpaste.

The Standard 1 curriculum includes lessons about personal hygiene for students during their first year at St Jude's. This includes tooth brushing; how to do it and how often it needs to be done.

It is important to realise that it is not common for people to go to a dentist in Tanzania. They would generally only go if they have a toothache and still they often go to a General Practitioner instead to get antibiotics and painkillers. It is only when the GP tells them to go see a dentist that people will go. Of note, many Tanzanians have weak teeth, stained teeth from excessive fluoride in the water and a high intake of sugar in their food and drinks.

All St Jude's students who are found to have dental cavities during health checks are given a letter from the school with the explanation of the problem, how to care for their teeth and a suggestion to go to the dentist for a check-up and treatment, then report back to the school. All students are followed up afterwards, however it is still the parents' responsibility to care for their child's dental hygiene.

Does the health check team do any psychological screening?

Because of the way the health checks run, it has not been possible to do formal psychological assessments. However, the Health Check team members should remain alert for signs of problems and speak with the welfare staff of any concerns.

In 2016, a team member undertook a psychosocial needs analysis particularly focusing on the secondary school students and provided a report with recommendations to the school. In the years following this, team members (social workers & psychologists) have continued to work with students and staff regarding social and emotional wellbeing. Health Check team members have facilitated day-long seminars for teachers and Welfare staff have had the opportunity to discuss common and complex situations with them. It is hoped that the Health Check team will continue to include members with expertise in this area to assist the school's continued development.

As of 2023, the school has a part-time psychologist who works closely with students and staff.

What does the school do before the Health Checks start?

- Worm treatment twice a year
- HIV testing on all of our newly arrived students (Standard 1 and Secondary), students that have been recommended by our nurses and by doctors at health checks. The new students also have a hemoglobin check.
- During our Scholarship Application Process, parents of successful students are asked if their child has any health issues and if so, their history is written down for the Health Checks team to review at the next visit
- Prior to commencement of boarding, students are required to have a health check by a local doctor, including a hemoglobin check, and provide the report to the school.
- All homeroom teachers, boarding teachers and PE teachers are asked to list the names of students who they think may have problems for the doctors to check up on. This is explained at a staff meeting a month before the Health Checks so that the teachers can all take time to observe their students.
- All school Nurses (day and boarding) are also asked to provide names of students they have noticed are often coming to the nurse's room with problems.
- Secondary students are receiving sex education once a year and general health education at the end of each month, including hygiene, mental health awareness etc.
- Our welfare students, who are looked after by our deputies, receive help from the school for their medical and psychological issues.
- All students with HIV receive multivitamins and special diet at school. If any students have severe anemia, malnutrition or other problems where a special diet is needed, this is provided as much as possible.

What does the school do after the Health Checks?

We have policies and procedures for many standard problems that are identified that we use to assist with follow up after the Health Check Team leaves. It is very important that the successful applicants in the Health Check Team make themselves completely familiar with these documents and use the same terminology. The staff involved at the school have minimal health backgrounds so we have found having standardised follow up as much as possible for common conditions assists them in communicating with the parents.

These policies and procedures also take in to account cultural aspects, as well as what health care is available and accessible in Arusha and surrounding regions.

In general, students with “everyday” illnesses are referred to the school Nurse on the same day, who either sends the student home for a check-up or takes the student to a health facility herself.

For students who have been identified with more complicated, serious problems, the Health Check Team Leader and relevant team members discuss options with the Community Relations Team and nurses. These are the school staff that will see that these students get the special care they need, taking in to account the family situation and available health care options.

Does the school have any contacts with doctors in Arusha?

Yes, The School of St Jude has a good contact with different hospitals around town plus specific doctors. Our best relationship is with a general practitioner, Dr Mohammed, at a hospital in Arusha town who we use for our students with asthma and special cases.

Do all the students speak English?

No. In January every year, we welcome new Standard 1 classes with students who have never spoken any English before. When Health Checks take place there will always be a member of the Community Relations Team to help you with translation for these students any others who need assistance.

In addition, new students are accepted in to secondary school in Form 1 and Form 5 (the first and second last years of secondary). Because their previous schooling was completed in a government school where English is not spoken, they will still be learning English and might not always understand you fully. Welfare staff will be present to help you with translation for these students.

Are there any specific medical products that we can bring over to leave at the school?

Splints, such as SAM splints, are useful, as are spacers for students with asthma, non-contact thermometers and portable nebulizers for asthmatic students.

NOTE: Please do not bring any medication (e.g. antifungal cream, antibiotics or other prescription drugs) with you as we do not provide that for the students. We have a strict rule that says the parents are responsible for their children and therefore they need to buy these items themselves. These medicines are generally affordable and the parents will be able to provide it themselves.

You will be required to bring over equipment to help specifically with the Health Checks, particularly stationery and stickers.

Our general wish list can be provided for those who would like to bring non-health-related donations for the school.

Can I bring equipment that needs electricity or should it only be equipment using batteries?

Yes, you can easily bring your electrical equipment with you.



If you have any more questions regarding St Jude's Health Checks, feel free to contact Jane Larkin through: janelarkin1@gmail.com and or Lisa Wanda through: lisa.p@schoolofstjude.co.tz

NB: Tanzania has made some changes to their immigration laws, therefore we will be in touch with the team after announcement to confirm which visa you will have to apply for. Please note that the cost may be up to US \$250 for YOUR visa.

Applications close on 31 August 2023

Late applications may be considered.