

### **Health Checks at The School of St Jude – Information Pack**

The School of St Jude has been conducting an annual Health Check for its students for more than ten 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 check on the students' overall health. 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 the 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 provides advice to parents for specific students and general advice on the patterns of issues seen by the team that can be addressed by the school for their student population.

The international team members are only present for two weeks of the year and are not registered to practice in Tanzania, and so will not provide treatment. 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 exceeded the capacity of the volunteer team. We have adopted a slightly different approach—not every student is checked yearly, but all receive a full check at key stages of their school life and development. This has enabled the team to spend more time with specific students, such as those new to the school, those requiring 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 ultimately responsible for their child's health and wellbeing, including any medical issues that may occur during their time at school. 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 for the school to continue supporting the students' physical and emotional wellbeing whilst empowering parents and guardians in their roles. We understand that as a health professional, you are duty-bound to treat a health problem upon identification. But please be aware that processes can take time here in Tanzania, so if an issue is not addressed while you are here, be assured that the team on the ground will ensure they are attended to 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 town. For the purpose of the health checks, we refer to the three as Primary, Girls, and Smith.

Over the last few years we have aimed to have three to four teams to do the medical checks – one to two for each school. Due to the increasing number of students joining the school, we again strive for four teams in 2026 to ensure smooth operation during the checks. Each team will comprise two to four doctors, a health professional experienced in vision checks, and two assistants. Depending on the timetable and requirements, the hearing team may work with these teams or separately. 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, school nurses, and alumni of St Jude's as Community Service volunteers will also help, particularly with language translating, when they have free time from their other obligations.

### **A normal Health Check day**

Primary and Girls teams generally start at 8.30am (with preparation time prior), while the Smith team usually catches an early morning bus to see the students at Smith Campus. The school bus will leave the Sisia Campus, where your accommodation facilities are located at 7:30am to make it to Smith Campus on time.

Generally, the day finishes around 5pm —the health checks usually end at about 3:15pm, followed by other tasks such as seeing students, discussing complex cases, and following up with staff. The documentation and preparations for the next day are often done in the evening, and a briefing usually happens 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 these will change over the fortnight.

In the past, records of students' heights, weights, and health issues have been recorded in various 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 must be written down in the student record and recall forms so we have the information for further follow-up. The student record includes notes from previous years so you can check progress and see if additional 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 standardized policies and procedures as much as possible.
- We strictly follow confidentiality about our students' health status. Therefore, it is important to ensure that the information on the students' medical forms is not visible to others during the check-up. We have students with HIV who are receiving support and counselling, but this is kept confidential from other students. We expect that Health Check team members will maintain this during the exercise.
- 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 tea break or lunch time so you can conduct further check on them.
- We also request that doctors 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 Community Relations team member 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 eyesight check. The school has basic eye charts available, but we recommend volunteers who will do the eye checks to 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 ensure that the students take off their shoes, socks, and sweaters before entering the room for their check-up with the doctor and the vision team member eye specialist. To improve local capacity building and future sustainability, St Jude's alumni will assist in this regard, so the number of helpers required may be less than advertised above (if alumni fill some of these roles).

As you can imagine, it can get noisy and a bit chaotic during the health check, so the Team Leader can help explain systems that have worked in past years.

Hearing team:

The hearing check team will usually work independently of the other three teams due to the required time to conduct a hearing check under the necessary environmental conditions. There is some equipment available at the school that has previously been donated. More information regarding the available hearing equipment 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 a problem with 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, anaemia, 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 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 involve 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 nurses, students and other organisations (such as toothbrush and toothpaste companies) have taught the students about teeth and dental hygiene. Generous toothbrush and toothpaste donations to the school have also allowed us to distribute toothbrushes and toothpaste and organise workshops and demonstrations with the younger 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 note that it is not common for people to visit 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 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 sugar intake from 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 explaining the problem, how to care for their teeth, and a suggestion to go

to the dentist for a check-up and treatment. All students are followed up afterward; 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 and the short time of our visit, 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 about any concerns.

In 2016, a team member undertook a psychosocial needs analysis, particularly focusing on 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.

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

### **What does the school do before the Health Check starts?**

- Administer worm treatment twice a year.
- Conduct HIV testing at school on all our newly arrived students (Standard 1/2 and Secondary) and those recommended by our nurses and the doctors at health checks. The new students also have a haemoglobin check.
- During our Scholarship Application Process, parents of successful students are asked if their child has any health issues; if so, their history is written down for the Health Check team to review at the next visit.
- Before the commencement of boarding, secondary students are required to have a health check by a local doctor, including a haemoglobin check, and provide the report to the school.
- All homeroom, boarding, and PE teachers are asked to list the names of students they think may have problems for the doctors to check 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 coming to them often with problems.
- Secondary students receive sex education once a year and general health education at the end of each term, 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 a special diet at school. If any students have severe anaemia, 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 Check?**

We follow existing policies and procedures for many standard problems identified during the health check to assist with follow-ups once the Health Check team leaves. We expect that successful applicants will take time to familiarise themselves with these documents and use the same terminology and follow the same policies. The school staff involved in this exercise have minimal health backgrounds, and thus, having a standardised follow-up procedure for common conditions greatly assists them in communicating with parents.

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

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 themselves.

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 school staff will ensure that these students get the special care they need, considering the family situation and available health care options in Arusha.

### **Does the school have any contacts with doctors in Arusha?**

Yes, The School of St Jude has good contact with different hospitals around town, plus specific doctors. Our best relationships are with a general practitioner, Dr Mohammed, and Dr Deborah, a Paediatrician from a local hospital who we use for our students with asthma and more complex cases.

### **Do all the students speak English?**

No. Every January, we welcome new Standard 1/2 classes with students who have never spoken English. But there will always be a team member from Community Relations who will help you with translation during the health checks for these students and any others who need assistance.

In addition, new students from government schools are accepted into our secondary school in Form 1 and Form 5 (the first and second last years of secondary). Because English is not used as a medium of instruction in government schools, these students have limited English skills and may not understand you fully. Welfare staff will be present to help you with translation for these students during consultations.

### **Are there any specific medical products we can bring 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 them for the students. We strictly adhere to our rule of making parents take full responsibility for their children's health, and therefore, they need to buy these items themselves when required. These medicines are generally affordable, and the parents can provide them themselves.





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

Our general wish list will be provided for those who want to bring non-health-check-related donations to the school.

**Can I bring equipment that needs electricity, or should it only use batteries?**

Yes, you can bring equipment that runs on electricity.

If you have any more questions regarding St Jude's Health Check 2026, feel free to contact Jane Larkin, Health Check Team Leader through email at [janelarkin1@gmail.com](mailto:janelarkin1@gmail.com), Philip Mlay, Community Relations Manager through [philip.m@schoolofstjude.co.tz](mailto:philip.m@schoolofstjude.co.tz), and Focus Carol, Community Relations Team Lead through [focus.c@schoolofstjude.co.tz](mailto:focus.c@schoolofstjude.co.tz), and the right person will reply.

**NB:** Tanzania has changed its immigration laws; therefore, we will contact the team once we confirm members, with the details of which visa you must apply for. Please note that the visa application fee may cost US\$250.

Applications close on 31 August 2025, but late applications may be considered contingent on filling the positions on the team.

To understand more about the Health Checks at The School of St Jude please visit the below video on YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=70d5ZLrjX44>