

To School administrators and teachers where there are albino children in the school or community:

From: Every Child Ministries

A Christian NGO bringing hope to “the forgotten children of Africa”

Because CHILDREN are any nation’s greatest resource—

A precious treasure from God!

Every Child Ministries Uganda

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To school administrators and teachers,

Greetings! We appreciate your dedication to serve the nation of Uganda and especially to form the character of its youth through education. It’s a challenging job you have undertaken. May God bless you with strength and wisdom.

We are writing to you because your school has a child with albinism, a genetic trait that usually results in poor eyesight and can lead to skin cancer if the child’s unprotected skin is exposed to the rays of the sun.

Children with albinism have normal intelligence, can develop normally, contribute productively to society, and live a normal life span if certain precautions are taken.

Children with albinism often have poor eyesight. A few albinos are blind or almost blind. They can learn to read braille and live as blind people. For people with albinism, increasing the size of something doesn’t always help him to see it better. Increasing the contrast in text is often more effective—for instance, using a pure black marker on a bright white paper, or using a very black chalkboard instead of one obscured by lots of old chalk dust.

You have it in your power to make the lives of these children better in several ways, and we ask you to use your God-given position of authority and influence for their benefit.

You can help by:

- Making sure that children with albinism are seated where they can best see the blackboard. Please allow them to experiment with sitting closer to the board to see if this will help them.
- Larger print or use of a hand-held magnifier helps some children. If this becomes embarrassing to them as they grow older, at least see whether they might be willing to use these aids for home study. Many places where photocopies are made can enlarge text. An association of people with albinism in Ghana informs us that normally, people with albinism need type of font size 18 in order to read well. (Most textbooks are written in font size 11 or 12). Albino children may need to hold the book they are reading closer to their face than is considered usual. This should be permitted, and others should not be permitted to ridicule them for doing this.
- For many albinos, increasing the contrast in print is even more effective than increasing the size. For instance, using a pure black marker on a bright white paper is often effective. Blackboards will be easier for the albino child to read from than green chalkboards. Contrast can be greatly increased simply by washing the board with plain water frequently. Softer chalk will give a better line, and brightly-colored chalk is also sometimes effective.
- Excusing children with albinism from parts of physical education class or adapting your program to meet their needs. Children with albinism are physically as strong as others, but if required to do outdoor activity in shorts or other clothing that exposes their skin to the sun during the hottest hours of the day, from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., serious damage can result, including skin cancer. These children can do exercises in the shade or inside. If they must be outside, please allow them to wear long sleeves and pants and a protective wide-brimmed hat. This seems like a big concession, but your cooperation could keep a child cancer free and give them the gift of a normal life.
- Permitting the child to wear dark sunglasses whenever he is outside. This is essential to protect his eyes from further damage from sunlight.
- Please do all you can to protect these children from teasing and ridicule born out of ignorance. These children do not have a disease and they are not a curse. They are normal children just like others who need social

acceptance to become all God intended them to be. While their poor eyesight and sensitive skin may be considered a handicap, they are capable of full productivity when minor adjustments are made. Name-calling and insulting in particular should not be permitted in the school. Its negative influence on students is immeasurable.

- Except for special protection from the sun and special attention due to poor eyesight, albino children should be treated like all others and integrated into the activities of the school. Please encourage the children to include the albino children socially as well as academically. This is very important for their development.
- You may need to spend some time in school assembly talking about albinism. The guides and the Questions and Answers prepared by Every Child Ministries are available to help you. Some things need to be repeated over and over, like “Albinism is not a disease. Albinos are not dangerous. Albino children are a blessing, not a curse, just like all others”, etc.
- Many attitudes are reinforced at home. It may be helpful to plan a meeting with parents to help them understand more about albinism and to minimize any wrong perceptions that may come from the homes of the children.

If you have any questions about albinism, our project officers will be happy to talk with you. Thank you for your contribution to the lives of the children and for your cooperation in these matters.

Available from Every Child Ministries:

Teaching for parents of albino children

Teaching for albino children

Questions & Answers on Albinism

Suggestions for Educators on helping children with Albinism (this document)

Sunglasses & occasionally other help for any albino child who comes with a parent or guardian and registers at one of our offices.

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www.ecmafrica.org

Watch our website for further information from time to time.