

Fewer than one in 10 students who passed Rwanda's 2025/26 Primary Leaving Examinations (PLE) have secured places in boarding schools, as demand continues to far exceed the available spaces.

Education Minister Claudette Irere said 243,958 students passed the exams, but only 17,412 have been placed in boarding schools. The remaining 226,546 students will attend day schools.

That means only about 7% of successful PLE candidates have secured boarding places, while more than nine in every 10 will begin secondary school as day scholars.

The competition is especially tough at some of the country's most sought-after schools.

At GS Saint Aloys in Rwamagana, around 28,000 students applied for just 110 to 120 available places, according to Ms Irere. That works out at more than 230 applicants competing for each place.

The École des Sciences de Musanze also received 22,456 requests for only 105 places.

The shortage is being felt by parents as they prepare their children for the transition from primary to secondary school.

In Kayonza District, three parents who spoke to the Rwanda Dispatch said the limited number of boarding places had added uncertainty to their plans.

One parent, who asked not to be named, said the family had hoped their child would get a boarding place but would have to consider a day school if that did not happen.

The parent said the family would support whichever school the child was assigned to, but distance, transport costs and the availability of suitable schools were among the concerns they had to weigh.

Ms Irere, who addressed the shortage of boarding facilities, said the government could not accommodate every student seeking a boarding place.

"The government is continuing to expand school infrastructure, including both

boarding and day schools, to respond to the growing number of students entering secondary education,” she said.

Boarding education, however, remains highly sought after. Popular schools continue to attract thousands of applications even when they have only a small number of vacancies.

Authorities have urged parents to support children who are placed in day schools, stressing that boarding is not the only route to a quality secondary education.

Analysts believe that for many families, passing the PLE is therefore only the first hurdle. Getting a place at the school they want can be an even tougher competition.