The Ministry of Health has raised concern over the use of drugs and substandard alcoholic beverages among schoolchildren, saying cases are being reported even among students in lower secondary school.

State Minister for Health Dr. Ivan Butera made the disclosure on Wednesday while speaking to students at Nyagatare Secondary School during a two-day working visit to Nyagatare District.

Butera urged students to avoid drugs and focus on their education, warning that substance use can affect their health and undermine their ability to pursue their goals.

“There are issues we have been dealing with recently, including substandard alcoholic beverages, and they have not spared even children who are still in school,” Butera said. “You may find a child in Senior One or Senior Two who has already started using them.”

He said the ministry was engaging students to explain the dangers associated with drug use and encourage them to stay away from substances that can affect their health.

Butera also warned students against combining their pursuit of education with drug use.

“Some schools have reported cases of drug use, including substandard alcoholic beverages,” he said. “You should avoid them because it would be dangerous to come to school every day seeking knowledge while at the same time using substances that impair your reasoning.”

The minister told students that they were expected to contribute to building the country in the future and should therefore maintain healthy lifestyles and pursue their educational goals.

Students who attended the discussion said substance use was also a concern in some communities where they live.

Iradukunda Fils, a Senior Six student, said the advice could help both students who had never used drugs and those who may have experimented with them.

Mutuyimana Joyce said students should report people involved in selling or using

drugs to authorities.

“Where we live, you find places where these alcoholic drinks and other drugs are sold,” she said.

Butera’s visit to Nyagatare also includes visits to health facilities and discussions with different groups on health and health protection.