



**basic education**

Department:  
Basic Education  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

## **STATEMENT BY THE MINISTER OF BASIC EDUCATION, MRS ANGIE MOTSHEKGA MP, AT THE MEDIA BRIEFING ON THE OPENING OF SCHOOLS FOR 2022 SCHOOL YEAR**

**11 JANUARY 2022**

Good morning and thank you for your time.

We welcome you to the first media briefing of the year, which happens just a day before schools reopen for the 2022 academic year. Tomorrow (12 January 2022), the five (5) inland provinces will be receiving learners from Grades R to Grade 12. The five provinces include the Free State, Gauteng, Limpopo, Mpumalanga, and the North West. Schools in the four (4) coastal provinces – Eastern Cape, KwaZulu-Natal, Northern Cape and the Western Cape, will go back to school only next week.

Today, we will however give you the state of readiness presentation, which covers all the provinces. You will recall also that late last year we addressed the Portfolio Committee on Basic Education, where we presented the report, following the engagements we had with the provinces regarding their preparations for 2022.

COVID-19 has had a devastating impact on the Basic Education Sector in the last 2 years. We have spoken before about the learning losses incurred as a direct result of the novel COVID-19 pandemic – from the loss of teaching and learning time, to education personnel losing their lives to COVID-19 complications. We have lost an MEC,

an HOD, a teacher union leader, teachers, staff; and learners have also been affected.

We have sought to find every strategy to keep the Sector going, even under such difficult conditions. Working together with our stakeholders, we have been able to return all learners back to school at primary level.

In 2021 we recorded a significant decline in the number of schools that were closed and reopened due to COVID-19. This can be attributed in part, to the successful vaccination programme of education personnel from June 2021. Another important factor that has contributed to the relative stability in the Sector, is the adherence to COVID-19 health and safety protocols. We applaud our schools for doing all they can to ensure that protocols are observed at all times. We expect that the same will apply this year, as we intensify the implementation of our recovery programme.

We really need to work together to reboot the system, and get it back on track again. It will take time, but a concerted effort is required from all stakeholders.

## **Schools Admissions**

The Department is aware that there are still learners who are yet to be placed in schools. At the moment, Gauteng is experiencing challenges in this regard; and we appeal to parents and guardians to cooperate with the District officials to resolve any matter. Traditionally, admissions take a year to process; but invariably, we find that due to a variety of reasons, admissions spill over into the ensuing year.

Delay admissions, impact on teaching and learning, as delays occur even where this should be avoided. We will continue to work with

our provinces to ensure that we place all unplaced learners as a matter of urgency. We however, implore parents and guardians to accept the schools in which their learners are placed. When schools have reach their maximum capacities, further admissions become impossible.

## **Vaccination among learners**

Late last year, the Department of Health announced that vaccines were available for young people aged of 12 years and above. We could not run the programme in schools at the time, as the Sector was seized with end-of-the-year assessments and examinations. We decided to defer the vaccination of learners to January this year.

Yesterday, the Departments of Health and Basic Education met to consider a vaccination plan, insofar as it affects learners in school. It was agreed that we need to increase the vaccination for everybody eligible. We have agreed to prioritise an advocacy campaign, to encourage eligible people – both adults and learners of eligible age, to go get their jabs.

Misinformation and hesitancy still pose a huge challenge; hence we really need to work hard, to explain the benefits of vaccinating. We need to raise awareness, and increase literacy; and address false and fake news regarding the vaccination.

For education personnel, vaccination sites are open. Your details are already on the system; hence you do not need to make prior bookings. Just present yourself, and vaccinate or get a booster shot. We need to clarify that we are not vaccinating in school yet, because the Department of Health does not have the capacity to be in all schools. We will use existing sites for vaccination even for the 12-year-olds and above. Let me emphasise that vaccination is voluntary.

## **New Directions**

The Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs has on 30 December 2021, amended the Regulations in terms of the Disaster Management Act. In order to address the matter relating to gatherings, an amendment has as also been effected in the Directions for the Basic Education Sector. The amendment is with regard to the number of spectators permitted at school sport venues. That is the only change that we intend gazetting once stakeholders have made their inputs.

With regards to schooling, the situation will remain the same, especially rotational time-tabling, where it was applicable when we concluded schooling in 2021. The fact of the matter, is that COVID-19 is very much still with us, and we need to continue to work together to fight it. We are exploring possibilities to return schooling to normal, but we need to do so responsibly; and to this end, we rely entirely on the advice of public health experts, through the Ministerial Advisory Committee, the National Coronavirus Command Council, and indeed Cabinet. At the right time, we will come back to report on progress being made.

## **Matric Results**

Lastly, next week, we will release the National Senior Certificate (NSC) examination results for the Class of 2021. Once again, we have observed the debate and discussion in the public arena on the pass requirements for the National Senior Certificate.

The Department and respected scholars, have sought to clarify this matter, and we will continue to do so. We however, discourage the spreading of misleading information regarding the NSC pass requirements. There is information we have made available in which we explain the pass requirements.

All that needs to be said is that 30% is not a pass mark in this country. If a candidate gets an aggregate of 30% in all subjects written, the candidate will surely fail. There are myths, which are being repeated year-after-year, almost by the same people on this matter; and it is unfortunate and disappointing.

Next week, we will demonstrate how the Sector has worked hard under difficult circumstances to support learners. We need to rally behind our learners, show them support, and not discourage them by spreading false news, which could affect their confidence and the future. We welcome constructive engagement, but what is happening now is nothing more than mischief making.

Let me provide you the NSC pass requirements, hopefully once and for all. Anything other than this, is a fallacy or a figment of one's imagination. We have three pass requirements, which can be summarised as follows –

**(a) Admission to Bachelor Studies**

- (i) Must obtain at least 40% for the candidate's Home Language (this is compulsory);
- (ii) Must obtain at least 50% for the candidate's four (4) other subjects, excluding Life Orientations;
- (iii) Must obtain at least 30% for the language of learning and teaching (LOLT) of the Higher Education Institution;
- (iv) Must obtain at least 30% for one (1) other subject; and
- (v) Must pass at least six (6) of the seven (7) subjects.

**(b) Admission to Diploma Studies**

- (i) Must obtain at least 40% for the candidate's Home Language (this is compulsory);
- (ii) Must obtain at least 40% for three (3) of other subjects, excluding Life Orientation;

- (iii) Must obtain at least 30% for the language of learning and teaching (LOLT) of the Higher Education Institution;
- (iv) Must obtain at least 30% for one (1) other subjects; and
- (v) Must pass at least six (6) of the seven (7) subjects.

### **(c) Higher Certificate**

- (i) Must obtain at least 40% for the candidate's Home Language (this is compulsory);
- (ii) Must obtain at least 30% for the language of learning and teaching (LOLT) of the Higher Education Institution;
- (iii) Must obtain at least 40% for two (2) other subjects;
- (iv) Must obtain at least 30% for three (3) other subjects; and
- (v) Must pass at least six (6) of the seven (7) subjects.

Ladies and gentlemen, there is another development, which we wish to announce today.

The Protection of Personal Information Act (POPIA), 2013 (Act No. 04 of 2013) came into effect on 01 July 2021. The DBE recognises that section 14 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996, provides that everyone has the right to privacy. This right to privacy, includes a right to protection against the unlawful collection, retention, dissemination and use of personal information.

In order to comply with the provisions of the POPIA, the usual practice of publishing the National Senior Certificate examination results on public platforms (media platforms), will not occur for 2021 NSC examination results. As was also the practice in previous years, all learners will be required to obtain their Statements of Results from their respective schools. In this way, every learner's personal

information, with regards to the outcomes of the 2021 NSC exams, will be protected.

## **Second Chance Matric Programme**

Yesterday, I official launched our campaign on the Second Chance Matric Programme in Mpumalanga. This programme is intended to encourage young people never to give up with their dreams. We will continue with this campaign, as we strongly believe it is right to do so.

The registration for the 2022 Matric rewrite examinations started on 01 October 2021, and will close on 15 February 2022 – therefore, there is about a month to register for the Matric rewrite. The mid-year exams, will start on 09 May 2022, and end on 23 June 2022.

## **LEARNER WELLBEING ISSUES – A FOCUS ON PREVENTION OF LEARNER PREGNANCY, VIOLENCE, ALCOHOL AND DRUG ABUSE AS WELL AS SPORT, ARTS AND CULTURE**

The DBE continues to implement the Partnership Protocol with the South African Police Service in promoting ***safety and security*** in all school. This is achieved through ensuring that all schools are linked to their local police stations and that a police officer is linked to every school. The Partnership Protocol contributes to the identification of problematic schools, as well as implementation of School Safety Programmes.

The Basic Education Sector is leading a collective of Deputy Ministers in the roll-out of the ***Anti-Bullying Campaign***, which was launched in Gauteng during May 2021. The Campaign pulls together efforts of various Government Departments that contribute to the eradication and management of bullying incidents in schools, and

making communities aware of various available interventions to address the Bullying problem.

Over the COVID period in 2020 and 2021, the Department has conducted monitoring on the implementation of the National School Safety Framework (NSSF) in ALL 75 Education Districts to gauge school compliance with the minimum requirements for school safety. All provinces identified their areas of support needs such as NSSF training as a means to assist schools to establish School Safety Committees, conduct school safety audits and develop school safety plans. This assists schools to eliminate the enabling factors to school violence and establish early warning systems. The NSSF has been tailored to assist eradicate other behaviours that pose safety challenges in schools, such learners bringing weapons, alcohol and drugs to school premises.

Since the report was received from the Ministerial Task Team to evaluate discrimination found in textbooks and LTSMs towards a policy to promote diversity through curriculum, teachers received training on Addressing Discrimination and Promoting Diversity in the Classroom. In response to some of the recommendations from this report, this year the DBE is finalising the *Protocol for the Elimination of Unfair Discrimination in Schools*, in addition to the *Protocol to Deal with Incidents of Corporal Punishment in Schools* as well as the *Protocol for the Management and Reporting of Sexual Abuse and Harassment in Schools*.

Nuances of intolerance, particularly of xenophobic nature, have been observed in society in general and the spill-over on schools. In partnership with the Foundation for Human Rights, DBE facilitates provincial dialogues on Addressing Xenophobia and “What it means to be an African” to sensitise children and youth about the unity of Africa. Working with civil society and international organisations, we intend to inculcate the values and principles of UBUNTU to prevent



violent attacks and vandalism of community assets, which tend to spike during protests and unrest.

The recent statistics on ***pregnancy of young girls*** between the ages of 10 and 19 are concerning to the Basic Education Sector. As such, DBE has gazetted the *Policy for the Prevention and Management of Learner Pregnancy (EUP) in Schools*. Through this policy, we are on continuous engagement with other sectors and parents to strengthen the prevention of early and unintended pregnancy. Interventions such as the Let's Talks EUP, implemented with support from UNESCO, allow us to open up safe spaces of intergenerational dialogue on how we could, as a collective, best deal with the issue of teenage pregnancy.

Our commitment is to strengthen the Comprehensive Sexuality Education offering in Life Orientation to ensure that learners are empowered with knowledge and skills to make informed decisions about their health and sexuality, prevent HIV infection and pregnancy, and focus on their education. Where early pregnancy occurs, the policy will help the Sector support the pregnant learner and ensure that care and support is provided so that the unfortunate occurrence does not impact negatively on their education. The DBE calls of the parents, caregivers and community members to help us ensure that children are protected, especially because most of the time, pregnancy among children usually occurs as a result of sexual abuse and coerced sexual intercourse and sexual abuse.

The provision of co-curricular activities is one of our strong strategies to help us address social ills and risky behaviour among learners. We know that when they do not have access and opportunities to healthier alternatives provided in **sport, arts and culture** activities, they tend to engage in high risk behaviour. The COVID-19 period, forced the Sector to suspend these activities during the higher alert levels, as a way of containing the spread of COVID-19. We knew

that we would not close for a very long time to avoid learners finding an outlet of their boredom in other risky behaviours. As such, the latest Directions for COVID-19 in Basic Education now allow for the resumption of sport, arts and culture activities in schools, taking into account the limits and COVID-19 safety measures of large group gatherings indoors and outdoors.

## **Progress of the overhaul of the History Curriculum in Grades 4-12**

The History Ministerial Task Team (MTT) is working on finalising the overhaul of the History curriculum in Grades 4-12. The topics for Grades 4-9 have been finalized; and topics for Grades 10-12 will be refined and finalised this year. There were consultations held by the MTT with a reference team of History teachers and curriculum advisors in 2019 (Grades 4-9) and 2021 (Grades 10-12), on the proposed topics, concepts, skills and forms of assessment that must be included in the revised History curriculum.

Broader consultations with relevant stakeholders will be conducted during this year, and will be followed by the submission of the draft revised History curriculum to Umalusi for evaluation and appraisal, to determine if the revised History curriculum meets the curriculum development and design standards.

## **Partnerships with our private sector**

The DBE has a dedicated Partnerships Unit, whose primary focus is to establish and monitor the implementation of partnership programmes with the private sector. The contributions of our partners is generous, sincere and aligned to the priority areas of the DBE.

Some examples that relates to specific support areas. For instance –

In 2017, when we requested business to consider supporting the *Read to Lead Campaign*. This call was answered with enthusiasm. To date 1 128 libraries have been donated to the neediest schools by partners such as AVBOB. Companies, like Toyota and Volkswagen, support technical schools with equipment and expertise.

E-Learning – when we faced serious challenges with learning and teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic, MTN Foundation stepped in, and launched the MTN Online School. This allowed millions of learners and educators access and tools to continue their schooling, with no worries about data costs.

On School Infrastructure, the eradication of inappropriate school infrastructure, is a priority for this Administration. We have made significant progress in replacing asbestos schools and pit latrines. This progress could not have been achieved without the support of business. AVBOB, ASSUPOL, and others, has been the main contributor in our infrastructure programmes. Mining companies, especially in the platinum belt, continue to provide similar support for affected schools in the areas of their operations.

On Learner Wellbeing, Nestlé, Unilever, Tiger Brands and Colgate-Palmolive are some of the companies that help us to ensure the nutritional and psychosocial needs of our learners are met.

On DBE main events – such as the National Teaching Awards, the announcement of the NSC exam results, the Excellence Awards in Education, we are proud to inform the public that this event is fully sponsored by our partners. This is a significant, as such sponsor allows us to do more with what we have. We are eternally indebted

to our sponsors, and implore them to continue all our Sector programmes to the extent necessary

## School Infrastructure

We are working very hard to address the infrastructure challenges at public schools. Under the ASIDI programme, we have completed **two hundred and eighty-six** (286) complete new schools; replacing old schools constructed of inappropriate materials. We completed water supply projects at **one thousand, one hundred and fifty six** (1 156) schools; and electricity supply at three **hundred and seventy three** (373) schools.

As at 10 January 2022, we remain with **forty four** (44) old schools constructed of inappropriate materials to be replaced; and **one hundred and fifteen** (115) schools that require water supply. All of these are scheduled for completion in 2022/23.

Under the SAFE programme, we have replaced basic pit toilets at **one thousand, four hundred and thirty nine** (1 439) schools. As at 10 January 2022, we remain with **one thousand, four hundred and twenty three** (1 423) schools, where basic pit toilets needs to be replaced. All of these are scheduled for completion in 2022/23.

In view of the above, it is heart-breaking when our own people vandalise the school infrastructure. There have been several incidents of blatant criminality, aimed at damaging or even destroying school infrastructure.

Over and above the vandalism, we need to address the school infrastructure damaged though storms. The bulk of these challenges are addressed by the respective Provincial programmes.

The Infrastructure Unit in the Department is conducting weekly meetings with the operational staff of all Implementing Agents. The updated weekly progress reports are then presented to the Executive Oversight Committee, consisting of the DG and the various CEOs of these Implementing Agents.

As part of monitoring, the DG conduct his own one-on-one meetings with the Implementing Agents, and has personally visited more than **one thousand** (1 000) construction sites.

Under the leadership of the Deputy Minister, bi-weekly meetings are held with the Infrastructure Unit to monitor progress and to identify any issues that require Ministerial intervention.

## **Conclusion**

Let me invite the DDG Simone Geyer to present on our state of readiness for the reopening of schools for the 2022 academic year. The Director-Director will then make inputs on the other areas we had identified for this Media Briefing.

I thank you