

All systems go for 2022 academic year

Basic Education Minister, Angie Motshekga, says the arrangements that are meant to protect the school sector from coronavirus infection will remain in place as schools in inland provinces are set to open their doors to learners tomorrow.



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The situation will remain the same with regards to schooling, especially rotational time-tabling where it was applicable when schooling concluded last year.

On Wednesday, five inland provinces - Free State, Gauteng, Limpopo, Mpumalanga and the North West - will receive learners from Grades R to Grade 12, while schools in the four coastal provinces will go back to school only next week.

Presenting the state of readiness at a media briefing held in Pretoria on Tuesday, Motshekga said Covid-19 has had a devastating impact on the basic education sector in the last two years. However, the department and its stakeholders 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,” she said.

The Minister acknowledged that Covid-19 remains a reality, and continued partnership is necessary to manage it.

“We are exploring the possibilities of returning 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.”

Motshekga has applauded the schools for doing all they can to ensure that Covid-19 protocols are observed at all times.

She emphasized that the same is expected to apply this year, as the implementation of the recovery programme is implemented.

“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,” the Minister said.

With regards to vaccination among learners aged 12 years and older, the Minister said that there are no vaccination sites in school yet because the Department of Health does not have the capacity to be in all schools.

Motshekga said the sector will use existing sites for vaccination in this age group.

Schools admissions

The department said it is aware that there are still learners who are yet to be placed in schools and is working tirelessly with provinces to ensure that all learners are placed.

The Minister said at the moment, Gauteng is experiencing challenges in this regard. The department has appealed to parents and guardians to cooperate with 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.

“Delayed admissions impact on teaching and learning, as delays occur even where this should be avoided,” she said.

Motshekga said they will continue to work with provinces to ensure that all unplaced learners are placed as a matter of urgency.

“We, however, implore parents and guardians to accept the schools in which their children are placed. When schools have reached their maximum capacities, further admissions become impossible.”

Matric results

On 20 January, the department will release the National Senior Certificate (NSC) examination results for the Class of 2021.

Upon observing the debate and discussion in the public arena on the pass requirements for the NSC, the Minister said the department and various scholars have sought to clarify this matter, and they will continue to do so.

However, the sector discourages 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,” she said.

The Minister said it was unfortunate and disappointing that the inaccuracies keep being repeated year after year.

School infrastructure

Motshekga said the sector is working very hard to address infrastructure challenges at public schools.

"Under the ASIDI programme, we have completed 286 complete new schools, replacing old schools constructed of inappropriate materials. We completed water supply projects at 1,156 schools and electricity supply at 373 schools."

As at 10 January 2022, the Minister said the department remains with 44 old schools constructed of inappropriate materials to be replaced and 115 schools that require water supply. All of these are scheduled for completion in 2022/23.

"Under the SAFE programme, the department has replaced basic pit toilets at 1,439 schools. As at 10 January 2022, we remain with 1,423 schools where basic pit toilets need to be replaced. All of these are scheduled for completion in 2022/23," Motshekga said.

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