



basic education

Department:
Basic Education
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

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TO:

**HEADS OF PROVINCIAL EDUCATION DEPARTMENTS
HEADS OF PROVINCIAL HUMAN RESOURCES SECTIONS
DISTRICT DIRECTORS
CIRCUIT MANAGERS
AREA MANAGERS
SCHOOL PRINCIPALS
SCHOOL GOVERNING BODIES (SGBs)
SCHOOL BASED EDUCATORS**

CIRCULAR NO 01 OF 2021

THE RETURN OF EDUCATORS AND SUPPORT STAFF TO SCHOOLS FOR THE 2021 ACADEMIC YEAR AMIDST COVID-19 PANDEMIC

1. As the Department of Basic Education (DBE) welcomes all educators, support staff and learners back in our schools for the 2021 academic year, the Department is cognisant of the rising COVID-19 infections in the country, which may bring a lot of anxiety to educators as they return to schools.
2. The Department has taken the necessary precautions to ensure that learning and teaching will take place in a safe environment where all the non-pharmaceutical safety protocols such as wearing of masks at all times, regular washing and sanitisation of hands as well as social distancing are adhered to.
3. Schools are requested to ensure that the screening processes are conducted thoroughly for all employees at all times.

4. In line with the Basic Education Sector plans for the re-opening of schools for the academic year 2021, the following measures shall apply to Educators upon their return to schools:
 - 4.1 School Management Teams (SMTs) and support staff (i.e. General Assistants, Administrative Staff and Education Assistants) shall report for duty on Monday, 25 January 2021;
 - 4.2 Educators shall follow on Monday, 01 February 2021; and
 - 4.3 Learners shall return on Monday, 15 February 2021.
5. This staggered approach will allow time and space for both the SMTs and the educators to prepare for the return of learners and the smooth resumption of the academic year.
6. All Educators are informed that Collective Agreement 1 of 2020: “*Concession Process to follow for Employees with a Comorbidity (Covid-19)*”, lapsed when the country entered into Alert level 1 of the national state of disaster and that no provision was made in the resolution for future increases in the Alert levels.
7. Any employee who may not feel well at any given time should immediately report such to the relevant authorities at school. He/She is encouraged to consult his/her medical doctor immediately.
8. Where an employee has tested positive for Covid-19 and is required to self-quarantine or is hospitalised, schools should utilise the services of Education Assistants (EAs) to oversee learners in and out of the classroom setting. EAs should also assist educators who have been granted a concession to work from home by supporting learners to complete their daily tasks. Further be reminded that the Education Assistants are not qualified to teach learners.
9. In cases where an educator is required to be away from work for more than 10 consecutive days, principals, upon approval by the relevant provincial education department, must ensure that substitute educators are immediately appointed - so that learners are not left without an educator.
10. Consequently, the following measures shall apply for educators with comorbidities:

- 10.1 Be required to submit a recent medical report (Not older than one month) from the treating doctor indicating that he/she is at risk of being affected by COVID-19 due to his/her medical condition;
 - 10.2 Be required to agree with the Principal/Manager on how such comorbidity or underlying medical condition shall be accommodated whilst taking into consideration the operational requirements of a school;
 - 10.3 Be required to agree with the Principal/Manager on the arrangements to either work from home or for special workplace arrangements to be made to accommodate him/her;
 - 10.4 The Principal/Manager shall be required to complete the Individual Risk Assessment Form for all the vulnerable employees due to Covid-19, indicating which work options have been agreed upon;
 - 10.5 The Educator and the Principal / Manager shall be required to comply with the relevant procedures and measures as determined by the employing PED.
 - 10.6 Where the Principal/Manager has a comorbidity or an underlying medical condition, the above measures shall be applicable between the affected Principal/Manager and the relevant District or Circuit Manager.
11. All educators are further notified that the **current leave provisions as contained in Personnel Administrative Measures (PAM) are applicable** under the circumstances, despite the country having been moved to an adjusted alert level 3 in terms of the National Disaster Management Regulations.
 12. Provincial Departments of Education together with Districts and schools are to ensure that all entry-level educator posts are filled at all times and that there is no class without an educator. In cases where substitutes are to be appointed where educators are ill, or where there is a vacancy, this is to be done immediately by consulting the available resources such as the Funza Lushaka database or the database on unemployed educators which are available at both provincial and national level.
 13. All the COVID-19 health, hygiene and safety measures must be implemented equally outside of the work environment as well. All staff members must take all reasonable precautions to prevent acquiring the viral infection to protect the school/work environment and the health of everyone on the premises.
 14. Schools are reminded that educators must take extra care in staff rooms by maintaining a maximum of 50% occupancy at all times, social distancing is maintained, wearing of

masks and the availability and use of hand sanitisers are abided to. Where possible convergence of Educators in Staff Rooms and or common areas that are indoors should be avoided.

15. Schools are required to keep a record of all reported COVID-19 incidents/cases. Principals must report all **laboratory confirmed** Covid-19 related cases (including deaths) to their respective Circuit/Area Managers and Schools' Health Teams within 6 hours of been notified by the staff member, parent or learner. This is to facilitate the quick response in terms of psycho-social support and tracing and tracking of close contacts.
16. Covid-19 School Committees should also be provided with the contact details of their local Integrated School Health and/or Environmental Health teams to provide the necessary risk assessment/compliance and support to the school as and when Covid-19 cases are reported.
17. If we all play our role to safeguard the learning and teaching space, we will succeed in providing quality education amid the COVID-19 pandemic.
18. All Employees in schools appointed in terms of the Public Service Act shall be dealt with in terms of the DPSA Circular 1 of 2021: "*State of Disaster: Covid-19 Public Service Adjustments to Risk Adjusted Level 3 Regulations*" or subsequent procedures and measures as determined by the employing PED.
19. Be assured of the Department's concern and support.

Yours Sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'HM Mweli', written in a cursive style.

MR HM MWELI

DIRECTOR-GENERAL

DATE: 16/02/2021