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POLICY: ADMISSIONS

AIM

The aim of this policy document is to promote and facilitate the admission of learners from any race to the school. It reflects the democratic principles of the Department of Basic Education and the Western Cape Education Department to comply with its constitutional responsibility to ensure learners' access to quality education.

FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES

The right to basic education and to equal access to educational institutions is not only contained in the Constitution, it is also included in the Education Bill that has been adopted by the Legislature. Subject to the stipulations no learner may be refused access to a school on grounds of race, gender, origin (ethnic or social), religion, belief, colour, culture, provable inability to pay school fees, language or age.

COMPULSORY ATTENDANCE

- According to this Act and any applicable act, every parent should let every learner that he or she is responsible for, attend a school from the first school day of the year such learner reaches the age of seven years, until the last school day of the year in which such a learner reaches the age of fifteen or the ninth grade, whichever occurs first.
- The Minister of Education determines through a notice in the Government Gazette the ages of compulsory school attendance for learners with special educational needs.
- Each member of the Executive Council cannot comply with the sub-sections, due to a lack of space at the date of the implementation of this Act, he or she should take steps to correct any such lack of space as soon as possible, and he or she should report to the Minister annually regarding the progress with this action.
- If a learner who is subject to compulsory school attendance, according to the sub-sections, is not enrolled at a school or fails to attend one, the head of the department can:
 - investigate the circumstances regarding the learner's absence from school;
 - take applicable steps to correct the matter;
 - failing to effect such correction, direct written notice to the parent of the learner demanding compliance with the subsections.
- According to this Act and any other applicable act:
- Any parent who fails to comply with the sub-sections without sound reason and after written notice from the head of the department, is guilty of an offence and at being
 - found guilty, subject to a fine or prison sentence for no more than six months;or

- o any person who prevents a learner, who is subject to compulsory attendance, from attending school, is guilty of an offence and at being found guilty, subject to a fine or a prison sentence for a period of no more than six months.

EXEMPTION OF COMPULSORY ATTENDANCE

- A head of department can exempt a learner fully, partially or conditionally from compulsory school attendance if it is in the best interest of the learner.
- Each head of the department should keep a register of the learners who are exempt from compulsory school attendance.

ADMISSION TO PUBLIC SCHOOL

- A public school should admit learners and serve their educational needs without any unfair discrimination.
- A public school may not apply any test that relates to the admission of a learner to a public school, or instruct or authorize the principal or any other person to apply such test.
- No learner may be refused admission to a public school on grounds of his or her parent:
 - o not being able or failing to pay school fees as determined by the governing body according to section 39;
 - o not subscribing to the mission of the school;
 - o refusing to enter into a contract in terms of which the parent relinquishes any claim for damages that may result from the education of the learner.
- The Minister can, in consultation with the Council of Education Ministers, by means of notice in the Government Gazette, determine age requirements for the admission of learners to a school or to different grades in a school.
- According to this Act and any applicable act, this admission policy of a learner with special educational needs, the head of department and the principal should take into consideration the rights and wishes of the parents of such learners.
- An application for admission of a learner to a public school should be addressed to the Education Department in a way determined by the head of the department.
- If any application is refused according to any sub-section, the head of the department should notify the parents in writing of such refusal and the reason for it.
- Any learner or parent, who has been refused access to a public school, can lodge an appeal against the decision at the Member of the Executive Council.

RESPONSIBILITY FOR ADMINISTRATION OF ADMISSIONS

Principals, in the first instance, and their deputy principals and staff members to whom authority has been delegated, should be responsible for the administration of admission to a school. District directors should inform principals and/or other educational structures regarding the admission policy and the procedures that should be followed. District coordinators should render continuous support to schools. Principals, or groups of schools, may in cooperation with the district director organize themselves into Registration and Admission Committees in order to facilitate and organize the admission programme in their areas. This should enable them to manage the admission of learners to their schools more effectively, as well as to monitor and verify the movement of learners between schools.

PROCESS OF APPLICATION FOR ADMISSION

The WCED will issue a circular that confirms the administration of admissions for the year, which has to be done on the official WCED School Admissions Management Information (SAMI) system and schools may therefore

NOT use their own hard copy, online forms or systems, or request any additional information from parents not in line with the South African Schools Act (SASA), 1996 (Act 84 of 1996), the Admission Policy for Ordinary Public Schools, published in Government Gazette No. 19377 of 19 October 1998, or the POPI Act.

The application process takes place in three phases.

1. In phase one, parents apply online, within the stipulated time frames (indicated in the WCED circular) and schools resolve placement.
 2. In phase two, district officials and schools resolve placement.
 3. In phase three, district officials resolve placement.
- As the accountable officer, the principal must sign off the status of applications on the Online Admissions System on the required date indicated by the WCED timeframes, as the successful status of an application cannot be reversed after the outcome has been published and parents notified.
 - Schools may not deviate from the time frames given.
 - Schools who do not adhere to the time frames, will be dealt with in terms of WCED procedure.
 - Schools MAY NOT inform parents of the outcome of their application status before it is displayed on the Online Admission System.
 - Schools may not ask parents to confirm before the due date as parents have the right to wait until all schools have notified them of the outcome of the application.
 - If parents do not confirm final acceptance by this date and time, the Online Admissions System will automatically allocate the first successful offer from a school on the list.
 - If parents do not confirm acceptance by 19 June 2023, schools may offer such places to learners on the waiting list or to other learners who still need placement.
 - As applications are processed, the Online Admissions System generates a list of unplaced learners and indicates which schools have places available.
 - It is therefore vital that schools ensure that their planned enrolment is correct and that applications are processed by the due dates to ensure that officials have accurate information, which will be used to inform parents of the available places.

It is the responsibility of the parents to ensure that they have secured a place for the learner at another school before transferring the learner out of a school.

- Schools are requested to make every effort to empower parents to apply on the Online Admissions System by assisting in the following ways:
 - Parents who approach schools directly for assistance may not be turned away. There have been allegations made in court that parents were turned away by the support staff. Schools are required to assist all parents with admissions queries. All queries (telephonic, emails, walk-ins) related to admissions must be captured on the admission system. The school must record the name, surname, and contact details of the parent as well as the name, surname and CEMIS/Identity Document number of the learner.
 - Schools must give parents the learner admissions form which must be captured on the system on behalf of the parent. Parents must be informed that the completed admissions form handed back does not automatically guarantee a space at the school if the school has no available spaces as per the planned enrolment.
 - Schools and district officials are strongly advised to acknowledge any communication received from parents and to act on any query within 10 school days.
 - All interaction must be captured on the SAMI system.
 - Parents are required to indicate their order of preference on the Online Admissions System. This eliminates the blocking of places which delays the finalisation of admissions on an annual basis. Schools are not able to see the learners' preference.

All applications, whether captured by the parent or handed in to the school, MUST be captured and processed on the Online Admissions System.

- Schools must prioritise applications submitted during the official application time frame.
- In the case of an admissions appeal, dispute or a legal challenge, schools may be required to provide the details of an application, such as when and how the application was processed. Any details needed to resolve a dispute, will then be taken from the official WCED admissions information database.
- School to ensure that the correct outcome is displayed on the system.
- School and district WILL capture ALL late applications received.
- Parents confirming acceptance and submitting supporting documents
- Parents must confirm acceptance of their final choice by the due date indicated by the WCED.
- If parents do not confirm final acceptance by this date and time, the Online Admissions System will automatically allocate the first successful offer from a school on the list.

Parents can confirm acceptance in the following ways:

- a) confirming directly on the Online Admissions System.
- b) signing and submitting a confirmation letter/reply slip directly to the school; or
- c) contacting their nearest district office.

- The school must upload all confirmation letters/reply slips, which were submitted to them, on the Online Admissions System.
- Parents must upload copies of the supporting documents required onto the Online Admissions System when they apply.
- After receiving outcome, parents must hand in certified copies of supporting documents to the school where the learner's confirmation of acceptance was submitted or confirmed for 2024. This must be done within seven school days after confirmation of acceptance.
- Governing bodies have the right to reject applications if parents submit false/untrue information or fraudulent documents.
- After confirmation of acceptance by parents, schools may proceed to offer places which are open to learners on the waiting list or other learners who still need places.

WHO SHOULD REGISTER

Learners who are currently registered at schools should in principle stay in the same school and therefore do not need to register or apply for admission annually. Learners, who wish to attend a specific school for the first time, should register using the WCED online admissions portal, within the stipulated time frames, indicated by the WCED. All registrations should be completed by the tenth school day of the following year.

The following categories of learners should register:

- learners who will turn seven in the relevant year;
- learners of school age (between 7 and 15 years old) who have not registered yet;
- learners who are going to complete the highest grade in their current school and who will want admission to the following phase, e.g. from a primary to a secondary school, etc;
- learners, who wish to be admitted to another school for other reasons, e.g. transfer of parents.

MOVEMENT OF LEARNERS BETWEEN SCHOOLS

Principals and central registration offices should ensure that preference is given to learners from the school's feeding area. Transfer of learners from other schools should only be done if valid reasons are supplied for such transfers.

DOCUMENTS REQUIRED FOR ADMISSION

All documents, including ID's, birth certificates, transfer cards, reports, etc., should be checked and verified carefully before admission to a school is effected.

AGE OF LEARNERS

- **GRADE ONE:** A learner should not be admitted to a primary school unless he or she should reach the age of seven in the year of admission.
- If the school holds the view that a learner is under the school age and no documentary proof of the contrary can be submitted, the principal may in consultation with the district office refuse the relevant learner admission to the school, while attention should be given to the official channels through which proper documentation can be obtained.
- Learners of school age who have been out of school for a period of time, or who have not been attending school at all, or who are above the age for the specific grade, should be brought to the attention of the circuit manager.
- Persons of 16 years and older who have never before attended school and who want to be admitted for the first time, should obtain permission from the head of education (or the person authorized by him or her), before they may be admitted to a school.

LEARNERS WITH SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS

Learners with special educational needs (LSEN) should be admitted to the LSEN class only when they have been recommended for such class by an educational resource centre, and only after thorough and valid evaluation.

FEEDING AREAS

- Learners who live in the natural feeding area of the school should be given preference.
- If a learner lives within Hoofweg Primary Schools natural feeding area and that school's capacity has already been exceeded, such learner should be admitted to the next school nearest to him or her.
- The home address as on the municipal water and electricity account of the parents who live within the natural feeding area of the school is regarded as the permanent residential address, only if the school has accommodation for the child. An electricity and water account can also be requested as proof of residence.