

Feedback: Meeting with HOD and Executive Management - State of readiness of primary schools to receive all learners

A virtual meeting was held on 28 July 2021 to discuss the above-mentioned matter. The Minister of Basic Education announced that all primary school learners must report back to schools on 2 August 2021. Subsequently, the Limpopo Department of Education conducted an analysis to determine the readiness, based on the following:

Facilities

The Province will provide mobile classrooms to 436 schools although some schools can only get the mobile classes by 30 September 2021. The assessment was based on the ratio of 1:45, meaning there will be 45 learners per classroom although schools have different classroom sizes. Social distancing will be impossible, however, health experts advised that learners would not be exposed to risk if they are wearing masks.

Water supply

Challenges of water supply are acknowledged and all needy schools were provided with water tanks. It remains the responsibility of schools to ensure constant engagement with water authorities to refill tanks. Further, 67 projects of drilling of water boreholes are underway while procurement processes are being finalised for another 47.

Sanitation

There were 547 schools with inadequate toilets where 515 are still using pit latrines. From the 515 schools with latrine toilets, 300 are attended by SAFE program whereby 84 projects are already completed. The remaining 215 are attended to by the Department and already completed 62. The Department has provided mobile toilets to schools without toilets and those where construction work is underway.

COVID-19 essentials

The provision of sanitisers remains compulsory and inadequacy of Norms and Standards budget at some schools made it possible to procure such. Additional funding has been provided to districts to ensure purchasing of sanitisers and replacement of masks. Grade Rs will be provided with second masks. The

Department still has digital thermometers and districts have been advised to provide a list of needs for departmental intervention.

Special schools

Infrastructure challenges at some schools made it difficult to have full attendance of learners, however, the Department is attempting to intervene where it can, to ensure that learning and teaching take place. 35 Therapists have been appointed to offer learners therapeutic services. Such services can even be offered at their homes where necessary. Assistive devices have been procured for visually impaired learners at six special schools and nine additional schools will receive assistive devices by the end of July.

Learner transport

Learner transport operators have been workshopped on health protocols and must ensure that their vehicles are cleaned, learners wear masks and are sanitised before boarding. The health and safety reps are also checking cars for compliance over and above the Department of Transport's continuous inspection on the road.

Human resources

The Department currently has 10 701 screeners to ensure screening of educators and learners at school, thus the return of all learners will present a challenge. Unfortunately, the Department is not able to appoint more screeners owing to budgetary constraints. CoGHSTA promised to provide 34 000 additional screeners although the number must be shared by all provinces. Budgetary problems have also caused the discontinuation of General Assistants' and School Assistants' contracts. The DBE is still in engagement with Treasury to source funding to address these issues.

GENERAL MANAGER