

Most schools ready to reopen

Minister of Basic Education, Angie Motshekga, says most of the country's schools are ready to receive learners from Monday morning.



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The Minister briefed media in Pretoria on Sunday on the readiness for schools to reopen for matrics and Grade 7s.

“We can now say with confidence that about 95% of our schools have been ably provided with the Covid-19 related imperatives. The sector, with the assistance of our partners, will strive to deal with the remaining 5% to ensure that the unfettered rights to health, safety and basic education for all South African children are protected,” said the Minister.

She said the golden rule is that there will be no school that will resume if not ready to do so.

For the remaining 5% of learners, alternative measures have been developed by different districts such as temporarily using neighbouring schools, using underutilised spaces in boarding schools and putting other learners in camps.

“Because some of the alternatives need consultations with parents, provinces will be engaging parents and following the appropriate protocols to get parental concessions. All of this, we agreed, should be finalised during the course of the week

and recovery programs be implemented,” said the Minister.

The department had earlier planned for schools to reopen on 1 June 2020.

However, the Minister announced that more time was required to mop up the state of readiness for the resumption of schooling, in order to comply with the health, safety and social distancing requirements.

Issues that needed to be ironed out included the outstanding deliveries of Personal Protective Equipment (PPEs) as well as the outstanding provision of water and sanitation to the schools; the cleaning of schools needed to be finalised; provinces needed to finalise the training of screeners, cleaners and volunteers for the national school nutrition programme (NSNP) and teachers and support staff had to be orientated on the new school environment brought about by the Covid-19, among others.

Motshekga said the provinces expended their energies to ensure that all prerequisites were attended to during the mop-up week from 1 June 2020.



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The department has solicited the support of the South African National Defence, the Development Bank of Southern Africa (DBSA), and Mvula Trust to accelerate the provision of water and sanitation in outstanding schools.

“We are cooperating with the Department of Transport to ensure that learner transport provided does meet the health, safety and social distancing measures and requirements on Covid-19. This will include scholar transport for learners with special education needs.

“We are continuing to work with the Departments of Health and Social Development to ensure that health and psychosocial needs of the school communities are met,” she said.

Where practicably possible, learners from the “not-so-ready schools” will be moved to neighbouring schools that meet the health, safety and social distancing set measures and requirements.

The teaching and learning programmes provided online will continue and parents who are uneasy about sending their children back to school must follow the law to ensure that their children’s right to basic education is unhindered.

A meeting of the Council of Education Ministers (CEM) on Thursday and a meeting with sector partners on Saturday both agreed that the mop up week has drastically improved the national picture, said Motshekga.

The number of provinces which were classified as low risk levels improved from two to six provinces.

The number of provinces classified as showing medium risk levels, has improved from the seven which were classified as medium risk (4) and high risk (3) on 30 May, to three provinces as on 3 June 2020.



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“Of course there are varieties among provinces, which can be attributed to a variety of factors, including but not limited to

vandalism in 1 672 schools; interfering with the deliveries of essentials to schools; induction and orientation of educators and support staff, water and sanitation not yet provided to some schools, faulty thermometers, amongst others,” said the Minister.

Standard Operating Procedures will be circulated among schools to ensure that schools are able to manage identified infections among educators, learners, educators and support staff.

Directions published

The department has published the directions in terms of the Regulations under the Disaster Management Act, 2002 regarding the reopening of schools, and measures to address, prevent and combat the spread of the Coronavirus in the basic education sector.

The directions, as amended on 1 June 2020, do cater for deviations to the extent necessary to be applicable to small schools, special schools, as well as independent and private schools.

They also cater for instances where parents may choose to keep their children at home fearing that their children could be infected by the Covid-19 or schools may not be ready to resume schooling.

Motshekga said the department is in the process of revising the 2020 school calendar year.

The challenges related to comorbidities among educators is also being attended to and an agreement with organised labour is about to be completed.

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