

South Africa

Disaster Management Act, 2002

Directions regarding the full time return of learners to schools and measures to address, prevent and combat the spread of COVID-19 in the National Department of Basic Education, and Provincial Departments of Education, and all schools in the Republic of South Africa

General Notice 806 of 2022

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General Notice 806 of 2022

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I, Angelina Matsie Motshekga, Minister of Basic Education, in terms of regulation 4(3)(a), read with regulation 66A(1) and 66A(4), read with regulation 69 and 7, of the Regulations made under section 27(2) of the Disaster Management Act, 2002 ([Act No. 57 of 2002](#)), as published under Government Notice No. R.480, in *Government Gazette* No. 43258 of 29 April 2020, as amended, hereby issue the Directions in the Schedule regarding the full time return of learners to schools and measures to address, prevent and combat the spread of COVID-19 in the National Department of Basic Education, and all Provincial Departments of Education, all education district offices and public and independent schools in the Republic of South Africa.

Mrs AM Motshekga, MP

Minister of Basic Education

1. Definitions

In these directions, a word or expression bears the meaning assigned to it in the South African Schools Act, the Disaster Management Act or in the Regulations, and, unless the context indicates otherwise—

"**COVID-19 essentials**" means the Basic Hygiene and Sanitation Package for each school, as contained in Appendix 1 to the DBE Guidelines;

"**DBE Guidelines**" means the Department of Basic Education Guidelines on Maintaining Hygiene during COVID-19 Pandemic, available on the Department of Basic Education website, accessible through the following link:

<https://www.education.gov.za/Portals/0/Documents/Recovery%20plan%20page/DBE%20Guidelines%20for%20schools%20on%20maintaining%20hygiene.pdf>

"**DBE Standard Operating Procedures**" means the Department of Basic Education Standard Operating Procedures for the Prevention, Containment and Management of COVID-19 in Schools and School Communities, available on the Department of Basic Education website, accessible through the following link:

<https://www.education.gov.za/Portals/0/Documents/Recovery%20plan%20page/Links%20for%20schools/dbe-standard-operating-procedure-for-covid-19.pdf>;

"**Department of Basic Education**" means the National Department of Basic Education;

"Department of Health Guidelines" means the Guidelines for symptom monitoring and management of essential workers for COVID-19 related infection, issued by the Department of Health in April 2020, accessible through the following link:

<https://www.saiosh.co.za/news/502409/Guidelines-for-symptom-monitoring-andmanagement-of-essential-workers-for-COVID-19-related-infection.htm>;

"education support centres" means a centre that offers curricular support or extra tuition to learners;

"hostels" means boarding houses run by a school, whether on school property or not, for the purpose of providing accommodation to learners registered at the school;

"offices" includes the Provincial Departments of Education, and the Department of Basic Education;

"official" means—

- (a) an employee appointed by the school governing body, in terms of section 20(4) and (5) of the South African Schools Act;
- (b) a person defined as an officer in terms of section 1 of the South African Schools Act;
- (c) an educator as defined under the Employment of Educators Act, 1998 ([Act No. 76 of 1998](#));
- (d) a person employed in terms of the Public Service Act, 1994 ([Proclamation No.103 of 1994](#)); or
- (e) a person employed by a school board;

"Provincial Department of Education" means the department responsible for education in a province and includes all public schools, further education and training institutions and departmental offices in such provinces;

"Regulations" means the Regulations made under section 3 of the Disaster Management Act, 2002, published under Government Notice No.R.480, in *Government Gazette* No. 43258 of 29 April 2020, as amended;

"South African Schools Act" means the South African Schools Act, 1996 ([Act No. 84 of 1996](#)); and

"third parties" means persons who do not fall under the definition of an "official", but may access a school or offices, including, but not limited to—

- (a) volunteer workers;
- (b) persons appointed in terms of the Expanded Public Works Programme and as community development workers;
- (c) food handlers;
- (d) chief food handlers;
- (e) parents of learners attending the school; and
- (f) persons delivering goods or providing services to the school.

2. Objectives

The objectives of these directions are—

- (a) to provide for arrangements for the return of educators, officials and learners to schools, hostels and offices;
- (b) to provide for the schools, hostels and offices to comply with their obligations in accordance with—
 - (i) the Regulations;

- (ii) all directions and circulars issued by the Minister of Employment and Labour and the Department of Public Service and Administration, in relation to COVID-19 and the national state of disaster; and
 - (iii) Chapter H of the Personnel Administrative Measures, dealing with leave measures applicable to educators; and
- (c) to ensure a uniform approach, as far as possible, in respect of arrangements by the Department of Basic Education, Provincial Departments of Education, for the return of learners and officials to schools, hostels and offices.

3. Scope and application

- (1) These directions apply to—
- (a) all schools, hostels and offices;
 - (b) learners;
 - (c) officials;
 - (d) third parties; and
 - (e) governing bodies and school boards.
- (2) The provisions contained in these directions apply for the duration of the national state of disaster, unless otherwise indicated.

4. Entry to school premises

- (1) No person, other than a learner or official, may enter a school premises or hostel, unless such person obtains the permission of, and makes arrangements with, the principal or Head of Department in advance before entering the school premises or hostel.
- (2) Sub-direction (1) does not preclude any state institution supporting constitutional democracy from executing their mandate.
- (3) Despite sub-direction (1), the principal of a school who convenes or hosts an event or activity, as contemplated in direction 8, may allow entry of permitted persons for that event or activity at the school: Provided that compliance with hygiene and safety measures on COVID-19, as contemplated in direction 9; 10 and 11 are complied with.

5. Return of all learners to daily attendance and traditional time tabling model

- (1) A risk adjusted differentiated strategy means an approach to school attendance that is determined by the level of reported COVID-19 infections in the school, and COVID-19 infections in the district, municipality, province and country.
- (2) Primary, secondary and schools for learners with special education needs including hostels must return to the traditional and daily attendance timetabling model with no social distancing from 7 February 2022: Provided that the risk adjusted differentiated strategy, as contemplated in sub-direction (1), is implemented, and the health and safety measures on COVID-19, as contemplated in these directions, the DBE Standard Operating Procedures and the Regulations, are adhered to.
- (3) Primary, secondary and schools for learners with special education needs including hostels must ensure strict compliance with health protocols, which include, but not limited to, the wearing of face masks or face shield for learners with special education needs for ensuring maximum

ventilation, the washing of hands and the use of hand sanitizers, and must comply with safety measures on COVID-19, as contemplated in these directions, and the Regulations.

- (4) Aftercare facilities that are managed by or operating at a school, and in education support centres, may reopen: Provided that they comply with the health, and safety measures and requirements on COVID-19, referred to in the DBE Standard Operating Procedures and the DBE Guidelines.
- (5) Where a person is a confirmed laboratory positive COVID-19 case and has no symptoms, he or she is not required to isolate.
- (6) Where a person is a confirmed laboratory positive COVID-19 case and has symptoms, he or she must isolate for 7 days unless a longer period has been recommended by a medical practitioner.
- (7) Where a learner tests positive and displays symptoms of COVID-19—
 - (a) the parent, caregiver or a designated family member must inform the school as soon as possible of the learner's condition; and
 - (b) the school must inform the Head of Department of the incident through the district office.
- (8) Where a learner displays symptoms of COVID-19 at school, the school must as soon as possible—
 - (a) inform the parent, caregiver or a designated family member of the learner's condition and—
 - (i) request them to fetch the learner from school;
 - (ii) advise them to refer the learner to a medical practitioner; and
 - (iii) advise them that if the learner tests positive with symptoms to keep the learner isolated at home.
- (9) The Head of Department, or a person duly authorised by him or her, must continuously monitor and evaluate the maintenance of hygiene and safety standards for the duration of the national state of disaster and must report, in writing, every quarter, to the Department of Basic Education on any failure to meet the required health, and safety measures as well as compliance with COVID-19 essentials in the case of a public school.
- (10) All windows and doors must remain open to ensure adequate ventilation.
- (11) Overcrowding must be avoided by putting measures in place to provide adequate spaces for teaching and learning.
- (12) The Head of Department must provide all reasonable support to enable schools to safely return to a daily attendance and the traditional timetabling model.
- (13) Scholar transport must comply with the directions issued by the Department of Transport.

6. Learners with special educational needs

- (1) Officials must be provided by the Provincial Department of Education with appropriate personal protective equipment, including protective clothing, where such provision is necessary.
- (2) Officials appointed to carry out symptom screening, in schools for deaf learners, must be able to communicate using South African Sign Language. Where this is not possible, a sign language interpreter must be available to ensure proper communication with the learners.
- (3) Written communication for blind learners, as well as those who are Deaf-blind, must be through Braille.
- (4) The Provincial Department of Education must, at a minimum, provide the following personal protective equipment to learners with visual and hearing impairments:

- (a) Face shields, in the case of blind learners;
- (b) cloth face masks, in the case of low vision learners, teachers and support staff; and
- (c) face shields, in the case of teachers, support staff and learners in schools for the deaf.

7. School hostels

- (1) A school hostel must comply with the—
 - (a) health, and safety measures and requirements on COVID-19, referred to in DBE Standard Operating Procedures and the DBE Guidelines and, in the case of a public school also has all the COVID-19 essentials in place; and
 - (b) ensuring that there is adequate ventilation. proper use of masks, good health and hygiene practices including the availability of adequate and safe soap and water resources or sanitisers.

8. Sport and extracurricular activities

- (1) Subject to sub-directions (2), (4) and (5), and in compliance with hygiene and safety measures on COVID-19, as contemplated in these directions, the DBE Standard Operating Procedures and the Regulations, the following activities may resume with spectators:
 - (a) Contact sport, non-contact sport, including training, intra-school and inter-school matches, and all arts and culture intra-school and inter-school activities;
 - (b) co-curricular and enrichment programmes, such as oral history, spelling bee, moot court, speech contests, debates and school clubs, may resume activities including competitive inter-school events and engagements; and
 - (c) choir practice or rehearsals and choir competitions.
- (2) The following health and safety measures must be adhered to when resuming events or activities contemplated in this direction:
 - (a) Face masks must be worn by all persons entering the venues where the activities take place, change rooms or training areas, except when participating in training or matches accompanied by vigorous exercise;
 - (b) there must be sufficient quantities of hand sanitizers, with at least 70% alcohol content, available for use by all officials, coaches, assistants, learners and participants;
 - (c) there must be facilities for washing of hands with soap and water;
 - (d) all windows and doors must remain open to ensure adequate ventilation;
 - (e) the sharing of drinks and drink containers is not allowed;
 - (f) a COVID-19 compliance officer must be appointed for each venue;
 - (g) each of the entry points at the venue must be controlled to ensure that the stipulations with regards to gatherings, as contemplated 2 (p), are complied with;
 - (h) all participants must undergo health and temperature screening before warm-up or an event;
 - (i) any person who enters the venue must undergo health and temperature screening;

- (j) hand sanitisers must be available at the entrance gate and every person who enters the venue must sanitise their hands;
 - (k) participants and officials must sanitise their hands before and after a match or event;
 - (l) a person who leaves the venue temporarily and returns, must undergo the process of health and temperature screening, and hand sanitising;
 - (m) if a person has COVID-19 symptoms or presents with a temperature above 38 degrees Celsius, that person must be refused access into the venue;
 - (n) spectators at the venue of a sport event are permitted and the number of persons permitted at a venue at any one time is limited to the number as prescribed under the Regulations in respect of gatherings for the particular adjusted Alert Level at the time, and if the venue is too small to hold the prescribed number of persons, observing a distance of at least one and a half meters from each other, then not more than 50 percent of the capacity of the venue may be used, subject to strict adherence to all health protocols;
 - (o) teams, technical officials, volunteers, relevant stadium staff, medical staff and registered members of the media or broadcaster team must leave the venue as soon as their responsibilities are completed;
 - (p) the wearing of face masks must always be maintained by persons who are not participating in matches or events;
 - (q) participants must always wear face masks, except when participating in an event that involves vigorous exercise and singing;
 - (r) technical officials must report before the start of any event or competition for a COVID-19 regulations and protocol briefing session and screening;
 - (s) all ablution facilities must be sanitised regularly and kept clean as per COVID-19 protocols; and
 - (t) all sport equipment must be sanitised before and after use.
- (3) The principal of a school, or an organiser of a venue, hosting an event or activity contemplated in this direction, who fails to comply with sub-direction (2)(q) and the Regulations, commits an offence and is, on conviction, liable to a fine or imprisonment as contemplated in regulation 69(12) of the Regulations.
- (4) Subject to compliance with the Regulations for Safety Measures in Public Schools, as published under Government Notice No. 1040 in *Government Gazette* No. 22754 of 12 October 2001, any travelling required for participation in any of the events or activities contemplated in this direction may resume and must comply with prescribed transport regulations and directions.
- (5) The school or venue hosting the events or activities contemplated in this direction must ensure that venues, tools and equipment are cleaned and sanitized before and after any activities.
- (6) In order to ensure compliance with sub-direction (2)(q), schools may prioritise parents, caregivers or designated family members of participating learners to attend an event.

9. General safety measures at schools, school hostels and offices for duration of the national state of disaster

- (1) The Provincial Department of Education is responsible for the provisioning of personal protective equipment and other COVID-19 essentials for officials and learners in public schools and school hostels.

- (2) To ensure the sufficient supply of cloth face masks, in compliance with regulation 34(3)(c) of the Regulations and face shields for learners with special educational needs, the principal of a public school, must request the Provincial Department of Education, in writing, through the district office, to procure cloth face masks and face shields as required by a public school.
- (3) All schools and offices must develop a workplace plan containing the following information:
 - (a) What plans are in place for the employees at the workplace;
 - (b) what health protocols are in place to protect employees from COVID-19; and
 - (c) the details of the COVID-19 compliance officer.
- (4) A school must send out a notice to all parents informing them that they must not send learners to school if the learners have any of the observable symptoms associated with COVID-19, including fever, cough, sore throat, redness of eyes and shortness of breath or difficulty in breathing, body aches, loss of smell or loss of taste, nausea, vomiting, diarrhoea, fatigue or weakness.
- (5) Every school, school hostel and office must implement the health and safety measures as contained in these directions, the DBE Standard Operating Procedures and the DBE Guidelines.

10. Symptom screening

- (1) All persons entering any school premises, hostel or office must be screened at the entrance.
- (2) Screening must be conducted—
 - (a) by the persons who have either been identified by the school or by the Head of Department; and
 - (b) in accordance with the Department of Health Protocols and the DBE Standard Operating Procedures and the DBE Guidelines.
- (3) All persons who conduct screening must receive the relevant training.
- (4) Any person who has any COVID-19 symptoms must immediately report such symptoms to the COVID-19 compliance officer of the school, school hostel or office or any person designated by him or her.
- (5) If a person presents with the symptoms referred to in direction 13(6), or informs the COVID-19 compliance officer or designated official of these symptoms, the school, school hostel or office must—
 - (a) not permit the person to enter the premises; or
 - (b) if the person is already on the premises of a school, school hostel or office—
 - (i) immediately isolate the person, and require that person or, in the case of a learner, advise the parent or guardian, to make arrangements to be transported in a manner that does not place any other person or members of the public at risk, either to be self-isolated or to go for a medical examination or testing;
 - (ii) assess the risk of transmission, disinfect the area and any official's or learner's workstation or sleeping quarters, in the case of a school hostel;
 - (iii) refer those persons who may be at risk for screening; and
 - (iv) take any other appropriate measure to prevent possible transmission.

- (6) If there is evidence that any official contracted COVID-19 as a result of occupational exposure, the school must lodge a claim for compensation in terms of the Compensation for Occupational Injuries and Diseases Act, 1993 ([Act No. 130 of 1993](#)) in accordance with the Notice on Compensation for Occupationally-acquired Novel Corona Virus Disease (COVID-19), published under Government Notice No. 193, in *Government Gazette* No. 43126 of 23 March 2020, if applicable.
- (7) If any person has been diagnosed with COVID-19 and are symptomatic and has completed the period of isolation, that person may return to school, a school hostel or office as contemplated in the Department of Health Guidelines.
- (8) The Minister, in consultation with the Minister of Health, will regularly review the DBE Standard Operating Procedures and DBE Guidelines to ensure that health and safety measures are consistent with the current and best practices.

11. Sanitizers, disinfectants and masks

- (1) For the purposes of these directions, a hand sanitizer as a COVID-19 essential must be one that contains at least 70% alcohol and complies with the recommendations of the Department of Health.
- (2) Every school, hostel and office must ensure that there are—
 - (a) easily accessible, sufficient quantities of hand sanitizers, based on the number of learners, educators or officials or other persons who access the school, school hostel or office, at the entrance of, and in, the workplace or sleeping quarters, which the persons are required to use; and
 - (b) facilities for washing of hands with soap and clean water.
- (3) Every school, school hostel and office must take proper measures to ensure that—
 - (a) all work surfaces and equipment are cleaned before school or work begins, or after school or work ends;
 - (b) classrooms, sleeping quarters and water and sanitation facilities are cleaned at least once a day by appointed cleaners; and
 - (c) surfaces that are touched frequently by many people (railings, light switches, communal taps, braille signage, lunch tables, sports equipment, door and window handles, toys, teaching and learning aids, etc.) are cleaned more frequently.
- (4) Every Provincial Department of Education must—
 - (a) provide each official and learner at public schools, with two cloth face masks or face shields; and
 - (b) require learners and any other person entering the school premises, hostel or office to wear a cloth face mask, a homemade item that covers the nose and mouth or another appropriate item to cover the nose and mouth.

12. Learning recovery

- (1) In order to accommodate the teaching time lost as a result of the national state of disaster and the adjustment of timetables, the curriculum, as articulated in the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement, has been reviewed by the Minister in accordance with section 3(4)(l) of the National Education Policy Act, 1996 ([Act No. 27 of 1996](#)), which empowers the Minister to determine national policy for curriculum frameworks, core syllabuses and education programmes.

- (2) The recovery of Annual Teaching Plans (ATPs) released through Circular S13 of 2021, aimed at supporting the recovery of learning and ensuring authentic deep learning, remain the official teaching plans for all grades (R-12). These are accessible on the website of the Department of Basic Education, through the following link:

<https://www.education.gov.za/2021ATPs.aspx>.

13. Withdrawal of directions

The Directions regarding the reopening of schools and measures to address, prevent and combat the spread of COVID-19 in the Department of Basic Education, all Provincial Education Departments, all education district offices and all schools in the Republic of South Africa, issued under Government Notice No. 42, in *Government Gazette* No. 44154 of 12 February 2021, including Directions amended under—

- (a) Government Notice No. 145, published in *Government Gazette* No. 44339 of 27 March 2021,
 - (b) Government Notice No. 224, published in *Government Gazette* No. 44486 of 23 April 2021,
 - (c) Government Notice No. 451, published in *Government Gazette* No. 44633 of 28 May 2021,
 - (d) Government Notice No. 393, published in *Government Gazette* No. 44779 of 29 June 2021,
 - (e) Government Notice No. 422, published in *Government Gazette* No. 44858 of 15 July 2021,
 - (f) Government Notice No. 442, published in *Government Gazette* No. 44922 of 1 August 2021,
 - (g) Government Notice No. 633, published in *Government Gazette* No. 45380 of 22 October 2021;
 - (h) Government Notice No. 707, published in *Government Gazette* No. 45611 of 9 December 2021; and
 - (i) Government Notice No. 758, published in *Government Gazette* No. 45753 of 14 January 2022.
- are hereby withdrawn

14. Short title and commencement

These directions are called the Directions regarding the full time return of learners to schools and measures to address, prevent and combat the spread of COVID-19 in the National Department of Basic Education, and Provincial Departments of Education, and all schools in the Republic of South Africa, and come into operation on the date of publication thereof in the *Government Gazette*.