

2 MAY 2021

THE DEPARTMENT OF BASIC EDUCATION IS READY TO WELCOME TEACHERS AND LEARNERS BACK TO SCHOOL FOR THE SECOND TERM IN 2021

The Department of Basic Education is ready to welcome teachers, staff and learners back to school for the second term in 2021.

The resumption of schooling happens in the same week when the Council of Education Ministers (Minister, Deputy Minister and all MECs of education) will hold a two-day meeting on Thursday and Friday to deliberate on key issues affecting the basic education sector. The impact of COVID-19 on the sector will form part of the discussions.

In the meantime schools will continue to apply the rotational approaches as the Department intensifies its implementation of the safety campaign aimed at saving lives and livelihoods. Health and safety protocols remain in place with social distancing, washing of hands and sanitising being the basic hygiene practices that must still be adhered to at all times.

The Department is currently investigating the possibility of returning all learners at primary school level due to the learning losses suffered as a direct result of the coronavirus pandemic. The proposal is now being considered at the National Joint Operational and Intelligence Structure (NATJOINTS) where the Department has since delivered a presentation at the relevant work streams.

The Council of Education Ministers will also consider the matter this week. An announcement on the outcome of the discussions will be made in due course.

In the first term the sector experienced several tragedies that resulted in loss of lives. Bullying and violence in schools became an issue that had to be addressed.

As the second term begins learners are reminded to conduct themselves in a manner consistent with the statement of commitment that says as a learner you are expected to:

- a) accept that the main reason for being in school is to learn and develop academically, socially and culturally;
- b) adhere to school rules;
- c) respect the legitimacy and authority of teachers;
- d) participate in Learner Representative Councils (LRCs) to safeguard your interests;
- e) show respect to other learners and not to discriminate; and
- f) avoid anti-social behaviour like theft, vandalism, assault, sexual harassment, alcohol and drug abuse, as well as other activities that disrupt the learning process.

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The Department is also preparing for a vaccination programme that will target citizens that are over the age of 60 years and employees at risk (40 years and above starting with those that are 60 years and above including teachers) who have been identified as essential workers.

Parents and guardians of learners will be required to register as part of the preparation for the vaccine programme to be rolled out in a date to be announced by the Department of Health.

The Department also welcomes all the newly elected members of school governing bodies around the country. SGB elections concluded on 23 April after the process began in March. Due to COVID-19 the period for the elections had to be extended to allow for safety measures to be observed by everybody participating. The Department is satisfied with the SGB elections and that there were no major incidents.

ISSUED BY THE DEPARTMENT OF BASIC EDUCATION

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