



Admissions

Every child has the right to be admitted to any public school, and to participate in all school activities. The admission age of a learner to a public school is:

- 4 years turning 5 by 30 June in the year of admission, for grade R;
- 5 years turning 6 by 30 June in the year of admission, for grade 1.

Parents may however choose to send their children to grade R and grade 1 at a slightly older age, namely 5 turning 6 in year of admission to grade R or 6 turning 7 in year of admission to grade 1.

It is the responsibility of every parent to ensure that:

- Their children are registered for the following year, well before the end of the current school year;
- All children between the ages of 6 and 15 years attend school;
- Their children attend school regularly.

The governing body of a public school may determine an admission policy for the school. However the school's admission policy must be based on the guidelines determined by the Head of the Provincial Education Department (HOD). If the applicant is refused the HOD must, through the principal of the school, inform the parent of the refusal and the reasons thereof.

The following documents are needed to register a child at a public school:

- Birth certificate
- Immunisation card
- Transfer card or last school report card for learners who have been to school

A child may be registered provisionally if these documents are not available; and the parent must be given reasonable time to submit them.

A parent may register his or her child at any public school if vacant places exist at the school. However, if a feeder zone has been created by the HOD in consultation with SGBs-

- preference must be given to learners living in the feeder zone of the school or whose parent's work address is in the feeder zone;
- other learners will be admitted on a first come first served basis.

Once the school has reached capacity it may not be able to register a child, but must advise the parent to find an alternative school through the district office. The capacity of the school will be determined by the number of classrooms and the educators available at a school. The recommended number of learners per classroom is 40 in grades 1 to 6, and 35 in grades 7 to 12.

All schools must admit learners without discriminating against anyone in any way. Schools may not administer any tests, use pre-school experience or language as reasons not to enroll a learner. No learner may be refused admission to a public school because his or her parents/guardians:

- Are unable to pay school fees;
- Do not subscribe to the mission statement of the school;
- Have refused to sign an indemnity contract;
- Are unable to afford all or part of the school uniform.

The following should be considered when decisions on school uniforms are made:

- Parents must be consulted;
- Choose the type of uniform easily obtainable at many suppliers;
- Parents must not be forced to buy different summer and winter uniforms.

A female learner cannot be refused admission, suspended or forced to leave the school because she is pregnant.

The South African Schools Act (SASA) requires ordinary public schools to admit learners with special education needs, where it is reasonably practical. Schools are encouraged to make the necessary arrangements to make their facilities accessible to all learners.

If a child has been refused admission to a public school, the school principal must give a written explanation of why the learner was not admitted. If the parent is not satisfied with the explanation he/she may lodge a written appeal with the provincial MEC for Education. Contact numbers are provided at the end of the pamphlet.

School Allocation

School allocation is the amount of money that government gives to each public school every year. The aim of school allocation is to ensure that all learners regardless of economic status and geographical area are able to access quality education.

The amount of money the school receives from government is worked out on the basis of how many learners the school has and how poor the school community around the school is.

The school allocation should be used to improve the quality of education. School allocation should not be used to pay for personnel costs or to build classrooms. This money may for example be used for: Learner Support Materials, computers, learner furniture, laboratory equipment, fax machines, intercom systems, cleaning equipment, stationary for learners and office, small repairs and maintenance of the buildings, water and lights.

Quintile

Every year the Minister determines the national quintiles for public schools which must be used by the MECs to identify schools that may not charge school fees. MECs must subsequently identify and publish a list of these schools in their provinces.

Schools in each province are therefore classified into five groups from the most poor to the least poor. For example Quintile 1 is a group of schools in each province catering for the poorest 20% of schools. Quintile 2 caters for the next poorest 20% of schools while Quintile 5 schools represent the least poor. Schools receive money from government according to their quintiles. Quintile 1 schools receive the highest allocation per learner, while Quintile 5 receive the lowest.

The parents and the entire school community must know in which quintile their school is, and the amount of money the school will receive. Provincial offices should communicate this information through their District Offices to schools in writing.

Should parents and the SGB think that they were not classified under the right quintile they have the right to lodge a dispute. The Provincial and District offices must inform parents and schools of the dispute procedures to be followed.

School Fees & School Funds

A school fee is an agreed amount of money that parents pay to schools, aimed at improving the quality of education of learners. School fees may not include registration fees, administration or other fees. The school may not charge further fees for additional subjects chosen by learners from the school programme.

According to SASA all public schools must supplement government funding, by charging school fees and doing other forms of fund-raising. The right not to charge school fees will be limited to the schools that have been declared 'no fee schools'. The names of the 'no fee schools' will be published in a Provincial Gazette and the criteria to determine the 'no fee schools' will be based on the economic level of the community around the school.

The school fund is a combination of school fees, the fundraising money and donations. It is the responsibility of the SGBs to ensure that all these funds are kept and managed in one bank account. No public school should have more than one account.

A public school has the right to take legal action against a parent who does not pay school fees, but only after the exemption criteria have been applied and the parent is still liable to pay such fees. The learner must remain in school while the case is on.

A learner cannot be excluded from participation in the school programmes, matric farewells or sporting events due to non-payment of school fees by the parent. A school may not retain a learner's report because the parent cannot afford to pay school fees.

For more information you may contact the following provincial offices:

Province	Telephone	Fax
Eastern Cape	(040) 608 4732 (040) 608 4261	(040) 608 4288 (040) 608 4726
Free State	(051) 405 4046 (051) 404 8425	(051) 404 8310
Gauteng	(011) 355 0812	(011) 355 0640
KwaZulu-Natal	(033) 341 8534	(033) 341 8646
Limpopo	(015) 290 7128	(015) 297 2507
Mpumalanga	(013) 766 5310	(013) 766 5580
Northern Cape	(053) 839 6767	(053) 839 6580
North West	(018) 387 3411 (018) 387 3433	(018) 387 4093
Western Cape	(021) 467 2578 (021) 467 2513	(021) 467 2268

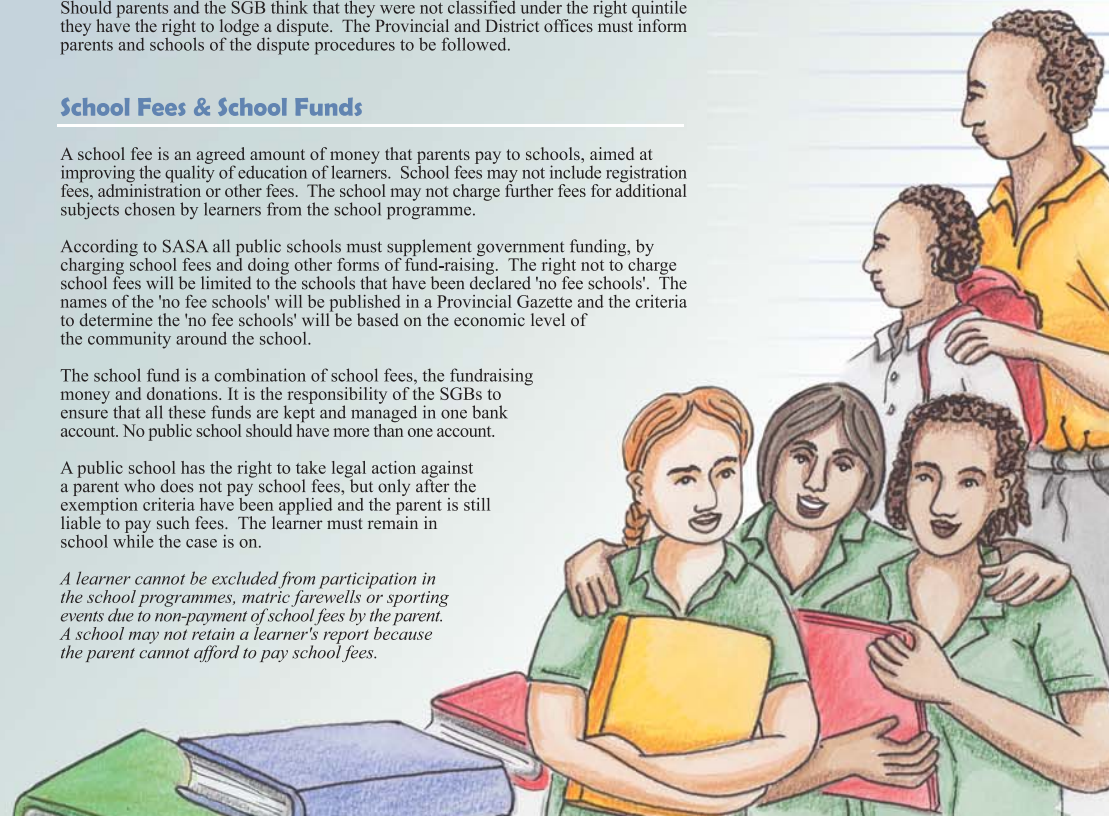
The National Hotline number is:
0800 202 933

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A PUBLIC SCHOOL POLICY GUIDE



Exemptions from Payment of School Fees

The exemption from payment of school fees is a mechanism government has put in place to assist parents to access quality education for their children, irrespective of their background or financial constraints. Exemptions must be calculated retrospectively from the beginning of the year, if the parent qualifies.

Parents who cannot afford to pay school fees must apply to the SGB for conditional, partial or full exemption from paying school fees. Application forms can be obtained from the SGB through the principal of a school. Public schools must inform parents of the criteria and procedures and assist them in applying for exemption from paying school fees. The SGB must inform the applicant in writing within 7 days after assessing the application for exemption. Schools must not charge school fees for orphans. Schools cannot refuse access to orphans.

If a parent is not satisfied with the SGB decision related to full or partial exemption, he/she may appeal to the Head of Department against the decision of the school within 30 days after receiving the school's decision. It is the responsibility of every public school to assist the parents in lodging appeals.

Voluntary Contributions

Any parent, including those granted any type of exemption, can make voluntary contribution to the school fund. Contributions can be in the form of money, in kind or in the form of any service a parent may render to a school.

Assistance to Parents Applying for Exemptions

Each public school is encouraged to establish a School Fees Committee. The chairperson of this committee must be a member of the SGB. The function of the committee is to administer all issues pertaining to school fees such as collection of school fees, reporting to the SGB on income from school fees and to assist parents apply for school fee exemptions. This committee adjudicates the applications for exemptions and provides the SGB with recommendations.

A parent who, for whatever reason, needs assistance to apply for exemption or lodge an appeal, may request the school fees committee chairperson or any members of the School Fees Committee to assist him or her in making the application.

If no assistance is given to the parent after he or she has requested it, the principal of the school concerned must assist the parent in such an application or appeal if requested to do so by the parent.

No applicant may be disqualified on the ground that his or her application form is either incomplete or incorrectly completed. The School Fees Committee must respond in writing to the parents on the outcome of their application within 14 days of applying.

Appeals for Declined Exemptions

A parent whose application has been declined by the SGB has the right to lodge an appeal with the HOD of that province within 30 days after notification of that decision. The principal or School Fees Committee must offer a parent this opportunity and assistance by providing and explaining the appeal form to the parent.

The parent appealing must provide the HOD with:

- Reasons for appeal
- All relevant information pertaining to the appeal

The HOD must:

- Within 14 days after receipt of the documentation from the parent notify the SGB chairperson of the appeal that has been lodged;
- Inform the SGB that it cannot take any action against the parent until the appeal is heard;
- Within 7 days of deciding on the appeal, inform the SGB and the appellant in writing of his/her decision and the reasons thereof.

The HOD shall request the SGB chairperson to forward to him within 14 days:

- A copy of the minutes of the meeting of the SGB at which the application was discussed and a decision taken;
- Any comments the SGB wishes to make with regard to the application; and
- Any other information relevant to the appeal.

The Annual General Meeting (AGM)

Each year, the SGB of a public school must prepare a budget with estimated income and expenditure of the school for the next financial year and present it at the AGM of parents for consideration and approval by a majority of parents present and voting. The SGB must inform the parents of the AGM at least 30 days before the meeting. The budget must be distributed to parents at least 14 days before the meeting.

It is important for all parents to attend the AGM, since the decisions taken at this meeting are legally binding. The meeting is intended to discuss important issues such as finances, school fees and school uniform. Proceedings of this meeting must be written down and be available to anyone.

Corporal Punishment

The SASA banned the use of corporal punishment in schools. Any person administering corporal punishment at a public school can be found guilty of assault or even murder, if the child dies.

Every public school must have a code of conduct for learners providing for alternative ways of maintaining discipline in schools such as positive reinforcement, withdrawal of privileges and daily reports. Provincial Departments should train educators in cooperative discipline methods.

Language in Education

The language of learning and teaching must be agreed at the AGM. If parents are not happy with the decision the MEC must be contacted within 60 days by the unhappy parents.

The language(s) of learning and teaching in a public school must be an official language(s) determined by the governing body.


Each learner must, upon admission at a school, indicate the preferred language of learning and teaching. If the school cannot afford the required language, the principal/SGB must direct the parent to the district office or another school where the preferred language is offered.

The school may provide education in a language not already offered, if at least 40 learners in grades 1 to 6 or 35 in grades 7 to 12 in a particular grade request it, and if educators can be accessed.

If you want a new language introduced to your preferred school, get at least 35 parents together who want this option and see the principal and SGB as a delegation.

Participation in SGB Elections

It is the right of every parent of a child at school, educators, non-teaching staff and learners in Grade 8 and above to participate in SGB elections. SGB elections are held every three years and the next elections will be in May/June 2006. Provincial Education Departments will communicate details on these elections to all eligible voters.

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