



LIMPOPO
PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

DEPARTMENT OF
EDUCATION

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Circular No 104 of 2026

TO: Deputy Director Generals (DDGs)

Chief Directors
Directors (Head Office)
District Directors
Circuit Managers
Principals of Schools
School Governing Bodies
Parents

**SUBJECT: LIMPOPO DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION PROVINCIAL
GUIDELINES ON LEARNER ADMISSIONS FOR 2027 IN PUBLIC
SCHOOLS**

1. Introduction

- 1.1. The above matter bears reference.
- 1.2. In accordance with **Section 5(7)** of the South African Schools Act, (Act No 84 of 1996 as amended), the Head of Department is mandated to **determine** the **procedures** for learner admission applications. These Guidelines are issued to provide guidance to **districts, circuits** and **schools** on the **processes** and **procedures** of administering learner admissions in public schools.
- 1.3. The Limpopo Department of Education emphasizes the importance of early learner enrolment (ELE) in public schools for the upcoming academic year, recognizing it as a critical factor in enhancing overall academic performance.
- 1.4. **Early registration** and admission facilitate **effective planning** by public schools, ensuring that learners receive **continuous, equitable, and non-**

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discriminatory access to quality education throughout their **schooling journey**.

- 1.5. This **Circular No 104 of 2026** supersedes all previous learner admission circulars issued by this Department in **prior** years.

2. PURPOSE OF THE CIRCULAR

- 2.1. The **purpose** of this circular is to provide **clear guidance** to District Directors, Circuit Managers, school principals, communities, School Governing Bodies, School Admission Committees, sister departments and all relevant stakeholders on the proper administration of learner admissions in public schools.
- 2.2. These guidelines are designed to assist school governing bodies in the development and implementation of school admission policies that promote equitable access to public schools, in compliance with national legislation (**South African Schools Act No 84 of 1996 as amended**), provincial and other applicable legislations and policies.
- 2.3. The circular aims to ensure that principals and school admission committees (**SAC**) adhere to **lawful** and **fair procedures** in the administration of learner admissions.
- 2.4. Furthermore, the Guidelines seek to facilitate the timely commencement of effective teaching and learning on the first day of the academic year.
- 2.5. The circular also serves to inform communities, stakeholders, and relevant role players that learner admissions for the **2027** academic year in the Limpopo Province will be conducted through double modes (**both online & walk-in modes**). The online system will be implemented for **entrance grades** only to all public ordinary and **public** special schools in the province.

3. LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK

- 3.1. The following legislative and policy frameworks must be considered by School Governing Bodies when developing school admission policies, and by principals and admission committees when administering learner admissions in public schools
- 3.1.1. The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, **(Act No 108 of 1996)**: Section **29(1)(a)** of the Constitution guarantees everyone the right to a basic education. This right is immediately realisable and places a legal obligation on the State to ensure that learners have access to education without discrimination. **Section 9** of the Constitution further promotes equality and prohibits unfair discrimination, which must guide all school admission practices.
- 3.1.2. South African Schools Act (Act No 84 of 1996, as amended) especially Section **5(1)** of the Act provides that a public school must admit learners and serve their educational requirements ***without unfair discrimination*** of any kind. Section **5(5)** empowers the School Governing Body to determine the admission policy of a school, subject to the Constitution, the Act, and applicable provincial legislation. In addition, **Section 5(7)** provides that the Head of Department must ***determine the process and procedures*** for the admission of learners in public schools.
- 3.1.3. National Education Policy Act (Act No 27 of 1996 as Amended): This Act provides the framework for the determination of national education policy by the Minister of Basic Education. It guides the development and implementation of national policies that regulate ***learner admission, governance, and the management*** of public schools.
- 3.1.4. Admission Policy for Ordinary Public Schools (**Government Notice No. 2432 of 1998, issued Gazette No.19377 of 1998**): This policy provides the national ***framework*** for the development of school admission policies. It sets out the

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procedures and principles that schools must follow to ensure **fairness, transparency, and consistency** in learner admissions, while complying with the South African Schools Act and other applicable legislation.

- 3.1.5. Children's Act (**Act No 38 of 2005, as amended**): This Act **promotes** and **protects** the rights and well-being of children. It emphasises that the **best interests** of the child are of paramount importance in every matter concerning the child, including **decisions** relating to education and school placement.
- 3.1.6. Child Justice Act (**Act No 75 of 2008**): This Act establishes **a separate criminal justice system** for children who are in conflict with the law. It promotes **rehabilitation** and **reintegration** into society and emphasises **restorative justice** approaches. Schools must ensure that learners who have had contact with the justice system are **not unfairly excluded** from education.
- 3.1.7. Promotion of Administrative Justice Act (**Act No 3 of 2000**): This Act gives effect to the constitutional right to **lawful, reasonable, and procedurally fair** administrative action. In terms of this Act, any person whose rights have been **adversely affected** by an administrative **decision**, such as refusal of admission, has the right to be provided with **written reasons** for that decision.
- 3.1.8. Promotion of Access to Information Act (**Act No 2 of 2000**): This Act gives effect to the constitutional right of **access to information**. Public schools are required to provide **access** to certain **records** upon request, including admission policies and records relating to admission **decisions**, unless **lawful grounds** exist to **refuse** such access.
- 3.1.9. Promotion of Equality and Prevention of Unfair Discrimination Act (**Act No 4 of 2000**): This Act promotes **equality** and prohibits **unfair discrimination** on various grounds such as **race, gender, disability, religion, and social origin**. Admission policies and practices must comply with this Act and ensure **equitable access** to education for all learners.

- 3.1.10. Protection of Personal Information Act (**Act No 4 of 2013**): This Act establishes minimum standards for the lawful processing and protection of personal information. Schools must ensure that personal information collected during the admission process is processed lawfully, securely stored, and used only for legitimate educational purposes such as learner administration, assessment, examinations, and the provision of support programmes.
- 3.1.11. Refugees Act (**Act No 130 of 1998**): This Act provides for the *reception, protection*, and legal recognition of *asylum seekers* and *refugees* in South Africa. It affirms that refugee and *asylum-seeking* children have the right to access education and should not be denied admission to public schools.
- 3.1.12. Immigration Act (**Act No 13 of 2002**): This Act regulates the admission and residence of *foreign nationals* in the Republic. While schools may request relevant documentation, the absence of such documentation should not automatically result in the denial of access to basic education, particularly where it would *infringe* the constitutional rights of the child.
- 3.1.13. **Court Judgments and Legal Precedents**: Judgments of South African courts provide authoritative interpretation of legislation and policy relating to learner admissions. These decisions guide the implementation of admission policies and ensure that practices remain consistent with constitutional principles, statutory provisions, and established legal precedent.
- 3.2. The legislative and policies outlined above must guide School Governing Bodies in the development of admission policies and assist principals and admission committees in administering learner admissions. **Compliance** with these frameworks ensures that admission *processes* are *lawful, transparent, equitable*, and aligned with the constitutional right to basic education

4. ADMISSION TO PUBLIC ORDINARY SCHOOL

- 4.1. The **right of access** to basic education and the right to **equitable access** to educational institutions are fundamental rights guaranteed by the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, (**Act No 108 of 1996 as Amended**). These rights impose a legal obligation on the State to ensure that all children of **school-going age** are afforded the opportunity to attend school and benefit from quality basic education without discrimination.
- 4.2. These constitutional rights are further articulated and operationalised through the provisions of the South African Schools Act (**Act No 84 of 1996, as amended**), as well as the Admission Policy for Ordinary Public Schools (**Government Gazette No. 19377 of 1998**). These legislative and policy instruments regulate the **procedures** and **principles** governing learner admissions to public schools and ensure that admission processes are conducted in a **fair, transparent, and equitable** manner.
- 4.3. In terms of Section 3(1) of the South African Schools Act (**Act No 84 of 1996, as Amended**) every parent or guardian has a *legal obligation* to ensure that a learner of **compulsory school-going age** for whom they are responsible attends school. Compulsory school attendance commences from the **first** school day of the year in which the child turns six (**6**) years of age and continues until the learner reaches the age of fifteen (**15**) years or completes **Grade 9**, whichever occurs first.
- 4.4. Furthermore, Section 3(6) of the South African Schools Act (**Act No 84 of 1996 as Amended**) provides that any person who, without just cause, prevents a learner who is subject to **compulsory school attendance** from attending school commits an offence. Upon conviction, such a person may be liable to a **fine** or to **imprisonment** for a period **not** exceeding twelve (**12**) months. This provision underscores the seriousness with which the law safeguards a learner's right to education.

- 4.5. The Provincial Department of Education bears a constitutional and legislative **responsibility** to ensure that **all learners of compulsory school-going age** have **access** to public education. This responsibility requires the Department, in **collaboration** with schools and School Governing Bodies, to implement admission processes that are **equitable, inclusive, transparent**, and **free** from **unfair discrimination**, while ensuring that every learner is placed in an appropriate educational setting.

5. AGE REQUIREMENT FOR LEARNER ADMISSION

- 5.1. The admission of learners to public ordinary schools must comply with the prescribed **age requirements** as determined in national education legislation and policy.
- 5.2. These requirements are intended to ensure that learners are admitted to grades **appropriate** to their **age**, developmental stage, and level of schooling. In terms of the South African Schools Act (Act No 84 of 1996, as amended), as well as the Admission Policy for Ordinary Public Schools (**Government Gazette No. 19377 of 1998**), minimum admission ages are established to promote **orderly progression** within the education system and to support effective teaching and learning.
- 5.3. Public ordinary schools provide education from Grade **R** to Grade **12**. In accordance with Section **5(4)(a)** of the South African Schools Act (Act No 84 of 1996, as amended), a learner may be admitted to Grade **R** if he or she is four **(4)** years old and **turning five (5)** on or before **30 June** of the year of admission. Similarly, a learner may be admitted to Grade **1** if he or she is five **(5)** years old and turning six **(6)** on or before **30 June** of the admission year.

- 5.4. **Priority** for admission must be given to learners who are of **compulsory school-going age**. In terms of **Section 3** of the South African Schools Act (**Act No 84 of 1996, as Amended**) **compulsory school attendance** begins from the **first** school day of the year in which the learner turns six (**6**) years old and continues until the learner reaches the age of fifteen (**15**) years or completes **Grade 9**, whichever occurs first.
- 5.5. Schools and education authorities must take all reasonable measures to ensure that learners of compulsory school-going age are provided with **access** to **placement** in public schools. This **obligation** must be **fulfilled** in accordance with the applicable legislative framework and must promote **equitable access** to education for all learners.
- 5.6. Where public schools provide for early childhood education programmes that admit learners below the compulsory school-going age, such as pre-Grade R classes, priority should be given to learners who are five (5) years old on or before 30 June of the admission year, as well as those who have reached compulsory school-going age. This approach ensures alignment with the age norms prescribed in the South African Schools Act 84 of 1996, as amended, and supports appropriate progression into formal schooling.

6. SCHOOL BASED ADMISSION POLICY AND APPROVAL

- 6.1. In terms of Section **5(5)** of the South African Schools Act (Act No 84 of 1996, as Amended) the **School Governing Body** of a public school is responsible for **determining** the admission policy of the school. Such a policy must be developed in a manner that is **consistent** with the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, (Act No 108 of 1996 as Amended), the South African Schools Act (1996), and other applicable national and provincial legislation and policies regulating learner admissions.

- 6.2. The admission policy must further comply with the **principles** and **procedures** outlined in the Admission Policy for Ordinary Public Schools (**Government Gazette No. 19377 of 1998**).
- 6.3. The admission policy of an ordinary public school must therefore be aligned with the constitutional principles of **equality, dignity**, and the **right** to basic education, as well as the provisions of the South African Schools Act (Act No 84 of 1996, as Amended) and other relevant national and provincial legislation and policy frameworks governing **access** to education. Schools must ensure that their admission policies are **lawful, fair, transparent**, and **consistent** with national education policy.
- 6.4. In **administering** learner admissions, neither the admission policy of the school nor the implementation thereof by the principal or any departmental official may **unfairly discriminate** against any learner applying for admission. Admission **practices** must be guided by the constitutional principles of **fairness, equity**, and **non-discrimination**.
- 6.5. Admission policies developed by School Governing Bodies must be submitted to the Head of Department of Education, or his or her delegated official, for **quality assurance** prior to implementation. The Head of Department or the **delegated authority** must **ensure** that such policies are **consistent** with the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (1996), the South African Schools Act (**Act No 84 of 1996, as Amended**) and other relevant national and provincial legislation and policies governing learner admissions.
- 6.6. While the School Governing Body is responsible for determining the admission policy of the school, the **responsibility** for the **administration** and **implementation** of learner admissions rests with the **principal**, acting on behalf of the Head of Department, in ensuring that these guidelines are implemented as they are developed in terms of Section 5(7) of the South African Schools Act 84 of 1996.

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- 6.7. School **principals** are further required to ensure that learner **records** are properly managed during the admission process. Upon admission of a learner transferring from another school, the principal must request the learner's **academic** and support **records** (Learner Profiles) from the previous school.
- 6.8. In cases where learners are admitted to Grade **R** or Grade **1** for the **first** time, principals must ensure that learner **profiles** are created and **maintained** in accordance with the requirements of the **Screening, Identification, Assessment** and Support (**SIAS**) Policy, in order to facilitate **early identification** of learning **barriers** and the provision of appropriate support.

7. ADMISSION OF LEARNERS TO FULL-SERVICE SCHOOLS

- 7.1. In terms of Section **12(4)** of the South African Schools Act (Act No 84 of 1996, as amended), the Member of the Executive Council (**MEC**) for Education must, where reasonably practicable, provide education for learners with special education needs (**LSEN**) at ordinary public schools and provide relevant educational support services for such learners. According to section **12(5)** the Member of the Executive Council must take all reasonable measures to ensure that the **physical facilities** at public schools are **accessible** to disabled persons.
- 7.2. **Full-service** schools therefore play a critical role in promoting **inclusive education** by accommodating learners who experience barriers to learning within a supportive **mainstream** school environment.
- 7.3. Learners admitted to **full-service schools** must generally follow the standard admission procedures applicable to ordinary public schools. However, learners identified through the **inclusive education** support **structures**, including those referred by the relevant Inclusive Education Directorate or Sub-directorate, may be placed in full-service schools based on the **outcomes** of the **assessment** and **support processes** undertaken in accordance with applicable departmental policies and support frameworks.

- 7.4. Schools **designated** as **full-service** schools must ensure that learners with **diverse learning needs** are admitted into an **enabling, supportive, and non-discriminatory** learning environment.
- 7.5. In order to promote **equitable access** and meaningful **participation** in education, School Governing Bodies are encouraged to take **reasonable measures** to improve the **physical accessibility** and suitability of school facilities. This may include undertaking **minor infrastructure** adjustments or repairs, where necessary and feasible, to accommodate learners with **learning barriers**, while working **collaboratively** with the Provincial Department of Education to ensure that the school environment remains **safe, accessible, and conducive** to learning for all learners.

8. ADMISSION OF LEARNERS TO SPECIAL SCHOOLS

- 8.1. Learners who require placement in a public special school must first be **assessed** by the relevant structures within the Inclusive Education Directorate or Sub-directorate of the Provincial Department of Education. According to section 5(6) of SASA, in determining the placement of a learner with **special education needs**, the Head of Department and principal must take into account the rights and wishes of the parents of such a learner.
- 8.2. Such assessments are conducted to **determine** the **nature** and **level** of the learner's support needs and to ensure that **placement** in a special school is appropriate and in the **best interests** of the learner, in accordance with the provisions of the South African Schools Act (Act No 84 of 1996, as Amended).
- 8.3. The **identification** and **placement** of learners in **special schools** or **full-service** schools must be conducted in accordance with the **procedures** prescribed in the **Screening, Identification, Assessment** and Support (SIAS) Policy. This process ensures that learners who experience barriers to learning

are properly **screened, assessed**, and provided with the appropriate level of **support** within the education system.

- 8.4. The **Inclusive** Education Directorate or Sub-directorate, in collaboration with the Institutional Governance Directorate of the Provincial Department of Education, must **facilitate** the **placement** of learners who are residing in **care centres, child and youth care centres**, or other alternative care facilities into appropriate public special schools.
- 8.5. Such placements must be undertaken in compliance with the relevant provisions of the Children's Act (**Act No 38 of 2005, as Amended**) as well as the South African Schools Act (**Act No 84 of 1996, as Amended**) to ensure that these learners are afforded their constitutional **right to access** basic education.
- 8.6. Admission **criteria** applicable to ordinary public schools, including provisions relating to **feeder zones** or other general admission requirements, shall not apply to special schools where such criteria may **limit or hinder** the placement of learners with identified special education needs.
- 8.7. The placement of learners in special schools must therefore be **guided** primarily by the **outcomes** of the **assessment process** conducted in terms of the Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support (**SIAS**) Policy, and the **principles** of inclusive education as articulated in the **Education White Paper 6 on Special Needs Education (2001)**.

9. ADMISSION TO FOCUS SCHOOLS

- 9.1. **Focus** schools refer to schools focusing on a **specific curriculum** intending to address challenges affecting the country, for example **Technical, Commercial and Agricultural Schools**.

- 9.2. Focus schools are instructed to **prioritize** the admission of learners who reside in close proximity to the school. Thereafter, preference should be given to learners residing within the boundaries of the Limpopo Province.
- 9.3. Learners from outside the province may only be considered once all eligible learners from within the immediate vicinity and the Limpopo Province have been admitted and placed.
- 9.4. **Placement** assessments at a focus school may **only** be administered after a learner has been admitted. Such **assessments** must be **used solely** to determine the most **appropriate course** or programme for the learner and may **not** be used as **a criterion** for admission.
- 9.5. District Directors and Circuit Managers are responsible for ensuring **full** compliance with the guidelines in this circular.

10. LEARNER ADMISSION IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS WITH HOSTELS

- 10.1. Learner admissions to public schools with **hostel facilities** shall be **administered** in accordance with **Section 5** of the South African Schools Act (**Act No 84 of 1996, as amended**), which regulates the admission of learners to public schools, together with the admission criteria outlined in this circular
- 10.2. In terms of **Section 5(1)** of the South African Schools Act (**Act No 84 of 1996, as Amended**) a public school must admit learners and serve their educational requirements **without unfair discrimination** and in accordance with the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa.
- 10.3. Public schools with **hostel facilities** may therefore admit learners who reside outside the **geographical area** in which the school is located, including learners applying to a **school of choice** or based on the **work address** of the parent or guardian.

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- 10.4. In accordance with **Section 5(5)** of the South African Schools Act (**Act No 84 of 1996, as Amended**) which allows the governing body to **determine** the **admission policy** of a public school subject to the Act and applicable provincial laws and policies. The public schools with **hostel facilities** must ensure that their admission practices promote **equitable access** to education.
- 10.5. Schools should therefore prioritise **vulnerable** learners, including **orphans**, learners in **foster care**, and those living in **unsafe or unstable** home environments where hostel accommodation may support their continued schooling.
- 10.6. Subject to the availability of space at both the school and the hostel, learners seeking admission may also be considered where they have **siblings** currently enrolled at the same school, as part of **reasonable admission** criteria applied by the school governing body in line with **Section 5(5)** of the South African Schools Act 84 of 1996
- 10.7. To promote **fair and orderly** placement of learners, public schools with **hostel facilities** must prioritise learners residing in close proximity to the school. Thereafter, preference should be given to learners residing within the boundaries of Limpopo Province.
- 10.8. Learners from **outside** the province may **only** be considered once **all eligible** learners from the immediate locality and Limpopo Province have been accommodated, subject to the **availability of space** and consistent with Section 5 of the South African Schools Act (1996).
- 10.9. In terms of **Section 5(9)** of the South African Schools Act (Act No 84 of 1996, as Amended) the Head of Department **may intervene** where a learner has been **refused** admission, or where the admission policy of the school or its implementation **unfairly** prevents a learner from accessing education.

- 10.10. All public schools with **hostel facilities** must cooperate with the Department and comply with Provincial Guidelines issued by the Head of Department to ensure that no learner is unfairly denied access to education.

11. ADMISSION OF LEARNERS TO FEE-PAYING SCHOOLS

- 11.1. In terms of **Section 39** of the South African Schools Act (**Act No 84 of 1996 as Amended**), the governing body of a public school may determine and charge school fees, except in the case of **No-Fee** schools (**Quintiles 1, 2 and 3**). However, the **inability** of a parent to pay school fees may not be used as a reason to refuse admission to a learner.
- 11.2. In accordance with **Section 40** of the South African Schools Act (**Act No 84 of 1996 as Amended**), parents are responsible for the payment of school fees unless they qualify for **exemption**. Schools must therefore inform parents of their right to apply for **full or partial exemption** from the payment of school fees and make the necessary application forms available.
- 11.3. Parents applying for exemption must provide sufficient information to demonstrate their **inability** to pay school fees. The School Governing Body must consider such applications and determine **eligibility for full or partial exemption** in accordance with the criteria prescribed under the Act (**Act No 84 of 1996 as Amended**).
- 11.4. Where parents are found **liable** for the payment of school fees and fail to meet their obligations, the school may take legal steps to recover the outstanding fees, as provided for in **Section 41** of the South African Schools Act (**Act No 84 of 1996 as Amended**).
- 11.5. In terms of **Section 5(3)** of the South African Schools Act (**Act No 84 of 1996 as Amended**), a learner may not be refused admission to a public school on the grounds that the parent is unable to pay school fees. Schools must therefore

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ensure that admission decisions are not influenced by the financial circumstances of the parent or guardian.

- 11.6. The provisions contained in paragraphs 11.1 to 11.5 are intended to guide education officials, including **School Principals, Circuit Managers, and District Directors**, in ensuring that public schools remain *accessible* to all learners regardless of their *socio-economic background*. In line with the principles of the South African Schools Act (**Act No 84 of 1996 as Amended**), schools must ensure that **no** learner is *unfairly denied* admission on the basis of a parent's *financial* circumstances.

12. ADMISSION OF UNDERAGE LEARNERS

- 12.1. The admission of **underage** learners to public schools must *comply* with the **age requirements** prescribed under **Section 5(4)** of the South African Schools Act 84 of 1996 and applicable provincial admission policies.
- 12.2. An **underage** learner may *only* be considered for admission where the parent or guardian submits a report from a suitably *qualified professional*, such as a **registered educational psychologist**, confirming the exceptional circumstances that justify early admission
- 12.3. The admission of an **underage** learner must be *approved* in writing by the Circuit Manager. Public schools may *not admit* an underage learner without such approval and the required professional report.
- 12.4. The professional report and the written approval of the Circuit Manager must be kept in the learner's record (Learner Profile) until the learner completes basic education (Grade R to Grade 12). The information must thereafter be managed or disposed of in accordance with the requirements of the Protection of Personal Information Act 4 of 2013.

13. ADMISSION OR PLACEMENT OF OVER-AGE LEARNERS

- 13.1. The placement of **over-age** learners in public schools must comply with **Section 5** of the South African Schools Act (**Act No 84 of 1996 as Amended**) and must promote the best educational interests of the learner.
- 13.2. Where a learner **exceeds** the prescribed age for a grade, the school should, where reasonably practicable, **place** the learner in **a fast-track programme** or with learners of **a similar age** to support age-appropriate learning and progression.
- 13.3. Placement must follow the **two-year age-grade** norm. Learners can be placed in a grade if they are **no more** than two years older than the normal age for that grade. Learners who are more than two years over-age should be referred to suitable support programmes or alternative pathways, such as Adult Education and Training (AET) centres, to help them continue their education successfully.
- 13.4. An over-age learner **already enrolled** at a public or registered independent school who **must relocate** due to circumstances beyond their control must be admitted, regardless of age, to ensure continuity of schooling.
- 13.5. Learners who have never attended school or fall outside the compulsory school-going age must be advised to enrol at an AET centre, in line with Section 3 of the South African Schools Act (**Act No 84 of 1996 as Amended**).
- 13.6. Applications from learners who have been **out** of school for **three** (03) years or more must be considered by the District Director or delegated official. Decisions must take into account the reasons for **interruption** and be **fair** and **reasonable**. Where approval is granted, placement should be in **a fast-track** programme to enable accelerated progression.

- 13.7. **Fast-track** programmes must be developed by the school, with support from the **District Curriculum Sub-Directorate**, and submitted to the **Circuit Office** for monitoring and oversight.
- 13.8. Schools may not establish their own **age requirements**. **Admission** decisions must comply with **SASA age requirements**, provincial policy, and the DBE **two-year age-grade** norm.

14. CRITERIA FOR LEARNER ADMISSION

- 14.1. In terms of **section 5** of the South African Schools Act (**Act No 84 of 1996 as Amended**), admission to a public school must be conducted in a **fair, transparent** and **non-discriminatory** manner. When considering applications, the following **criteria** must be applied in the order listed below:
- a. **First Criteria: Proximity to the school:** Priority must be given to learners who **reside** within the geographical area served by the school, including the surrounding suburb, township, or village.
 - b. **Second Criteria: Sibling preference:** Learners whose siblings are already enrolled at the school must be given priority consideration.
 - c. **Third Criteria: Progression within the same area:** Consideration must be given to learners attending schools within the same locality (**feeder school**), particularly learners progressing from **Grade 7 to Grade 8**.
 - d. **Fourth Criteria: Parent or guardian employment and school preference:** Learners whose parents or legal guardians **work within** the school's catchment area (**work address**), or

- e. **Fifth Criteria:** Parent or guardian who have selected the school as *their preferred choice (school of choice)*, may be considered where space is available

- 14.2. The admission of learners must be determined strictly in accordance with the criteria set out above and must **comply** with the **principles** of **fairness** and **equity** as required by **section 5** of the South African Schools Act (**Act No 84 of 1996 as Amended**).
- 14.3. The Principal and the **Admissions Committee** must apply the criteria sequentially and ensure that each category is exhausted before proceeding to the next category.
- 14.4. In accordance with **section 5(1)** and **section 6(2)** of the South African Schools Act (**Act No 84 of 1996 as Amended**), a learner may **not** be **refused** admission to a public school on the basis of the **Language of Learning and Teaching**.
- 14.5. Within each category listed in paragraph 14.1 (a–e), applications must be processed in accordance with the principle of *“first-come, first-served.”*

15. REQUIREMENTS FOR ADMISSION

15.1. FIRST-TIME ADMISSION

When a learner is admitted to school for the *first time* or is *transferring* to another school, the parent or guardian must obtain and complete the prescribed admission forms from a public school. The application for admission for the first time to a new school will be done in one of the two modes: **online admission system** for **Entrance Grades (Gr R, 1 & 8)** and **Manual or walk-ins** at schools for **Internal Grades (Gr 2,3,4,5,6,7, 9, 10, 11 & 12)**. In accordance with **section 5** of the South African Schools Act (Act No 84 of 1996 as Amended) and this Guidelines, parents may apply to a school that is:

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- i. Located **nearest** to their place of residence (**residential address**).
- ii. Attended by the learner's **sibling(s)**
- iii. Situated within the area where the learner is currently attending school (**feeder school**)
- iv. Situated near the parents or guardian's **place of work (work address)**; or
- v. The parent's **school of choice**.

15.2. Required Documentation

- (a) When applying for admission, the parent or guardian must submit the following documents:
 - i. A learner's **Birth Certificate**, or any other **acceptable proof** of the learner's **date of birth** as provided for in the applicable admission policy, must accompany the application. Where a birth certificate is **not** available, the parent or guardian must complete an **affidavit** confirming the learner's date of birth, as provided in **Circular No 104 of 2026**. The affidavit must be certified at the South African Police Service before submission.
 - ii. The learner's **Immunisation card** (where applicable);
 - iii. A **transfer card** from the previous school, or an **affidavit** explaining the absence of such a document; and
 - iv. The learner's most recent **school report**.
- (b) Where the parent or learner is **not** a South African citizen, the following **additional** documents may be required:

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- i. A valid **study permit** or **work** permit.
 - ii. A **temporary or permanent** residence permit issued by the Department of Home Affairs; or
 - iii. **Proof** that an **application** to remain in the Republic of South Africa has been submitted to the Department of Home Affairs (**DHA**).
- (c) In terms of **section 5(1A)** of the South African Schools Act (**Act No 84 of 1996 as Amended**), a learner may **not** be **refused** admission to a public school on the basis that the required documents are not immediately available.
- (d) The principal must admit the learner and assist the parent or guardian to obtain the outstanding documentation within a reasonable period, as provided in **Sect. 5(1B) of SASA (Act No 84 of 1996 as Amended)**.

16. PROHIBITED PRACTICES DURING LEARNER ADMISSION

- 16.1. In terms of the South African Schools Act 84 of 1996 and the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, public schools may not engage in any form of **unfair discrimination** during learner admission. All learners have the **right to equal access** to basic education, and any practice that **humiliates**, excludes, or **unfairly** treats a learner is prohibited.
- 16.2. The principal and the School Governing Body must ensure that all admission processes **comply** with the law and that none of the following prohibited practices occur.

A. Payment of Fees

- (a) In terms of Section 5(3) of the South African Schools Act 84 of 1996, a learner may not be refused admission to a public school because a parent cannot pay or has not paid school fees.
- (b) A school may not require payment of registration or admission fees, nor may it compel a parent to sign an agreement to pay school fees as a condition for admission.
- (c) Section 39(5) of the South African Schools Act 84 of 1996 further prohibits public schools from charging registration, administration, or any other fees during the admission application process. School fees may only be charged after the learner has been formally admitted.

B. Subscription to Mission

- (a) In terms of Section 5(3)(a) of the South African Schools Act 84 of 1996, a learner may not be refused admission because a parent or guardian does not subscribe to the religious, cultural, or educational mission of the school.

C. Testing or Interviews of Learners

- (a) Section 5(2) of the South African Schools Act 84 of 1996 prohibits public schools from administering tests or interviews as part of the admission process.
- (b) The School Governing Body may not instruct or authorise the principal or any other person to conduct tests or interviews to determine whether a learner should be admitted.

- (c) Schools must therefore not use interviews, assessments, or any screening methods to select learners before admission.

D. Refusal to Admit Undocumented Learners

- (a) The Constitution guarantees every child in South Africa the right to basic education, regardless of whether the learner has documentation such as a birth certificate, passport, identity document, asylum permit, or study visa.
- (b) Section 5(1A) of the South African Schools Act (Act No 84 of 1996 as Amended) requires schools to admit a learner even if the parent or guardian has not yet submitted the required documentation.
- (c) Where a **birth certificate** is not available, the parent must provide a written affirmation or sworn affidavit confirming the learner's age.
- (d) If such an **affidavit** is submitted, the learner must still be admitted while the parent arranges to obtain the official documentation.
- (e) The **principal** must inform the parent that providing false information about a learner's age constitutes an offence in terms of **Section 31** of the Births and Deaths Registration Act (**Act No 51 of 1992 as Amended**).
- (f) The principal must assist the parent by referring them to the nearest office of the Department of Home Affairs (**South Africa**) to obtain the required documentation, in accordance with the guidance provided in Circular No **104 of 2026**, which outlines the advisory support to be given to parents of undocumented learners and the procedure for making such referrals.

E. Academic, Sport and Cultural Achievement

- (a) Schools may not use a learner's **academic performance** as a criterion for admission.
- (b) Similarly, achievements in **sport or cultural activities**, including provincial or national participation, may **not** be used as a basis for admitting or rejecting a learner.

F. Pre-School Experience

- (a) A learner may **not** be denied admission to Grade R or Grade 1 because he or she did not attend **pre-school**.
- (b) Admission to these grades must be based **only** on the **official age requirements** provided in South African Schools Act (Act No 84 of 1996 as Amended), this circular and applicable education policies.

G. Collection and Submission of Admission Forms

- (a) **No** public school may prevent a parent from collecting or submitting an admission application form because of the Language of Learning and Teaching (**LoLT**) used at the school.
- (b) Principals and administrative staff must not discourage parents from applying for admission on the basis of the school's **language policy**.
- (c) All schools must follow the **uniform** procedures for the distribution and submission of admission forms as outlined in this circular.

H. Unauthorised Opening of Admission Process

- a) The learner admission process for the 2027 academic year will commence as follows:
- Manual or walk ins for Internal Grades 21 July to 14 August 2026
 - Online Admission system for Entrance Grades 27 to 31 August 2026
- (b) Any public school that has opened the admission process without such authorisation must immediately discontinue and reverse the process.

I. The Use of On-Line Learner Admission System

- (a) The Limpopo Department of Education has directed that the public schools in Limpopo will use **two modes** of admissions (both **online system & manual or walk-ins**). All public ordinary and special schools will utilise **online learner admission system** for entrance grades (Grades R, 1 & 8) **ONLY** and for other internal grades a **manual mode (or walk in mode)** will be utilised.

17. ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURE FOR ADMISSION

17.1. COLLECTION AND SUBMISSION OF APPLICATION FORMS

- 17.1.1. The learner admission process must be administered in accordance with the procedures set out in the **Provincial Learner Admission Management Plan** for the 2027 academic year, and in **compliance** with the South African Schools Act (Act No 84 of 1996 as Amended).

- 17.1.2. Parents or guardians of learners for entrance grades (R, 1 & 8) must utilise **online system** to send their application for processing. Whereas the parents or guardians of learners for internal grades (2-7 & 9-12) must collect learner

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admission application forms directly from public schools according to the **schedule** determined in the **Provincial Learner Admission Management Plan for 2027 Academic Year**.

- 17.1.3. All application forms and attachment documents for **entrance** grades will be submitted through **online system**. Whereas the completed application forms for **internal** grades must be returned to schools **manually** (*viz. through walk-ins*).
- 17.1.4. **N.B. Those who are not able to submit electronically for entrance grades must seek assistance from either the nearest schools or circuit offices (*viz. Walk-in call centres*).**
- 17.1.5. Applications submitted ***electronically or manually*** through the school or Circuit **call centres** must be categorised according to the five (05) approved admission **criteria** contained in these guidelines.
- 17.1.6. The **official timeframes** for the **distribution** and **submission** of application forms for **internal grades** are contained in the **Provincial Learner Admission Management Plan for the 2027** academic year, and all schools and parents must comply with these **prescribed** dates.
- 17.1.7. Parents or guardians must ensure that all required supporting **documents** accompany the application at the time of submission. **Incomplete** applications may **delay** the **processing** and **placement** of the learner.
- 17.1.8. The **Circuit Manager** must ensure that each **complain** form for **internal grades** received is **properly recorded** and allocated a **complain** submission **number** for administrative and tracking purposes. The issuing of this number does not constitute **confirmation** of admission instead it **confirms receipt** of complain thereof.

- 17.1.10. Complainants for **internal grades** must **personally** complete their details in the Complain Submission Register at the Circuit Office. Where a complainant is unable to write, assistance may be provided by a **designated** official.
- 17.1.11. **Complainant** submission numbers for internal grades must be issued strictly in the order of the **date** and **time** of submission to ensure **fairness** and **transparency** in the admission process.
- 17.1.12. To promote orderly administration and prevent **overcrowding**, the collection of **regret letter (refusal outcome)** and **completion of complain** forms for **internal grades** from schools and submission to Circuit Offices must follow **scheduled timeframes** based on the grade applied for, as determined in the **Provincial Learner Admission Management Plan for 2027 Academic Year (AY)**.
- 17.1.13. Principals and parents are required to **adhere strictly** to the **Provincial Guidelines** contained in this Circular and the Provincial Learner Admission Management Plan for 2027 (AY) to ensure a **fair, transparent, and orderly** admission process.
- 17.1.14. Applications for internal grades may be submitted on the **same day** that the forms are collected, provided that the required **supporting documentation** accompanies the application.
- 17.1.15. Applications submitted **after** the **official closing date** may still be received; however, such applications **may not** be **prioritised** during the placement process.

17.2. DESIGNATED AREA SUBMISSION OF APPLICATION FORMS

- 17.2.12. Schools must direct **parents or guardians** to **submit** admission application forms for **internal grades** at the **designated area** determined by the school. The identification of the **designated area** is the responsibility of the school principal.
- 17.2.13. The Circuit Office must determine and communicate **a designated area** within the circuit for the submission of parents **complain forms**. This arrangement is intended to ensure the **orderly administration** of admissions and to **prevent** disruption of circuit operations.
- 17.2.14. The **designated submission** area must support **efficient** administration of the admission process and ensure that other circuit operations are **not** disrupted.
- 17.2.15. Only officials **authorised** by the Circuit Office may **receive, record, and process** admission complain forms.
- 17.2.16. After receiving the complaint forms, the Circuit Office must record them in a **submission register** and distribute the applications to the relevant schools. A copy of the **submission register** must accompany the applications, while the original register must be retained at the Circuit Office for record-keeping and monitoring purposes
- 17.2.17. Upon receipt of the applications from circuit, the school principal or the admission committee must verify the information submitted by the applicant. Where **false or misleading** information is identified, including **falsified** proof of **residence, parenthood, or guardianship**, the application may be disqualified in accordance with the applicable admission policies and the South African Schools Act (Act No 84 of 1996 as Amended).

17.2.18. All circuit **placement lists** must ultimately be submitted to the relevant school for recording and processing including verifying the **residential address** and **report card** for placement in the correct grade.

17.3. MAIN APPLICATION STEPS FOR LEARNER ADMISSION

- (a) Parents or guardians must apply for admission for **entrance grades** using **online** system at the public school or **Circuit Walk-In centre** at the circuit office **closest** to their place of residence within the period prescribed in the **Provincial Management Plan on Learner Admissions for 2027**.
- (b) The parents or guardian must apply for admission for **internal grades** using **manual or Circuit walk-ins mode** at the public school nearest to their place of residence.
- (c) The **completed** application form must be submitted together with all required supporting documents in **both** admission modes of learner admissions (**online system & manual or walk-ins' mode**).
- (d) Upon submission of the application form **electronically** the parents or guardians will receive the **messages of receipt** in their cell phones. This means that the applicant will receive an **Application Submission Number** for **reference** purposes. The system will process the application and place the learner at the school selected by the parent which match one of the **five** criteria.
- (e) In terms of **Section 3(3)** of the South African Schools Act (**Act No 84 of 1996 as Amended**), the Head of Department is responsible for ensuring that every learner of **compulsory school-going age** has access to education and is placed in a public school where reasonably practicable.

- (f) According to **section 5(8)** of the Act (**Act No 84 of 1996 as Amended**), if an application in terms of **subsection (7)** is **refused**, the Head of Department must **inform** the parent in **writing** of such **refusal** and the **reason**, therefore. In case of those who **utilize online** learner admission system, the **outcome** of the application will be sent to the applicant **gadget** through a notification in the form of an **SMS** message.
- (g) In order to facilitate the **effective administration** of the **admission process**, the Head of Department hereby **delegates** school **principals** to **communicate** the **outcome** of learner admission applications to parents or guardians for learner in **internal** grades within the timeframes prescribed in the **Provincial Management Plan on Learner Admission for the 2027** academic year.
- (h) In terms of **section 5(9)** of the Act (**Act No 84 of 1996 as Amended**), any learner or parent of a learner who has been **refused** admission to a public school may **appeal** against the decision to the Member of the Executive Council (**MEC**) within **14** days of receiving the **notification** of the refusal of admission to the public school.
- (i) Where a parent or applicant for **entrance** grades is **dissatisfied** with the admission **results**, the online system provides option for lodging an **appeal** with both district and head Office within fourteen (**14**) days of **receipt** of the admission **outcome**. The department through the **district or circuit** will **consider** and **decide** on the matter (**appeal**) and **inform** the learner or parent of the learner of the **outcome** of the **appeal** within fourteen days (**14**) of receipt. Whereas, if the parents of learners for **internal grades** are **dissatisfied** with the admission **outcome**, a formal **complaint** may be lodged with the relevant Circuit Office. The Circuit office will consider and decide on the matter (**appeal**) and **inform** the learner or parent of the learner of the **outcome** of the appeal, therefore.

- (j) According to section **5(11)** of the above Act, if the governing body is not satisfied with the decision of the Head of Department as contemplated in subsection **(5)(b)**, the governing body may appeal against the decision to the Member of the Executive Council within fourteen **(14)** after receiving the decision of the Head of Department.
- (k) Depending on the volume of applications received, some applicants for *internal* grades may receive feedback earlier than the official notification.

17.4. RE-REGISTRATION OF CURRENT LEARNERS

- 17.4.1. Schools may require parents or guardians of learners already enrolled to complete a re-registration form confirming whether the learner will return to the school in the following academic year. This process assists the school to plan effectively for the placement of learners and the admission of new applicants.
- 17.4.2. The re-registration form must also allow parents or guardians to indicate if the learner will not return to the school in the following year, so that the school can update enrolment records and determine the availability of spaces.
- 17.4.3. The re-registration process is **purely administrative** and must **not** be used to **refuse** continued enrolment, **exclude** a learner, or **compel** a parent or guardian to remove a learner from the school.
- 17.4.4. In accordance with **section 3** of the South African Schools Act (Act No 84 of 1996 as Amended), which guarantees every learner the right to basic education, a school may **not deny** a learner **continued attendance** based on academic performance, behavioural challenges, or disciplinary concerns.
- 17.4.5. Where a learner displays **poor** academic performance or behavioural difficulties, the school must address such matters through appropriate **support, counselling, or disciplinary processes** as provided for in **sections**

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8 and 9 of the South African Schools Act 84 of 1996, and not through the re-registration process.

17.4.6. All schools are encouraged to develop a **standard re-registration form** to be completed annually by parents or guardians of all currently enrolled learners in order to maintain accurate enrolment records.

17.4.7. **Re-registration** forms must be issued and returned within the timelines prescribed in the Provincial Learner Admission Management Plan for the relevant academic year.

17.4.8. **Information** collected through the **re-registration** process must be **recorded** and **managed** in accordance with applicable education legislation and **administrative procedures** to support proper planning and compliance with learner admission requirements.

17.5. ADMISSION INTO GRADE 12 AND GRADE 12 REPEATERS

17.5.3. In terms of section **5(1)** of the South African Schools Act (**Act No 84 of 1996 as Amended**), a public school must admit and provide education to learners and must serve their **educational requirements** for the duration of their school attendance without unfairly discriminating in any way. This means that every learner has the right to admission to a public school without unfair discrimination. Accordingly, learners who meet the promotion requirements for **Grade 11** must be granted access to **Grade 12** irrespective of the school at which the learner previously studied.

17.5.4. Learners who do **not meet** the **minimum** promotion requirements for the National Senior Certificate (**NSC**) may be permitted to **repeat Grade 12** in accordance with national assessment and promotion policies issued by the Department of Basic Education.

- 17.5.5. A learner may **repeat Grade 12** a maximum of **two additional times**, meaning that a learner may be enrolled in Grade 12 on **no more than three occasions** in total, subject to the applicable promotion and assessment policies.
- 17.5.6. Public secondary schools may **not refuse** admission to a learner who has successfully completed **Grade 11** at **another public or independent** school and who satisfies the requirements for admission into Grade 12. Any practice of **placing** such learners **back** into Grade 11 or **refusing** their admission solely because they previously attended **another school** constitutes **unfair discrimination** and is **inconsistent** with **section 5** of the Act (**SASA**) and the Country's Constitution (**Act No 108 of 1996 as Amended**).
- 17.5.7. Learners who intend to **repeat** Grade 12 must request and complete a Grade 12 **re-registration form** to formally indicate their **intention to repeat** the grade. The responsibility to request and complete the form rests with the learner's parent(s).
- 17.5.8. **No** learner may be **re-registered** as a Grade 12 repeater **without** completing the prescribed re-registration form. Schools must ensure that the form is made available upon request and that the process is administered in a **fair and transparent** manner.
- 17.5.9. The re-registration process is an **administrative requirement** to record the learner's intention to repeat Grade 12 and must not be used as a mechanism to enforce discipline, exclude learners, or limit access to education.
- 17.5.10. Schools must provide appropriate **academic guidance** and **counselling** to learners who intend to repeat Grade 12 in order to support their preparation for the National Senior Certificate and to promote successful completion of the grade.

- 17.5.11. Any failure by school management, School Governing Bodies, or departmental officials to implement the provisions of this circular, or any action that **unlawfully** restricts admission to Grade 12, will constitute **misconduct** and may result in **disciplinary action** in terms of the applicable education legislation and public service regulations.

17.6. ADMISSION AND MANAGEMENT OF LEARNERS FROM SECURE CARE CENTRES AND CORRECTIONAL FACILITIES

- 17.6.3. Learners placed in *secure care centers or correctional facilities* have a constitutional **right to access** basic education. The Department of Basic Education bears the responsibility for ensuring that this right is upheld.
- 17.6.4. Some learners may **not** be eligible for **removal** from secure care centers or correctional centers due to the nature of the **offence** committed and the **conditions** set by a court of law. In such cases, the learners must be **linked** to the **nearest public school** for the purpose of **completing** formal academic assessments.
- 17.6.5. The **formal academic tasks** referred to above must be **administered, marked, and recorded** by the school with which the learner is **officially linked**.
- 17.6.6. The **principal** of the school identified for such linkage is required to **cooperate fully** with officials from the **secure care or correctional facility** to facilitate the educational Programme of the learner.
- 17.6.7. The learners eligible for the services described herein are those of **compulsory school-going age**, as well as those who were **enrolled** in public schools **prior** to their **placement** in a secure **Care Centre or correctional facility**.

- 17.6.8. The **age limit** for learners who may remain in **secure care or correctional centers** while continuing their education under this arrangement is twenty-one (21) years.
- 17.6.9. District Directors and Circuit Managers are responsible for ensuring that learners in secure environments are adequately **supported** and provided with **access** to quality education.
- 17.6.10. In cases where learners are placed in a new location due to circumstances beyond their control and were **unable to complete** the **formal assessment tasks** for a particular term, the receiving school shall **evaluate** the learner based on the formal tasks they were able to complete prior to relocation.
- 17.6.11. The above-mentioned paragraph is intended to **safeguard** the rights of children, as enshrined in **Section 29 (1)** of the *Constitution of the Republic of South Africa*, which affirms every child's right to education and protection in all circumstances.

17.7. DISCLOSURE AND DISSEMINATION OF INFORMATION

- 17.7.3. In accordance with **section 5** of the South African Schools Act 84 of 1996, every public school must ensure that parents and applicants are provided with clear information regarding the admission process and the requirements for learner enrolment.
- 17.7.4. Schools must make available to parents or guardians the **school's admission policy**, the **learner code of conduct**, and the **procedure** for applying for **exemption** from the payment of school fees, where such fees are charged.
- 17.7.5. The procedure for exemption from school fees must be communicated to parents in accordance with **sections 39 to 41** of the South African Schools Act (**Act No 84 of 1996 as Amended**), which regulate the **determination** of

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school fees and the right of parents to apply for **full, partial, or conditional** exemption.

17.7.6. School Governing Bodies must ensure that all policies and information provided to parents are consistent with the provisions of the South African Schools Act, National Policy on Learner Admission, the applicable Provincial Guidelines on Learner Admissions, and any other relevant legislation regulating public schools.

17.7.7. In terms of section **20(1)(d)** of the South African Schools Act (**Act No 84 of 1996 as Amended**), the School Governing Body is responsible for adopting and implementing of policies that promote the **best interests** of the school and ensure proper governance.

17.7.8. The disclosure of this information promotes transparency and accountability and enables parents or guardians to make informed decisions regarding the admission and enrolment of their children.

17.8. ADVOCACY FOR LEARNER REGISTRATION

17.8.3. Public schools must conduct **advocacy** and **awareness campaigns** to encourage parents and **guardians** to register learners for the forthcoming academic year.

17.8.4. These campaigns must **inform** communities about the learner admission **process**, application **timelines**, and the documentation required for admission.

17.8.5. The initiatives must promote the right of every learner to basic education as provided for in section 29(1)(a) of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996.

- 17.8.6. Schools must further support the implementation of section 3(1) of the South African Schools Act (**Act No 84 of 1996 as Amended**), which requires parents to ensure that learners of *compulsory school-going age* attend school.

17.9. UNSUCCESSFUL LEARNER ADMISSION APPLICATIONS

- 17.9.3. Every public school must ***maintain*** a complete and accurate record of all learner admission applications, clearly indicating both successful and unsuccessful applicants.
- 17.9.4. In terms of Section 5(8) of the South African Schools Act (**Act No 84 of 1996 as Amended**), parents or guardians must be **informed** in ***writing*** when an application for admission is **unsuccessful**. The written communication for internal grades application and notification of a message from online system for entrance grades must clearly state the reasons for the decision.
- 17.9.5. Learners whose applications are **unsuccessful** must be placed on a **waiting list** and the list must be submitted to the Circuit Office. The waiting list must be compiled in accordance with the approved admission criteria contained in these directives and the school's admission policy.
- 17.9.6. Schools must capture and maintain **electronic records** of all admitted learners as well as those placed on the **waiting list**. The waiting list must reflect the **grade** applied for, the applicable admission criterion, and the **date** on which the application was **submitted**.
- 17.9.7. The **admission list** and the **waiting list** for internal grades must be **electronically** submitted to the relevant **Circuit Office** for monitoring and learner **placement** purposes.

- 17.9.8. Upon receipt of the **waiting list for internal grades**, the Circuit Manager must **consider** the applications in accordance with the approved admission **criteria** and **prioritise** learners who **meet the highest-ranking criteria**.
- 17.9.9. In line with **Section 3(3)** of the South African Schools Act (Act No 84 of 1996 as Amended), the **Head of Department**, through the Circuit Manager, must facilitate the **placement** of learners who could **not** be admitted at their school of **first choice**.
- 17.9.10. The Circuit Manager must ensure that learners for **internal grades** on the waiting list are **placed** at a public school **without delay** to give effect to compulsory school attendance.
- 17.9.11. School principals, acting under the authority of the Head of Department, must **notify** parents or guardians of learners for **internal grades** of the **outcome** of admission applications within the **timeframes** prescribed in the **Provincial Learner Admission Management Plan for 2027 Academic year**.
- 17.9.12. In terms of Section 5(9) of the South African Schools Act (Act No 84 of 1996 as Amended), a parent or guardian who is **dissatisfied** with the admission **decision** of a school may **lodge an appeal** with the Member of the Executive Council (MEC) responsible for Education.
- 17.9.13. Where a parent or guardian of learners for **internal grades declines an admission or placement offer**, either the school or Circuit Office **must** be **informed** immediately so that the **available space** can be **allocated** to another learner on the waiting list.

17.10. PLACEMENT OF LEARNERS

- 17.10.3. In terms of section 3(3) of the South African Schools Act 84 of 1996, the Member of the Executive Council (MEC) for Education and the Head of

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Department must ensure that every learner of **compulsory school-going age** is placed at a public school.

- 17.10.4. The Department must take **reasonable measures** to ensure that learners are **placed** in public schools where **capacity exists** so that the **right** to basic education, as guaranteed in section 29(1)(a) of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996, is realised.
- 17.10.5. Where a school **cannot** admit a learner in **internal grade** due to **capacity limitations**, the principal must **submit a record** of **unplaced learners** to the relevant **Circuit Office** together with the **school's admission register** and supporting documentation, in accordance with Provincial Guidelines on Learner Admission for 2027 Academic Year.
- 17.10.6. Upon **receipt** of the list, the Circuit Manager must facilitate **placement** of the learners in **internal grades** at appropriate public schools within the circuit, taking into account admission **criteria** and available **capacity**.
- 17.10.7. Where **placement cannot** be secured within the circuit within a **reasonable period**, the matter must be escalated to the **District Director**, who must take **appropriate steps** to **place** the learners within the district.
- 17.10.8. If placement **cannot** be secured at district level, the **Head of Department**, through the **Institutional Governance Directorate**, must **intervene** to **facilitate placement** in accordance with the provisions of the South African Schools Act (Act No 84 of 1996 as Amended) and relevant provincial policies.
- 17.10.9. The Provincial Office must **monitor** the implementation of learner **placement** processes and provide **guidance** and **support** to districts to ensure **compliance** with legislative and policy requirements.

17.10.10. Where reasonably practicable, learners must be placed at schools located as **close** as possible to their **place of residence**, taking into account school **capacity**, **accessibility** and learner **safety**.

17.10.11. Learners whose applications were **unsuccessful** at their schools of **first choice** must be placed in **alternative** public schools in accordance with the Provincial Learner Admission Management Plan and within the prescribed admission timelines

17.11. LEARNER PLACEMENT DURING THE ACADEMIC YEAR

A. Placement of Learners by the Department

17.9.1. The Limpopo Department of Education may place learners in public schools during the academic year where such placement is necessary to ensure continued access to education.

17.9.2. In accordance with the South African Schools Act (Act No 84 of 1996 as Amended), public schools **must cooperate** with the Department in facilitating **lawful placement** of learners who require immediate access to schooling.

17.9.3. Such placements may occur where a learner **relocates**, where educational continuity is **disrupted**, or where intervention is required to safeguard the learner's welfare.

B. Circumstances Requiring Placement During the Academic Year

17.9.4. Placement during the academic year may arise under **circumstances** including, but **not limited** to, the following:

(a) **Relocation** of the learner's parent or guardian to another geographical area.

- (b) **Intervention** by relevant authorities where the learner's home environment is unstable or not conducive to learning.
- (c) **Disciplinary or behavioural interventions** implemented in accordance with applicable legislation and departmental procedures.
- (d) **Protection** of a learner exposed to neglect, physical abuse, emotional abuse or sexual abuse, as contemplated in the Children's Act 38 of 2005;
- (e) **Placement** of a learner admitted to a **Child and Youth Care Centre**, safe care facility, children's home, secure care centre or correctional facility in terms of **court order**.
- (f) **Reintegration** of a learner into the schooling system following release from foster care, temporary safe care, children's homes or secure care facilities.

C. Accommodation of Over-Aged Learners

- 17.9.5. Where a learner **relocates** during the academic year due to circumstances beyond the control of the learner or parent, the receiving public school must facilitate placement in an appropriate grade or educational programme.
- 17.9.6. Placement must consider the **learner's age**, previous **schooling** and educational **needs** to ensure continued access to education in accordance with the South African Schools Act 84 of 1996.
- 17.9.7. A learner may **not** be **denied placement** solely on the basis of age where relocation or other compelling circumstances require admission during the academic year.

D. Placement Where Schools Indicate They Are Full

- 17.9.8. Where a school indicates that it has reached its admission **capacity**, the principal must immediately **notify** the relevant Circuit and District Office and provide **accurate information** regarding classroom **space**, **current enrolment**, and the approved admission **capacity** of the school.
- 17.9.9. In terms of the South African Schools Act 84 of 1996, the Head of Department bears the **ultimate responsibility** for ensuring that every learner of **compulsory school-going age** has access to a public school.
- 17.9.10. A principal or School Governing Body may **not refuse or delay** the admission of a learner where placement has been directed by the Head of Department or a duly authorised official.
- 17.9.11. Where necessary, the Department may implement reasonable measures to accommodate the learner, including **temporary placement**, redistribution of learners, or the utilisation of available classroom space.
- 17.9.12. Any **dispute** relating to learner placement or school **capacity** must be referred to the Head of Department for resolution in accordance with applicable legislation and provincial admission procedures.
- 17.10. Learners of Compulsory School-Going Age Who Remain Unplaced
- 17.10.1. Where a learner of **compulsory school-going age** has **not** secured placement in a public school, the parent or guardian must report the matter to the relevant District Office of the Department of Education without delay.
- 17.10.2. In terms of the South African Schools Act 84 of 1996, parents or guardians must ensure that learners of compulsory school-going age attend school,

while the State must ensure that appropriate schooling opportunities are available.

- 17.10.3. Upon receiving notification that a learner remains **unplaced**, the Department must take **reasonable steps** to identify an appropriate public school and **facilitate placement** without undue delay.
- 17.10.4. Where necessary, the Head of Department or a duly authorised official may direct a public school to admit the learner to ensure that the learner's right to basic education, as protected in the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996, is realised.
- 17.10.5. Public schools must cooperate fully with placement directives issued by the Department and may not take any action that **unreasonably delays** or obstructs the placement of a learner.

17.11. GRADE PLACEMENT ASSESSMENT

A. Identification and Admission of Learners

- 17.11.1. Learners of compulsory school-going age who have been kept at home without being enrolled in a registered school, or who have attended unregistered independent schools, including unregistered online schools or unregulated home education programmes, must be admitted to a public ordinary school to ensure access to basic education as guaranteed in section 29(1)(a) of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996.
- 17.11.2. Upon identification of such a learner, the Department must ensure that the learner is placed at a public school and undergoes a Grade Placement Assessment Test (GPAT) in order to determine the most appropriate grade placement.

- 17.11.3. The Grade Placement Assessment Test must be administered by officials from the District Curriculum Sub-Directorate and must serve solely to determine an appropriate grade placement. The assessment may not be used as a condition for admission or as a basis to deny a learner access to schooling.

B. Conduct of the Grade Placement Assessment

- 17.11.4. The assessment must be conducted in a fair, supportive and age-appropriate manner and may include oral or written activities suitable to the learner's educational background.
- 17.11.5. Curriculum officials conducting the assessment must focus on foundational competencies in the following learning areas:
- (a) Home Language, to assess reading, comprehension and communication abilities;
 - (b) Basic Mathematics, to assess foundational numeracy and problem-solving skills; and
 - (a) Elementary Natural Sciences concepts, to assess the learner's basic understanding of simple scientific ideas appropriate to the learner's developmental level.
- 17.11.6. The purpose of assessing these learning areas is to assist the Department in determining the most appropriate grade placement and to support the learner's successful integration into the schooling system.
- 17.11.7. In determining the appropriate grade placement, the Department must consider the learner's age, previous learning exposure and the age-grade norms contained in paragraphs 27 and 28 of the Admission Regulations for

Ordinary Public Schools, 1998, including the principle that a learner should generally not be more than two years older than the norm age for the grade.

C. Timeframe for Assessment and Placement

- 17.11.8. The Grade Placement Assessment Test must be conducted immediately once the learner has been identified.
- 17.11.9. The assessment and the provision of the placement recommendation must be completed within seven (7) days from the date on which the learner was identified.
- 17.11.10. Following the assessment, the District Curriculum Sub-Directorate must provide a written recommendation indicating the appropriate grade placement for the learner.
- 17.11.11. The District Governance Sub-Directorate must ensure that the learner is admitted and placed in the recommended grade in accordance with the provisions of the South African Schools Act 84 of 1996.
- 17.11.12. Failure by officials to conduct the assessment within the prescribed timeframe must be reported to the District Director for immediate intervention.

D. Enforcement and Compliance

- 17.11.13. Where it is established that an individual or institution is operating an unregistered independent school, the District Director or his/her delegate must take appropriate legal steps, including reporting the matter to the South African Police Service, as operating an independent school without registration constitutes an offence in terms of section 46(1) of the South African Schools Act 84 of 1996.

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- 17.11.14. Circuit Managers must monitor their circuits to ensure that no unregistered independent schools or unregulated home education programmes operate within their jurisdiction.
- 17.11.15. These measures are intended to protect learners from unlawful educational practices and to ensure that all learners receive education that meets the minimum standards prescribed by law
- 17.11.16. A learner must not remain out of school pending assessment or evaluation by the Department

17.12. LEARNERS TRANSITIONING FROM REGISTERED HOME EDUCATION

- 17.12.3. Where a parent intends to withdraw a learner from registered home education for enrolment in a public school, the parent must submit the prescribed documentation to the Department, including proof of registration, withdrawal confirmation from the relevant provincial department, and records of the learner's previous assessments
- 17.12.4. The application must include the following documents:
- (a) proof of the learner's registration for home education, including the official registration number;
 - (b) written confirmation of withdrawal from home education issued by the relevant Provincial Education Department;
 - (c) the certificate of registration issued by the Provincial Education Department;
 - (d) the learner's portfolio of evidence reflecting the learning activities completed; and

- (e) certified copies of annual assessment reports for each grade completed under home education, including an external assessment report prepared by a competent assessor where applicable.

17.12.5. To facilitate proper evaluation and placement, the District Director must establish an Education Evaluation Team (EET) consisting of officials from:

- (a) Curriculum Advisory Services;
- (b) Inclusive Education;
- (c) Institutional Governance; and
- (d) the Circuit Manager responsible for the affected school.

17.12.6. The Education Evaluation Team must be co-chaired by the District Chief Education Specialists responsible for Curriculum and Institutional Governance. Officials from Inclusive Education must provide secretariat support to the team.

17.12.7. The EET must evaluate the submitted documentation, consider the learner's prior learning evidence and, where necessary, request a Grade Placement Assessment in order to determine the most appropriate grade placement.

17.12.8. All recommendations of the EET must be submitted to the District Director for approval.

17.12.9. The District Director must communicate the approved decision in writing to the parent or guardian, clearly indicating the grade placement of the learner.

17.12.10. The communication must also inform the parent or guardian of the right to appeal to the Head of Department should they be dissatisfied with the decision taken.

17.12.11. The purpose of the EET process is to ensure that learners transitioning from home education are placed in a grade appropriate to their age, prior learning and educational development, while safeguarding their right to continued access to education.

17.13. ADMISSION AND MANAGEMENT OF LEARNERS FROM SECURE CARE CENTRES AND CORRECTIONAL FACILITIES

17.13.3. Learners placed in secure care centres or correctional facilities retain the right to basic education as provided for in **section 29(1)(a)** of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996. The Department must take reasonable measures to ensure that these learners continue to receive education.

17.13.4. Where learners are unable to attend a public school outside the facility due to court orders or security conditions, the Department must ensure that such learners are academically linked to the nearest appropriate public school.

17.13.5. The public school to which the learner is linked remains responsible for the **administration, marking and recording of formal academic assessment tasks** in accordance with national curriculum and assessment policies.

17.13.6. The principal of the identified school must cooperate with officials of the secure Care Centre or Correctional Facility to facilitate the learner's educational programme and ensure that assessment requirements are properly implemented.

17.13.7. These arrangements apply primarily to learners of ***compulsory school-going age*** as contemplated in **section 3** of the South African Schools Act

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(Act No 84 of 1996 as Amended), as well as learners who were enrolled in public schools prior to their placement in secure care or correctional facilities.

- 17.13.8. Learners who remain in Secure Care or Correctional Facilities may continue to receive educational support through the **linked** public school until the age of twenty-one (21) years, where circumstances justify continued participation in the schooling programme.
- 17.13.9. District Directors and Circuit Managers must ensure that learners placed in secure environments receive **adequate academic support** and that coordination between the Department and the relevant facilities is maintained.
- 17.13.10. Where a learner is **relocated** due to circumstances beyond their control and has **not** completed **all formal assessment tasks** for a term, the receiving school must **evaluate** the learner based on the completed **assessment evidence available**, in accordance with applicable assessment policies.
- 17.13.11. These measures are intended to **protect** the educational **rights** and **welfare of learners** in state care and to ensure that **no** learner is **deprived** of **access** to education due to placement in a secure environment.

18. MANAGEMENT OF CONSENT FORMS DURING LEARNER ADMISSION

18.4. SUBMISSION OF CONSENT FORM

- 18.4.3. The principal must ensure that every learner admission application submitted to the school is accompanied by a duly completed **Parental Consent Form** (Annexure C) signed by the parent or legal guardian.

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18.4.4. The consent form forms part of the official learner admission documentation and must be submitted together with the admission application to enable the school to lawfully administer learner information and related educational activities.

18.4.5. Schools may not process learner admission documentation that is ***incomplete*** or ***not*** accompanied by the **required consent form**, except where reasonable arrangements are made to allow parents or guardians to submit the consent form within a specified timeframe.

18.5. RESPONSIBILITY OF THE PRINCIPAL

18.5.3. The principal, as the professional manager of the school in terms of South African Schools Act 84 of 1996, must ensure that the **consent form** is properly issued, explained where necessary, and collected during the learner admission process.

18.5.4. In accordance with **section 16A** of the South African Schools Act (**Act No 84 of 1996 as Amended**), the principal must ensure that ***proper administrative systems*** are in place for the ***management, safekeeping***, and **control** of all learner admission **records**, including signed consent forms.

18.6. GOVERNANCE AND RECORD MANAGEMENT

18.6.3. The School Governing Body must support the proper management of **learner records** as part of its governance responsibilities in terms of **section 20(1)(g)** of the South African Schools Act (Act No 84 of 1996 as Amended), which requires the governing body to **administer** and **maintain** school **records** and **property**.

18.6.4. The principal must ensure that **all signed consent forms** are **securely filed** as part of the learner's official admission records and are accessible only to authorised officials for administrative or oversight purposes.

18.6.5. **No** learner may be **excluded** from admission solely on the basis that the consent form is outstanding, provided that the parent or guardian undertakes to submit the form within a reasonable period.

18.7. COMPLIANCE WITH DATA PROTECTION LEGISLATION

18.7.3. Schools must ensure that the **handling, storage, and use** of personal information obtained through the consent form complies with the requirements of the Protection of Personal Information Act (PPIA) (**Act No 4 of 2013 as Amended**).

18.8. AVAILABILITY FOR ADMINISTRATIVE AND OVERSIGHT PURPOSES

18.8.3. Consent forms must be kept as part of the learner admission records and must be made available for verification by authorised officials of the Limpopo Department of Education when required for monitoring, compliance, or administrative purposes.

19. PROCESS AND PROCEDURE TO HANDLE GRIEVANCE

19.4. Where a learner's admission application is **unsuccessful**, the school must provide the parent or guardian with **written reasons** for the decision and the contact details of the **relevant Circuit Manager** to enable the parent or guardian to lodge a **complaint or grievance**.

19.5. A complaint or grievance submitted to the Circuit Office must be acknowledged and addressed within fourteen (14) working days from the date of receipt.

- 19.6. Circuit and District Offices must maintain a **complaint or grievance register** recording all **complaints or grievances** received, the **date** of submission, the **nature** of the complaint, and the **outcome** of the complaint or matter.
- 19.7. If the **complaint or grievance** is **not** resolved at Circuit level, the parent or guardian may **escalate** the matter to the District Director. The District Director must consider the **complaint or grievance** and provide a **written outcome or response** within fourteen (14) working days.
- 19.8. Where the parent or guardian remains **dissatisfied** with the **decision** of the **District Director**, the matter may be **referred** to the Head of Department (HoD) through the Institutional Governance Directorate for **review** and consider a complain and make a decision or a determination.
- 19.9. Parents or guardians are encouraged, while the **grievance process** is underway, to continue seeking placement for the learner at other schools within the area in order to minimise disruption to the learner's schooling.
- 19.10. Parents or guardians submitting a grievance must provide **full personal details**, including **contact details** including both residential and work addresses, to facilitate communication and the effective resolution of the matter.

20. APPEAL TO THE MEMBER OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL (MEC)

- 20.4. A parent or guardian who is **dissatisfied** with a decision of the Head of Department (HoD) regarding the admission of a learner may **lodge** a formal **appeal** with the Member of the Executive Council (MEC) responsible for Education.
- 20.5. This appeal must be submitted in **writing** within a reasonable period (14 days) after the decision of the Head of Department has been communicated to the **parent or guardian**.

- 20.6. The MEC must consider the appeal and make a determination within 14 days of receipt in accordance with section 5(9) of the South African Schools Act 84 of 1996, which empowers the MEC to hear and decide appeals relating to learner admission.
- 20.7. In considering the appeal, the MEC must ensure that the decision is **lawful, reasonable, and procedurally fair**, as required by section 33 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996 and the provisions of the Promotion of Administrative Justice Act (**Act No 3 of 2000 as Amended**).
- 20.8. The MEC may **confirm, vary, or set aside** the decision of the Head of Department and must communicate the **outcome** of the appeal to the parent or guardian in **writing**.
- 20.9. The decision of the MEC constitutes the **final administrative remedy** within the Provincial Education Department.

21. ACCOUNTABILITY FOR NON-COMPLIANCE

- 21.4. Any failure by a school principal, Circuit Manager, District official, or any other authorised official to process or respond to a complaint or grievance within the prescribed **timeframes**, or to comply with the procedures set out in this circular, may **constitute misconduct** and may result in **disciplinary action** taken against the affected official in terms of the applicable provisions of the South African Schools Act (**Act No 84 of 1996 as Amended**), the Employment of Educators Act (**Act No 76 of 1998 as Amended**), the Public Service Act (**Act No 103 of 1994 as Amended**), and other relevant public service regulations.
- 21.5. Officials responsible for the administration of learner admissions must ensure that all complaints or grievances are handled **lawfully, reasonably, and procedurally** fairly in accordance with **section 33** of the Constitution of the

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Republic of South Africa, (**Act No 108 of 1996 as Amended**) and the provisions of the Promotion of Administrative Justice Act (**Act No 3 of 2000 as Amended**).

- 21.6. Any conduct that **unlawfully delays, obstructs, or frustrates** a learner's **access** to education may be regarded as a violation of the learner's constitutional right to basic education as guaranteed in **section 29(1)(a)** of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, (**Act No 108 of 1996 as Amended**) and must be addressed through appropriate administrative or disciplinary measures.

22. UTILISATION OF PUBLIC-SCHOOL FACILITIES TO ACCOMMODATE UNPLACED LEARNERS

- 22.4. In order to fulfil the constitutional obligation to ensure **access** to basic education as guaranteed in **section 29(1)(a)** of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996, and in accordance with **section 12** of the South African Schools Act (**Act No 84 of 1996 as Amended**), which places a **duty** on the Member of the Executive Council (MEC) for Education to provide sufficient public schools for learners,
- 22.5. The Department must ensure that **available** public education infrastructure is **utilised** primarily for the **accommodation** of learners requiring access to basic education in public facilities.
- 22.6. Where any portion of a public-school facility has been leased or occupied by a private institution or independent school, such space may, where necessary, be prioritised for the **placement of compulsory school-going age** learners who require admission to a public school.
- 22.7. In accordance with **section 29(1)(a)** of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996, every learner has the **right** to basic education. The Department

must therefore take **reasonable measures** to ensure that **unplaced learners** are **accommodated** in **available public education spaces**.

- 22.8. In executing the responsibility provided for in **section 12** of the South African Schools Act (**Act No 84 of 1996 as Amended**), the MEC may **provide additional schooling facilities** where capacity is **insufficient**. Such provision may include the establishment of **additional classrooms** in the form of **permanent brick-and-mortar structures** or the installation of **mobile or prefabricated classrooms**.
- 22.9. District Directors and Circuit Managers must monitor the utilisation of public-school infrastructure **within** their jurisdictions and ensure that **available space** is allocated in a manner that **prioritises the placement** of unplaced learners.
- 22.10. Where a public school has **leased part** of its premises to a **private entity**, any decision to **utilise such space** for the placement of learners must be undertaken in **consultation** with the school governing body, as required by **section 16** of the South African Schools Act (**Act No 84 of 1996 as Amended**).
- 22.11. Before such space is **repurposed** for educational use by the Department, the current occupant must be **notified in writing** in accordance with the **applicable lease agreement** and relevant **legal requirements**. Reasonable notice must be provided to ensure compliance with **contractual** and **administrative law** obligations.
- 22.12. The **utilisation** of public-school facilities must at all times serve the **best interests** of learners and **promote equitable access** to education in accordance with the **principles** of the South African Schools Act (**Act No 84 of 1996 as Amended**) and the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, (**Act No 108 of 1996 as Amended**).

23. OFFICIALS RESPONSIBLE FOR LEARNER ADMISSION

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24. CONCLUSION

- 24.4. It is essential that we work collaboratively to ensure that ***"No Child is Left Behind"*** by administration of learner admissions process, particularly in **hotspots** (e.g. urban areas) where space is limited.
- 24.5. We call upon **all stakeholders** to contribute positively towards the transformation of our communities. The **non-admission** of a learner should not be interpreted through a **racial lens**.
- 24.6. In cases where an application is **unsuccessful**, the school will **inform** the applicant and provide the **written reasons** for non-admission.
- 24.7. We urge all affected parents and guardians to **respond promptly** and to adhere to the **prescribed timelines** for learner registration. This will help schools to plan effectively ahead of time and prepare for effective teaching and learning before the reopening of schools in **January 2027**.
- 24.8. School principals are required to ensure that the information contained in this **Circular No 104 of 20206** and the **2026 Provincial Learner Admission Management Plan** is disseminated to all parents, legal guardians, and caregivers of school-going age children.
- 24.9. The Limpopo Department of Education will closely monitor the admission process to minimise instances of unfair discrimination and exclusion.

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- 24.5. School principals are required to ensure that the information contained in this **Circular No 104 of 20206** and the **2026 Provincial Learner Admission Management Plan** is disseminated to all parents, legal guardians, and caregivers of school-going age children.
- 24.6. The Limpopo Department of Education will closely monitor the admission process to minimise instances of unfair discrimination and exclusion.
- 24.7. We strongly encourage all parents to register their children for school admission in accordance with the outlined procedures, in order to prevent unnecessary tensions and conflicts.
- 24.8. The **Provincial Management Plan for 2027 Academic Year Learner Admissions** is attached hereto.



Mr Molongoana M.C

DDG: IGCS



Date

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