

# Basic education under the spotlight as schools reopen

School safety will come under the microscope when Basic Education Minister Angie Motshekga and MECs meet to discuss matters affecting the sector this week.



Image source: Getty Images

Also expected to be deliberated on is the possibility of primary school learners returning to classes on a full-time basis and the impact Covid-19 has had on the sector.

This as the Department of Basic Education (DBE) declared its readiness to welcome back teachers, staff and learners back to school for the second term in 2021 that commences today.

Motshekga, Deputy Minister Dr Makgabo Reginah Mhaule and all education MECs will on Thursday and Friday hold a two-day meeting to deliberate on key issues affecting the basic education sector.

“In the meantime, schools will continue to apply the rotational approaches as the department intensifies its implementation of the safety campaign aimed at saving lives and livelihoods,” said the DBE ahead of schools reopening on Monday.

The department said health and safety protocols remain in place with social distancing, the washing of hands and sanitising being the basic hygiene practices, that must still be adhered to at all times.

“The department is currently investigating the possibility of returning all learners at primary school level due to the learning losses suffered as a direct result of the coronavirus pandemic,” it said in a statement.

The proposal is now being considered at the National Joint Operational and Intelligence Structure (NATJOINTS) where the department has since delivered a presentation at the relevant work streams.

An announcement on the outcome of the discussions will be made in due course.

In the first term, the sector experienced several tragedies that resulted in the loss of lives.

“Bullying and violence in schools became an issue that had to be addressed.”

As the second term begins, the department has reminded learners to conduct themselves in a manner consistent with the statement of commitment.

The statement of commitment states that learners are expected to, among others, accept that the main reason for being in school is to learn and develop academically, socially and culturally.

It also states that learners are expected to adhere to school rules; respect the legitimacy and authority of teachers.

Learners are also to participate in Learner Representative Councils (LRCs) to safeguard their interests and show respect to other learners and not to discriminate.



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In addition, learners are expected to avoid anti-social behaviour like theft, vandalism, assault, sexual harassment, alcohol and drug abuse, as well as other activities that disrupt the learning process.

The department said it was also preparing for a vaccination programme that will target citizens that are over the age of 60 years and employees at risk who have been identified as essential workers.

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

The department also welcomed newly elected members of school governing bodies (SGBs) around the country. SGB elections concluded on 23 April after the process began in March.

Due to Covid-19, the period for the elections had to be extended to allow for safety measures to be observed by everybody participating.

“The department is satisfied with the SGB elections and that there were no major incidents,” it said.

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