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To: Deputy Directors-General, Chief Directors, Directors, Heads: Inclusive Specialised Learner Education Support, Circuit Managers, Principals and Chairpersons of governing bodies of public schools and Recognised Employee Parties

Short summary: *Salaries and benefits of and stipend payments to Grade R educators and practitioners.*

Subject: Salaries and benefits of and stipend payments to Grade R educators and practitioners

1. The progressive universalisation of Grade R in the Western Cape Education Department (WCED) commenced on 01 January 2023.
2. **Fully qualified Grade R practitioners (Relative Education Qualification Value (REQV) 13-14)** were appointed permanently in terms of the Employment of Educators Act, 1998 (Act 76 of 1998), as educators (post level 1) for Grade R in the Foundation Phase, with full service benefits and conditions of service.
 - 2.1 A professionally qualified Grade R educator (National Qualifications Framework (NQF) level 6 and above) must be recruited should a vacancy result due to attrition within this cohort of educators. (See attached Annexure 1 for the appointment of post level 1 educators for Grade R in a permanent capacity.)
 - 2.2 If a professionally qualified Grade R educator (Foundation Phase) cannot be sourced, a nomination for an underqualified Grade R practitioner may be submitted via the Contract Appointment Tracking System – People Management Practices System (CAT-PMPS) and the incumbent will receive a stipend (underqualified), as outlined in paragraph 3. The post must be advertised and filled permanently by a professionally qualified educator within six months of becoming vacant.

3. **Underqualified Grade R practitioners (REQV 11-12)** remain Grade R practitioners, appointed by their respective governing bodies and they are paid the stipend part of the transfer payment via the WCED payroll system (PERSAL). This measure has been put in place to ensure that stipends reach the underqualified Grade R practitioners and are not diverted for other purposes or adjusted in any way.
 - 3.1 See attached Annexure 1 for the appointment of a Grade R (post level 1) educator in a permanent capacity should an underqualified Grade R practitioner obtain his/her professional qualification (NQF 6 and above) issued by a recognised Higher Education Institution (HEI) and wants to be appointed as a post level 1 educator. Permanent appointments will be made within three months of the receipt of the documentation to allow for administrative processes to be finalised. Payment will be made from the date reflected on the letter of appointment. Head Office will issue a revised staff establishment reflecting an additional post level 1 position to be utilised for Grade R.
 - 3.2 Underqualified Grade R practitioners will be paid an annual stipend of $R154\ 167 \div 12 = R12\ 816$ per month from January 2023. Those employees whose stipends were calculated at the lower notch will receive their back pay on or before 31 July 2023. Deductions from stipends include personal income tax and contributions to the Unemployment Insurance Fund (UIF). The stipend is paid on the last working day of the month, except for December when the stipend will be paid after 15 December and before 25 December. These payments are made via electronic transfer into the Grade R practitioners' bank accounts.
4. **Unqualified Grade R practitioners (REQV 10 and below)** will be paid a stipend by the governing body from the WCED transfer payment.
 - 4.1 Should an unqualified Grade R practitioner exit the service, a professionally qualified post level 1 educator for Grade R must be recruited.
 - 4.2 If a professionally qualified Grade R educator (Foundation Phase) cannot be sourced, a nomination for an underqualified Grade R practitioner may be submitted via the CAT-PMPS and the incumbent will receive a stipend (underqualified), as outlined in paragraph 3, for not more than six months.
 - 4.3 Permanent appointments in this category can only be effected every six months, either on 01 April or 01 October, to coincide with transfer payment periods, in order to prevent paying one practitioner both a stipend via the governing body and a salary from the WCED when appointed permanently. Governing bodies must remain cognisant of this when recruiting and filling these vacancies.
5. All personnel matters pertaining to underqualified and unqualified Grade R practitioners will be managed by their respective governing body, who is the employer. This includes any service conditions/benefits provided by the governing body.

6. Governing bodies are advised to follow principles of fairness and reasonableness as outlined in the Labour Relations Act, 1995 (Act 66 of 1995), when managing the contracts of underqualified and unqualified Grade R practitioners.
7. The stipend of an underqualified Grade R practitioner who goes on maternity leave will be stopped for the duration of the absence. She may access her UIF for this period.
8. Proof of maternity leave and the nomination for the underqualified replacement practitioner must be provided by the principal via the CAT-PMPS. The medical certificate for maternity leave must clearly indicate the start and end date of the leave of absence.
9. In the case of unauthorised absence taken by underqualified Grade R practitioners, the principal must inform the relevant deputy director in Service Benefits (Annexure 2) by the second day of the unauthorised absence so that the stipend may be stopped.
10. Special schools which received a transfer payment for Grade R prior to 01 January 2023 are part of the universalisation of Grade R.
11. The Cost of Living Adjustment that may impact the stipend amount applicable to Grade R practitioners (underqualified), at the new notch of R173 895, will be duly calculated and backdated to 01 April 2023. These payments will be made on or before 31 July 2023 to the underqualified practitioners via PERSAL.
12. A qualification pathway is currently being discussed within the education sector and guidance will be provided by the Department of Basic Education which, together with all the provincial education departments, will engage HEIs. The outcome will be communicated once finalised.
13. Kindly bring the content of this circular to the attention of all relevant personnel.

SIGNED: B WALTERS

HEAD: EDUCATION

DATE: 2023-06-14