



Reference: 20200304-5284  
File no.: 12/2/7  
Enquiries: LR Abrahams

Institution Development and Coordination Minute: 0001/2020

To: Deputy Directors-General, Chief Directors, Directors (Head Office and district offices), Circuit Managers, Principals and Chairpersons of governing bodies

Short summary: *Online admissions matters.*

**Subject: Update on online admissions matters**

1. Despite a challenging start to the online admissions process, the Western Cape Education Department (WCED) can report that we have already exceeded the expected number of applications captured and submitted on the online system in comparison to the same time in the admissions process last year.
2. On the opening day, 17 February, **33 518** applications were submitted and at close of business on 25 February 2020, **154 449** applications have been successfully captured by parents on the system.
3. The WCED experienced technical difficulties at the start of the process from Monday, 17 February 2020, until the afternoon of Wednesday, 19 February 2020. These challenges were beyond our control.
4. This has resulted in some parents being unable to complete and submit their applications from Monday to Wednesday afternoon.
5. School principals and governing bodies are requested to take this into account when processing applications to ensure that all applications received for the full duration of the admission period from 17 February 2020 to 17 March 2020, are processed and treated fairly.
6. In addition, the WCED has also received several complaints from the public relating to irregular and unlawful admissions practices which must be brought to the attention of school principals and governing body chairpersons for resolution where applicable.

7. It has been brought to the attention of the WCED that some schools are not adhering to the stipulated time frames, with a few instances being reported where parents were informed by schools that the school had already concluded their admissions at the start of February or that they will be conducting their processes at a later stage.
8. Schools are reminded that the admission dates were published in Circular 0043/2019, dated 15 November 2019 and that these dates have been made public.
9. Therefore, all applications received during the period mentioned in paragraph 5 above, **MUST** be processed to ensure a fair administrative process as outlined in the Promotion of Administrative Justice Act, 2000 (Act 3 of 2000).
10. **SCHOOLS REQUIRING PARENTS OF GRADE R LEARNERS ALREADY ENROLLED IN THE SCHOOL TO APPLY FOR PLACEMENT IN GRADE 1 FOR 2021:**
  - 10.1 Schools cannot require Grade R learners, who are already enrolled in the school to apply for placement for Grade 1, as the learners, for the most part, will be progressed to Grade 1 by the school and the Circuit Manager in line with the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement at the end of the year.
  - 10.2 The online system is aligned to this policy and therefore does not provide the parent with an option to apply for Grade 1 at the same school.
  - 10.3 All school principals, governing bodies and officials are advised that such parents do not need to submit ANY applications if the child is already at the school.
  - 10.4 These applications lead to inflated learner enrolment and applications data and is not a true reflection of the number of unplaced Grade 1 learners by the time we report to the province or the National Department later this year.
11. **SCHOOLS REFUSING TO PROCESS HARD COPY APPLICATIONS:**
  - 11.1 The online admissions system is still being piloted to assess the best way forward.
  - 11.2 Although we are actively encouraging parents to apply online, we must be sensitive to the fact that there are still parents who may be unable to access the internet and who are not able to manage the online process.
  - 11.3 Schools need to cater for such parents and accept hard copy applications.
  - 11.4 Many parents are contacting and visiting our offices and are raising their frustrations at schools that are refusing to accept hard copy applications and that they are being turned away without any support.

- 11.5 Although we are encouraging parents to use the online system, schools may not, at this stage, refuse to accept hard copy applications if the parent is unable to access the internet.
- 11.6 Schools are asked to support such parents, by either availing their computer centres to guide and assist parents to apply, or, alternatively, to take in hard copy applications and process this on the system.
- 11.7 It is envisaged that parents will transition fully to the online process in due course, but we must still accommodate hard copy applications in this transition phase.
- 12. SCHOOLS CHARGING PARENTS REGISTRATION FEES OR UPFRONT FEES TO SECURE PLACEMENT:**
- 12.1 We have also received numerous complaints from parents where schools are charging parents registration fees or fees upfront in lieu of securing a placement at the school.
- 12.2 This is an unlawful practice and Circuit Managers are requested to advise schools and governing bodies that the WCED does not condone such practices and will have no option but to advise parents of their rights and require that schools fully refund any such payments.
- 12.3. Please be advised that such practices may result in legal action being taken against the WCED and the governing body and could result in disciplinary action taken against the relevant school or district official.
- 13. SCHOOLS REQUESTING INFORMATION FROM PARENTS, WHICH CONTRAVENES THE SOUTH AFRICAN SCHOOL'S ACT, 1996 (ACT 84 OF 1996), AND/OR THE POPI ACT, 2013, (ACT 4 OF 2013).**
- 13.1. Schools are reminded NOT to request personal information about prospective learners and their parents for the purposes of admission which is not in line with chapter 2, paragraph 5, of the South African Schools Act, 1996, (Act 84 of 1996).
- 13.2. This includes information relating to the ability of the parent to pay school fees or personal and behavioural information about the learner or the parent which may contravene the Protection Of Personal Information Act (POPI), 2013, (Act 4 of 2013).
- 13.3. Principals, governing bodies and educators who issue or respond to such requests for confidential information are advised that such practices may expose the school and the WCED to legal challenges.
14. The WCED wishes to extend its sincere thanks to schools who have gone the extra mile to assist parents during this process and appreciates the patience and support of all role players at this time.

15. All queries in respect to the above can be directed to the relevant Circuit Manager in each district or the Head: Management and Governance in each district.

16. Kindly bring the contents of this circular minute to the attention of all concerned.

**SIGNED:** HA LEWIS

**DEPUTY DIRECTOR-GENERAL: INSTITUTION DEVELOPMENT AND COORDINATION**

**DATE:** 2020-03-03