

File no.: 27/R
Reference: 20240315-2530

Institution Development and Coordination Minute: 0001/2024

To: District Officials, Departmental Heads, Principals, Members of governing bodies and Educators

Subject: Invitation to schools to apply for blue heritage plaques in 2024

1. General information on the Blue Plaque Schools Project

- 1.1 The Blue Plaque Schools Project was initiated by the Centre for Conservation Education (hereafter referred to as "the Centre") and the Cape Town Heritage Foundation, an affiliate of the Heritage Association of South Africa (HASA), in 2015. Since then, 60 schools in the Western Cape and one in the Eastern Cape have received blue heritage plaques.
- 1.2 The recipients in 2023 were Bishops Diocesan College, Dominican School for Deaf Children, Rhenish Primary School, St Cyprian's Diocesan School for Girls, Wittedrift High School and Wynberg Boys' Junior School.
- 1.3 Many schools have a long history and a proud heritage of providing education to their communities. Some of these schools are household names, their excellence having reached the public's attention in several ways. Yet many others have remained unnoticed in the shadows due to our country's inequitable past. This is particularly true of the many mission schools that developed into fine institutions in underprivileged communities. The Western Cape Education Department's belief is that all schools deserve recognition for their contributions.
- 1.4 Blue plaques are an internationally recognised symbol of buildings and places that have an important significance in the history and heritage of a local area. The HASA has run the Blue Plaque Project for the last 57 years.
- 1.5 This project means that historically interesting and valuable buildings and sites are given recognition and status through the awarding of a blue plaque. For more information and to see images of blue plaques awarded go to www.cthf.co.za or www.heritagesa.org.

- 1.6 Schools have largely been overlooked and under-represented in the awarding of blue plaques. The Centre and the HASA would like to make schools aware of the project and encourage those schools that feel they qualify for a blue plaque to apply by paying careful attention to the categories listed in point 4.
- 1.7 Wherever possible, the support of local heritage bodies is sought and some of these have pledged to sponsor a blue plaque for deserving schools in their area that are unable to pay for it themselves:
- (a) **Cape Town area:** Cape Town Heritage Foundation (one to two free plaques/year)
 - (b) **Paarl area:** Drakenstein Heritage Foundation (one free plaque/year)
 - (c) **Stellenbosch area:** Stellenbosch Heritage Foundation (one free plaque/year)
 - (d) **Swellendam/Southern Cape area:** Swellendam Heritage Association (as funds allow)
- 1.8 Although most heritage bodies do not have available funds to sponsor blue plaques, they serve on the adjudication committees.
- 1.9 Most schools have to be prepared to pay for their blue plaques themselves but are encouraged to approach sponsors in their communities.
- 1.10 This project is open to all schools in the Western Cape. However, numbers may be limited due to the administration involved.

2. **Benefits for schools**

- 2.1 Receiving a blue plaque can have the following benefits for schools:
- (a) Blue plaques are internationally recognised as symbols of the heritage status of a building or site.
 - (b) Blue plaques are prestigious and only a limited number will be awarded every year depending on the available resources and administration involved.
 - (c) Blue plaques are affixed to the front of the school as a permanent historical marker to commemorate a link between the school and an activity, event or person. They are prominently displayed so that learners, parents and visitors can see them.
 - (d) Through being awarded a blue plaque, a school receives recognition for the contribution it has made to the education of its community and to education in general.
 - (e) Blue plaques are a source of community pride and achievement.
 - (f) The blue plaques are tastefully designed and made of durable materials.
 - (g) Schools that receive blue plaques will be listed on the websites of the HASA and local heritage bodies.
- 2.2 The application process has been kept simple so that schools are not required to spend unnecessary time making lengthy and elaborate proposals.

3. How the Blue Plaque Schools Project works

- 3.1 Schools that feel they fit the criteria in point 4 are invited to apply.
- 3.2 Every application will be considered on merit by a panel of adjudicators representing the HASA, the various affiliated heritage bodies and the Centre. Schools need only meet **one of the six criteria** listed in point 4. Schools must motivate their application (listing sources so that information can be verified), they must declare themselves willing to display the blue plaque on the front of their building and must submit their application by the due date. An application form (Annexure A: in English only) is attached. **Schools are reminded that submitting an application does not automatically guarantee success.**
- 3.3 Schools will be notified via email and telephone whether they have been awarded a blue plaque or not. This is entirely at the discretion of the adjudication committee. Schools that meet the criteria but that cannot be accommodated due to a large number of applications will be asked to re-submit the following year.
- 3.4 Schools will be given the opportunity to suggest the wording for their blue plaques, and the adjudicators will make every effort to concede to this. However, historical accuracy, Latin mottoes, grammatical correctness and language usage will be carefully considered so that there is a level of uniformity.
- 3.5 Schools that receive blue plaques should **inform their learners, parents, governing bodies and school communities** of this recognition. Learners, in particular, should be made aware of the plaque's symbolism and value.
- 3.6 Schools that receive blue plaques must **organise an official handover and unveiling ceremony** at a date and time that suit the school and the organisers. It should, if possible, be **within the same calendar year as the award** and **learners should preferably be involved**. A representative from the HASA, the local heritage body, or the Centre will be present if invited. The blue plaque should be affixed to the wall a few days before the event.
- 3.7 The cost of a blue plaque, excluding installation, may vary between R2 000 and R4 000 depending on which supplier the heritage body uses, the materials used, the size of the plaque, and the availability of materials. Successful applicant schools that will carry the costs themselves will be invoiced for 100% of the costs before the plaque is ordered.
- 3.8 Load shedding may unfortunately contribute to a delay in getting the plaques manufactured. Schools should submit their applications timeously.

4. **Categories**

- 4.1 The categories and criteria are as follows:
- (a) The age of the school (must be older than 125 years to qualify).
 - (b) An architecturally significant building (e.g. well-known architect, building style, etc.)
 - (c) The school's survival under difficult circumstances (e.g. the South African War, forced removals, role in the struggle for democracy, natural disaster, etc.).
 - (d) A past learner or educator who has distinguished themselves (must be mentioned by name and no longer be alive).
 - (e) The school's particular **exceptional service** to the community (e.g. first school in the community, contribution to special education, upliftment of the community, etc.) **This award is not easily made.**
 - (f) A school that has closed, but nevertheless played a significant role in education.
- 4.2 Schools may find that they qualify in more than one category, but they should choose the **ONE** that best indicates what they are most proud of. A school can only be awarded ONE blue plaque, so the choice of category should be considered carefully.

5. **Applications for 2024**

- 5.1 The closing date for submissions is **Wednesday, 15 May 2024.**
- 5.2 Applications should be made electronically, via email, by using the application form provided (Annexure A) and submitting it to principal@centreforconservation.co.za.
6. For more information, the principal of the Centre, Mr Anton Fortuin, can be contacted on tel. no. **021 762 1622.**
7. Please bring the content of this minute to the attention of all relevant role players.

SIGNED: A MEYER

DEPUTY DIRECTOR-GENERAL: INSTITUTION DEVELOPMENT AND COORDINATION

DATE: 2024-03-19