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**STANDARD PARAMETERS FOR CLOSURE AND MERGER OF MICRO PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

*(Version 1, Draft 2*)

***25 March 2017***

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**MICRO PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

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# BACKGROUND AND PROBLEM STATEMENT

The closure and merger of micro and unviable schools under the School Rationalisation and Re-alignment Process is affecting the progress made towards ensuring that schools meet the provisions of the Minimum Norms and Standards for School Infrastructure. Huge delays that have been experienced in this regard and poor reporting on the progress made remain disconcerting.

The process to be followed when considering closures and mergers of micro schools is well-established, as documented in the *Guidelines on the School Rationalisation Process* *(Sept 2014)*. However, what remains problematic is the lack of clear standard parameters that should be guiding this process, similar to the notion of providing “barrier lanes and guard rails” to a road. This has brought about uncertainty and indecisiveness on how some of the issues that are encountered should be dealt with, thereby leading to immense delays. As a result of this gap, different practices have been adopted across the sector leading to inconsistency of practice and some practices that are not fully aligned with the spirit of the School Rationalisation Process. For instance there are instances where:

* Some primary schools with Learner Enrolment Figures (LEF) of up to 315 were proposed for closure;
* Up to 13 schools were earmarked to be merged into one school;
* The proposed total LEF in a number schools that are earmarked for merger is in the order of 1000, and up to 1600 in some cases;
* Schools that are far from the public transport routes and in areas that have no access to basic services were proposed as Host Schools for merger over sites that had better access to such services;
* Proposed Host Schools are removed from the catchment areas that draw a higher number of learners in favour of smaller catchment areas;
* The new Host Schools have been built in the middle of nowhere, with an attempt to locate them equidistant from the catchment areas they serve;
* Up to five (5) School Principals were found in one school after some schools were merged and closed down; and
* Learners were moved into a Host School where no infrastructure provisions were made and no additional furniture was provided.

These concerns point to a huge gap in the parameters that should have been instituted to assist and to guide the sector in this regard and be adhered to whenever possible.

Discussions have been held in a number of forums where concerns regarding the lack of clarity on the guiding parameters for the School Rationalisation Process were raised. Some suggestions, proposals and recommendations were made in those forums but these have not been reduced into writing, adopted and formally disseminated to the sector at large to inculcate uniformity of practice. This left the sector and the appointed consultants to their own devices with respect to the interpretation, setting-up of parameters and the implementation of the School Rationalisation and Re-alignment Process.

It is in the light of the above concerns that this document, the *Standard Parameters for Closure and Merger of Micro Schools,* has been developed for implementation across the basic education sector.

# PURPOSE OF THE STANDARD PARAMETERS

This document, the *Standard Parameters for Closure and Merger of Micro Schools*, complements the *Guidelines on the School Rationalisation Process (Sept 2014).* It is intended to:

1. Facilitate the School Rationalisation and Re-alignment Process;
2. Provide clarity on certain boundaries that need to be observed when considering merger and closure of micro schools;
3. Provide certainty to the sector about the boundaries of the School Rationalisation Process with a view to facilitating and expediting the decision-making processes and the implementation of this programme; and
4. Instil uniformity of practice and predictability across the sector.

# PARAMETERS FOR CLOSING DOWN MICRO SCHOOLS

1. Only schools that are classified as micro schools according to the *Minimum Uniform Norms and Standards for School Infrastructure (Nov 2013)* should be considered for closure and merger. This refers to Primary Schools with Learner Enrolment Figures (LEF) of less than 135 and Secondary Schools with LEF of less than 200.
2. Where schools with LEF of more than 20% of either 135 or 200, as the case might be, are proposed for closure, a formal request for approval of such must be prepared by the Education District and submitted to the Member of Executive Council (MEC) of the Provincial Education Department (PED), stating clearly the justification for such proposal.
3. The site to which other schools could be relocated for merger, i.e. the Host School Site, could either be:
4. Another existing micro school;
5. An existing bigger school; or
6. Green-fields site, where such should be considered in cases where the existing nearby schools are either:
7. Built of inappropriate materials;
8. Do not have sufficient land for a merged school;
9. Not located on ideal sites – either unavailability of basic services, difficult terrain, environmental constraints such as flood-lines, or incompatible adjacent land-uses such as taxi ranks, public hostels, brothels, etc.;
10. Constrained by topographical and/or man-made physical barriers between the proposed Host Site and the catchment areas; or
11. Located at excessive distances from the catchment areas.
12. When deciding on the Host School or new site for the Host School all the conditions stated below must be taken into consideration. Where possible the Host School must:
13. Be part of an existing catchment area that draws the highest number of learners or that is centrally located between the catchment areas it serves;
14. Not be placed in the middle of nowhere, being isolated from any of the catchment areas it serves;
15. Located within reasonable distance from the catchment area such that if transport is to be provided:
	1. The road conditions are reasonably good and the road is passable under all weather conditions;
	2. The road does not have a low river crossing that floods when it rains;
	3. It would not take more than 45 minutes maximum, one way, to transport the Primary School Learners either to school or from school, and not more than 1hr 15min for Secondary School Learners given the distance to be travelled and the condition of the roads. This is intended to prevent fatigue among the learners and loss of productive time; and
	4. Notwithstanding item (4)(c)(iii) above, where possible the Host School should not be located more than 20km, one way, (as measured along the route to be traversed) from the catchment area – to manage the transportation costs and to reduce risk of exposure to potential road accidents.
16. Not be located more than 3km (as measured along the route to be traversed) from the parent catchment area for Primary Schools and 5km for Secondary Schools if no Scholar Transport would be provided;
17. Not merge more than 3 micro schools, and up to 5 micro schools at most, at one Host School Site. This is to ensure smooth transition, avoid system shock, and manage effectively the amalgamation of different school cultures;
18. Not end up with merged LEF of more than 650, and up to 750 at most;
19. Be located on a site that has access to municipal and other essential services (water, sewer, telephone lines, mobile network connectivity, radio and TV signal) and within reach of the National Power Grid;
20. Be on the site that is closest to the main transport routes, when compared with other potential sites;
21. Be located in the proximity of other social services such as clinics, hospitals, Police Stations, public libraries, where these services are available;
22. Be in the proximity of feeder primary schools or secondary school, for association and to enhance the potential of sharing resources such as sport facilities;
23. Be located next to the catchment areas with a potential of and/or earmarked for economic development;
24. Be located close to catchment areas that are earmarked for development of or expansion of human settlements;
25. Not be located on a small site that might prohibit the current and/or potential future expansions;
26. Not be located on areas with difficult terrain and/or difficult soil conditions; and
27. Must not have natural or man-made physical barriers that limit accessibility and/or pose safety and security risks to learners to and/or from school.
28. All the parameters stated in Sub-section (4) above must be weighed against one another to yield the most optimum location for the Host School.
29. Topographical or man-made physical barriers that separate the proposed Host School Site from the catchment area, thus posing safety and security risks, must be considered at all times when deciding on the ideal Host School Site. The physical barriers that need to be avoided, where possible, include:
30. Rivers with no safe river crossings for pedestrians and/or for vehicles;
31. Ravines, gorges and deep dongas;
32. Forests, bushes and thickets;
33. Mountains;
34. Cliffs;
35. Deserted routes with potential hideouts;
36. Railway lines with level pedestrian crossings;
37. Roads where the speed limit exceeds 60km/hr and with no overhead pedestrian bridge or safe subway (box culvert) pedestrian crossing;
38. Informal settlement through which to traverse;
39. Farms:
40. Where crops such as sugar cane, tea, sunflower are grown;
41. Where thoroughfare or trespassing is prohibited; or
42. With dangerous animals.
43. No micro school must be closed down and no learners must be moved to the Host School unless:
44. All the necessary **infrastructure provisions** have been made and finalised in the Host School to accommodate the additional learners and staff from the schools earmarked for closure. Such infrastructure provisions shall include:
45. Adequate number of classrooms with sufficient floor area and built of appropriate materials, per the provisions of the *Norms and Standards for School Infrastructure*;
46. Adequate staff-room space to accommodate the additional educators;
47. Adequate furniture for all the learners and educators;
48. Adequate basic services, per the *Norms and Standards for School Infrastructure*, and these include:
	* 1. Adequate number of ablution facilities of acceptable standards, i.e. safe and built of appropriate materials and no pit latrines, mobile or chemical toilets;
		2. Sufficient potable water; and
		3. Adequate power supply.
49. All the **transport arrangements** have been confirmed and finalised in instances where learner transport would be provided.
50. Where **Learner Accommodation Facilities** would be provided, to ensure that facilities that are safe, built of appropriate materials and of acceptable quality standards have been completed fully with all the requisite support spaces, recreational facilities and the necessary furniture, fittings and equipment (FFE) made available.
51. All the **Human Resource related matters** pertaining to the School Governing Bodies (SGBs), educators and the learners of the school(s) to be closed down, and educators of the Host School have been addressed successfully and concluded, having the following steps been followed:

**HR-Step 1:** Consultations with relevant stakeholders concluded, notifications sent to all the interested and affected parties, representations made and appeals resolved amicably, all these done in accordance with the provisions of Sections 5, 6 and 7 of the *Guidelines on the School Rationalisation Process.*

**HR-Step 2:** Arrangements for the SGB of the merged school been concluded in line with Section 12A(6) of SASA and Section 8 of the *Rationalisation Guidelines*, having been facilitated by the District Director where necessary.

**HR-Step 3:** Decision, for endorsement by the Provincial Education Department, made by the joint Senior Management Team of the affected schools, the SGBs of the affected schools and the Education District Office on the:

(aa)Curriculum choice in terms of the subjects and/or phases to be offered at the merged school;

(bb) Language choice to be used in merged school, taking into consideration the needs of all the learners in all the schools earmarked for merger; and

(cc) Staff establishment.

**HR-Step 4:** Decision made by the joint Senior Management Team of the affected schools and SGBs of the affected schools on the:

(aa) Name of the merged school, if there is a need to change it from the existing name of the Host School;

(bb) School uniform of the merged school; and

(cc) Nature of the assistance that might be provided to needy and destitute learners of the school(s) earmarked for closure to acquire the “new” uniform of the merged school.

**HR-Step 5:** The Principals of all the schools affected by the merger communicated, in their respective schools, the final outcomes of the items under HR-Steps 3 and 4 above to:

1. All the educators;
2. All the admin personnel and support staff;
3. All the learners; and
4. All the parents/guardians of learners in the affected schools.

**HR-Step 6:** Decisions on the School Management Team finalised, having the following processes been followed:

1. *The School Principal:*
2. If the Principal of the Host School is graded higher than the Principal(s) of the school(s) earmarked for closure, then the Principal of the Host School would become the Principal of the merged schools.
3. If the Principal of the Host School is graded lower than the Principal(s) of the school(s) earmarked for closure, then the post of the Principal should be advertised. The successful candidate would then become the Principal of the merged schools.
4. If the Principals of both the Host School and the school(s) earmarked for closure have the same grading, then the Last-In-First-Out (LIFO) Principle should be applied to decide on the Principal of the merged schools.
5. If the Principals of both the Host School and the school(s) earmarked for closure have the same grading and the same LIFO, then the Principal with the higher credentials and whose school has been obtaining a relatively higher pass rate over the past three (3) years shall become the Principal of the merged schools.
6. After all the processes stated in (aa) to (dd) above have been concluded, the “unsuccessful” Principal(s) may be offered lower level post(s) in the Host School at salary level(s) that is/are commensurate with that/those post(s), pending the availability of such post(s) and the suitability of the incumbent(s).
7. Where the “unsuccessful” Principal(s) cannot be accommodated in the Host School, then they should either be:
* Transferred to other schools where there are vacancies, pending the suitability of the incumbents; or
* Offered severance packages if they are unable or not willing to continue providing their services, or if they cannot find suitable posts in other schools.
1. *The Deputy Principal:*
2. The LIFO Principle should be applied to decide on the Deputy Principal(s) of the merged schools.
3. The remaining Deputy Principal(s) may be offered other lower level post(s) in the Host School, at salary level(s) that is/are commensurate with that/those post(s), pending the availability of such post(s) and the suitability of the incumbents.
4. Where the “excess” Deputy Principal(s) cannot be accommodated in the Host School, then they should either be:
* Transferred to other schools where there are vacancies, pending the suitability of the incumbents; or
* Offered severance packages if they are unable or not willing to continue providing their services, or if they cannot find suitable posts in other schools.

1. *The Heads of Department:*
2. Where there are more Heads of Department than the posts available in the merged school, the LIFO Principle should be applied to decide on the Heads of Department to be moved from the schools earmarked for closure to the Host School, taking into account the subject needs of the merged school and the profile(s) of the incumbent(s).
3. The remaining “excess” Heads of Department may be:
* Offered level 1 post(s), in the merged school at salary level(s) that is/are commensurate with the said post(s), pending the availability of such post(s) and the suitability of the incumbents; or
* Transferred to other schools, pending availability of vacant posts in such schools and the suitability of the incumbents; or
* Offered severance packages if they are unable or not willing to continue providing their services, or if they cannot find suitable posts in other schools.

**HR-Step 7:** Decisions on *Post Level 1 Teachers* finalised, having the following processes been followed:

(aa) In the event of a sufficient number of additional level 1 posts been provided in the merged school, per the Staff Establishment requirements of the merged schools, thereby able to accommodate all the teachers from the school(s) earmarked for closure, then the principle of Teachers-Following-Learners should be applied.

1. In the event of a less number of additional level 1 posts been provided in the merged school, per the Staff Establishment requirements, thereby not able to accommodate all the teachers from the school(s) earmarked for closure, then the LIFO Principle should be applied to decide on the teachers to be moved to the Host School, also subject to their profile(s) to match the grades and the curriculum choices.
2. No other “new” post level 1 teacher(s) from outside must be appointed in the vacant post(s) occasioned by the mergers in the Host School unless all the teachers in the schools earmarked for closure have been accommodated in the Host School or were given an opportunity to do so but declined it.
3. Any “excess” post level 1 teachers that could not be accommodated in the Host School should be redeployed to other school(s) subject to the availability of vacant posts and the suitability of the incumbents.
4. In the event of the post level 1 teacher(s) not willing, or unable to continue providing their services, or unable to find suitable alternative schools, then they should be offered their severance packages.

**HR-Step 8:** Decisions on the *Admin Personnel and Support Staff* finalised, having the following processes been followed:

(aa) Where possible seek to accommodate all the Admin Personnel and Support Staff in the Host School, subject to the availability of posts.

(bb) In instances where any of the Admin Personnel and/or Support Staff cannot be accommodated for at the Host School, the LIFO Principle should be applied to decide on the incumbents of the school(s) earmarked for closure who would be moved to the Host School.

1. If “excess” Admin Personnel and/or Support Staff of the school(s) earmarked for closure could not be accommodated for at the Host School, then they should be redeployed to other schools, subject to the availability of posts and the suitability of the incumbents.
2. In the event of any Admin Personnel and Support Staff not willing, or unable to continue providing his/her services, or unable to find suitable alternative schools, then he/she should be offered his/her severance package.

**HR-Step 9:** Where applicable, all the relocation costs/assistance and/or compensation arrangements concluded, as they refer to any of the members of staff to be:

(aa) Relocated to the Host School;

(bb) Relocated to other schools; or

(cc) Services terminated.

**HR-Step 10:** Any dispute or disagreement in respect of any of the posts in the merged school, or on the selection and redeployment processes, or on the compensation mechanism must be dealt with, resolved and concluded according to the dispute resolution procedures of the ELRC and/or GPSSBC, but without:

(aa) Unduly delaying the process; and

(bb) Intentionally holding the process into ransom.

1. All the **administrative and support processes** should have been initiated and, where possible, concluded, having the following steps been followed:

**Admin-Step 1:** *Registration of new Host School*

In instances where the Host School would be established on a new green-fields site, per Section 3(3)(c) above, such new Host School must be registered with the Department of Basic Education upon which a new EMIS Number would be issued.

**Admin-Step 2:** *Management of Staff Establishments on PERSAL*

(aa) All the preparations must be made by the District Director and notifications sent to the PERSAL Controller in the Provincial Education Department (PED) on a need to stop and close the components and pay points of the closed schools on PERSAL immediately after the teachers and administrative staff of the schools earmarked for closure have been moved from the closed schools and new components and pay points to be opened as part of the staff establishment of the Host School.

(bb) The PERSAL Controller in the PED must be informed in writing by the District Director within seven (7) working days of closure of the schools that have been merged and that he/she should proceed with the stoppage and closure of the components and pay points of the closed schools and open new ones as part of the staff establishment of the Host School.

(cc) Once the PERSAL Controller has created the new components and pay points under the Host School, the District HR Officials should proceed and capture the names of the teachers and admin support staff who have been redeployed to the Host School against the Host School.

1. The Department of Basic Education must be informed in writing by the PED of the stoppage and closure of the components and pay points of the closed schools and opening of new components and pay points as part of the staff establishment of the Host School. Such correspondence must be directed to the Director: Education Human Resource Planning, Provisioning and Monitoring.

**Admin-Step 3:** *Reclassification of the Host School*

(aa) The classification of the school to be merged school must be assessed and, where necessary, reclassified as either a Fee-paying or a Non-fee Paying School, taking into consideration the classification of all the affected schools prior to earmarked merger and closure.

(bb) All the admin processes and funding arrangements commensurate with the reclassified Host School must be initiated and concluded by the District Director for approval by the PED.

**Admin-Step 4:** *Amalgamation of School Nutrition Programmes*

(aa) The allocation of the School Nutrition Funds against the schools earmarked for closure must be stopped immediately after the learners have been moved to the Host School.

(bb) The allocation of the School Nutrition Funds at the merged school must be increased, amalgamating the funds of both the Host School and the schools that have been closed down.

(cc) The processes stated in (aa) and (bb) above must be co-ordinated and scheduled properly to manage the transition period such that:

* No “excess” food supplies are left in the schools that have been closed down;
* Learners in the schools earmarked for closure continue to be provided with regular meals until they have left the schools to be closed down; and
* There is sufficient food in the Host School to cater for additional learners from the schools that would have been closed down.

**Admin-Step 5:** *Relocation of Personnel and Goods to the Host School*

Once all the arrangements have been finalised in the Host School for accommodating the learners and the staff from the schools earmarked for closure, the schools to be closed down must be assisted with the physical relocation processes to the Host School. The relocation processes for the schools to be closed down include the following:

(aa) Making arrangements for any fittings together with large and delicate equipment, and any other specified items to be moved from the schools to be closed down and re-used at the Host School. Such items must be identified, specified and included as part of the contract of the contractor to be appointed to carry out the infrastructure works at the Host School preparing for the merger and for receiving the additional learners and staff from the schools to be closed down. The deliverables associated with this part of the contract shall include:

* Taking off all such items from the fixtures;
* Packaging and packing them;
* Transporting them to the Host School;
* Refurbishing and/or fixing any such items that require such (could use sub-contractors for such work);
* Install them at the Host School; and
* Commission them.

The timing of such activities must be carefully planned and agreed upon ahead of time with the Principals of the affected schools to minimise any potential disturbances to the teaching and learning activities.

(bb) The District Office should make arrangements and pay for relocation of any other items that are not part of (aa) above, moving them from the schools to be closed down to the Host School. The deliverables associated with this assignment shall include packaging, packing, transporting, off-loading and placing such items in the areas identified by the Host School. Such items would include, but not limited to:

* Any learning and teaching materials;
* Any material used as part of the support services;
* Any sport and recreational material; and
* Furniture, equipment and tools.

(cc) Where the Leaner Boarding Facilities have been provided in the Host School for use, among others, by the learners from the schools earmarked for closure, the District Office should make all the necessary arrangements including payments for the transportation of the needy learners and their belongings from their homesteads to the Host School Boarding Facilities.

(dd) Where a learner opts to attend a different school other than the Host School, then such learner shall make his/her own relocation arrangements to such alternative school and pay for them, unless agreed otherwise by the School Governing Bodies and the District Office.

(ee) The District Office shall make all the necessary arrangements and pay for the relocation costs of the teachers, admin personnel and support staff that are earmarked to move either to the Host School or to other alternative schools in accordance with the applicable agreements in the ELRC and PSCBC.

(ff) All the items in the schools earmarked for closure that will not be used in the Host School shall be dealt with in accordance with Sections 12A, 37 and 58A of the South African Schools Act (Act No. 84 of 1996) (SASA), as amended.

**Admin-Step 6:** *Deregistration of Schools that have been Closed Down*

(aa) Per Section 5 of the *Rationalisation Guidelines*, once schools have been closed down, with teachers and learners relocated to the Host School, the vacated schools must be closed down and formally deregistered on the education systems.

(bb) The process of deregistering a school shall be led by the District Office for approval by the Provincial Education Department.

(cc) Such closure and request for deregistration shall be communicated formally by the PED to the Department of Basic Education.

**Admin-Step 7:** *Employee Wellness and Assistance Plans*

(aa) Section 5 of the *Rationalisation Guidelines* makes provisions for employee wellness support and professional assistance. Such requirements must be adhered to.

(bb) The nature of the required wellness support and assistance needed by the staff members will vary from one Host School to the next and therefore the specific support needs of the personnel in each Host School must be assessed by the Senior Management Team of the merged school together with the District Office.

(cc) Where a need for support and assistance has been identified, a comprehensive Employee Support Plan for each Host School must be developed within two (2) weeks of merger by the Senior Management Team of the Host School and District Office, having observed the situation on the ground. The Employee Support Plan should, as a minimum, cover the following:

* List of all the educators in the Host School that need assistance and support, as occasioned by the merger;
* Identified problem areas and proposed interventions in terms of the required assistance and support;
* Duration over which the wellness support and/or professional assistance would be provided;
* Proposed approach on how such support and/or assistance would be provided, e.g. in-sourced, out-sourced or a combination;
* Costs estimates of the identified intervention;
* Expected outcomes of the intervention; and
* Monitoring Mechanism to assess the effectiveness of the intervention.

(dd) The Employee Support Plan must be submitted to the Provincial Education Department for approval and, where necessary, for providing the necessary funding to enable its implementation. The PED shall also monitor its implementation and assess the realisation of its objectives, and suggest any modifications where necessary.

(ee) The copy of the Employee Support Plan should be made available to the Department of Basic Education and could also be shared with relevant Teacher Unions in the relevant Provincial Education Labour Relations Council.

# CONSIDERATIONS FOR LETTING MICRO SCHOOLS TO CONTINUE OPERATING

1. Given the current geographic location of some of the human settlements, the rurality of some provinces, the extent of farming activities taking place in some provinces, the topographical and man-made physical constraints, the cultural orientation of some communities, the current and planned socio-economic activities, some human settlements (catchment areas) remain sparse and isolated from other nearby human settlements. Therefore taking this reality into consideration, it is inconceivable that all the micro schools would be closed down. While the primary goal is to ensure the provision of quality education to all the learners, accessibility to the education facilities is a prerequisite and therefore imperative. Following this reality, Regulation 5(6) of the *Minimum Norms and Standards for School Infrastructure* allows for instances where micro and “unviable” schools could be allowed to continue to operate, therefore needing to be provided for fully with their physical infrastructure requirements and supported adequately.
2. Given the consideration in (1) above, the assessment to be made is whether it would be economically viable, sustainable, just and socially acceptable to close down some of the micro schools. The areas to be considered include:
3. The distance of the next nearest school from the catchment area, and the condition of the roads, so that it would not take more than 45min, one way, to transport Primary School Learners to or from school and 1hr 15min for Secondary School Learners;
4. Existence of topographical and/or man-made physical barriers;
5. The general safety and security concerns; and
6. Potential future reversal of the current learner migration patterns requiring a need for re-establishment of some of the schools that would have been closed down, especially in the townships because of population growth rates and inflow of people from other areas.
7. Where a decision has been made not to close down a micro school, such schools must:
8. Be supported fully curriculum-wise;
9. Consider multi-grade teaching;
10. Consider combined schools where a primary and a secondary school are in the same vicinity; and
11. Be provided with adequate, proper, and conducive physical infrastructure in line with the provisions of the *Norms and Standards for School Infrastructure*, taking into consideration the following:
12. Where the LEF has been decreasing over the past five (5) years, with projected further decrease, then provide Movable Alternative Building Technologies (MABT), with the proviso per the matrix below. This excludes “mobile classrooms” that do not meet Indoor Environmental Quality Standards (especially thermal and acoustic standards) and that do not have Agrément Certification; and
13. Where the LEF has been gradually increasing or remained relatively stable over the past five (5) years, with the proviso per the matric below, then provide brick and mortar (B&M) structures.

***MICRO SECONDARY SCHOOL***

***MICRO PRIMARY SCHOOL***

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **B&M** | **MABT** |
| **MABT** | **MABT** |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **B&M** | **MABT** |
| **MABT** | **MABT** |

*100 ≤ LEF < 200*

*30 ≤ LEF < 135*

*LEF < 30*

*LEF < 100*

*LEF Decreasing*

*LEF Increasing or Stable*

*LEF Increasing or Stable*

*LEF Decreasing*

# PROVISIONS FOR LEARNER BOARDING FACILITIES

Some Provincial Education Departments (PEDs) have opted to provide Learner Boarding Facilities instead of transporting learners to and fro school. Where this option has been considered, the following provisions should be taken into consideration:

1. The Cost-Benefit Analysis must be carried out on the provision of Learner Boarding Facilities over the provision of Scholar Transport, looking at both the capital and operating costs over the life-span of the Boarding Facility, which should be taken as 30 years for the sake of these calculations. This analysis must include both financial and non-financial costs.

1. In deciding on the Learner Boarding Facilities, the PED must consider the total costs (Capital Expenditure – CAPEX, and the Operating Expenditure - OPEX) to be incurred and the total revenue to be realised from running the Learner Boarding Facility over its projected life-span. Consideration must be made on the sources of revenue especially given the Non-fee Paying Schools that might need to be accommodated as they predominantly rely on the national fiscas for funding. This should include the maintenance costs and any refurbishments that might be required in future, taking into consideration different life-spans of various components that make up a complete, conducive and functional facility.
2. Both the CAPEX and OPEX for developing and for running the Learner Boarding Facilities should be funded from the Provincial Equitable Share (PES) to free up the special Conditional Grants such as the Education Infrastructure Grant (EIG) to focus on the provision of replacement schools, new schools, maintenance, refurbishments/renovations and on upgrades and additions, thereby dealing with the current infrastructure and maintenance backlogs and the current overcrowding in some schools, as a means of meeting the requirements of the *Norms and Standards for School Infrastructure*.
3. Where possible, Grades R to 3 learners should not be placed in the Learner Boarding Facilities to prevent potential psycho-social problems associated with early separation from parents and/or relatives and potential serious psychological problems later in life, and the associated societal costs/burden.
4. The learner migration patterns must be taken into consideration when planning these accommodation facilities as this would affect the medium- to long-term viability of the provided facilities and would also have an impact on the return on investment, where the Occupancy Rate of 85% is considered as a minimum.
5. As part of the assessment required in (5) above, due consideration must be given to the general trends in the area with respect to the utilisation of boarding facilities that were once operational but no longer operational. This should be coupled with market research to assess the extent to which the notion of the proposed accommodation facilities (revived or new) would be favoured by the potential users − parents, learners and educators, and supported by the local communities.
6. The general increase on the incidents arising from ill-discipline, vandalism and other scholar safety and security concerns such as bullying and violent attacks have to be considered carefully in deciding whether it would be beneficial to provide learner accommodation facilities and if all the necessarily measures would be put in place to abate such problems.
7. Where the Learner Boarding Facilities are provided, adequate safety and security measures must be provided, in line with the provisions of the *School Infrastructure Safety and Security Guidelines (2017)* and other School Safety Standards/Policies of the Department of Basic Education.
8. The learners in the Learner Boarding Facilities must be provided with adequate sport and recreational facilities.

# MANAGEMENT OF SCHOOL FACILITIES POST CLOSURE OF MICRO SCHOOLS

1. After a micro school has been closed down, the facility must not be left unoccupied for more than six (6) months as this poses serious safety and security risks.

1. Where the facility was built of inappropriate materials or a brick and mortar structure that is deemed to be unsafe structurally, such structures must be demolished and the site cleared, with rubble disposed of in an environmentally acceptable manner. The cleared site should then be transferred by a Department of Public Works, as a custodian, to either a needy Government Department, Local Municipality, or nearby community, having the provisions of Section 33(3) of SASA, and the applicable due processes of disposing of public assets been followed.
2. Where the facility was built of appropriate materials and structurally safe, it must be transferred either to another Government Department, Local Municipality or to the nearby community for its use, having followed the due processes per section (2) above. The recipient shall thereafter become fully accountable and responsible for the transferred facility.
3. In event of point (3) above, the Education Department should not incur or be liable for any further capital costs associated with the necessary renovations, reconfiguration, or upgrading of the facilities prior to or after they have been transferred to the recipient.

# PUBLIC MICRO SCHOOLS LOCATED IN PRIVATE PROPERTIES

1. The education sector has a number of schools that are located on private properties. Where this occurs, Section 14 Agreements, per Section 14 of SASA, are expected to have been signed between the respective Provincial Education Department (PED) and the private property/land owner, setting out the roles, responsibilities and the obligations of each party with respect to the facility concerned.
2. Where a public school facility is on private property and the PED had agreed to the establishment and operation of the said school on such property, the PED remains fully responsible for ensuring access to quality education by the learners and that the facilities used for teaching and learning purposes meet the provisions of the *Minimum Norms and Standards for School Infrastructure*, and that they are safe and conducive for teaching and learning. This is the Constitutional obligation of the Department and also as espoused in SASA.
3. The question that normally arises is whether the PED should invest on a private property by upgrading a school and/or boarding facility that is located on such property. Consideration is made on micro schools that are built of inappropriate materials and/or those that do not have access to any form of basic services and cannot be relocated to alternative sites per Section 4 above. Depending upon the obligations and conditions set out in the Section 14 Agreement, per item (1) above, the PED is expected maintain and/or upgrade such property to acceptable standards of an educational facility or to cause the property/land owner to maintain and/or upgrade it.

# MICRO SCHOOLS UNDER SPECIAL PROGRAMMES AND ALSO AFFECTED BY SCHOOL RATIONALISATION

## The Problem Statement

The Department of Basic Education (DBE) is pursuing some special programmes that are intended to address specific problems in the education sector. The Accelerated School Infrastructure Delivery Initiative (ASIDI) Programme is one such programme. Its primary objective is to provide safe, accessible, functional, conducive and complete teaching and learning spaces and also to provide basic services to learners and educators, thereby restoring their dignity and to enhance their well-being. Its focal point is on the eradication and replacement of schools that are built of inappropriate materials and those that do not have any form of access to basic services.

In order to implement the ASIDI Programme, a special grant fund, the School Infrastructure Backlogs Grant (SIBG) was made available by National Treasury. The SIBG is an additional source of funding for the sector that might go away at some point in time. The DBE must therefore optimise on this dispensation while it lasts.

The School Rationalisation Process is also another special programme that is intended to reduce or eliminate the number of micro schools and to merge them with other schools so as to improve the quality of education (more subject choices, higher number of learners for peer referral, better access to more sport codes) and to increase the return on investment associated with the provision of school infrastructure.

These two Programmes coalesce at some point in that there are micro schools that are built of inappropriate materials. Where this occurs, the default approach has been that of excluding such schools from the list of projects to be attended to on the basis of the imminent closure of such schools. However, in essence, the process of closing down a school does not make the learners and educators from such schools go extinct. Therefore the process of closing down a school does not take away the need for providing safe, decent and accessible teaching and learning spaces to the affected learners. This therefore calls for the review of the current default approach of discounting or eliminating such schools from the project lists − the ASIDI project list and also the provincial project lists. This does not imply that there must be capital investment in such schools but that alternative means must be sought to provide better facilities for such learners.

## Required Approach

If a school that is built of inappropriate materials is earmarked for closure and merged with another school, the Host School must be provided with sufficient amenities to accommodate learners and educators from the closed school(s). In this case, there are four options that are at play, per Sub-section 3(3) and Section 4 above. These are to:

1. Let the micro school continue operating as is – depending upon the conditions stated under Section 4 above;
2. Merge the micro school to be closed down with another micro school on an existing site;
3. Merge the micro school to be closed down with another micro school on a new site – depending upon the conditions under Sub-section 3(3) above; or
4. Merge the micro school with an existing bigger school.

Where micro schools built of inappropriate materials were on the original project list of a special programme such as ASIDI, it is considered more justifiable to accommodate all the four potential options highlighted above under such special programme, and attend to all such schools.

## Rationale for the Required Approach

The primary objective of the ASIDI Programme is to eradicate inappropriate schools and to replace them with safe, accessible and decent school facilities. The process of closing down a school and have it moved to another location does not take away the need for the learners to be accommodated decently. This concept would be evident when considering options (a) to (c) under Sub-section 8.2 above but might not be clear when considering option (d), i.e. where a micro school is merged with an existing bigger school.

The logic that is being advanced here is that the new location of a former micro school that was built of inappropriate materials should not detract from having the Host School considered under the ASIDI Programme and that is by virtue of the micro inappropriate school linked to it. However, where the Host School is an established bigger school, this will not call for the total demolition of that school but to be upgraded and to be provided with the necessary additions and the associated amenities. Following that, the ASIDI Programme would have both totally New Replacement Schools and schools with Upgrades and Additions.

The articulations above suggest that regardless of the size of an inappropriate school and whether or not such a school were affected by the School Rationalisation Process, there is a need to keep track of all such schools, as long as the said schools were identified as befitting the ASIDI Programme or identified as inappropriate and therefore needing to be addressed. Following this point, how would this impact on how progress on such programmes is reported on?

## Reporting on Progress Made

Following the points raised above, the initial baseline that was established for inappropriate schools should not be changed when reporting on progress made because no school should be excluded from any project list simply because of the Rationalisation Process. In other words, if the baseline for the ASIDI Inappropriate Schools was 510 and, say, 150 of those schools were identified as micro schools that are earmarked for closures and mergers, the baseline should still remain 510 because all those 150 micro schools still need to be addressed under the ASIDI Programme, albeit that not 510 schools would be rebuilt because of possible mergers. The Progress Report should therefore indicate both the total number of inappropriate schools to be eradicated based on the original list of identified inappropriate schools and the number of New Replacement Schools and schools with Upgrades and Additions, but with a note made on the mergers to keep track of the baseline numbers.

This would enable the DBE and the sector at large to keep track of all the schools that were identified initially as inappropriate schools and also to ensure consistent reporting, thereby addressing the serious problem of credibility of the data being reported on. This would also address the potential pervasiveness of claiming rather empty victories where progress made is reported against reduced baseline thus increasing the reported percentage achievement, while the real problem or need on the ground still exists.

The idea posed above would work well with micro schools built of inappropriate materials. But would the same principles apply when dealing with schools that need access to Basic Services?

## Dealing with Micro Schools that have no Form of Basic Services

If a micro school that is subject to the School Rationalisation Process needs access to basic services, the normal reaction is that of excluding it from the list of projects to be attended to and therefore not provide anything to such schools on the basis of the fact that they would be closed down “soon”. This is a legitimate consideration that is advanced on the grounds of a need to maximise return on investment, given the capital outlay to be incurred.

When a micro school is earmarked for closure and merger, the entire process might take anything up to three years or more to be concluded before the learners and educators could be moved to the Host School. This period includes all the preliminary consultations and stakeholder engagements, gazetting etc. and also the time it would take to complete the construction activities at the Host Site. Given that, does this imply that such schools should remain without access to basic services over this period of time, particularly sanitation and water?

It is proposed that for such schools, cheaper temporary measures should be provided at all times because the learners and educators cannot be left without access to basic services for the extended period of time. As the case was with inappropriate schools, schools that are in need of access to basic services should also not be excluded from the project lists on the grounds of the School Rationalisation Process. Rather, the following temporary measures should be considered while long-term permanent solutions are being pursued:

1. For temporary sanitation provisions:
2. Relatively shallow VIP Latrines with IBR metal sheet cladding;
3. Removable alternative technology; or
4. Mobile toilets should be considered, depending upon the costs.
5. For temporary access to water supply:
6. Carting of water and filling up water tanks; or
7. Temporary connections to existing water supply such as the mains or local bulk water storage should be considered.
8. For electricity, the vulnerability of solar panels to theft limits the potential approaches that could be considered and would therefore have to await the completion of the new Host Site.

For the purpose of reporting on progress made, the approach proposed under Sub-section 8.4 above should also be considered when dealing with the provision of basic services. In this case, reporting would include updates on the provision of both the temporary and the permanent measures.

The baseline should therefore not be reduced because of the School Rationalisation Process as this would be seen as “an easy way out” while the problem still exists on the ground. Once again, this approach would ensure that the DBE and the sector at large monitor progress on all the identified schools that need attention and not lose track of those due to the School Rationalisation Process. This will also assist in addressing the serious problem of credibility of the reported data.

# REPORTING ON PROGRESS MADE ON THE SCHOOL RATIONALISATION PROCESS

1. The sector needs to adopt a uniform approach towards reporting on the progress made on the School Rationalisation Process to ensure uniformity, ease of interpretation of the data and the ability to roll-up the numbers for consolidation and sector reporting.
2. The first part of the Progress Report should confirm the baseline information per Province, providing basic information on all the micro schools. The Reporting Template for such is included as **Annexure A**.
3. The second part of the Progress Report should reflect progress made towards the successful completion of all the processes leading to and including the decanting of the learners and educators to replacement facilities, and also on the decommissioning processes including the transfer of the unused school property to the next beneficiary. The Template for this report is included as **Annexure B**.

# REVIEW OF THE STANDARD PROCEDURES

1. Conditions on the ground change with time as the issues are interacted with, more information made available, new and unforeseen problems encountered, and refined realisation dawning, leading to new experiences on how to deal better with the issues.
2. This calls for continuous improvement of the processes and approaches for effectiveness and efficiency. Therefore this document will be revised from time to time as the need arises.

# ANNEXURES

## Annexure A – *Template for Reporting on Baseline Information on the Status of all Micro Schools in a Province*

## Annexure B – *Template for Reporting on Progress Made on the School Rationalisation & Re-alignment Process*