**NATIONAL ASSEMBLY**

**WRITTEN REPLY**

**Question 289**

**DATE OF PUBLICATION OF INTERNAL QUESTION PAPER: 06/03/2020**

**INTERNAL QUESTION PAPER: 07/2020**

289. Dr SS Thembekwayo (EFF) to ask the Minister of Basic Education:

Whether her department is planning to build a school in Gert Sibande District Municipality region for children living with autism: if not; what is the position in this regard; if so what are the relevant details?

Response

The Department has no plans to build a school for learners with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) in Gert Sibande District Municipality. The establishment of a school is based on a wide range of criteria including the number of learners identified to attend the school. Currently; there are 42 learners with autism that are admitted in Special Schools. The Department has Units in the Special Schools for Severe Intellectual Disability (SID) to accommodate learners with autism. Through the implementation of inclusive practices learners with autism are able to access required professional specialists appointed at SID schools because they are learners who require moderate to high levels of support. However; some learners referred and recommended for placement are not yet placed as the parents have a right to choose a school; unfortunately, in some instances preferred schools are full to capacity. It has to be noted that there is a plan in place to open a Unit for learners with autism at the proposed school for hearing and visually impaired which is currently under planning and design in Barberton.