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GUIDELINES TO ENSURE QUALITY EDUCATION AND SUPPORT IN SPECIAL SCHOOLS AND SPECIAL SCHOOL RESOURCE CENTRES

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GUIDELINES TO ENSURE QUALITY EDUCATION AND SUPPORT IN SPECIAL SCHOOLS AND
SPECIAL SCHOOL RESOURCE CENTRES TO SUPPORT INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

2014

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GUIDELINES TO ENSURE QUALITY EDUCATION AND SUPPORT IN SPECIAL SCHOOLS AND SPECIAL SCHOOL RESOURCE CENTRES

1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Historically, inequity in the provision of quality education and support was most evident in the “Special Needs sector”. The Report of the Human Rights Commission of 2004 showed that learners with special needs in rural areas experience the worst forms of education exclusion. Not only are there very few special schools in rural areas, they do not exist in many deep rural areas, and where they do exist, they are in the most deplorable conditions and do not always have qualified personnel and specialists support personnel.

This inequality in the provision of education support to learners with special needs was further confirmed by the Department of Education report of 2007. According to this report, in 2007, 408 special schools across the country provided education to 91,280 learners identified with special needs. Typically the best resourced special schools are in the urban areas and they attract the best qualified specialists. The quality of education offered in many of these special schools is very limited and many learners enrolled in some of the schools never progress beyond Grade 1. Some of the challenges that contribute to the poor provision of education and support in special schools include:

- Limited skills among teachers and support personnel
- Unavailability of professional expert support personnel
- Inadequate personning, especially non-teaching personnel and care professionals in hostels
- Lack of learning and teaching support material and other material resources;
- Lack of assistive devices;
- Poverty and reliance on disability grants for payment of school fees by learners;
- Inadequate transport
- Infrastructure challenges

In an attempt to address these past and current challenges, in 2001 South Africa adopted the inclusive education policy: Education White Paper 6: Special Education Needs Building an Inclusive Education and Training System. This policy outlines strategies for the provisions of education support for learners who experience barriers to learning and development. According to this policy one of the key strategies for improving education support to learners experiencing barriers to learning and development is through the establishment of an inclusive education and training system. At the centre of this system should be strengthened specials schools that will provide adequate and

appropriate and quality educational provision for those learners who require intense level of support and are enrolled in these schools. Specials schools will also be strengthened so that they function as a resource centre. As a resource centre they will be expected to provide "particular expertise and support, especially professional support in curriculum, assessment and instruction to neighbouring schools, especially full service schools. They will do this as part a district based support team (DBST)". Annexure 1 provides details about the DBST and its function.

This document provides guidelines for the system on the minimum standards that are required for any special school to function adequately and provide quality education, care and support to learners enrolled in these schools. The document also outlines guidelines for a functional Special School as Resource Centre (SSRC). The guidelines will guide the Department of Basic Education at all levels in resourcing, supporting and monitoring Special Schools and Special Schools as Resource Centres.

The guidelines are divided into two sections. The first section provides guidelines for Special Schools that will ensure that all they are fully functional and provide quality education and support to learners who require high level of support and are enrolled in these schools. The guideline also outlines some of the requirements for a special school to qualify to be a Special School Resource Centre (SSRC). The Department of Basic Education must ensure that a special school meets most of the standards described in these guidelines before the school begins preparations to function as a SSRC. The second section of the guideline provides guidelines for a functional SSRC.

2. GUIDELINES TO ENSURE QUALITY EDUCATION AND SUPPORT IN SPECIAL SCHOOLS

The guideline to ensure quality education and support in special schools outlines some of the requirements for a functional special school. The information in this guideline is organised under the following headings:

- Legislative and policy framework
- Curriculum management and implementation
- Personnel supply and qualifications
- Infrastructure and hostel accommodation

2.1 Legislative and policy framework

2.1.1 Special schools are public schools. Therefore, their functioning must be guided by the laws and policies that guide other public schools. Furthermore, special schools have a critical role in the implementation of an inclusive education system. Therefore their functioning should be guided by the relevant legislation and policies that support an inclusive education system.

2.1.2 Below are some of the key legislation and policies that should guide the functioning of Special Schools.

- Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, No. 108 of 1996.
- South African Schools Act; Act No 84 of 1996.
- The Children's Act; Act No. 38 of 2005
- The Children's Amendment Act No 41 of 2007
- Education White Paper 6: Special Needs Education: Building an inclusive education and training system, 2001
- The National Curriculum Statement, Grade R-12, 2011
- National Protocol on Assessment Grade R-12, 2011
- United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and its Optional Protocol December, 2006
- Guidelines for the Provision of Boarding Facilities in Public Ordinary Schools
- The South African Bureau of Standards (SABS) 0400 Code of Practice for the Application of the National Building Regulations; 1990
- National Building Regulation and SABS of 1993, SANS 10-400
- The National Building Regulations and Building Standards Act No 103 of 1997
- South African Schools Act; Act No 84 of 1996: Regulations relating to minimum uniform norms and standards for public school infrastructure, 2013
- Public Finance Management Act, Act No 1 of 1999 as amended by Act 29 of 1999

2.1.3 Furthermore, Specials schools should be guided by the following guidelines that will assist them in the delivery of quality education and support.

- National Policy on Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support (SIAS), 2014
- Guidelines for Inclusive Teaching and Learning, 2010
- Guidelines for Responding to Learner Diversity in the Classroom Through Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statements, 2011

2.1.4 It is imperative that Specials Schools are familiar with all the relevant legislation, policies and guidelines and must have copies in their schools for reference purposes.

2.1.5 Education legislation and policy which includes the inclusive education policy, identify several institutions, structures and personnel that are tasked with the development and implementation of an inclusive education system.

2.1.6 Special schools should have a clear understanding these institutions, structures and personnel whose direct or indirect mandate is to ensure that special schools function optimally. These institutions, structures and personnel include:

- The National Department of Basic Education
- Provincial Departments of Education
- Districts
- Ordinary mainstream schools
- Full-service schools
- Special schools as resource centres
- District-based support teams
- School-based support teams
- Teachers
- Parents
- Support personnel
- Other government departments

2.1.7 Special schools should have an understanding of the roles of these institutions, structures and personnel. Such an understanding is important because the effective functioning of special schools relies on these institutions, structures and personnel.

- 2.1.8 The inclusive education policy and several guidelines documents, which include the Guidelines for Full-Service/Inclusive Schools, 2010, Guidelines for District-based Support Teams (DBST), 2005, Draft National Policy on Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support (SIAS), 2014, provide a detailed outline of what these structures are and their roles and responsibilities. Special schools must familiarise themselves to these guidelines documents. All special schools must have copies of these guidelines. A summary of some of the roles are outlined below.
- 2.1.9 The Department of Basic Education at national, provincial and district levels has an obligation to monitor all special schools on a regular basis and provide the necessary support. All aspects of education provision must be monitored. These include, but are not limited to, school governance and management, curriculum planning and delivery, infrastructure provisioning, human resource management and transport. Special schools must not be seen as the sole responsibility of officials from the Inclusive/Special Needs Education sections of the Department.
- 2.1.10 The Department of Basic Education must keep all the special schools' records required by the education system for planning, monitoring and reporting purposes.
- 2.1.11 When signing the annual progression and promotion schedules, the relevant district officials must ensure that all learners at special schools are benefiting educationally.
- 2.1.12 Provincial Departments of Education must establish and develop skills of District-based Support Teams to support the implementation of White Paper 6.
- 2.1.13 As District-based Support Teams are introduced, districts must ensure that these teams are fully functional in accordance with the Framework for the Establishment of District-based Support Teams (July 2005). These teams must liaise with other Government Departments, such as Health and Social Development, to provide the required support to schools.
- 2.1.14 Special schools that have been identified as Special School Resource Centres (SSRCs) must operate under the auspices of the DBST and provide support to other schools. This should be managed via a District-based Support Team management committee. Principals of all SSRCs in the district must be represented on this committee. Their responsibility, inter alia, is to manage the balance between ensuring that quality teaching, learning and support takes place at their schools, whilst ensuring that personnel at Special School Resource Centres provide adequate support as an arm of the District-based Support Team.

2.1.15 Special Schools must ensure that they support the families of learners enrolled in their schools. Such support may include educational guidance and support, psychological and emotional guidance and support, etc. Schools must advise parents on the best possible career opportunities available to learners.

2.2 Curriculum management and implementation

2.2.1 Admission of learners

- i. Special schools are there to provide education support to learners who require high levels of support. Therefore, special schools should only admit learners who require high levels of support.
- ii. Special schools should be organised according to their programme of specialisation which entails specific curriculum delivery requirements. A special school may admit only learners who require support in the area of specialisation offered at the school. The learners' support needs should be determined using the National Policy on Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support (SIAS) process. Only learners whose support needs have been identified using the SIAS process should be admitted to special schools. All admissions must be ratified by the District-based Support Team.
- iii. In cases where the determination of a learner's support needs require a medical assessment, this assessment must be conducted by the relevant professionals by completing the Disability and Health Form included in the SIAS Toolkit. The outcome of the assessment should be communicated to the school and parents and used to ensure that the learner receives appropriate support as part of the SIAS process. The medical assessment on its own must not be used as justify admission to a special school.
- iv. No learner with very high needs may be refused admission on the basis of the severity of the learner's support needs.
- v. Priority of admission to a special school should be given to learners who need high levels of support, are out-of-school and have not been able to gain access to any form of schooling.
- vi. Appropriateness of placement of learners should be reviewed annually or at least every two years.
- vii. Admission to a special school should be considered as a last option for a learner and should only be done in cases where reasonable accommodation cannot be made available in the local ordinary school. Learners and parents who meet the requirements for additional support must still have the opportunity to exercise their choice as to whether they are educated in a special school or an ordinary or full-service school.
- viii. Ideally, a special school should accommodate a maximum of 300 learners on site.
- ix. A decision to exempt a learner entirely, partially or conditionally from compulsory schooling should be approved by the Head of Department and such a learner should be placed on a register by the Department

(SASA, Section 4 (1) and (2)). The Department must put in place measures for the monitoring of such learners in terms of their support and education. The exemption clause is not meant to be used by schools to exclude learners with disabilities. Only parents can request for their child to be exempted from compulsory school attendance.

- x. Special schools should introduce exit strategies and transition to work programmes for learners who are older than 18. Schools must motivate why individual learners should remain at school after the age of 18. Such a motivation must outline the programme of curriculum support that will be offered. This motivation must be reviewed on a year-by-year basis and must be approved by the Head of the Provincial Education Department.
- xi. Schools must further incrementally introduce early intervention programmes and classes for learners from the age of three. This is particularly important for children with intellectual disability, visual impairment, autism, communication impairments, physical disability and those who are Deaf who are dependent on specialist interventions at as early an age as possible.
- xii. All Grade R classes are expected to be inclusive and offer places to all learners. Special schools should establish outreach services to provide additional support to children with disabilities in mainstream settings.

2.2.2 Organising curriculum delivery in specials schools

- i. Schools should be organised around specialised curriculum support programmes rather than category of disability. Curriculum support programmes should address the following curriculum support needs:
 - Learning and cognition
 - Hearing
 - Vision
 - Mobility
 - Communication
 - Skills and vocational
 - Complex, multiple and pervasive disability
 - Behaviour and psycho-social factors
- ii. When planning the programmes schools should consider personnel qualification, use, distribution and capacity building, curriculum delivery, physical infrastructure, learning and teaching support materials (LTSM), assistive devices and technology and ICTs.
- iii. Every school that offers a particular programme should develop the necessary expertise and become a centre of excellence in that particular programme.

- iv. A school that indicates that it offers a particular form and level of support must ensure that it is equipped in all respects to offer such support.

2.2.3 Curriculum management

- i. Like all other principals, principals in specials schools should adhere to regulations and policies with regard to curriculum management.
- ii. As curriculum managers they must ensure that The National Curriculum Statement is the norm in their schools. A school may not offer programmes outside of the National Curriculum Statement without the approval of the provincial Department of Education.
- iii. The principal, supported by the SMT should ensure effective curriculum management. These include but are not limited to:
 - Ensuring the programme offered at the school is, as far as possible, aligned to the National Curriculum Statement;
 - Ensuring there is adequate and appropriately qualified teaching and professional personnel to deliver the curriculum;
 - Ensuring the availability of adequate and appropriate learning and teaching support material. These should be provided for all learners in an appropriate and relevant format, depending on the learners' needs;
 - Ensuring that the principle of one textbook per subject per learner is adhered to;
 - Ensuring that all learners have access to Workbooks and are supported to use these the appropriate level;
 - Mediating curriculum differentiation by making simplified versions, special editions or lower grade levels of texts available where necessary;
 - Providing adequate and appropriate assistive devices and technology and ensuring that these are effectively integrated in the teaching and learning process;
 - Effectively managing, retrieving, storing and maintaining Learning Teaching and Support Materials (LTSM), assistive devices and technology;
 - Managing timetabling and adherence to tuition time (also introducing periods for mastering of specific skills such as Braille, orientation and mobility, South African Sign Language, Augmentative and Alternative (AAC), computyping, etc.);
 - Ensuring there are support structures, resources and systems (e.g. a School-based Support Team (SBST), database of community and other resources and clear protocols and referral systems for personnel and students on how to utilise these) – community resources include social welfare services,

- primary health clinics, mental health drop in centres, support services at Higher Education Institutions, programmes run by non-governmental and disabled people organisations, teacher centres, etc.;
- Managing assessment and support records (Accommodations, SNA 1 and SNA 2 and other SIAS Forms); and
 - Creating a school environment that is welcoming, enabling and has high expectations for all learners.
- iv. Teaching and assessment in special schools should not only be guided by the National Curriculum Statement (NCS), but also by the Screening Identification Assessment and Support (SIAS) Policy, the Guidelines for Inclusive Learning Programmes, Inclusive Teaching and Learning and Responding to Learner Diversity through the Curriculum.
 - v. Curriculum delivery must focus on ensuring differentiation and adaptation so that learners can access the National Curriculum Statement. Content, teaching and assessment methods and LTSM should be differentiated and adapted.
 - vi. Individual support plans for learners should emphasise acquisition of knowledge and skills required for academic success and development in general.
 - vii. The development of literacy and numeracy should form part of everyday teaching for all learners, also learners with severe intellectual disability.
 - viii. Practical application and skills development must be linked to knowledge, theory and conceptual development as contained in the National Curriculum Statement.
 - ix. Schools that offer skills and vocational programmes must do this with the approval and under the supervision of the Provincial Department of Education and should ensure that the academic component as well as the skills component of the Learning Programme, is up to standard. Learners should not be compelled to follow the skills programme.
 - x. Schools should use the National Protocol for Assessment, Grade R-12 policy to guide assessment, recording and progression. Chapter 9 of the policy makes provision for assessment of learners with special needs.
 - xi. All learners must have the opportunity to make use of accommodations and adapted forms of assessment as outlined in the National Policy on the Conduct of the Senior Certificate, 2014 and applications must be submitted in time to the relevant structures at district and provincial level.
 - xii. Accommodations and adapted forms of assessment must be applied throughout learners' school careers.
 - xiii. All learners must be appropriately assessed for progression throughout the year.

- xiv. The advancement of learners through the grades should be the norm and no learner should remain in the same grade throughout the learner's school career. The Head of Department may give approval for learners to spend longer than four years in a phase if and when necessary.
- xv. Certification at least at Grade 9 level and, as far as possible, at Grade 12 level should form part of the curriculum package of all special schools.

2.2.4 Monitoring and supporting curriculum delivery

- i. The same curriculum support and monitoring that is provided by the National, Provincial (district and school level) Department of Education in ordinary schools should be provided to special schools. The monitoring and supporting of the curriculum in special schools must not be the responsibility of the DBE section that deals with inclusive education or special needs education alone.
- ii. Therefore it is important that support personnel such as curriculum advisors and circuit managers should have the knowledge and skills to support special schools. Special schools resource centres must play a role in capacitating support personnel with the knowledge and skills they require to support and monitor curriculum delivery in special schools. They should do this as part of their role within the DBST.

2.3. Personnel Supply, Utilisation and Qualifications

2.3.1 Personnel supply and ratios

- i. All personnel employed in special schools must be thoroughly screened to ensure suitability to work with children who require high levels of support.
- ii. Schools should endeavour to have personnel that come from a variety of cultural backgrounds and reflects the diversity of the learner population.
- iii. Personnel establishment should include professional and other personnel with disabilities.
- iv. Schools should determine the nature of the programme offered at the school and make sure they employ personnel with the appropriate qualifications to support the implementation of the programme.
- v. Special schools should have professional teaching and professional specialist support personnel, non-teaching personnel and administrative support personnel. The ratios of professional teaching, professional expert support personnel and non-professional personnel must be determined by the programme offered at the school. For example In some schools, such as those for learners with physical disabilities, non-teaching and non-professional personnel may exceed the number of professional teaching personnel, because of the

high level of needs of learners, especially in the foundation and intermediate phases. The norms and standards for the allocation of non-teaching personnel will be determined by the Department of Basic Education following the necessary consultative processes.

- vi. Teaching personnel should include teachers, learning support teachers/coordinators and teaching assistants. The teacher learner ratio determined by the Department of Basic Education in accordance with the level of support required by the learners must be adhered to.
- vii. Professional specialist support personnel refer to personnel that provide health and other therapeutic, psychological and social support that enhances learners' capacity to achieve maximum benefit from learning experiences. Depending on programmes offered at the school, professional specialist support personnel should include but not be limited to:
 - Guidance and counselling specialists
 - Psychologists
 - Sign Language interpreters
 - Braille and Orientation and Mobility Instructors
 - Therapists: Occupational, Speech and Language; Audiologists, Music and Physiotherapists
 - Social workers
 - Nursing Personnel
 - Rehabilitation workers
 - Child and youth care workers
- viii. Professional specialist support personnel may be appointed on a full time or part-time basis. Only those categories of professional specialist support personnel that are relevant to the specialised programmes offered at the school should be employed at the school.
- ix. Depending on the programme offered at the school and how the school operates non-teaching personnel should include:
 - House mothers
 - Assistant house mothers
 - Drivers
 - Security guards
 - Cleaners
 - Gardeners
 - Technicians, e.g. Braille room operators and wheelchair maintenance technicians

- x. The working hours of non-teaching personnel must be strictly negotiated and managed to avoid a situation where they do not complete eight hours of work a day, claim overtime for after-hours work, or refuse to do other tasks than those that they feel belong to them, e.g. in the case of drivers and hostel staff who have to perform duties before and after school hours, night and ground duties, supervision, etc.
- xi. Parents must not be forced to subsidise the salaries of non-professional personnel. However, some parents may choose to pay additional costs relating to non-professional personnel, in which case such payments must be agreed to, and monitored by, the school governing body.
- xii. Administrative support personnel should include:
 - Receptionist
 - Secretary
 - Financial administrator
 - Facility manager

2.3.2 Personnel qualifications, knowledge, skills and attitudes

- i. Personnel with qualifications, knowledge and skills that are in line with the curriculum programme offered in a particular school should be employed. All personnel employed in special schools should have a positive attitude towards people with disabilities.

ii. Management

School principals should:

- Possess a minimum graduate qualification and any other qualification or training required of school managers;
- Possess additional qualifications on disability studies, educational psychology, social work or educational therapy will be a strong recommendation;
- Have a thorough understanding of legislation and policies that guide the functioning of public schools including special schools;
- Possess some experience in mainstream schools. Where this is lacking, efforts should be made to organise manager-exchange links with mainstream schools, with a view to sharing ideas and strategies for enabling inclusive policy and practice across and between the settings; and
- Have an in depth understanding on how to create and manage an inclusive school.

Members of school management team (SMT) should:

- Possess the necessary qualification and experience;
- Have a thorough understanding of the education laws, policies and strategies. These should include an understanding of the inclusive education policy, implementation strategies and guidelines document; and
- Have a thorough understanding of their role in curriculum management and support.

iii. Professional teaching personnel

- All teaching personnel should possess at least a first degree or a diploma which includes training on special needs or inclusive education.
- Teachers who are appointed to the school without a formal qualification in special needs or inclusive education must undertake such training with immediate effect. There should be a time period of not more than one year for personnel who do not have the requisite specialised qualifications to acquire these through continued professional development arranged by the school.
- All teaching personnel should have knowledge of and competence in:
 - Implementing the NCS;
 - Developing Inclusive Learning Programmes that are in line with the NCS;
 - Using the SIAS strategy to support learners;
 - Differentiating and adapting the curriculum;
 - Developing and managing the implementation of individual support plans (ISPs);
 - Use of assistive devices and technology to enhance teaching and learning;
 - Method and mode of communication and learning utilised by the learners in the school;
 - Where Sign Language is used, teachers must be competent in academic sign language; and
 - Disability studies.

iv. Professional specialist support personnel

Professional Specialist Support Personnel:

- Must be familiar with the NCS, especially what and how teachers teach;
- Should have a good understanding of the inclusive education policy and education policies, strategies and guidelines for implementing the policy and their role in supporting the implementation of the policy;
- Should be competent in managing teaching and learning support;
- Should be competent working with others in a collaborative and consultative manner and be able to use this competency to support teachers, learners and parents;
- Should be competent in guiding teachers on the optimal use of assistive technology;

- Must be able to use their expertise to help learners access the curriculum and teachers differentiate and adapt the curriculum; and
- Utilise their professional expertise to address health barriers that learners experience that prevent them from accessing the curriculum.

v. Non-teaching and non-professional personnel

- House mothers and assistant house mothers employed in schools catering for learners with physical disability and cerebral palsy should possess a minimum qualification or training in health, social and/or home based care and should comply with standards outlined in the Children's Act (2005). In hostels that admit deaf learners, housemothers should possess minimum qualifications in South African Sign Language.
- Drivers, particularly where the school operates as a daily facility and daily transport is provided, should possess some previous driving experience and a full driving licence appropriate for the type of vehicle he/she is driving. Drivers can be appointed full-time at school or the service could be outsourced to a private transport provider, provided the above mentioned standards are met. Drivers must be trained in basic first aid and to support the learners that they are transporting. Principals are responsible for ensuring that vehicles are roadworthy at all times. Security guards employed in special schools in the day and/or residential facility must receive additional training in the needs of the learners at the school.
- All non-teaching non-professional personnel should have an understanding on the different disabilities, how they impact on functioning and how as personnel they can create an enabling environment that minimise the impact of the disability.

vi. Administrative support personnel

- Administrative support personnel must have their relevant qualification. In addition to this they should have some basic understanding of disability and learners' disabilities and how it can impact on their functioning. They should have an understanding of how in their respective roles they can create an enabling environment that limits the impact of the learners' disabilities on learning and development. They should have a basic understanding of the inclusive education policy and the role of a special school in implementing this policy.

2.3.3 Personnel utilisation

- i. Schools should use personnel in a cost-effective and productive manner. This is especially so in the case of professional expert support personnel whose availability in the country is very limited.

- ii. One-on-one interventions must as far as possible be alternated with group sessions and full-time special classes replaced with part time specialist support.

2.3.4 Personnel capacity building

- i. It is imperative that all special schools' personnel, especially teaching and professional expert support personnel, must engage in relevant ongoing professional development that will assist them to deliver the curriculum and support learners. Ongoing professional development will assist in keeping them abreast of latest developments in the education and support of learners who require high level of specialised support.
- ii. Schools must arrange continued professional development opportunities at school and externally and manage the professional development points system of all personnel.

2.4 Infrastructure and Hostel Accommodation

2.4.1 Physical Infrastructure

The *Regulations relating to minimum uniform norms and standards for public school infrastructure (2013)* apply to public ordinary as well as to public special schools. The principle of universal design is applicable to all schools.

In addition, the following requirements, over and above the mainstream schools requirements, apply in special schools.

- The design of the physical infrastructure should take into consideration the programmes offered at the school, the envisaged learner that will be enrolled in the programmes and ensure full accessibility of the whole school environment. This includes but is not limited to classroom, laboratories, workshops where necessary, administration, library, computer room, ablution block, soundproof room for audiometric testing, hostel, therapy rooms, observation facilities, braille printing rooms as well as pathways leading to these facilities.
- Architects with experience in designing buildings for people with disabilities must be consulted when designing or renovating special schools.
- All classrooms should be accessible for the installation and movement of specialist equipment, material resources and learning support equipment.
- The furnishing and resourcing of all the facilities in the school should take into consideration the learner population and programme specialisation offered at the schools. The furnishing and resources must be relevant and adequate to meet the learner needs and support the delivery of the curriculum, e.g. in terms of lay-out, space, height adjustable tables, lighting, electrical supply, etc.

- The school physical infrastructure should meet the legal requirements in terms of safety and health standards.
- Fully functional and adequately equipped incontinence facilities should be made available, where necessary.
- Multi-purpose rooms/spaces should be made available for parent guidance and consultation, community training, therapy, individual or small group interventions, orientation and mobility training, fitting and adjustment of assistive devices.
- Secure storage space must be built for the safe-keeping of expensive specialised equipment.
- Workshops must be provided for the calibration of instruments, minor maintenance work on equipment, etc.
- Schools should have appropriate recreational facilities.
- New schools should as far as possible be built in close proximity to an ordinary school or cluster of ordinary schools so as to enhance the capacity of the special schools to ultimately function as a special school resource centre.

2.4.2 Hostel Accommodation

Regulations that apply to hostel accommodation at public ordinary schools apply to hostels at special schools. In addition:

- The accommodation should consider the programme offered at the school and the learners that will be enrolled in the programme and make sure that their needs are accommodated;
- Particular care must be taken to ensure that hostel accommodation is appropriate, clean and should not offend the dignity of the learner;
- The school must put measures in place to ensure that no form of abuse takes place at any time or by anyone;
- Hostels must be sited in buildings dedicated for this purpose;
- Separate facilities must be provided for girls and boys and young and older children;
- Hostels must not be overcrowded;
- Dormitories should not contain more than four beds;
- The accommodation must be physically accessible for learners with various disabilities;
- Meals must follow commonly accepted nutritional prescripts taking into consideration the learners' needs, for example a meal may not consist of only bread or porridge;

- Health regulations should be adhered to at all times;
- The regulations recommended in the Children's Act should be adhered to for the safety and development of learners with special needs;
- Learners in hostels must be under constant supervision of an appropriate adult/s;
- Safety regulations must be adhered to at all times and by all personnel and learners;
- Security personnel must be provided, where appropriate; and
- Emergency exits must be accessible to all learners in the hostel and maintained in a state of good repair.

2.4.3 Material Resources

- i. Special schools must be equipped with appropriate, up-to-date and well maintained material resources. Schools should plan the sourcing of these material resources in such a way that teaching and learning are not affected.
- ii. The nature of the programme offered in the school and the learners that will be enrolled in the school should be used to determine the material resources requirements.
- iii. School management teams should be knowledgeable about current development related to relevant and appropriate material resources that can enhance teaching and learning. The market is flooded with material resources that can be used to enhance teaching and learning for learners who require a high level of support. Some of these add minimum value to teaching and learning. It is very important that schools are informed and source materials that offer value for money and are accessible and durable. Depending on the programme offered at the school, material resources may include, but should not be limited to:
 - E-learning facilities;
 - Personal devices for learners, such as Perkins Brailers and Alternative and Augmentative Communication devices;
 - Devices and equipment required to support teaching and learning such as high volume Braille printers, CCTV cameras, scanners, inter-active white boards, sound amplification systems and other assistive technology;
 - A library of technology for adaptive assessment or individual use on a long term basis;
 - Learning and teaching support material in accessible format for all learners;
 - Library resources, including material in support of the particular needs of the learners;
 - All equipment must be maintained and kept in good working condition at all times; and

- iv. It is critical that material resources are used to enhance teaching and learning and teachers are supported in learning how to use these material resources.

2.4.4 Transport

- i. Provincial Education Departments should plan transport for learners with disabilities as part of the comprehensive learner transport system so as to as far as possible avoid the need for a separate transport system for special schools.
- ii. Learner transport systems should meet the requirements of universal design.
- iii. In the short term, until such time as universal accessible transport systems are in place, special schools must provide transport for all those learners who require transport to and from school. The transport subsidy for special schools, both residential and non-residential, should be evaluated regularly to ensure adequacy.
- iv. In principle, daily transport should be provided for registered learners living up to a maximum of 40 kilometres away from the school, while those living more than an hour's drive away from school should be housed in residences within the school, at least during the school week.
- v. All vehicles used to transport learners must be appropriately licensed, driven by appropriately licensed drivers, meet the highest safety standards and be maintained regularly. The transport must be inspected by appropriately qualified person on a regular basis.
- vi. All vehicles used to transport learners must be accessible for all learners to be transported.
- vii. Schools should be able to provide suitable transport for learners to attend special events.
- viii. Adult support and supervision must be provided on learner transport to promote learner safety. All such adults must be trained in first aid and in attending to the needs of the learners being transported

3 CRITERIA FOR QUALITY EDUCATION AND SUPPORT IN SPECIAL SCHOOLS RESOURCE CENTRES

3.1 Introduction

- i. The Department of Basic Education acknowledges that some special schools have resources and expertise that can be used to provide system wide support to learners who require a high level of support. The DBE has embarked on a programme that will ensure that all specials schools are well-resourced and have the necessary expertise so that they can use them as resource centres to support learners who require a high level of support. It is only when special schools are strengthened that they will function as resource centres and provide support not only to learners enrolled in their schools, but to other schools. According to the Inclusive Education Policy, over time all special schools will be converted into special school resource centres (SSRC) and serve as centres of excellence.
- ii. As noted above, SSRCs are special schools whose mandate is the education of learners enrolled in such schools. Therefore the guidelines that guide the functioning of special schools should be used to guide SSRCs. Furthermore, SSRCs have an additional task of supporting other schools as part of a DBST and provide support to other schools. Therefore, they should be guided by additional guidelines over and above those that guide special schools. These are summarised below.

3.2 Legislative and policy framework

- i. SSRCs are special schools and should be guided by legislation and policies that guide other ordinary schools and specials schools. They must adhere to the guidelines set for special schools.
- ii. As indicated by the inclusive education policy, SSRCs must be part of district-based support teams (DBSTs). They must provide specialised professional support in curriculum, assessment and instruction to designated full-service and other neighbourhood schools as part of these teams. They should provide this support whilst also providing improved educational services to those learners who require high levels of support that are enrolled at their schools.
- iii. SSRCs must be supported by legislative and policy amendments that will affirm their existence and further guide their functioning and allow funding for their additional responsibilities of being part of a DBST. They should have school policies, rules and regulations aligned to their role of being a resource centre and part of a DBST

3.3 Curriculum management and implementation

3.3.1 Admission

SSRCs should admit a manageable number of learners who require a high level of support. This should be done so as to allow personnel sufficient time to plan and carry out their supportive role. SSRCs should enrol learners who require a high level of support and who can benefit from participating in the school's chosen specific specialised support programme/s. The learners enrolled in a SSRC are the main resource of the school. This means that it is from the experience of working with, assessing and seeing the long-term development of these learners that personnel in the SSRC will build and maintain their expertise.

3.3.2 Curriculum planning and delivery

In addition to the guidelines for special schools, SSRCs should have expert knowledge and skills that are not available in other schools in the planning and delivery of the curriculum programmes that are offered in their school. This includes, but is not limited to aligning their programme to the national curriculum, differentiating and adapting the curriculum so that learners enrolled in their schools are able to learn and develop.

3.4 Personnel quality and utilisation

SSRCs should be adequately and appropriately staffed so that they are able to fulfil their role as a resource centre.

This means that they must:

- Have additional personnel establishment and funding. This funding would support not just the school teaching personnel but the outreach workers and administrative personnel;
- Be staffed by the most experienced, most expert professionals in the provision of quality education of learners who require high levels of support;
- Have personnel with developed specialist knowledge which is not in ordinary schools;
- Have personnel with expertise, not only in supporting learners who require high levels of support, but in collaborative consultancy, administration, management, networking and working with organizations outside the school environment;
- Have personnel with positive attitudes, energy, passion and commitment to the education of learners who experience barriers to learning;
- SSRCs must be able to free their personnel to provide support to other learning institutions;
- Professional personnel should initially have a minimum of five hours available per week to offer external support;

- Professional specialist personnel may be appointed at district offices and stationed in special school resource centres. This will ensure that these professional specialist personnel with their scarce skills can move around easily and be able to support schools.
- SSRCs must develop and use creative ways of using their personnel and experts around their communities. They could request private practitioners with various types of expertise within their community to give their time and assist with some of their programmes

3.5 Provision of support

SSRCs must provide quality support not only to their learners but to other schools. Depending on the school capacity, this support should include but not be limited to the following:

3.5.1 Learner, family and community support

SSRCs must not only teach learners enrolled in their schools but should be the centre or focal points of educational services for learners who require high levels of support, regardless of where they go to school. They can:

- Function as a multidisciplinary assessment and review centre offering multidisciplinary assessment for their learners and learners in ordinary schools. This can be done at the school or this could be a mobile service;
- Provide therapeutic support to learners with disabilities in ordinary schools;
- Offer early intervention programmes of which the aim is to minimize barriers to learning;
- Offer complementary services such as holiday programmes and special workshops for children and young people who require high levels of support;
- Offer family support services (offer breaks or breathing space for families, support groups and training);
- Serve as a training base for parents and the community on supporting learners who require high levels of support;
- Provide community and adult training in Sign Language;
- Work collaboratively with community organisations and structures including disabled people's organisations, parent organisations, teacher unions, NGOs, DPOs, traditional healers, parents, grandparents and caregivers in providing teaching and learning support;
- Work with the community on advocacy and awareness-raising programmes aimed at changing negative attitudes towards people with disabilities and supporting the implementation of an inclusive education system; and
- Together with the community support the mobilisation of children and youth who are outside the system and who have no access to schooling.

3.5.2 Curriculum and capacity building support

- (i) SSRCs can provide specialised curriculum planning and delivery support to teachers in ordinary schools, who have learners who require specialised curriculum support.
- (ii) They can provide teacher training on a range of skills depending on the school's expertise and training needs of neighbouring ordinary schools and community. This may include but not be limited to the use of assistive devices and technology in teaching and learning, LTSM production, use, management and maintenance of specialised equipment and assistive technology, South African Sign Language, Braille, Augmentative and Alternative Communication, disability specific educational requirements, curriculum differentiation and adaptation.
- (iii) SSRC can be a base for ordinary schools to gain experience of working with learners who experience barriers to learning through teacher exchange. They could link up with training institutions and offer a practical training base for a range of professionals including teachers, therapists, social workers and medical practitioners.
- (iv) They can work with other sectors including Health, Social Development (Welfare), Labour, Justice, Correctional Services, Transport, Safety and Security, to develop a network of support to schools.

3.5.3 Resource and facility support

SSRC can:

- Provide physical resource base for storage, maintenance and use of specialised equipment for the benefit for learners in ordinary schools: For example a SSRC could store and produce Braille and other tactile resources that can be used by learners who have visual impairments enrolled in ordinary schools
- Be a general resource centre: The schools could provide resource such as LTSM and ICT and access technology services
- Be a loan centre for the loan of expensive equipment to learners in ordinary schools
- Provide E-learning facilities.
- Provide space and resources for various activities that are aimed at supporting learners who require high level of support. These may include space for consultations with learners and/or parents who need support, non-profit organizations to provide relevant training, to hold meetings etc. and other government departments to bring relevant services.
- Provide access to a library of technology for adaptive assessment or individual use.
- Have full time technical assistants who can service the school's and other neighbouring school's equipment and assistive devices used for teaching and learning

3.6 Driving innovative pilots

SSRCs should facilitate the development and implementation of innovative programmes whose aim is to enhance learning and development for learners who require high level of support. For example, they can establish relationships with stakeholders such as Business, the Departments of Social Development and Labour to introduce transition to work programmes and access to inclusive employment for school leavers.

Annexure 1

District-Based Support Teams

In the framework for the establishment of an inclusive education and training system, White Paper 6 emphasises the 'strengthening of education support services' (p28).

"The strengthened education support service will have, at its centre, new district-based support teams that will comprise personnel from provincial district, regional and head offices and from special schools. The primary function of these district support teams will be to evaluate programmes, diagnose their effectiveness and suggest modifications. Through supporting teaching, learning and management, they will build the capacity of schools to recognise and address severe learning difficulties and to accommodate a range of learning needs" (WP6, p29).

The DBST is a dedicated matrix team which coordinates and drives all activities related to inclusive education within a district, ranging from support to teachers in differentiation of the curriculum and management of diversity in the classroom, to support for principals to establish inclusive policies cultures and practices. The DBST must support Institutional Level Support Teams to identify, assess and support children with special needs and disabilities and those who experience barriers of a socio-economic nature which would require counselling support)

In an inclusive education system, support is defined as all activities that increase the capacity of schools to respond to diversity and to the challenges faced by its learners and teachers. This support should therefore become the responsibility of all officials working within the education system. To spearhead this support, White Paper 6 proposes that each district institute a District Based Support Team. By involving specialised professionals such as psychologists, social workers and therapists in an integrated, multi-disciplinary team, which works according to a consultative service delivery model, scarce human resources can be utilised more effectively to make support available to all learners in the system and not only to those who attend special schools. Especially children in disadvantaged urban and rural settings should have access to these support services. The approach proposed in Education White Paper 6 of establishing trans-disciplinary District-based Support Teams as a mechanism for making support available to more learners and teachers offers the most cost effective and contextually relevant solution to the challenges.

Members of the DBST should therefore not only come from the Inclusive Education units, but also involve personnel from the curriculum, educational management development, ECD, ABET, teacher development, personnel planning, provisioning, physical planning units as well as from special schools (with core team members from Curriculum, Institutional Development and Inclusive Education)

FRAMEWORK AND FUNCTIONS OF THE DISTRICT-BASED SUPPORT TEAM

Programmes	Focus Area 1	Focus Area 2	Focus Area 3	Focus Area 4
	Classroom-based Support	Institutional Support	Administrative Support	Psycho-Social, Environmental and Health Support
	↑	↑	↑	↑
	←			→
<p>Programme 1: Developing enabling environments through capacity building</p>	<p>Training/orientation of teachers</p> <p>Consultative and mentoring support to teachers</p> <p>Training and Monitoring of ILSTs</p> <p>Coordinating and monitoring of assessment of learner needs</p> <p>Planning and monitoring learning support programmes for identified learners/groups of learners</p>	<p>Development and monitoring of school policies that would enhance inclusivity and minimise exclusion</p> <p>Personnel development</p> <p>Whole school and organisational development</p> <p>Establishment and management of school-based support structures</p> <p>Managing enrolment and admissions</p> <p>SGB and parent development</p>	<p>Training in financial management</p> <p>Information systems and technology support</p> <p>Admin training</p> <p>Personnel supply, management, training and support</p> <p>Transport management</p>	<p>Monitoring the development and implementation of prevention and intervention programmes to children who are vulnerable and in need of care</p> <p>Capacity building in management of challenging and anti-social behaviour</p> <p>Programmes for HIV and Aids</p> <p>Health promotion and safety, including child justice, support for street children, prevention of child labour</p> <p>Developing networks for social support and counselling</p> <p>The coordination at an inter-sectoral level of all support services and intervention programmes which address barriers to learning and development</p>
<p>Programme 2: Developing and monitoring curriculum support programmes</p>	<p>Curriculum development</p> <p>Assessment of learner achievement and planning support programmes</p>	<p>Development of curriculum leadership</p> <p>Monitoring assessment and promotions</p>	<p>Administration of assessment</p>	<p>Development, implementation and monitoring of guidelines for Inclusive Learning Programmes</p> <p>Development, implementation and monitoring of dynamic and adaptive assessment</p>
<p>Programme 3: Resource provisioning</p>	<p>Provisioning of LTSM</p> <p>Development of LTSM</p>	<p>Managing and monitoring LTSM budgets and supply</p> <p>Managing and monitoring development of LTSM</p>	<p>Management of physical facilities</p> <p>Provisioning of assistive devices</p>	<p>Selection, Procurement and Monitoring provisioning of LTSM</p> <p>Development of LTSM to address specific barriers</p>