

# ALL ARE WELCOME!

CREATING A GENDER-RESPONSIVE SCHOOL FOR YOUNG CHILDREN:  
A PRACTICAL GUIDE FOR SCHOOL LEADERS IN SOUTH AFRICA



**basic education**  
Department:  
Basic Education  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA



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# ABOUT THIS GUIDE

*THIS GUIDE SUPPORTS SCHOOL LEADERS TO PROMOTE GENDER EQUALITY AND PREVENT DISCRIMINATION BASED ON GENDER IN FOUNDATION PHASE.*

- become aware of gender biases in early learning environments and how they affect children's learning.
- give adequate attention to gender issues in all aspects of their school's functioning to create a school environment that is safe, free of stigma and discrimination for all learners, regardless of their sex, gender identity or expression.
- give support to teachers of young learners in their school to practice a gender-responsive pedagogy.

## **WHAT IS GENDER-RESPONSIVE PEDAGOGY?**

GENDER-RESPONSIVE PEDAGOGY (GRP) enables teachers and practitioners to give adequate attention to gender issues in teaching and interacting with all learners. This includes processes linked to the learning environment, learning materials, learning activities, classroom interactions and language use, as well as interactions beyond the classroom.



## **WHO IS THIS GUIDE FOR?**

THE GUIDE PRIMARILY TARGETS SCHOOL LEADERS WORKING IN FOUNDATION PHASE

THIS INCLUDES ANY PERSON WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR LEADING OR MANAGING SERVICES INVOLVING THE EMOTIONAL, COGNITIVE, SENSORY, SPIRITUAL, MORAL, PHYSICAL, SOCIAL AND COMMUNICATION DEVELOPMENT OF YOUNG CHILDREN AT SCHOOL (E.G. SCHOOL PRINCIPALS, VICE-PRINCIPALS AND DEPARTMENTAL HEADS IN FOUNDATION PHASE).

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## ABBREVIATIONS

ECD	Early childhood development	NSSF	National School Safety Framework
GBV	Gender-based violence	PLC	Professional learning community
GRP	Gender-responsive pedagogy	SACE	South African Council for Educators
HR	Human resources	SGB	School governing body
LGBTI	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex	SMT	School Management Team
LTSM	Learning and Teaching Support Material	SRGBV	School-related gender-based violence

# INTRODUCTION

*THIS GUIDE OFFERS DIRECTION TO SCHOOL LEADERS IN CREATING A LEARNING ENVIRONMENT THAT PROVIDES EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR ALL CHILDREN TO ENGAGE AND LEARN, REGARDLESS OF THEIR SEX OR GENDER IDENTITY.*

Whilst the guide offers support that can benefit the whole school and all learners, it places particular focus on supporting the learning and development of learners in the Foundation Phase.

**GENDER IS AN IMPORTANT FACTOR THAT SHAPES THE WAY CHILDREN ARE TREATED AND WHAT IS EXPECTED OF THEM.**

Stereotypes or ‘rules’ about how children of a certain sex should look, speak and behave (for instance, girls should be kind and obedient; boys shouldn’t wear dresses or cry) affect how children come to see themselves, their value

and their own abilities. Access to opportunities and resources may also differ for children based on their sex. As a result, their development and learning can be negatively affected.

**All children, regardless of their sex and associated gender should** have equal access to opportunities to live a healthy and fulfilled life, accepted for who they are.

**Early learning environments** are important places to help children feel safe and accepted, where they can be encouraged to reach their full potential.



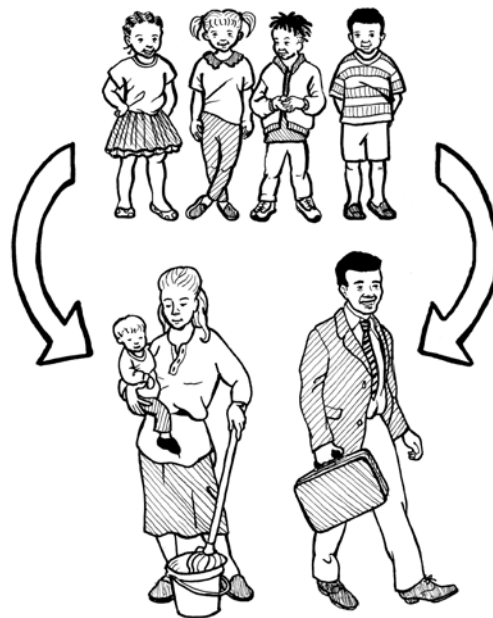
# WHY GENDER MATTERS

Gender is an important factor that shapes the way children are treated and what is expected of them. This is because society has traditionally taught us that there are two sexes (MALE/FEMALE), and that there are different gender rules and expectations for people based on these two sexes.

GENDER STEREOTYPES OR 'RULES' BEGIN IN CHILDHOOD AND CAN AFFECT CHILDREN'S SENSE OF SELF FROM A YOUNG AGE. THROUGH THEIR INTERACTIONS WITH OTHERS AND THEIR ENVIRONMENT, YOUNG CHILDREN RECEIVE MESSAGES ABOUT WHAT SOCIETY EXPECTS FROM THEM AND WHAT THEY CAN AND CANNOT DO.

## GIRLS

Girls are often given toys that encourage caring for others, like dolls. They are valued for being cooperative, kind and obedient. Girls are often socialised to become home keepers, responsible for the well-being, feeding and care of the family, placing less value on their educational attainment.



## BOYS

Boys are often given toys that encourage critical thinking, such as building blocks and are discouraged from playing with toys like cooking utensils or dolls. Boys are often prepared for their future role as provider and protector. Right from the earliest age boys are encouraged to lead and show authority, to be physically and emotionally strong.

Often children who do not conform to these traditional ideas about gender (for instance, girls thought to be too masculine and boys seen as feminine) face pressures to conform or experience mistreatment by peers in school, and condemnation by the broader society.

THESE RULES AND EXPECTATIONS ABOUT BEHAVIOR AND ROLES CAN BE LIMITING FOR ALL CHILDREN.

Gender equality – where all children regardless of their sex and associated gender have equal opportunities to live a healthy life – are important for all children to realise their full identity and potential.

# WHAT DO WE MEAN WHEN WE TALK ABOUT GENDER?

Most of us have been raised with the idea that there are two sexes (male and female) and that they align with two genders (man and woman).

## **HOWEVER, BOTH SEX AND GENDER EXIST ACROSS A CONTINUUM OF POSSIBILITIES.**

Generally, when a baby is born, we assign them a sex (male or female) based on their genitals. Once a sex is assigned, we presume the child's gender. We're told that those who are assigned male at birth are boys and those who are assigned female at birth are girls.

While we are often taught that bodies have one of two forms of genitalia, which are classified as "female" or "male," there are naturally occurring intersex conditions (associated with genitals,

sex chromosomes, gonads, hormones, reproductive structures).

**Similarly, gender isn't an either/or scenario but a spectrum. There is a wide range of gender identities and expressions.** Every person has a gender identity – their personal understanding of their gender and how they want the world to see them.

The two gender identities most people are familiar with are boy and girl (or man and woman), and often people think these are the only two gender identities. **Although many people in our society identify as men or women, there is a wider range of gender possibilities between and beyond the two.**



## **TRANSGENDER IS A TERM THAT INCLUDES THE MANY WAYS THAT PEOPLE'S GENDER IDENTITIES CAN BE DIFFERENT FROM THE SEX THEY WERE ASSIGNED AT BIRTH**

People who identify as transgender have a gender that is different from the gender associated with their sex. It also includes people who identify with a gender outside the man/woman binary. This means that the person identifies as neither man nor woman, but somewhere in between, or that the person identifies as a mix of both man and woman.

# KEY GENDER CONCEPTS

## SEX

The assignment and classification of people as male, female or intersex, based on biological differences at birth.

**INTERSEX:** a variety of conditions where a person's anatomy does not fit the typical definition of male and female.



## GENDER

THE PERSONAL AND SOCIAL CHARACTERISTICS ASSOCIATED WITH BEING MALE, FEMALE, A COMBINATION OR NEITHER.

## GENDER IDENTITY

A person's internal sense of being male, female, a combination or neither.

## GENDER ROLES

Activities, tasks and responsibilities ascribed to a group of people based on their sex.

**GENDER NON-CONFORMING:** When someone does not conform to typical gender roles.

## TRANSGENDER

When a person's gender identity or expression is different from the gender associated with their sex assigned at birth (for instance, a person born with male genitals but who identifies as female). Transgender also includes people who identify with a gender outside the man/woman binary (e.g. having no gender or multiple genders).

## GENDER NON-BINARY

Some people do not fit into the traditional binary gender divide (boy/girl, man/woman) and identify as neither man nor woman, but somewhere in between. Some may also identify as a mix of man and woman.

## HARMFUL GENDER PRACTICES:

Harmful practices such as 'gender bias', 'gender stereotypes' and 'gender discrimination', negatively affect a person's sense of identity and ability.

## GENDER BIAS

An unfair difference in the way people of different sexes and associated genders are treated.

## GENDER STEREOTYPES

Biased beliefs about the personal attributes, behaviours and roles of a specific social group (for example women should take care of babies while men need to provide for the family).

## GENDER-BASED DISCRIMINATION

Exclusion of a person from educational opportunities, meaningful careers, political influence or opportunities for economic advancement based on their sex.

## HELPFUL GENDER PRACTICES:

'Gender equality', 'gender responsiveness' and 'gender-responsive pedagogy' can be used to promote a person's sense of identity and ability.

## GENDER EQUALITY

The absence of discrimination based on a person's sex and associated gender. It implies that society sees everyone as equal, regardless of their sex.

## GENDER RESPONSIVENESS

Plans and actions that address the different needs and aspirations of people of different sexes and associated genders or taking actions to correct or prevent gender bias and discrimination to ensure gender equality and equity.

## GENDER-RESPONSIVE PEDAGOGY

Teaching and learning processes that pay attention to the specific needs of children of different sexes.



# GENDER AND THE SOUTH AFRICAN CONTEXT

South African society is to a large extent patriarchal. This means that men are seen to have the authority in society, and that women are seen as subordinate to men. The high levels of gender-based violence and the higher HIV infection rates among girls and women in South Africa are tragic consequences of sustained gender inequalities, related to prevailing harmful gender norms in our society such as female disempowerment and harmful ideas about masculinity.

## THESE HARMFUL IDEAS ABOUT GENDER ROLES ARE INTRODUCED TO CHILDREN WHEN THEY ARE STILL SMALL.

Boys may be expected to be tough and there may be less room for their emotions. Often, girls are brought up to believe that they should be submissive and that they cannot lead and speak out. Children who do not conform to these typical gender expectations often face ridicule, exclusion or violence.

## THERE IS NO WINNER FROM GENDER STEREOTYPES AND INEQUALITY. THE NEGATIVE RAMIFICATIONS AFFECT EVERYONE IN SOUTH AFRICA:

GIRLS ARE MORE LIKELY TO DROP OUT OF SCHOOL AND HAVE LOWER PASS RATES FOR MATHEMATICS AND PHYSICAL SCIENCE SUBJECTS <sup>1,2</sup>

BOYS HAVE HIGHER EXPULSION RATES AND ARE MORE LIKELY TO REPEAT PRIMARY SCHOOL GRADES <sup>3</sup>

MORE THAN HALF OF LGBTI\* PEOPLE REPORT THAT THEY EXPERIENCED VICTIMISATION AT SCHOOL BASED ON THEIR LGBTI STATUS <sup>4</sup>

\*LGBTI: LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL, TRANSGENDER AND INTERSEX

TRADITIONAL STEREOTYPES – ESPECIALLY PRESSURE TO PROVIDE FOR THEIR FAMILIES – ARE DIFFICULT FOR MANY SOUTH AFRICAN MEN TO LIVE UP TO <sup>5</sup>

BECAUSE OF HIGH UNEMPLOYMENT AND POVERTY (A LEGACY OF THE APARTHEID ERA), MANY MEN STRUGGLE TO SUPPORT THEIR FAMILIES FINANCIALLY, CAUSING FEELINGS OF HELPLESSNESS AND SHAME.

ONLY 10% OF CEOs IN SOUTH AFRICA ARE WOMEN

WOMEN AND LGBTI PERSONS ARE AT HIGHER RISK OF SEXUAL AND PHYSICAL VIOLENCE <sup>7,8</sup>

GENDER NON-CONFORMING INDIVIDUALS ARE LESS LIKELY TO BE EMPLOYED <sup>9</sup>

MEN ARE MORE LIKELY TO DRINK ALCOHOL, TAKE UNHEALTHY RISKS AND ENGAGE IN VIOLENCE 10. THEY ARE LESS LIKELY TO SEEK PROFESSIONAL HELP OR TALK ABOUT THEIR PROBLEMS WITH FRIENDS AND FAMILY <sup>11</sup>

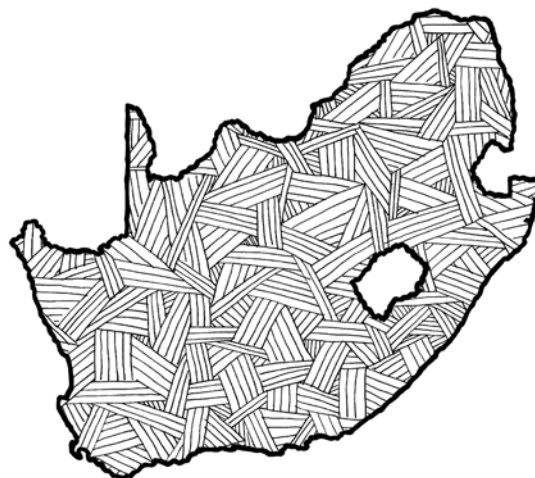
FOR EACH HOUR THAT A MAN SPENDS ON UNPAID CARE WORK, WOMEN SPEND EIGHT HOURS OF EQUIVALENT WORK <sup>12</sup>

# NATIONAL COMMITMENTS TO GENDER EQUALITY

South Africa is the only African country to offer constitutional protection against discrimination based on sex, gender and sexual orientation.

The Constitution and the Bill of Rights supports all people's right to:

- A NAME AND IDENTITY
- LIFE
- EQUALITY
- A HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT
- SOCIAL ASSISTANCE
- FOOD
- CLEAN WATER
- SHELTER
- HEALTH CARE
- SCHOOLING



## SOUTH AFRICAN POLICIES AND LEGISLATION THAT SUPPORT GENDER EQUALITY:

<b>CONSTITUTION OF THE REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA</b>	Protects the rights of all people and promotes freedom from unfair discrimination based on gender, sex, pregnancy and marital status
<b>SOUTH AFRICAN SCHOOLS ACT (SASA), 1996</b>	The right to education for all, promoting equity, eliminating discrimination, ensuring gender parity (learners indiscriminately receive quality basic education)
<b>EMPLOYMENT OF EDUCATORS ACT, 1998</b>	Seeks to address the issue of sexual abuse of learners by teachers by making it unlawful to employ a teacher who has been engaged in sexual abuse of a learner.
<b>EMPLOYMENT EQUITY ACT, 1998</b>	Promotes equity in the workplace, protects against discrimination (including those based on gender, sex, pregnancy, marital status, family responsibility)
<b>NATIONAL STRATEGIC PLAN ON GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE AND FEMICIDE, 2020 - 2030</b>	A multi-sectoral, coherent strategic policy and programming framework to ensure a coordinated national response to the crisis of gender-based violence and femicide by the government of South Africa and the country as a whole.

**The South African Department of Basic Education is committed to protecting the rights of all children.** The South African government recognises the importance of reducing gender biases and stereotypes, and supporting gender equality in education:

- The **Ministerial Task Team on Evaluation of Textbooks and Learning and Teaching Support Material (LTSM)** ensures that gender discrimination and bias is not evidenced within prescribed text for learners so that all texts, graphics and language are suitable to all learners and avoid gender stereotypes
- **The Directorate: Social Cohesion and Equity in Education** oversees social cohesion, nation building and gender empowerment in schools, where the **Gender Equity sub-directorate** coordinates and monitors gender empowerment and equity issues in schools.
- The **Protocol for the Management and Reporting of Sexual Abuse and Harassment in Schools** aims at standardizing how schools must respond to reports of sexual abuse and harassment in schools.
- The introduction of a **Life Skills Programme in Primary schools** that deals with gender issues such as gender violence, teenage pregnancy and discrimination, among other concerns, is considered a key contributor to minimising gender inequalities in schools. The programme aims to promote personal development, self-esteem and self-confidence among learners.

# GENDER IN EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

## **CHILDREN LEARN AND DEVELOP OPTIMALLY WHEN:**

- THEY PARTICIPATE IN A VARIETY OF LEARNING AND PLAY ACTIVITIES
- THEIR TEACHERS MAKE THEM FEEL SAFE AND SUPPORTED
- THEY RECEIVE ENCOURAGEMENT TO TRY DIFFERENT THINGS AND INTERACT WITH OTHERS

**Gender stereotypes and biases negatively affect how children participate in activities, and what they are able to gain from their education.** When children are treated differently because of their sex, it can hold them back from participation, interaction and learning, and from realising their full identity and potential.

Based on how the learning environment is set up and what teachers say/do or do not say/do, children 'learn', for example, whether their voices matter, who gets to lead in school or be a leader in future, or who gets to engage in particular activities.

## **LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS OFTEN PASS ON POWERFUL GENDER MESSAGES THROUGH WHAT IS DESCRIBED AS THE 'HIDDEN CURRICULUM' – WHAT CHILDREN LEARN FROM OBSERVING HOW THINGS ARE DONE IN THE CLASSROOM AND BY SCHOOL STAFF.**

### **EXAMPLES OF GENDER BIASES IN EARLY LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS:**

- Dividing groups by sex and only assigning certain tasks to girls (e.g. tidying) and other tasks to boys (e.g. moving furniture)
- Discouraging girls from participating in activities considered rough, and boys from playing with dolls
- Gently patting a girl who hurts herself and is crying, while a boy in the same situation is told, 'Get up, boys don't cry.'

As the managers of schools and key delivery agents in the education system, school management teams (SMTs) are critical to creating and upholding learning environments and conditions that provide equal opportunities for all children in the Foundation Phase. This will enable young learners to engage and learn and help them break free from harmful gender stereotypes that hold them back in life.

# THE BENEFITS OF SUPPORTING GENDER EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY

When early learning environments support gender equality and diversity and give attention to gender issues, children, teachers and the school as a whole benefit.



## **SUPPORT FOR GENDER EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY HELPS CHILDREN:**

### **DEVELOP GOOD SOCIAL SKILLS**

When learning environments support children to interact constructively and respectfully with children of diverse abilities and backgrounds, children learn to enjoy being with others who are different from themselves, including how to be sensitive to and adapt to these differences. This helps to improve communication skills and prepare children for healthy social interactions in future.

### **DEVELOP CRITICAL THINKING**

Being exposed to different viewpoints, opinions and experiences gives children the opportunity to think critically about their own beliefs and examine the world in fresh ways.

### **PRACTICE CREATIVITY**

Creativity is all about bringing together different ideas and transforming them to make something new. The more ideas and experiences children are exposed to, the more creative they can be.

### **DEVELOP A HEALTHY SELF-ESTEEM**

When children's individual abilities are recognised and supported, they feel worthy and capable. This helps them cope with making mistakes and encourages them to try again. Children with healthy self-esteem are less likely to fear differences or put other children down to feel better about themselves.

### **SUPPORT FOR GENDER EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY HELPS TEACHERS:**

- gain new knowledge about the different ways that children learn.
- apply positive approaches towards people, children and situations.
- experience greater job satisfaction and a higher sense of accomplishment when all children's learning is supported.
- have a meaningful and long-lasting impact on children's development, sense of identity and future success.

### **SUPPORT FOR GENDER EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY HELPS SCHOOLS TO:**

- build a vision and value system that includes, accepts, and respects all learners - enabling children to thrive.
- create a learning environment that is safe, welcoming and free of stigma and discrimination – accommodating each and every individual learner.
- establish school processes and conditions that support the development of all learners.
- create a supportive environment for teachers to facilitate effective learning for all children.
- actively engage with the wider school community and generate community buy-in and support.

# SCHOOL LEADERS AND GENDER-RESPONSIVE PRACTICES

*SCHOOLS ARE AT THE CENTRE OF COMMUNITY LIFE; A PLACE WHERE CHILDREN RECEIVE SUPPORT AND GUIDANCE TO DEVELOP KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS, ATTITUDES AND BEHAVIOURS FOR LIFE, LEARNING, SCHOOLING AND WORK.*

As the managers of schools and key delivery agents in the education system, school management teams are critical to the success of the children in their community and ensuring that every child becomes a national asset. **When school management supports teachers of young learners to implement a gender-responsive pedagogy (GRP) in their classrooms and in wider school practices, they allow all learners to have access to equal opportunities to develop to their full and unique potential.**

**THROUGH GRP, TEACHERS CAN SUPPORT POSITIVE GENDER RELATIONS AMONG THEIR LEARNERS AND PROVIDE THEM WITH EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR LEARNING. THIS CAN BE DONE ACROSS FIVE KEY AREAS\*:**



## **LEARNING ENVIRONMENT**

HOW CLASSROOM AND OUTDOOR AREAS ARE ORGANISED



## **LEARNING MATERIALS**

HOW CLASSROOMS ARE EQUIPPED WITH PLAY AND LEARNING MATERIALS, SUCH AS PICTURE BOOKS



## **LEARNING ACTIVITIES**

HOW TEACHERS ORGANISE CHILDREN'S TIME, WHAT ACTIVITIES ARE PLANNED AND EXECUTED



## **INTERACTIONS AND LANGUAGE USE**

HOW TEACHERS ENGAGE WITH CHILDREN IN THEIR CARE, AND HOW THEY FACILITATE ENGAGEMENT BETWEEN CHILDREN



## **INTERACTIONS BEYOND THE CLASSROOM**

HOW TEACHERS INTERACT WITH OTHER SCHOOL STAFF AND PARENTS

\* You can find more information on how teachers and practitioners can implement GRP across these five areas in the **TEACHERS' GUIDE**<sup>1</sup>

1. Promoting gender equality in ECD: A practical guide for teachers and practitioners in South Africa, 2020

## HOW CAN SCHOOL MANAGEMENT TEAMS CREATE A GENDER-RESPONSIVE SCHOOL AND SUPPORT TEACHERS TO IMPLEMENT GRP?

Evidence suggests that even amongst schools facing very similar challenges of poverty and human and physical resource constraints, there are often great differences with respect to learning outcomes and the sense of well-being and harmony in the school. What accounts for these differences? The obvious answer, and one that is supported by much research, is that **effective school management** makes the difference<sup>2</sup>.

The school management team is key to ensure effective school management. They work closely with the school governing body (SGB) and wider community to effectively manage, support and promote the best quality teaching and learning, the purpose of which is to enable learners to attain the highest levels of achievement for their own good, the good of their community and the good of the country as a whole.

To create an inclusive environment where all learners feel safe, welcomed and cared for requires a whole school approach. Gender-

responsive schools consider gender issues in all aspects of their school's functioning. The school is made up of several "components", namely, learners, educators, school management teams, school governing bodies (SGBs), and parents or guardians<sup>3</sup>. Together, these components interact and exist within the greater system of the home and community. Only by dealing with all aspects of the system will gender discrimination and inequality ultimately be reduced and eradicated.

*This guide offers practical tips to equip school leaders with the skills **to create a gender-responsive school for young children**. A gender-responsive school is a school that promotes gender equality and prevents discrimination based on gender – both within the classroom and in the wider school environment – to allow all learners to develop and thrive. The guide draws on the values in our constitution and principles set out in the Department of Basic Education's existing legislation, policies and plans.*

2. Action plan to 2014: Towards the realisation of schooling 2025. Department of Basic Education, 2011

3. This guide generally uses the term "parents" to encompass children's parents as well as guardians and other types of caregiving arrangements.

**THE NEXT SECTION CONSISTS OF KEY MESSAGES, ACTIONABLE TIPS AND EXAMPLES THAT CAN BE APPLIED IN VARIOUS ASPECTS OF A SCHOOL LEADER’S WORK, INCLUDING:**

<b>1</b>	<p><b>THE SCHOOL’S VISION, VALUES AND POLICIES</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How you define your school’s vision and values</li> <li>• What policies are enabled to support this vision</li> </ul>
<b>2</b>	<p><b>THE SCHOOL’S MANAGEMENT OF PROCESSES</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How school processes such as enrolment and attendance; budgeting and procurement; planning and monitoring take place</li> <li>• Administrative procedures, forms and documentation</li> <li>• Management of human resources and interactions with school staff</li> <li>• Management of school programmes and policies</li> </ul>
<b>3</b>	<p><b>THE SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The set-up of the school’s physical infrastructure</li> <li>• The play areas and furniture available to learners</li> <li>• Access to water and sanitation</li> </ul>
<b>4</b>	<p><b>LEARNING MATERIALS AND ACTIVITIES</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learners’ access to play materials, pictures and storybooks</li> <li>• The type and content of learning materials</li> <li>• How learners are divided into groups</li> </ul>
<b>5</b>	<p><b>SUPPORT FOR SCHOOL STAFF AND THE IMPLEMENTATION OF GRP</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continuing professional development</li> <li>• Shared leadership and teamwork</li> </ul>
<b>6</b>	<p><b>ENGAGING WITH THE WIDER SCHOOL COMMUNITY</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How you involve caregivers in their child’s learning and development</li> <li>• How you communicate, collaborate and make decisions with the community</li> </ul>



# HOW TO NAVIGATE THIS GUIDE

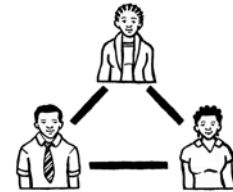
THERE ARE 6 UNITS IN THIS GUIDE



**THE SCHOOL'S VISION, VALUES AND POLICIES**



**THE SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT**



**SUPPORT FOR SCHOOL STAFF**



**THE SCHOOL'S MANAGEMENT OF PROCESSES**



**LEARNING MATERIALS AND ACTIVITIES**



**ENGAGING WITH THE WIDER SCHOOL COMMUNITY**

IN EACH UNIT, YOU WILL SEE:



**1 DIFFERENT WAYS TO PUT THIS MESSAGE INTO ACTION**



**PRACTICAL TIPS**

and illustrative examples

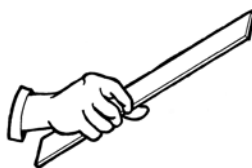
EACH UNIT WILL ALSO DRAW REFERENCE TO IMPORTANT SUPPLEMENTARY RESOURCES:



**RELEVANT POLICY & PROTOCOL DOCUMENTS FROM THE DEPARTMENT OF BASIC EDUCATION**



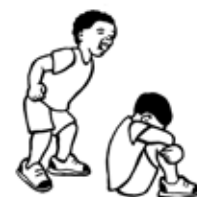
**RELEVANT SECTIONS OF THE TEACHERS' GUIDE**



**MORE ON CORPORAL PUNISHMENT**



**MORE ON GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE**



**MORE ON BULLYING**

# KEY MESSAGES FOR SCHOOL LEADERS

A school leader can support the creation of a gender-responsive environment in their school in many ways.



## THE SCHOOL'S VISION, VALUES AND POLICIES

### UPHOLD SCHOOL POLICIES THAT CREATE A SAFE ENVIRONMENT FOR YOUNG LEARNERS AND THAT ADDRESS ISSUES OF GENDER EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY

#### HOW?

1. Include gender equality and diversity in your school's vision and value system.
2. Uphold school policies that create a safe environment for young learners and that address issues of gender equality and diversity.



## THE SCHOOL'S MANAGEMENT OF PROCESSES

### ESTABLISH AND IMPLEMENT SCHOOL PROCESSES THAT PROMOTE GENDER EQUALITY AND PREVENT DISCRIMINATION BASED ON GENDER

#### HOW?

1. Ensure that gender biases do not influence enrolment and attendance of young learners at your school.
2. Review administrative systems, forms and documentation to ensure gender equality is reflected.
3. Oppose stereotypical gender roles and promote gender equality in all matters related to the school's human resources.
4. Account for the needs of learners of all sexes in your budget and procurement system.
5. Ensure that school programmes and rules do not reinforce gender stereotypes or discriminate based on gender.
6. Monitor the effectiveness of gender-responsive processes through a whole school evaluation approach.



## THE SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT

### CREATE A SAFE AND INCLUSIVE SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT THAT SUPPORTS THE NEEDS OF ALL LEARNERS

#### HOW?

1. Create a physically safe environment, accompanied by good governance to facilitate positive learner-learner and teacher-learner interactions.
2. Ensure that the school's infrastructure supports the needs of all learners in the school.
3. Provide safe and accessible water and sanitation facilities for all learners, effectively supervised by school staff.

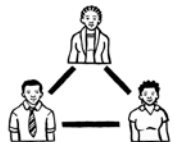


**LEARNING MATERIALS AND ACTIVITIES**

**OFFER LEARNING MATERIALS AND ACTIVITIES THAT ARE GENDER-RESPONSIVE TO SUPPORT CHILDREN'S HOLISTIC DEVELOPMENT**

**HOW?**

1. Ensure that learning materials are equally and equitably available to all learners.
2. Provide learning materials that challenge gender stereotypes and promote gender equality and diversity.
3. Facilitate learning activities that break down stereotypical ideas about gender.



**SUPPORT FOR SCHOOL STAFF**

**SUPPORT GENDER-RESPONSIVE PRACTICES THROUGH CONTINUING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR STAFF (AND SELF)**

**HOW?**

1. Support school staff (and self) in learning about gender biases and gender diversity.
2. Support school staff to implement gender-responsive pedagogy in their work.
3. Promote shared leadership and teamwork in creating a gender-responsive school.



**ENGAGING WITH THE WIDER SCHOOL COMMUNITY**

**SUPPORT EFFECTIVE SCHOOL-PARENT-COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT TO PROMOTE GENDER EQUALITY**

**HOW?**

1. Facilitate effective communication about gender issues and gender-responsive practices (COMMUNICATION).
2. Enable caregivers to support their children's holistic development (PARENTING, LEARNING AT HOME).
3. Foster collaborative school-parent-community relationships to support gender-responsive practices (DECISION-MAKING, VOLUNTEERING, PARTNER WITH THE COMMUNITY).

# THE SCHOOL'S VISION, VALUES AND POLICIES



Effective school leaders uphold the following key educational and social values in all aspects of their work:

1. All learners have the right to have access to relevant and meaningful learning experiences and opportunities.
2. The school community has the right to active participation in the life of the school.
3. All members of the school community must be treated with respect and dignity and with recognition of their diversity.
4. The school community has the right to a safe and secure learning environment.
5. The well-being of all learners must be fostered within the school and the wider community.

It is nearly impossible to uphold these values if school leaders do not give adequate attention to gender issues in all aspects of their school's functioning. Your school's vision and set of values heavily influence your own actions and the actions of others, and, will establish a clear sense of direction and purpose for the school. Equity, which includes striving for equality – including gender equality – needs to be a vital and clear part of this shared vision and values. School leaders shape this vision and translate these values into their own actions and clear guidelines for all stakeholders within the school community.

## THE VISION AND VALUES FORM THE FOUNDATION FOR ALL NEW DEVELOPMENTS, POLICIES AND ACTIONS.





## **WHAT DOES A GENDER-RESPONSIVE SCHOOL LOOK LIKE (VISION & VALUES)?**

Gender-responsive schools:

- Strive for gender equality
- Recognise that gender stereotypes and biases impact all learners
- Interrupt binary notions of gender
- Acknowledge gender diversity
- Question limited portrayals of gender
- Challenge gender stereotypes
- Support learners' and school staff's self-reflection
- Teach empathy and respect

## **HOW IS THIS IMPLEMENTED (POLICIES AND ACTIONS)?**

- Policies that emphasise gender as an area of diversity, protected and supported by the school (e.g., dress codes or sex-segregated activities are not enforced based on gender or gender stereotypes; policies to prevent and deal with corporal punishment, gender-based violence or bullying).
- Systems and procedures for working with transgender and gender non-conforming children (e.g., learner information systems allowing families to specify a child's gender marker, name and pronouns and forms that demonstrate a non-binary understanding of gender).
- Specific staff members take the lead on gender diversity work and issues.
- Systematic staff training that builds the capacity of teachers and other staff to promote gender equality and diversity.
- Restroom facilities that provide options for privacy without stigmatising learners.
- Signage/imagery and learning materials celebrating gender diversity.

A school leader works within the SGB, the SMT and with parents in the school's community to create and implement a shared vision, mission and strategic plan to inspire and motivate all who work in and with the school. To action these values, South Africa has many existing legislations, policies, plans and strategies that support child health, well-being and protection – all of which are central to enabling all children to learn and thrive, regardless of their sex and gender identity.



**DEVELOP A VISION AND VALUE SYSTEM THAT IS GENDER-RESPONSIVE, SUPPORTED BY GENDER-RESPONSIVE POLICIES AND PLANS**

**HOW?**

- 1 INCLUDE GENDER EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IN YOUR SCHOOL'S VISION AND VALUE SYSTEM.**
- 2 UPHOLD SCHOOL POLICIES THAT CREATE A SAFE ENVIRONMENT FOR YOUNG LEARNERS AND THAT ADDRESS ISSUES OF GENDER EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY.**



**RELEVANT POLICY AND PROTOCOL DOCUMENTS:**

National Integrated Early Childhood Development Policy, 2015  
 Protocol for the management and reporting of sexual abuse and harassment in schools, 2019  
 Protocol to Deal with Incidences of Corporal Punishments in Schools, 2019  
 Challenging homophobic bullying in schools  
 National School Safety Framework, 2015

**1 INCLUDE GENDER EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IN YOUR SCHOOL'S VISION AND VALUE SYSTEM**

A gender-responsive school starts with **a vision and a set of values** that promote gender equality and recognises the diversity of gender identity and expression. The vision and mission should take into account national educational values and traditions of the school's community and values enshrined in the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa – of which protection against discrimination based on sex and gender is a central aspect.



**INCLUDE VISION AND VALUE STATEMENTS THAT SPECIFICALLY ADDRESS GENDER EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY.**

A vision statement that supports gender equality and promotes gender diversity helps to convey a school's goal for a gender-equal learning environment, where all learners are supported to thrive, regardless of their sex or gender identity. This vision can set new expectations for the attitudes and behaviours of school staff and the school community, and, can be used as a benchmark for measuring progress.

**EXAMPLES OF VISION STATEMENTS THAT PROMOTE GENDER DIVERSITY AND SUPPORT GENDER EQUALITY:**

*Our school welcomes its duties under the South African Constitution and the South African Schools Act. These duties reflect our core aims and values.*

*We are committed to:*

- *Promoting good relationships between people of different genders, sexual orientations, foreigners, members of different cultural, racial and religious groups.*



- *Challenging and changing unequal power relations between men and women and negative attitudes and discriminatory practices that hold learners of certain sexes back.*
- *Eliminating unlawful discrimination based on gender, sexual orientation, national origin, racial group and religious association.*
- *Promoting gender equality and supporting gender diversity in all areas of school management.*
- *Creating a safe and supportive environment for young children where no child is subjected to corporal punishment, gender-based violence or bullying.*
- *Building the capacity of school staff to recognise and address gender stereotypes, promote gender diversity and support the holistic development of all children in their care.*



## **ENGAGE COMMUNITY STAKEHOLDERS IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE SCHOOL'S VISION AND VALUE SYSTEM.**

Integrating gender equality into the school's vision statement requires that the school leaders, school staff and school community can be open and honest about where the school stands and what they believe their ideal gender-responsive school looks like. It is beneficial to involve different community stakeholders (including non-teaching staff, parents and learners, where appropriate) to develop a shared vision for the school.

### **ACTIVITY TO DEVELOP A SHARED VISION:**

*A good way to develop a shared vision is to bring staff, parents and other stakeholders together (in one session or in separate sessions) and ask them to describe their ideal school. What would the school leaders be doing? What would teachers be doing? What would learners be doing? What would parents be doing? What would the community be doing? Give special attention to how all learners (regardless of their sex) will have the opportunity to succeed and develop to their full potential.*

*Even young learners can participate in such a process. Why not ask learners to draw their ideal school and tell you what they think is important for it?*

*Once there is a clear and shared understanding of what kind of school you want to be, you can ask all stakeholders what their core values for such a school would be. List all values and try to bring the number of values down by grouping together similar values until you reach five or six core values that everybody can agree on.*

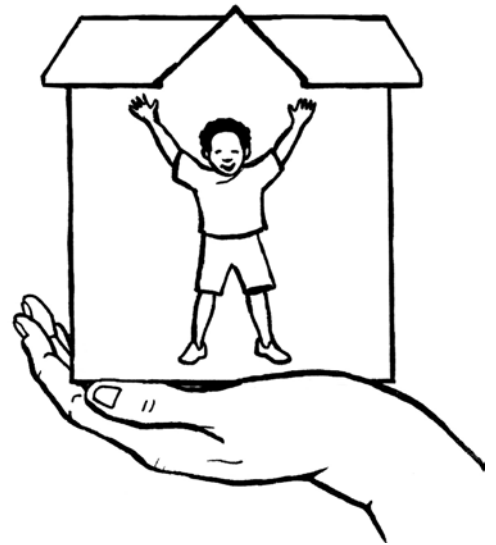
*Having established your school's shared vision and values, it is important to distribute and share them widely so that everybody in the school community is aware of them.*



## 2 UPHOLD SCHOOL POLICIES THAT CREATE A SAFE ENVIRONMENT FOR YOUNG LEARNERS AND THAT ADDRESS ISSUES OF GENDER EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY



School leaders need to be familiar with policies related to child health, well-being and protection and make sure that they are upheld in their schools. This will help create a safe and welcoming environment that discourages gender-based discrimination for all children. Our National Integrated Early Childhood Development Policy (2015) highlights that the best interests of the young child must be a primary consideration in all actions concerning them. Policies that support children's health, well-being and protection should be used to guide best practices for schools to ensure that all children are safe, included and respected in school, regardless of their sex or gender identity.



### PAY SPECIFIC ATTENTION TO IMPLEMENTING POLICIES THAT CREATE A SAFE AND RESPECTFUL SCHOOL CULTURE.

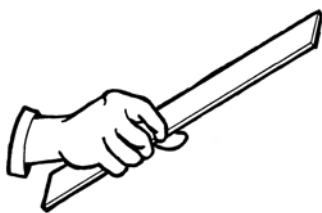
School safety is a fundamental precondition for learning. This is especially important during early childhood, as experience of violence in any environment at a young age increases the risk of later victimisation, as well as perpetration of violence and other antisocial behaviour. Intervening at an early age is critical, as this is the stage where attitudes, values and behaviours develop rapidly.

Safety within schools is not merely the absence of violence but encompasses many other aspects critical to school safety such as health, infrastructure, occupational health, disaster risk management and curriculum design.

The National School Safety Framework (NSSF) outlines four crucial steps to enable a safe school environment and preventing violence (whether corporal punishment, bullying, harassment or sexual and gender-based violence) and what is required for each.

**You can use the table below to determine where more work is needed to create a safe and gender-responsive environment for all learners.**

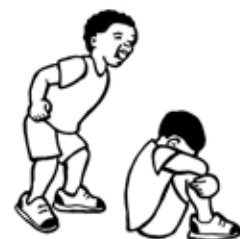
### IN THIS GUIDE, WE WILL FOCUS ON THREE SPECIFIC PRACTICES THAT CREATE UNSAFE AND HARMFUL SCHOOL ENVIRONMENTS FOR YOUNG CHILDREN:



**CORPORAL PUNISHMENT**

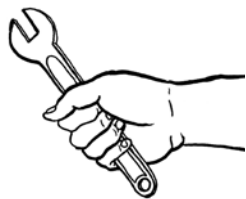


**GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE**  
(INCL. SEXUAL ABUSE)



**BULLYING**  
(INCL. GENDER-BASED BULLYING)





### 1. BE PREPARED TO PREVENT AND MANAGE PROBLEMS

#### WHAT IS REQUIRED?

- Our school has a safety officer or School Safety Committee.
- Our school has a School Safety Policy.
- Our school has a disciplinary procedure.
- Our school has emergency procedures and displays them.
- Access into and out of our school is controlled.
- Our school has an early release procedure for learners.
- Our school has security measures in line with the Regulations for Safety Measures at Public Schools.
- Educators adhere to the South African Council for Educators Code of Conduct.
- Educators have been trained on these policies and procedures.
- Our school has been linked to a police station as part of the Partnership Protocol between the South African Police Service and the Department of Basic Education.



### 2. BE AWARE OF WHAT IS HAPPENING IN YOUR SCHOOL

#### WHAT IS REQUIRED?

- We record incidents relating to interpersonal violence such as bullying, verbal abuse, physical violence and discrimination.
- We are able to refer reported incidents to the School Based Support Team and the District Based Support Team.
- Educators and learners know how and where to report threats and safety incidents.
- Educators know what to do if learners report incidents of threats to them.
- We have established a confidential system for learners to report incidents.
- We know what threatens the safety of our educators and learners and prevents our school from teaching and learning.



### 3. TAKE ACTION WHEN SOMETHING HAPPENS

#### WHAT IS REQUIRED?

- Our educators know what to do if our policies are not followed (e.g. if rules are broken).
- Our educators know what to do in an emergency (e.g. fire, bomb, disease, weather).
- We know what to do if there are illegal drugs at school.
- We know what to do if dangerous weapons are reported to us.
- We know what to do if guns are on the school property.
- We know what to do if theft, burglary or robberies occur.
- We know how to deal with bullying.
- We know what to do after a traumatic event.
- We consistently and fairly implement the agreed consequences when the Learner Code of Conduct is not adhered to.
- We have a directory of services in our community that we can refer learners to.



### 4. TAKE CARE TO BUILD A CARING SCHOOL

#### WHAT IS REQUIRED?

- We have a network of services that come to the school to support us, such as the police, social workers, and district support teams.
- We know who to contact at our nearest police station if we need their support.
- We have established relationships with religious and faith-based community structures that we can call on to provide pastoral care.
- We refer troubled learners or learners in need to the appropriate services.
- We encourage positive relationship building through demonstrating and encouraging appropriate behaviour.



## UPDATE YOUR SCHOOL POLICIES TO SPECIFICALLY ADDRESS ISSUES OF GENDER EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY.



This provides a solid basis for effective intervention and action. The school leaders should ensure that the support for gender equality is applied to the full range of the school's policies including those that are concerned with:

- Learners progress, attainment and assessment
- Behaviour, discipline and codes of conduct
- Teaching and learning
- Admissions and attendance
- Staff recruitment and professional development

### **FOR EXAMPLE:**

*No learner should be expelled, held after school, treated differently or punished in any way because of their sex or gender identity.*

*Discrimination, bullying, and harassment on the basis of sex, gender identity or expression is prohibited.*

*It is the responsibility of all school staff to ensure that all learners, including transgender and gender non-conforming learners, have safe school environments.*

*The scope of this responsibility includes ensuring that any incident of discrimination, harassment, or bullying is given immediate attention, including investigating the incident, taking age- and developmentally appropriate action, and providing learners and staff with appropriate resources and support. Enforcement of anti-bullying policies should focus on education and prevention rather than exclusionary discipline.*

*Complaints alleging discrimination or harassment based on a learner's actual or perceived gender identity or expression are to be taken seriously and handled in the same manner as other discrimination, bullying, or harassment complaints.*

*Any dress codes may not be enforced based on sex or gender stereotypes. Learners should have the right to dress in accordance with their gender identity and expression, including maintaining a gender-neutral appearance within the constraints of the dress codes adopted by the school. School staff shall not enforce a school's dress code more strictly against transgender and gender non-conforming children than other learners.*

*Under these policies, learners cannot be disciplined for wearing clothes associated with a particular sex if those clothes otherwise comply with the dress codes.*

*There is no medical or mental health diagnosis or treatment threshold that learners must meet in order to have their gender identity recognised and respected. The assertion may be evidenced by an expressed desire to be consistently recognized as the sex consistent with their gender identity.*



Where a learner was previously known at school by a different name, the school administration will direct school personnel to use the student's chosen name and appropriate pronouns. To ensure consistency among administrators and staff, every effort must be made to immediately update learner records (e.g., attendance reports etc.) with the learner's chosen name and appropriate gender markers.

Any learner, whether transgender, learners with disabilities or physical differences, learners who are reluctant to use facilities alongside other learners should be accommodated upon request with a safe and non-stigmatising alternative.



### **UPDATE YOUR SCHOOL'S CODE OF CONDUCT TO SUPPORT GENDER-RESPONSIVE PRACTICES.**

Codes of conduct for educators and learners are key to fostering a school climate characterised by respect, tolerance and cooperation. You can refer to the examples provided here to guide the school community in creating and / or revising your own school's code of conduct.



#### **ALL STAFF MEMBERS ARE EXPECTED TO:**

- Be able to recognise and tackle gender-based discrimination, bias and stereotyping.
- Teach respect and appreciation for diversity and equality.
- Create teaching lesson plans to challenge gender stereotypes and include exploration of gender diversity and non-discrimination.
- Promote school activities that respectfully engage with the experiences of people based on gender, sexual orientation, national origin, 'race' and religion.
- Provide confidentiality in reporting all forms of harassment and discrimination.
- Know that harassment and discrimination will result in action.

#### **THE SCHOOL MANAGEMENT TEAM IS EXPECTED TO:**

- Adequately train all staff members and learners on issues of gender equality, harmful impact of gender stereotypes and bias, and the importance of protecting the rights of all from gender-based discrimination.
- Ensure that the policy is communicated to all new staff, learners and parents. Take appropriate action in any case of unlawful discrimination.

NOTE: While important, codes of conduct alone may not achieve gender equality at the school. They are most effective when implemented alongside other physical and educative interventions.

# THE SCHOOL'S MANAGEMENT OF PROCESSES



**KEY MESSAGE:  
ESTABLISH AND  
IMPLEMENT SCHOOL  
PROCESSES THAT  
PROMOTE GENDER  
EQUALITY AND PREVENT  
DISCRIMINATION  
BASED ON GENDER**

## HOW?

- 1 ENSURE THAT GENDER BIASES DO NOT INFLUENCE ENROLMENT AND ATTENDANCE OF YOUNG LEARNERS AT YOUR SCHOOL.**
- 2 REVIEW ADMINISTRATIVE SYSTEMS, FORMS AND DOCUMENTATION TO ENSURE GENDER EQUALITY IS REFLECTED.**
- 3 OPPOSE STEREOTYPICAL GENDER ROLES AND PROMOTE GENDER EQUALITY IN ALL MATTERS RELATED TO THE SCHOOL'S HUMAN RESOURCES.**
- 4 ACCOUNT FOR THE NEEDS OF LEARNERS OF ALL GENDERS IN YOUR BUDGET AND PROCUREMENT SYSTEM.**
- 5 ENSURE THAT SCHOOL PROGRAMMES AND RULES DO NOT REINFORCE GENDER STEREOTYPES OR DISCRIMINATE BASED ON GENDER.**
- 6 MONITOR THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GENDER-RESPONSIVE PROCESSES THROUGH A WHOLE SCHOOL EVALUATION APPROACH.**



### RELEVANT POLICY AND PROTOCOL DOCUMENTS:

National Education Policy Act 27 of 1996

Rights and Responsibilities of Parents, Learners and Public Schools: A public school guide, 2005

Strategy to improve school management and governance in schools, Department of Basic Education

National Policy on Whole School Evaluation, Department of Education, 2002

# 1 ENSURE THAT GENDER BIASES DO NOT INFLUENCE ENROLMENT AND ATTENDANCE OF YOUNG CHILDREN AT YOUR SCHOOL



School leaders need to be familiar with policies related to child health, well-being and protection and make sure that they are upheld in their schools. This will help create a safe and welcoming environment that discourages gender-based discrimination for all children. Our National Integrated Early Childhood Development Policy (2015) highlights that the best interests of the young child must be a primary consideration in all actions concerning them. Policies that support children's health, well-being and protection should be used to guide best practices for schools to ensure that all children are safe, included and respected in school, regardless of their sex or gender identity.



## ENSURE THAT NO LEARNER EXPERIENCES PHYSICAL, ECONOMICAL OR OTHER BARRIERS TO ATTENDING SCHOOL<sup>4</sup>.

The rights of young children to survive and develop to their full potential is universal. As such, no child may be excluded from access to education services based on one or more grounds, including race, gender, sex, marital status of their caregiver, ethnic or social origin, colour, sexual orientation, age, disability, religion, conscience, belief, language, culture and birth<sup>5</sup>. Schools are required to make the necessary arrangements to make their facilities accessible to all learners.



4. Plan of Action: Improving access to free and quality basic education for all. Department of Education, 2003

5. National Integrated Early Childhood Development Policy, 2015



## CLOSELY MONITOR SCHOOL ATTENDANCE OF YOUNG LEARNERS.



The school community, led by the principal and the SGB, is responsible for promoting and monitoring school attendance in order to give learners the best chance of benefiting from their school experience<sup>6</sup>. A daily record of learner attendance enables a school to determine whether attendance of learners of a specific sex or gender identity is a challenge, and take appropriate follow up action. School leaders should support teachers and practitioners to monitor learner well-being and be alert to problems that might affect learner attendance.

## 2 REVIEW ADMINISTRATIVE SYSTEMS, FORMS AND DOCUMENTATION TO ENSURE GENDER EQUALITY IS REFLECTED

Schools require a host of administrative systems in order to deliver quality services to children and communities. They require application forms for new learners, records with details regarding learners and parents, attendance registers, learner assessment records, inventories of learning materials and other assets. **It is important to review all school systems and forms to ensure that gender is reflected as an area of diversity, protected and supported by the school.**



### ENSURE THAT FORMS AND PROCEDURES ARE FREE OF GENDER STEREOTYPES AND BIASES.

It is important to review all forms and documentation used in your school to make sure they include the option for both adults and children to identify as a gender other than male/female; boy/girl. In addition, parent/guardian forms should allow caregivers to specify their relationship to the child regardless of sex or gender identity (e.g. caregiver 1 and caregiver 2 as opposed to mother and father).



### ENSURE THAT FORMS AND PROCEDURES DEMONSTRATE A NON-BINARY UNDERSTANDING OF GENDER.

Many forms and documentation used in schools inadvertently support the notion of gender as a strict binary. For example, the National Education Policy Act 27 of 1996 recommends that a school attendance register in co-educational schools should *list boys and girls on separate pages, first boys, then girls. Write “Boys” or “Girls” in the space provided at the top of the page.* However, this kind of classification does not accommodate learners who identify as trans, non-binary or intersex, and it does not account for the true diversity of gender that exists.

6. National Education Policy Act 27 of 1996



## **ENSURE THAT FORMS AND DOCUMENTATION REFLECT THE PREFERRED NAME AND PRONOUNS FOR ALL LEARNERS.**



Every child has the right to be addressed by a name and pronouns that correspond to their gender identity, regardless of what name or sex has been captured on official documents such as a birth certificate, immunization card or Road to Health booklet.

For a school to be gender-responsive, allow families to specify a learner's preferred name and pronoun and make sure that all documentation such as attendance records, class lists and name tags reflect the child's preferred name and gender identity. Maintain a copy of the learner's birth certificate or other identity document that reflects the learner's name and sex as assigned at birth under lock and key in the principal's office, while the learner information system has the name and gender marker that correspond to the learner's gender identity.

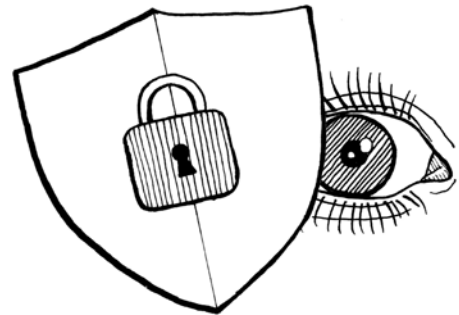


## **ENSURE PRIVACY FOR ALL LEARNERS.**

All learners in a school have the right to privacy, and this should include the right to keep one's transgender status private at school.

For gender non-conforming, trans and non-binary learners, processes like enrolment, taking attendance, assessments and school correspondence can compromise privacy and undermine an otherwise supportive school environment. Even in the most supportive school settings, simple administrative oversights can cause real trauma for a transgender learner.

A substitute teacher, for instance, calling out names from an attendance sheet can inadvertently disclose the learner's transgender identity to their peers.



Information about a child's transgender status, legal name, or sex assigned at birth constitutes confidential information. Disclosing this information to other learners or parents or other third parties may violate privacy laws. Disclosure without consent or misuse of this information may establish a hostile environment for a transgender or gender non-conforming learner, potentially subjecting them to bullying and harassment by peers, discrimination by school staff, or family rejection.

School management should make sure that records remain private. It is recommended that school staff privately ask transgender or gender non-conforming learners how they want to be addressed in class and in the school's communication with the learner's parents or guardians.

### 3 OPPOSE STEREOTYPICAL GENDER ROLES AND PROMOTE GENDER EQUALITY IN ALL MATTERS RELATED TO THE SCHOOL'S HUMAN RESOURCES



Adequate human resources are a critical component of effective provision of education services for young learners<sup>7</sup>. While two-thirds of teachers in public schools are women, men are still disproportionately represented in promotional posts and school management<sup>8</sup>.

As an agent of change, the school management team needs to have a gender-responsive perspective on the school's human resources (HR). The school can have a gender-responsive curriculum and materials, but if teachers and support staff do not understand and believe in gender-responsive pedagogy, it will be difficult to achieve the intended goals.

The school leaders, working with all stakeholders, should embrace the philosophy and practice of Ubuntu and carry the overall responsibility to build a professional learning community in the school. This will be achieved through effective interpersonal relationships and communication, which recognises, manages and celebrates the diversity of ethnicity, race and gender. Through the provision of opportunities for shared leadership, teamwork and participation in decision-making, school leaders promote the empowerment of those working in the school. This should be the case for all school staff, regardless of their sex or gender identity.



#### **TAKE NOTE OF REPRESENTATION OF DIFFERENT SEXES IN YOUR SCHOOL TEAM AND WHAT ROLES ARE ASSIGNED TO DIFFERENT TEAM MEMBERS. ENSURE EQUITY AND FAIRNESS IN THE DELEGATION OF WORK AND RESPONSIBILITIES.**

School leaders can ask themselves the following questions:

- Is the diversity (gender, age, background, ethnicity) of the school community reflected in the teaching staff? Do teachers of different sexes hold positions of responsibility? What can I do to influence teaching staff selection and allocation of roles?
- Is the diversity of the school community reflected in the support staff? Are different sexes represented? What can I do to support fair and gender equal staff selection?
- Is the diversity of the school community represented in the parents or caregivers who are part of the SGB? Are people of different sexes and gender identities represented?
- How are the roles of staff distributed? Who takes notes, who serves coffee, who attends trainings, etc.? Is this gender-balanced?



7. Human Resources Development Strategy for Early Childhood Development, 2020.

8. The National Policy Framework for Teacher Education and Development in South Africa





**HR MANAGEMENT SHOULD MAKE SURE STAFF ARE INFORMED ABOUT THE IMPORTANCE OF GENDER-RESPONSIVE APPROACHES AND POLICIES IN THE SCHOOL.**

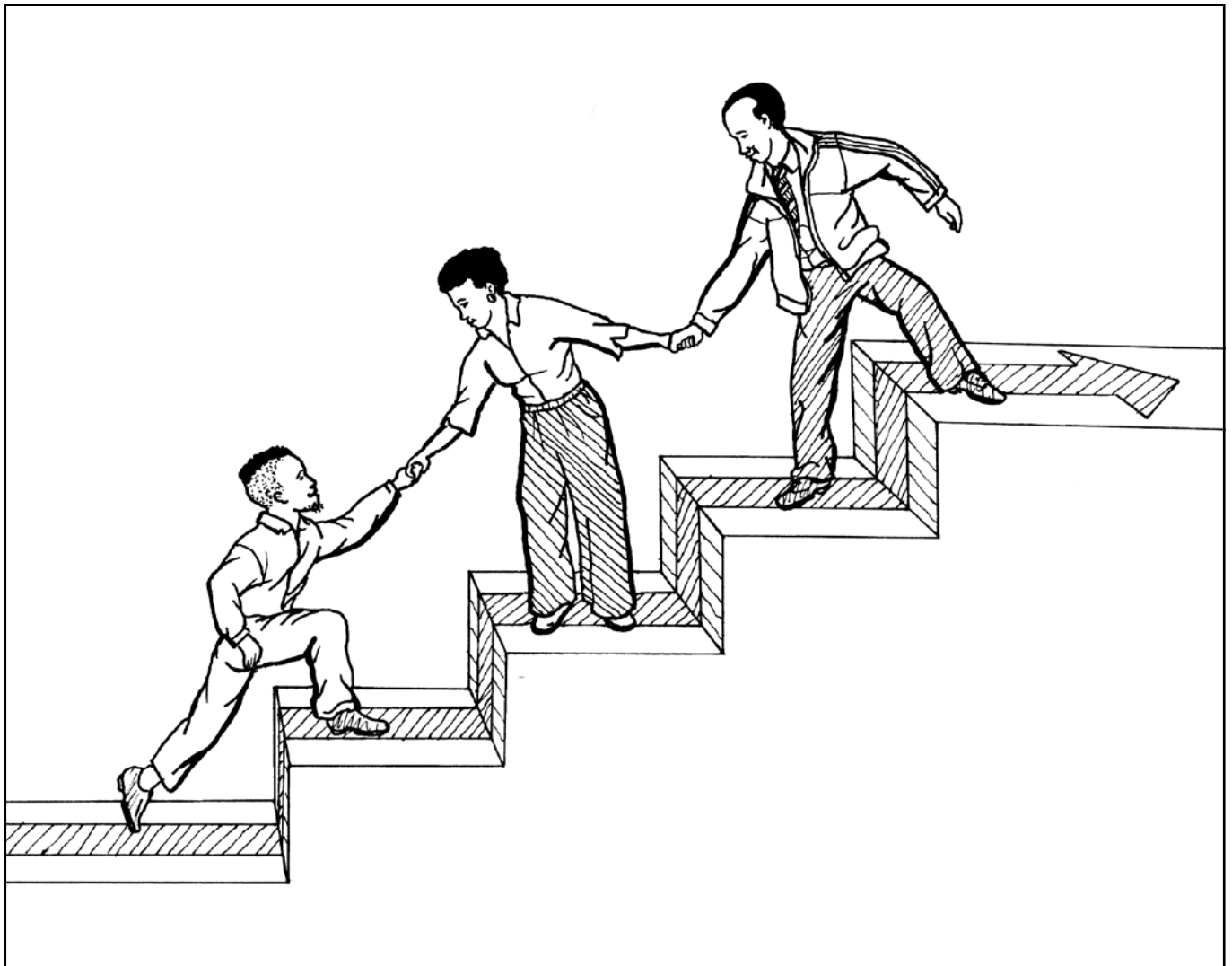


**School leaders should develop and maintain effective procedures for processes such as orientation, performance management and professional development.** School

leaders can ask themselves the following questions:

- Are policies related to staff recruitment, promotion, retention, development and motivation gender-sensitive? In what way can I influence these policies to be more gender-responsive? Can I make suggestions and to whom can I make them?
- Is gender-responsiveness part of the job description for staff? If not, whom can I approach to make sure this is considered?
- Are new teachers oriented on the school's gender policies?
- Is there a plan in place for supporting continuing professional development in terms of gender-responsive practices and monitoring staff performance?

**(LINKS TO UNIT 5: SUPPORT FOR SCHOOL STAFF)**



## 4 ACCOUNT FOR THE NEEDS OF LEARNERS OF ALL SEXES IN YOUR BUDGET AND PROCUREMENT SYSTEM



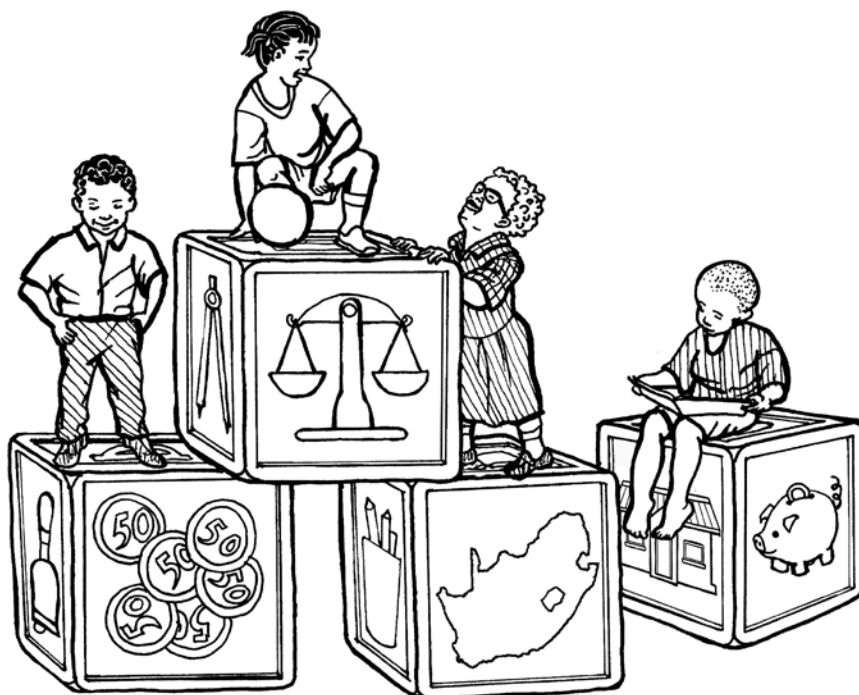
### SET UP A BUDGET AND PROCUREMENT SYSTEM THAT CONSIDERS THE NEEDS OF ALL LEARNERS.

An effective budget and procurement system must consider the different needs of all learners and take their social and economic status and background into account.

School leaders can ask themselves the following questions:

- What is the current budget allocation to address the specific needs of learners of different sexes in our school?
- What programmes, with matching budgets, does our school have for promoting the education of all learners equally?
- What specific procurement policies (and matching funds) should be put in place to address the needs of young children? Gender-responsiveness should always be considered when deciding which materials to buy.

**(LINKS TO UNIT 4: LEARNING MATERIALS AND ACTIVITIES)**



### INCLUDE THE WIDER SCHOOL COMMUNITY IN THE FINANCIAL PLANNING PROCESS.

Considering the different needs of all learners in your school's budget and procurement system can be achieved by including a variety of community members in the planning process<sup>9</sup>. Include caregivers, local leaders, teachers and learners of different sexes and gender identities. Doing so safeguards both diversity and inclusion. Use the annual general meeting to present your budget with estimated income and expenditure of the school for the next financial year to parents for consideration and input.

9. UNGEI (2017). Guidance for Gender-Responsive Education Sector Plans. New York: GPE. Retrieved from [http://www.ungei.org/GPE\\_Guidance\\_for\\_Gender-Responsive\\_ESPs\\_Final.pdf](http://www.ungei.org/GPE_Guidance_for_Gender-Responsive_ESPs_Final.pdf)

## 5 ENSURE THAT SCHOOL PROGRAMMES AND RULES DO NOT REINFORCE GENDER STEREOTYPES OR DISCRIMINATE BASED ON GENDER



### ENSURE THAT YOUR SCHOOL'S DRESS CODES ARE NOT ENFORCED BASED ON SEX OR GENDER STEREOTYPES.

How does the dress code refer to gender? For example “*skirts or shorts may not end more than two inches above the knee*” rather than “*girls may not wear skirts that end more than two inches above the knee*”. Reframe dress codes to describe what the school considers appropriate clothing without assigning clothing options to particular sexes.



### ENSURE THAT YOUR SCHOOL'S FEEDING PROGRAMME DOES NOT REINFORCE GENDER STEREOTYPES.

Take note of who is involved in the feeding programmes and how responsibilities are managed so that the programme does not reinforce stereotypes (by, for example, having only women prepare food). It is important they provide nutritious meals to all learners, without bias. Interaction with parents about the feeding programme can be an ideal opportunity to talk with the community about prevailing harmful stereotypes that prevent healthy nutrition. The school could, for instance, point out to parents that children of all sexes in the feeding programme will be given the same portions because their needs are the same, as long as this is in line with their willingness to eat and avoids wasting food.



## 6 MONITOR THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GENDER-RESPONSIVE PROCESSES THROUGH A WHOLE SCHOOL EVALUATION APPROACH



The implementation of the school plan needs to be monitored and evaluated. It is therefore helpful to make time to reflect on the progress made and, if need be, to adapt the plan.



### SEGREGATE MONITORING DATA BY SEX TO DETERMINE IF GENDER-RELATED ISSUES ARE PRESENT.

When monitoring, it helps to segregate your data collection by sex, as gender-related issues are more likely to emerge. For example, segregate data for enrolment, attendance, retention, progression and achievement rates. In addition, it is also useful to collect more qualitative data through interviews, focus-group discussions and observations.



### INCLUDE INDICATORS ON GENDER-RESPONSIVENESS IN YOUR SCHOOL'S INTERNAL EVALUATION.

Carrying out an internal evaluation of the school is part of the policy approach. A *School Self Evaluation* exercise can enable school communities to undertake a realistic and honest assessment of their school against the criteria within the nine areas of evaluation as set out in the Whole School Evaluation<sup>10</sup> policy.

To improve the gender-responsiveness of your school, you could add gender-responsive indicators (whether input, process or output indicators) to each of the nine key areas of evaluation:

<b>1</b>	<b>BASIC FUNCTIONALITY OF THE SCHOOL</b>	
<b>2</b>	<b>LEADERSHIP, MANAGEMENT AND COMMUNICATION</b>	
<b>3</b>	<b>GOVERNANCE AND RELATIONSHIPS</b>	
<b>4</b>	<b>QUALITY OF TEACHING, LEARNING AND EDUCATOR DEVELOPMENT</b>	
<b>5</b>	<b>CURRICULUM PROVISION AND RESOURCES</b>	
<b>6</b>	<b>LEARNER ACHIEVEMENT</b>	
<b>7</b>	<b>SCHOOL SAFETY, SECURITY AND DISCIPLINE</b>	
<b>8</b>	<b>SCHOOL INFRASTRUCTURE</b>	
<b>9</b>	<b>PARENTS AND COMMUNITY</b>	

10. The National Policy on Whole School Evaluation, Department of Education, 2002



## **INCLUDE GENDER-RELATED IMPROVEMENT AREAS IN YOUR SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PLAN.**



Subsequent to the School Self Evaluation process, the school community produces a School Improvement Plan that will address the identified challenges and improve the quality of basic education in the school. You can create a gender-related improvement area as part of your school's improvement strategy. The template below can be used to specify your area of improvement, what actions to take, who will take them, and when to take them.

<b>AREA FOR DEVELOPMENT</b>	<b>DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITIES / INTERVENTIONS</b>	<b>RESPONSIBILITY</b>	<b>START AND FINISH DATE</b>	<b>BUDGET</b>	<b>PROGRESS</b>

# THE SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT



The buildings and the overall set-up of school infrastructure have an impact on teaching and learning processes, especially for young learners.

Among other factors, the gender-responsiveness of the teaching and learning environment is determined by the availability of physical resources and infrastructure, the seating arrangements in class, indoor and outdoor learning, and access to water and sanitation facilities. It is important that the school leader understands how the learning environment can affect learners in different ways.

Poor learning environments contribute to irregular attendance or dropping out of school, teacher absenteeism and the teachers' and learners' ability to engage in the teaching and learning process. If facilities or infrastructure are limited, it

is important to consider which children might have limited opportunities to access these facilities or infrastructure compared to others in the school, and why. When children have limited or no access to certain physical facilities, gender patterns of participation in learning are more likely to occur<sup>11</sup>.

When school facilities are well maintained, the buildings, furniture and equipment will last longer and contribute to the effective learning and teaching in schools. Maintaining school facilities is an important function of the SMT. Importantly, school leaders need to ensure that:

- the school infrastructure supports the needs of all learners in their school.
- all children have equal access to the physical teaching and learning environment.

11. National Policy on an Equitable Provision of an Enabling School Physical Teaching and Learning Environment, 2010



**KEY MESSAGE:  
CREATE A SAFE AND  
INCLUSIVE SCHOOL  
ENVIRONMENT THAT  
SUPPORTS THE NEEDS  
OF ALL LEARNERS**

## HOW?

- 1 CREATE A PHYSICALLY SAFE ENVIRONMENT, ACCOMPANIED BY GOOD GOVERNANCE TO FACILITATE POSITIVE LEARNER-LEARNER AND TEACHER-LEARNER INTERACTIONS.**
- 2 ENSURE THAT THE SCHOOL'S INFRASTRUCTURE SUPPORTS THE NEEDS OF ALL LEARNERS IN THE SCHOOL.**
- 3 PROVIDE SAFE AND ACCESSIBLE WATER AND SANITATION FACILITIES FOR ALL LEARNERS, EFFECTIVELY SUPERVISED BY SCHOOL STAFF.**



### RELEVANT POLICY AND PROTOCOL DOCUMENTS:

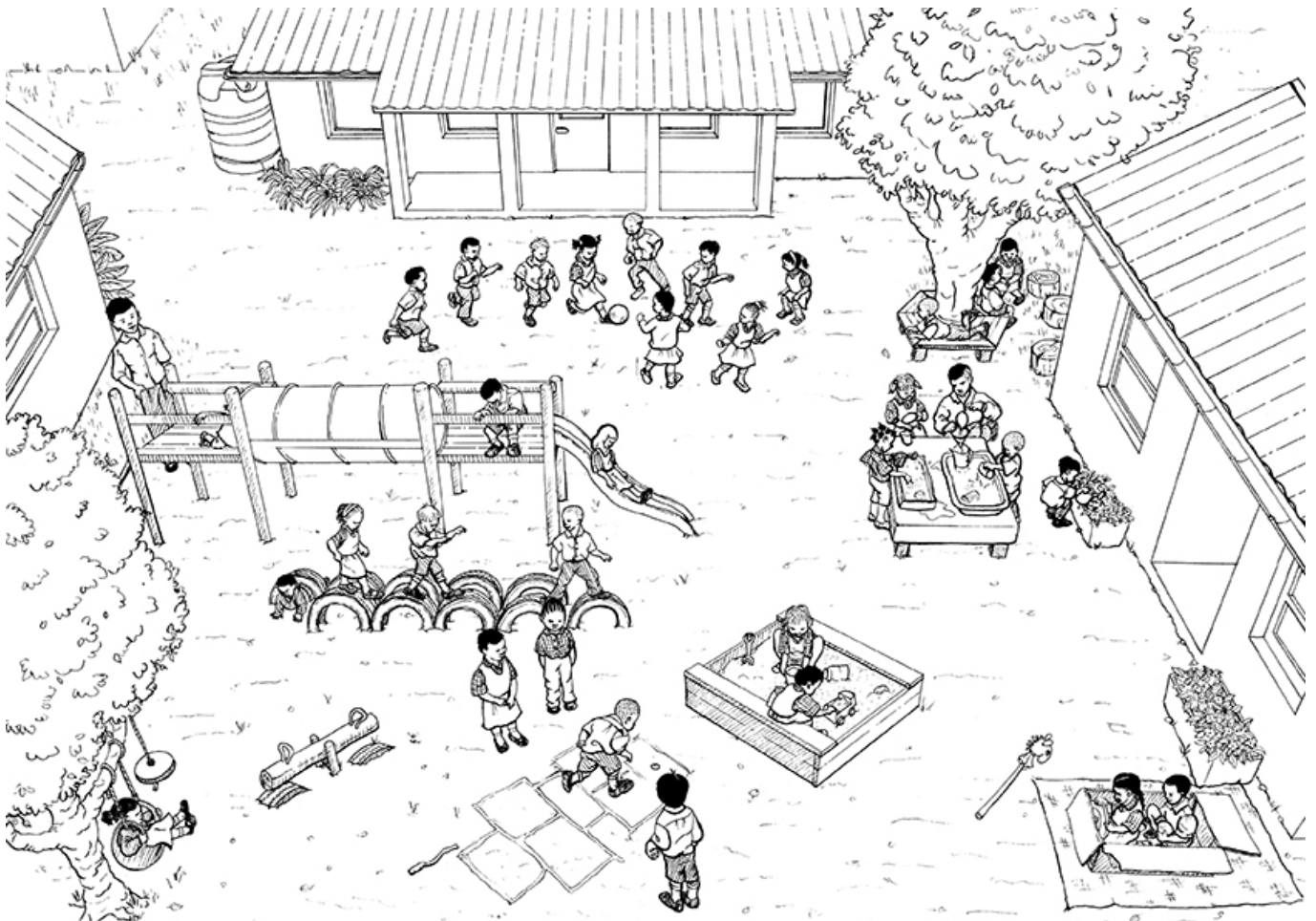
National Policy on an Equitable Provision of an Enabling School Physical Teaching and Learning Environment, 2010

Regulations relating to minimum uniform norms and standards for public school infrastructure, 2013



### LINK TO TEACHERS' GUIDE:

Create a learning environment that encourages the participation of all children  
*Pages 14-20*



# 1 CREATE A PHYSICALLY SAFE ENVIRONMENT, ACCOMPANIED BY GOOD GOVERNANCE TO FACILITATE POSITIVE LEARNER-LEARNER AND TEACHER-LEARNER INTERACTIONS

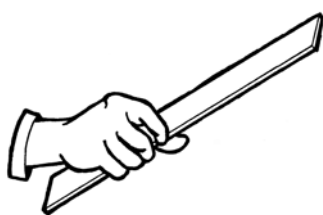


## ENSURE THAT THE SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT IS PHYSICALLY SAFE AND EFFECTIVELY SUPERVISED.

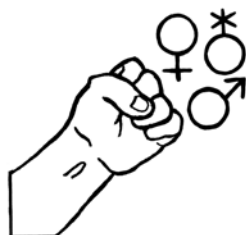
A physically safe school environment that is governed effectively can help to prevent incidents of corporal punishment, gender-based violence and bullying. School leaders can improve the safety of the school environment through introducing certain physical aspects such as secure fences, gates, ensuring school buildings are well-lit and well-maintained (see some examples below). However, it is important that the safety of the physical environment is accompanied by good governance and management practices and attention to learner discipline and professional teacher conduct.

1. School grounds are fenced.
2. Gates are secured with secure padlocks and chains after hours.
3. Signs are posted for visitors to report to the main office through a designated entrance.
4. Shrubs and foliage are trimmed to allow for good line of sight.
5. Bus loading and drop-off zones are clearly defined.
6. Good visual surveillance of play equipment and areas is possible.
7. Vehicle access to play areas is restricted.
8. Playground equipment has been secured.
9. Visual surveillance of parking lots from the main office.
10. Learner access to parking areas is restricted to arrival and dismissal times.
11. There are no broken windowpanes.
12. Unused areas of the school can be closed off during after-school activities.
13. If a classroom is vacant, pupils are restricted from entering the room alone.
14. School files and records are maintained in locked, vandal-proof, fireproof containers or vaults.
15. Exit signs are clearly visible and pointing in the correct direction.

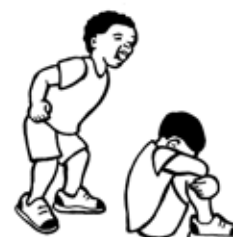
Make sure that all school staff are familiar with policies and procedures for preventing and reporting corporal punishment, gender-based violence and bullying. Refer to the following resources for more information:



**MORE ON  
CORPORAL PUNISHMENT**

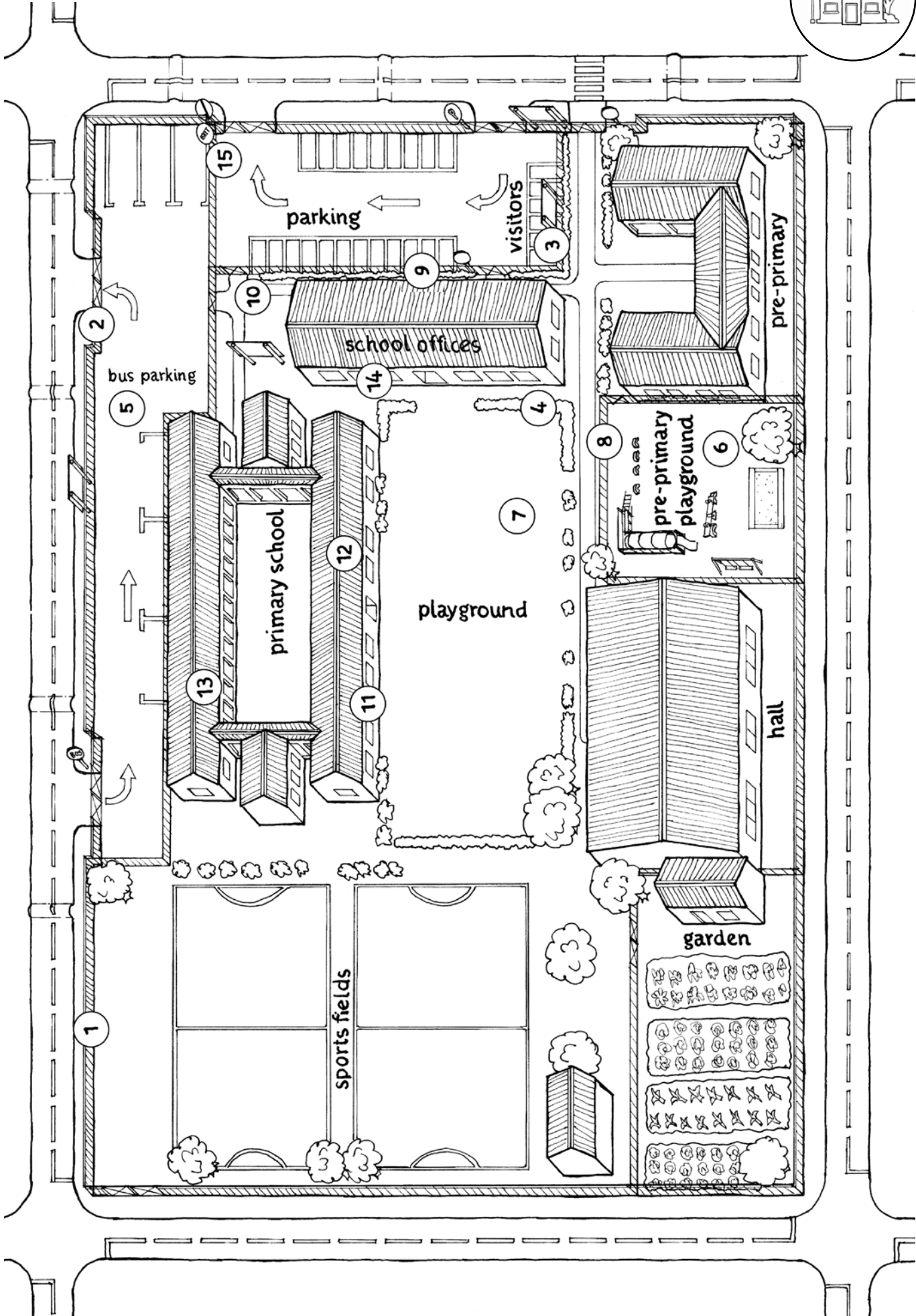


**MORE ON  
GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE**



**MORE ON  
BULLYING**







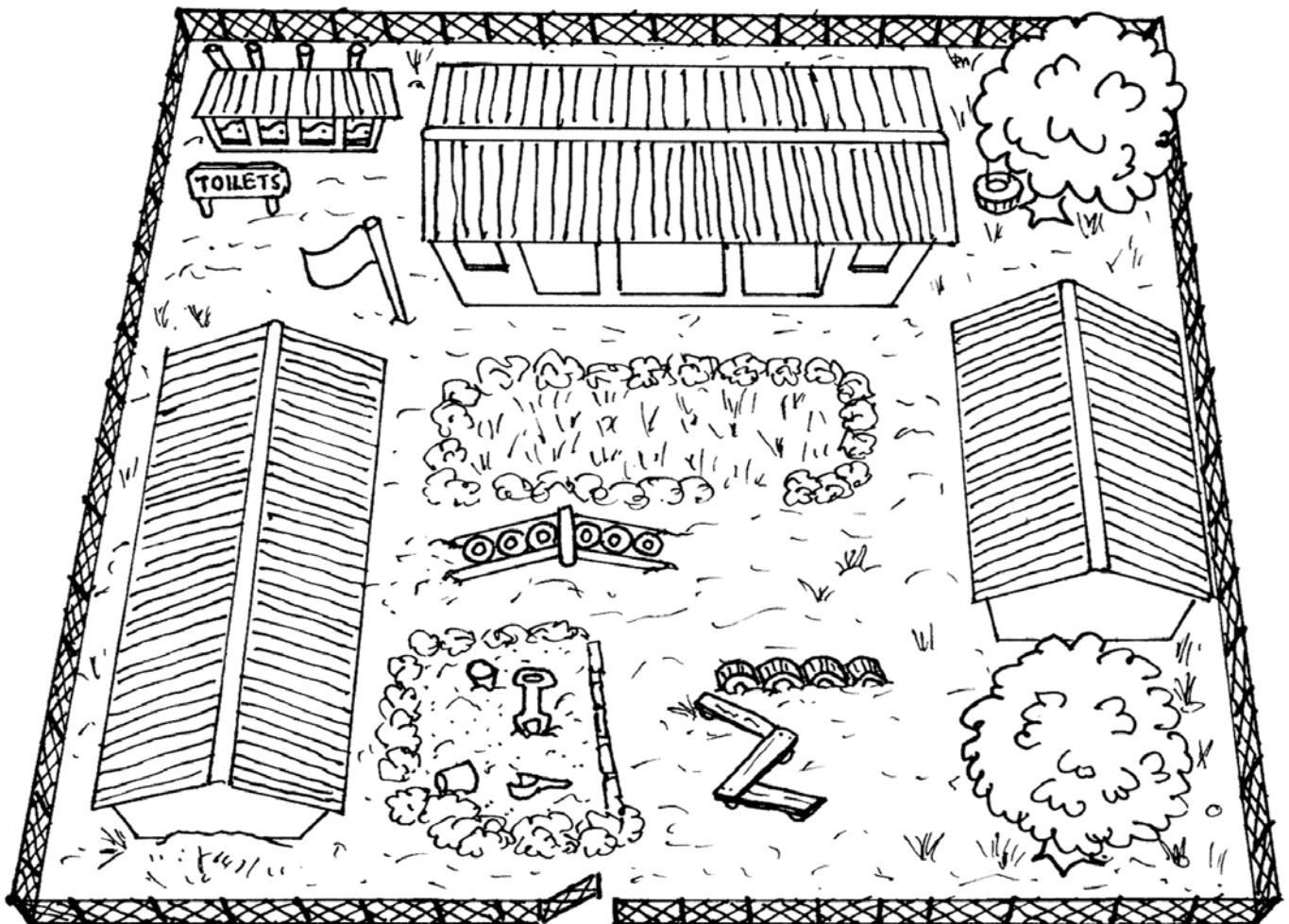
## ENABLE STAFF TO ENCOURAGE THE PARTICIPATION OF ALL CHILDREN IN OUTDOOR PLAY AREAS.



If an outdoor play area is provided, arrange for teachers to supervise play to ensure that the available equipment is accessible to all learners. You may consider dividing the play area by, for example, adding low bushes to prevent one group dominating the available space. It is important to encourage staff to intervene in a constructive manner when a group of children take up all the space or chase other children away.

## 2 ENSURE THAT THE SCHOOL'S INFRASTRUCTURE SUPPORTS THE NEEDS OF ALL LEARNERS IN THE SCHOOL

Regardless of sex, children have similar physical strength and ability until they reach puberty. Therefore, little or no distinction needs to be made in the school's physical infrastructure to suit both. It is important, however, that classrooms provide enough space for young learners to move.





## **ENSURE THAT THE SCHOOL INFRASTRUCTURE IS APPROPRIATE FOR ALL YOUNG LEARNERS.**



Door handles should be within learners' reach so they can enter and leave the classroom independently. Where noise is not an issue for children in other grades, you could also consider adopting an open-door policy where classroom doors remain open at all times. This increases transparency in what is happening within the classrooms, creates possibilities for stronger teacher collaboration and improves the safety of the learners.



## **PROVIDE APPROPRIATE FURNITURE TO SUPPORT THE LEARNING OF ALL YOUNG LEARNERS.**

The appropriateness and quality of classroom furniture affects the quality and gender-responsiveness of the education provided. School leaders can ensure that adequate classroom materials are provided to support the teachers in setting up classrooms for effective learning.

When procuring tables and chairs, it is advisable to cater for the diverse age groups as well as their appeal to all children. Mats can be used to deliver whole class activities that encourage interaction between learners.

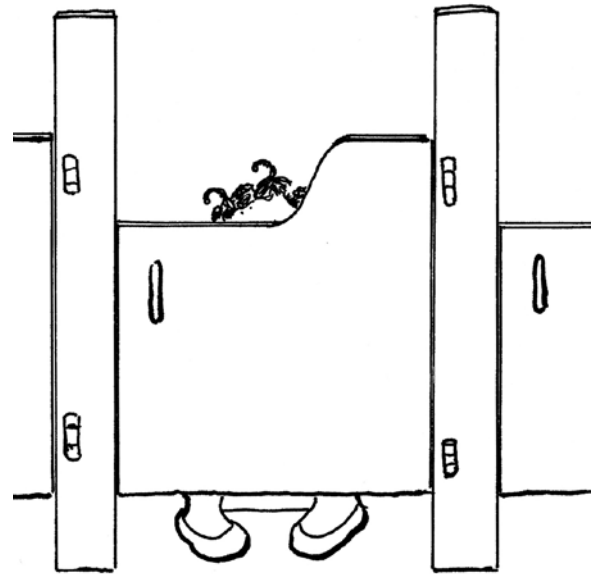
### 3 PROVIDE SAFE AND ACCESSIBLE WATER AND SANITATION FACILITIES FOR ALL LEARNERS, EFFECTIVELY SUPERVISED BY SCHOOL STAFF



The Department of Basic Education's regulations for public school infrastructure<sup>12</sup> outlines that all schools must have a sufficient number of sanitation facilities that are:

- easily accessible to all learners and educators.
- provide privacy and security.
- promote health and hygiene standards.
- comply with all relevant laws and are maintained in good working order.

Places where the body becomes visible to others such as toilets and changing rooms are common areas of anxiety or harassment. As a result, some children might avoid going to the toilet which has severe consequences for their health, well-being and ability to concentrate on learning. Schools therefore need to pay attention to creating a positive and supportive climate around toilet routines, accompanied by appropriate supervision to make sure every child feels safe and comfortable in the toilets and changing rooms.



#### **ENSURE THAT TOILET FACILITIES ARE SAFE AND ACCESSIBLE, APPROPRIATE FOR ALL LEARNERS IN THE SCHOOL.**

For example, the youngest learners may need a step to be comfortable on adult toilet bowls and to reach the water basins<sup>13</sup>. Distance to the ablution facilities is a key factor in ensuring that young learners can use the facilities safely<sup>14</sup> and independently.



#### **CONSIDER HOW SEX-SEGREGATED FACILITIES MIGHT IMPACT LEARNERS.**

Many schools have ablution facilities that divide bathrooms by sex. A potential problem with such bathrooms (i.e. separate facilities for males and females) is that trans and non-binary children may not feel comfortable using them due to others' reactions (e.g. being questioned or interrogated about their gender when using a particular toilet facility). Similarly, separating toilet routines for boys and girls place trans and non-binary children in a difficult position. If the toilets are separated, ensure the signage is gender-responsive and does not reinforce stereotypes. For instance, do not make the signage pink for girls and blue for boys, but use the same neutral colour.

12. Regulations relating to minimum uniform norms and standards for public school infrastructure, 2013

13. Department of Social Development / UNICEF South Africa and others (2006). The Guidelines for Early Child

14. Nur Otaran, Ö. E. (2016). Gender Sensitive Institution Standards Handbook. Turkey: European Union and Government of Turkey.



## ENABLE TOILET ROUTINES THAT SUPPORT GENDER DIVERSITY.



- Learners should have access to bathroom facilities that correspond with their gender identity.
- Learners should not be forced to use a bathroom for which they do not identify.
- Learners who identify as gender non-binary should be granted access to the facility that they feel most comfortable using.
- Learners who are uncomfortable using a sex-segregated bathroom or who indicate the need for increased privacy should be provided with a safe and adequate alternative (e.g. a single “unisex” bathroom or a single-user restroom such as a staff bathroom).
- While a private bathroom space should be available to learners as an option, no learner should be required or forced to use such a space.
- Schools can reduce children’s fears about using these spaces by creating a positive, supportive climate, and supervising it appropriately.



## ENABLE TOILET ROUTINES THAT CREATE A POSITIVE AND SUPPORTIVE CLIMATE.

School staff should respect and support learners’ decisions around which facilities to use and therefore not confront learners about their gender identity upon entry to the restroom. School staff should ensure that options are available to all learners and provided free of stigma or ridicule.

*NOTE: While other children might feel uncomfortable with a transgender child using a sex-segregated bathroom or question this, their discomfort is not a reason to deny access to the transgender child. Teachers and school staff should work with children to address the discomfort and foster understanding of gender diversity, to create a school culture that respects and values all children.*

*It should also be noted that much of the fear about transgender learners in bathrooms rests on the false notion that a transgender learner wants access for an improper purpose (e.g., to leer at other learners or for attention). Research has shown this is not an issue in schools with policies that ensure that transgender students can use the bathroom aligned with their gender.*



**PROVIDE APPROPRIATE SUPERVISION DURING TOILET ROUTINES TO MAKE SURE EVERY LEARNER FEELS SAFE AND COMFORTABLE IN THE BATHROOM.**



All schools likely have policies and practices in place to prevent behaviours such as verbal harassment, bullying, intimidation, inappropriate touching or invasion of privacy. Accordingly, schools must supervise bathroom spaces appropriately and take action when anyone violates these policies.

It is imperative that schools be specific about which behaviours are and are not acceptable in the bathroom. These include respecting the privacy and honouring the personal space of other learners using the facility. Expectations also include not leering at another learner or making disparaging comments about another learner's body. Staff should therefore be present to supervise and address harmful comments and behaviour.

# LEARNING MATERIALS AND ACTIVITIES



Children who are exposed to a variety play materials and learning activities – where they have the opportunity to interact with different children – are more likely to develop a wider range of skills.

However, toys and play materials often adhere to a clear gender binary (“toys for girls”, “toys for boys”), which can limit what children play with, while pictures and words in storybooks and posters can influence children’s understanding of different gender roles. In addition, when children are divided into groups based on sex, it reinforces beliefs that children of different sexes can’t work together and can’t perform the same tasks.

School leaders should therefore ensure that learning materials and activities are gender-responsive, in order to support children’s learning through play and holistic development.

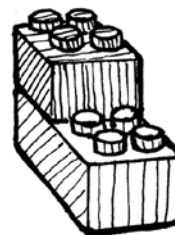
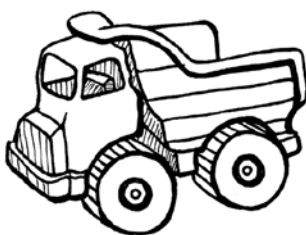
This means that:

- materials (play materials, story books and posters) are equally and equitably available to all learners.
- materials and activities challenge gender stereotypes and biases, promote gender equality and diversity.

South Africa’s Learning and Teaching Support Material (LTSM) policy has been introduced to ensure that all the injustices and inequalities of the past, with regards to learner support, are addressed. The policy ensures production and selection of quality LTSM and makes such available to all learners in public schools. The policy states that materials and activities must be appropriate for learners in a **diverse society and promote social transformation, and communicate values and attitudes consistent with the South African Constitution**<sup>15</sup>



“TOYS FOR GIRLS”



“TOYS FOR BOYS”

15. Draft national policy for the provision and management of learning and teaching support material, 2014

**KEY MESSAGE:  
OFFER LEARNING  
MATERIALS AND  
ACTIVITIES THAT ARE  
GENDER-RESPONSIVE  
TO SUPPORT CHILDREN'S  
HOLISTIC DEVELOPMENT**

## HOW?

- 1 ENSURE THAT LEARNING MATERIALS ARE EQUALLY AND EQUITABLY AVAILABLE TO ALL LEARNERS.**
- 2 PROVIDE LEARNING MATERIALS THAT CHALLENGE GENDER STEREOTYPES AND PROMOTE GENDER EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY.**
- 3 FACILITATE LEARNING ACTIVITIES THAT BREAK DOWN STEREOTYPICAL IDEAS ABOUT GENDER.**



### RELEVANT POLICY AND PROTOCOL DOCUMENTS:

Draft national policy for the provision and management of learning and teaching support material, 2014



### LINK TO TEACHERS' GUIDE:

Learning Materials: Encourage children to explore all types of toys and play materials. *Pages 21-24*

Use pictures and stories to talk about gender roles and promote gender diversity. *Pages 25-28*

Learning Activities: Use learning activities to break down stereotypical ideas about gender. *Pages 29-34*

## **1 ENSURE THAT LEARNING MATERIALS ARE EQUALLY AND EQUITABLY AVAILABLE TO ALL LEARNERS**



**TO ENSURE THAT MATERIALS ARE AVAILABLE TO ALL LEARNERS, ALL RESOURCES SHOULD BE PROPERLY ACCOUNTED FOR THROUGH A STRONG ADMINISTRATIVE AND MANAGEMENT PROGRAMME.**

The lack of proper asset management systems in many schools, including proper systems for the retrieval and storage of materials is an important factor contributing to leakages of resources and hence the under-resourcing of schools<sup>16</sup>. Recording and safe-keeping (e.g. a materials inventory) helps ensure materials are recorded, safely stored and effectively utilised.

<sup>16</sup>. Plan of Action: Improving access to free and quality basic education for all. Department of Education, 2003



## 2 PROVIDE LEARNING MATERIALS THAT CHALLENGE GENDER STEREOTYPES AND PROMOTE GENDER EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY



Learners and teachers should be provided with a wide variety of curricular resources, exposing learners to **diverse ideas, experiences and opinions**.



### SCREEN ALL TEACHING AND LEARNING MATERIALS FOR THEIR GENDER-RESPONSIVENESS.

- Establish a task force in your school mandated to screen all teaching and learning materials for their gender-responsiveness and motivate teachers to challenge the gender stereotypes encountered in the materials.  
**(see also page 26-27 of teachers' guide)**
- The task force can check story and picture books, posters and other visuals for stereotypes and encourage educators to prepare questions to use with learners to challenge any stereotypes. In addition, these books could be supplemented with more gender-sensitive materials.
- Bring gender stereotypes in existing learning materials to the attention of publishers and education officials when given the opportunity to provide feedback.



### WHERE POSSIBLE, INTRODUCE ADDITIONAL MATERIALS THAT ARE GENDER NEUTRAL OR THAT PROMOTE GENDER DIVERSITY.

- Stimulate and support teachers to develop and use gender-neutral play materials and other learning materials.
- Look out for, and procure gender-responsive teaching and learning materials.
- Encourage teachers to create their own gender-responsive play materials, story books and posters with locally available resources and stimulate them to be resourceful in creating such materials.



## ENRICH THE CURRICULUM TO INCREASE AWARENESS OF GENDER AND BODILY DIVERSITY.



Lack of education around and awareness of bodily diversity, and intersex traits in particular, creates a hostile and discriminatory environment for intersex children. The school environment tends to perpetuate the belief that only two sexes exist. In addition, by treating intersex traits as birth defects or disorders, the belief that intersex people need to be “fixed” is reinforced.

Early social affirmation of body diversity as a healthy manifestation of human diversity is crucial for the self-understanding and healthy mental development of intersex children and youth. For children whose bodies do conform to other people’s expectations about sex and gender, it is also important that gender and body diversity are discussed as part of the school curriculum.



Schools should find places in their curricula to discuss intersex bodies, chromosomes and the many varied elements of sex and gender as early as possible.

- Encourage school staff to have age-appropriate discussions with young learners about the variations of both sex and gender and acknowledge these variations as healthy manifestations of human diversity.
- Invite guest speakers (e.g., from LGBTI organisations) to your school who demonstrate gender-expansive examples of success and achievement or show appropriate videos about LGBTI issues.

Make sure that your curriculum includes the topic of sexual and gender diversity, for example in the Life Skills subject area. The aim of these discussions is to enable learners to develop the skills, values and knowledge that they need to respect diversity and remain safe. As part of including these topics in the curriculum, you should:

- 1. Let parents know that sexual and gender diversity is covered in the curriculum and invite discussion about this.**
- 2. Make learners aware that sexual and gender diversity is protected under the law.**
- 3. Show learners that they have a responsibility to respect other people.**
- 4. Provide learners with accurate information on the rights of LGBTI people.**
- 5. Have accurate and age-appropriate discussions of sexual behaviour and risk taking.**
- 6. Challenge homophobia and myths about LGBTI identities.**

### 3 FACILITATE LEARNING ACTIVITIES THAT BREAK DOWN STEREOTYPICAL IDEAS ABOUT GENDER



#### AVOID MAKING ACTIVITIES SEX-SPECIFIC.

There is no need to have separate school-wide activities for boys and girls, as these divisions will rob children of opportunities to learn from a variety of activities and interactions. In addition, separating activities by sex excludes trans children and reinforces gender as a strict binary. Rather, encourage your staff to facilitate mixed-sex groups and interaction during different activities **(see also page 30 of Teachers' Guide)**.

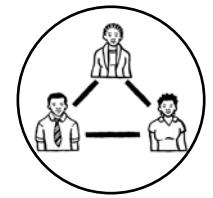


#### SUPPORT SCHOOL STAFF TO FACILITATE ACTIVITIES THAT BREAK DOWN STEREOTYPICAL IDEAS ABOUT GENDER.

The Teachers' Guide offers guidance on how teachers can create opportunities for learners to engage in a variety of learning activities and how teachers can use activities to question gender roles and stereotypes to promote gender equality. School leaders can support and encourage teachers to implement these approaches in their classes.



# SUPPORT FOR SCHOOL STAFF



The quality of the school's teaching and learning processes is a key element of a gender-responsive school environment.

Both school leaders and teachers need to acquire skills to recognise, identify and address barriers to learning. School leaders and teachers should create inclusive and enabling teaching environments for all learners regardless of their sex and gender identity.

The Code of Professional Ethics for Educators<sup>17</sup> promotes conduct that in several ways aligns with a gender-responsive pedagogy. Specifically, the code expects that an educator:

1. Respects the dignity, beliefs and constitutional rights of learners and in particular children, which includes the right to privacy and confidentiality.
2. Acknowledges the uniqueness, individuality, and specific needs of each learner, guiding and encouraging each to realise his or her potential.
3. Strives to enable learners to develop a set of values consistent with the fundamental rights contained in the Constitution of South Africa.
4. Exercises authority with compassion.
5. Avoids any form of humiliation, and refrains from any form of abuse, physical or psychological.
6. Promotes gender equality.
7. Uses appropriate language and behaviour in his or her interaction with learners, and acts in respect from the learners.

When a breach of this Code of Professional Ethics occurs, anyone can directly lodge a complaint with the South African Council for Educators (SACE).

Providing school staff with opportunities for Continuing Professional Development in gender-responsive practices will help school staff to uphold the Code of Professional Ethics for Educators and therefore enable young children to develop to their fullest and unique potential, regardless of their sex. All educators, as part of their conditions of service, should spend 80 hours per year on professional development activities<sup>18</sup>. **By developing as professionals to implement a gender-responsive pedagogy, school leaders and teachers can create a safe and inclusive school environment that promotes gender equality and respects gender diversity.**



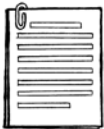
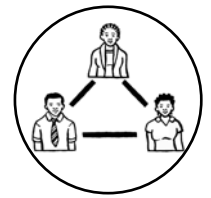
17. South African Council for Educators (SACE) Act31 of 2000

18. The Integrated Strategic Planning Framework for Teacher Education and Development (ISPFTED) 2011-2025

**KEY MESSAGE:  
SUPPORT GENDER-  
RESPONSIVE PRACTICES  
THROUGH CONTINUING  
PROFESSIONAL  
DEVELOPMENT FOR STAFF  
(AND SELF)**

**HOW?**

- 1 SUPPORT SCHOOL STAFF (AND SELF) IN LEARNING ABOUT GENDER BIASES AND GENDER DIVERSITY.**
- 2 SUPPORT SCHOOL STAFF TO IMPLEMENT GENDER-RESPONSIVE PEDAGOGY IN THEIR WORK.**
- 3 PROMOTE SHARED LEADERSHIP AND TEAMWORK IN CREATING A GENDER-RESPONSIVE SCHOOL.**



**RELEVANT POLICY AND PROTOCOL DOCUMENTS:**

The Integrated Strategic Planning Framework for Teacher Education and Development (ISPFTED) 2011-2025  
Professional Learning Communities: A guideline for South African Schools, 2015



**LINK TO TEACHERS' GUIDE:**

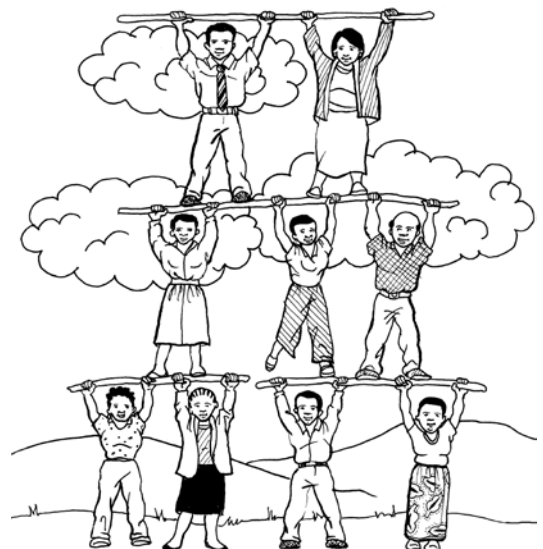
See all units of the Teachers' Guide for practical tips on how teachers can implement gender-responsive pedagogy in terms of the learning environment, materials and activities, classroom interactions and language use, as well as interactions beyond the classroom.

**1 SUPPORT SCHOOL STAFF (AND SELF) IN LEARNING ABOUT GENDER BIASES AND GENDER DIVERSITY**



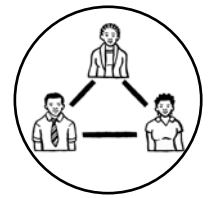
**AS SCHOOL LEADER, YOU CAN SUPPORT TEACHERS AND OTHER SCHOOL STAFF TO BECOME MORE AWARE OF UNCONSCIOUS GENDER STEREOTYPES AND BIASES.**

Gender stereotypes and biases are all around us and if we are not aware of them and the impact they have on children's potential and future, we cannot challenge them. Teachers work in very different school contexts in South Africa including in urban, rural and township settings where there may be different attitudes to gender diversity and equality. As school leaders, it is important to support school staff to reflect on gender biases, and challenge gender stereotypes in your interactions with all school staff.





## **COMMIT TO ONGOING SELF-DEVELOPMENT BY CONTINUING TO REFLECT ON YOUR OWN GENDER BIASES.**



School leaders need to be committed to their own continuing professional development in order to build a learning organisation and set a good example for their team. In order to effectively support school staff in becoming more gender-responsive, school leaders also need to be reflective of their own gender biases and be committed to their own continuing professional development in gender-responsive practices.



## **PROVIDE STAFF WITH FACTUAL INFORMATION ABOUT GENDER DIVERSITY.**

Gender diversity is protected under our legislation and in our education policies. Ensure that teachers are aware of these policies and provide them with information of how gender stereotypes and biases impact on the unique potential of young learners, and, may affect how they relate to others – both as children and as adults.

Educate staff to understand the complexities of gender and offer information and training on gender terms, concepts and current developmental understandings of gender identity, gender expression and gender diversity in children. You can use this Guide to guide these discussions and training for staff (*Why gender matters; What do we mean when we talk about gender; Key gender concepts; Gender and the South African context; Gender in ECD; The benefits of supporting gender diversity*).

## **2 SUPPORT SCHOOL STAFF TO IMPLEMENT GENDER-RESPONSIVE PEDAGOGY (GRP) IN THEIR WORK**



### **PROVIDE STAFF WITH TRAINING IN GRP AND HOW TO IMPLEMENT THIS IN THEIR WORK.**

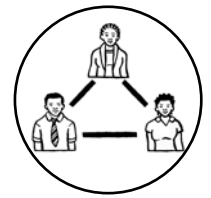
The Teachers' Guide provides practical advice for teachers and other school staff to promote gender equality. When school staff practices GRP, it allows schools to offer equal opportunities for all young learners to engage and learn and help them break free from harmful gender stereotypes that hold them back in life.

You can use the Teachers' Guide to provide training in the following aspects of GRP for young learners:

- How to create a learning environment that encourages participation of all children.
- How to encourage all children to explore all types of toys and play materials.
- How to use pictures and stories to talk about gender roles and promote gender diversity.
- How to use learning activities to break down stereotypical ideas about gender.
- How to use interactions with children to build their self-esteem and promote gender equality.
- How to support children to express themselves freely and accept one another.
- How to use interactions with school staff, parents and the wider community to promote and encourage gender equality.



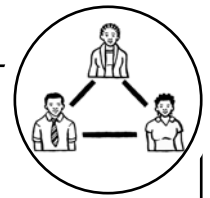
## SUPPORT AND EVALUATE THE GENDER-RESPONSIVE PRACTICES OF SCHOOL STAFF TO ENSURE IMPROVEMENT.



**By building trust**, school leaders create the context in which the school's vision and values can be translated into shared practice. Through trust, and by creating a safe and supportive environment for teachers to try out new gender-responsive models, they can enhance gender-responsive teaching and learning in their schools.

As the school leader, offer guidance and advice on the implementation of GRP by carrying out frequent and supportive teacher observations in their classrooms. You can use the questions in the table below to help guide your in-class observations and feedback to the teacher. Celebrate their achievements, while also constructively addressing improvement areas, ensuring appropriate remedial action and support.





## IN-CLASS TEACHER OBSERVATIONS: GUIDING QUESTIONS

### SEATING ARRANGEMENTS

1. Are learner seating patterns segregated according to sex? Limiting interactions between learners of different sexes will limit them in their development.
2. Where do learners of different sexes sit in the classroom in relation to the teacher? Learners who sit near the teacher are usually called on more frequently or receive more of the teacher's attention.
3. Does the teacher attempt to include shyer or more reserved learners in the conversation or activities?
4. In the conversation with the teacher afterwards you may want to ask about seating arrangements – how they are chosen, when they change, and so on.

### LEARNING AREAS

5. Does the teacher offer a combination of materials in the learning areas to attract diverse learners to play together?
6. Does the teacher encourage learners to try out different learning areas?
7. Does the teacher intervene when certain learners take up all the play space or chase other learners away?

*NOTE: It may also be useful to observe learners during outdoor and indoor free play.*

### LEARNING MATERIALS

8. Do learners of different sexes have equal access to play and other learning materials?
9. Does the teacher encourage all learners to explore play materials typically meant for a specific sex?
10. Do the pictures on the walls show people of different sexes and gender identities? Do they appeal to and inspire all learners? Are they stereotypical in any way? Does the classroom have any examples displayed of gender non-conforming individuals or cultures?
11. If there are some gender stereotypes in the books or stories, does the teacher engage the learners in talking about them?

### LEARNING ACTIVITIES

12. What activities do learners of different sexes engage in?
13. How are the learners grouped?
14. How are class tasks assigned?
15. During the activities, does the teacher ask thought-provoking questions to challenge gender roles?

### INTERACTIONS AND LANGUAGE USE

16. Does the teacher give learners positive feedback based on their skills rather than their sex?
17. Does the teacher give equal and similar attention to learners of different sexes?
18. Does the teacher use gender inclusive language?
19. Does the teacher talk about the gender diversity of all people and help expand learners' understanding of gender?
20. Does the teacher help learners equally to express their emotions?
21. Does the teacher encourage empathy and respect for diversity when interacting with learners?

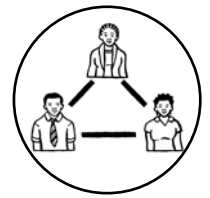
### GIVING FEEDBACK:

- Share your findings with the teacher after your observation. You can ask additional questions and look to clarify the reasons behind certain choices.
- Thank the teacher for what went well.
- Reflect together on any points for improvement.
- Formulate action points together.



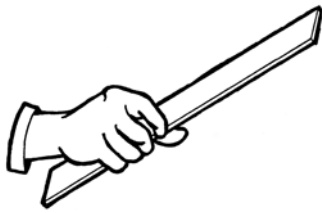


## **ORGANISE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR SCHOOL STAFF ON THE PREVENTION OF CORPORAL PUNISHMENT, SCHOOL-RELATED GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE AND BULLYING.**



School leaders and teachers play an important role in helping learners treat one another with respect, learn to express their emotions constructively, develop empathy and appreciate diversity. Supporting young learners to develop these skills is at the core of implementing gender-responsive practices in the school. School staff will be better able to implement gender-responsive practices if they can prevent corporal punishment, gender-based violence and bullying in their classrooms and the school.

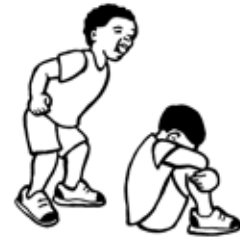
All school personnel - from teachers, aides and counsellors to administrative, cleaning and security staff - should be made aware of the school's policies regarding corporal punishment, bullying, discrimination and harassment and the procedures to follow to report such cases. All staff should be familiar with the reporting of cases of sexual abuse in schools. Staff should receive training in developmentally appropriate strategies for preventing and intervening in bullying incidents, as well as positive, non-violent discipline techniques (see the following resources for more information).



**MORE ON  
CORPORAL PUNISHMENT**

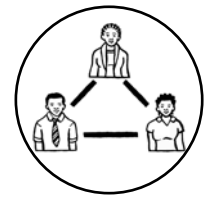


**MORE ON  
GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE**



**MORE ON  
BULLYING**

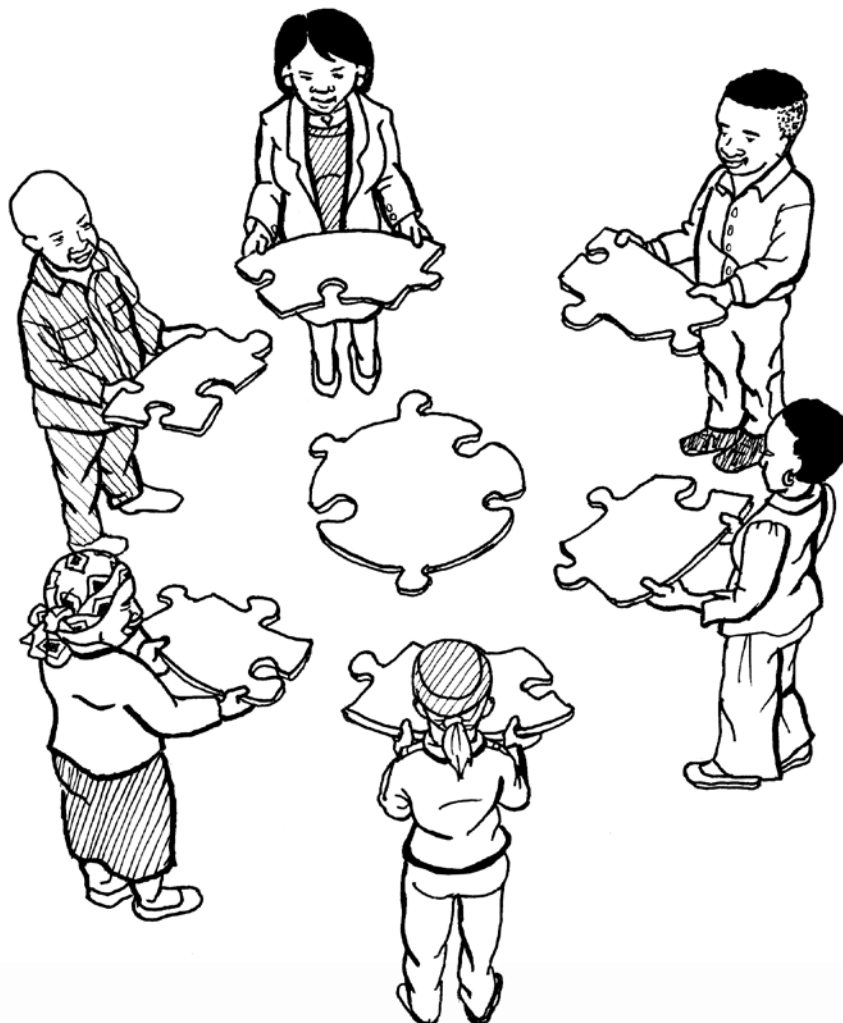
### **3 PROMOTE SHARED LEADERSHIP AND TEAMWORK TO MAKE YOUR SCHOOL GENDER-RESPONSIVE.**



As a school leader, you can assign roles and responsibilities to individuals or groups in your team to implement gender-responsiveness in your school. This can help encourage the development of shared leadership, participation in decision-making, teambuilding and teamwork.

You can assign teachers to set up committees on gender-responsiveness to facilitate sessions for their colleagues. In addition, you can support earnest self-reflection moments to help teachers to implement gender-responsive pedagogy or encourage teachers to participate in professional learning communities (PLCs)<sup>19</sup> which may spread across schools. PLCs are based on the vision that learning is more effective when it takes place within a community of professionals. Schools can provide the structure and culture to facilitate such collective learning. School leaders need to provide practical support to PLCs such as adapting teachers' timetables, providing a space and resources for the PLCs, and encourage and motivate teachers to participate<sup>20</sup>. For example, teachers from nearby schools could meet to address some of the challenges they face in implementing GRP.

**THE BOOKLET 'PROMOTING GENDER EQUALITY IN ECE - LEARNING WITH OTHERS IN A PROFESSIONAL LEARNING COMMUNITY' PROVIDES PRACTICAL HINTS AND TIPS ON HOW TEACHERS CAN COLLECTIVELY LEARN TO PROMOTE GENDER EQUALITY.**



19. Russell, A., (2008). Child Care Staff: Learning and Growing Through Professional Development. Professional Support Coordinator Alliance (PSC Alliance). Retrieved from <http://www.echr.edu.au/docs/default-source/resources/ipsp/child-care-staff-learning-and-growing-through-professional-development.pdf?sfvrsn=6> (PP9-10)

20. Professional Learning Communities: A guideline for South African Schools, 2015

# ENGAGING WITH THE WIDER SCHOOL COMMUNITY



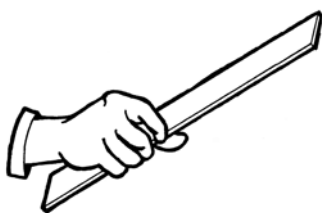
Schools do not exist in isolation; they are a key part of their community. Outside of school, learners interact with family members, neighbours, extended family and community members. **It is therefore essential that schools, caregivers and communities work together to overcome societal barriers to gender equality.**

Without the support of the larger community, there are limits to what the school can achieve in creating equal opportunities for learners, regardless of their sex.

Each school bears the responsibility to foster effective school-parent-community engagement. Such engagement offers a great opportunity to raise issues related to promoting gender equality and creating a gender-responsive environment for young learners.

## COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT IS CRUCIAL IN IMPROVING SCHOOL SAFETY, PREVENTING CORPORAL PUNISHMENT, BULLYING AND GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE.

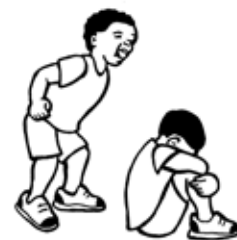
Since violence has deep societal roots, creating a safe school is a community function. Schools cannot accomplish this on their own. They require the support of community stakeholders and should work to establish the necessary linkages with professional organisations and government institutions, non-governmental and community-based organisations, businesses, law enforcement agencies and care workers. Community dialogue and working with local norms and understandings to bring about change from within, is more effective and respectful than imposing from the outside and avoids stigmatizing different groups of people.



**CORPORAL PUNISHMENT**



**GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE**



**BULLYING**



## THERE ARE MANY BENEFITS OF IMPROVED SCHOOL-PARENT-COMMUNITY COLLABORATION<sup>21</sup>:

- For learners, this contributes to better quality schools.
- Parents gain greater knowledge of education programmes and how schools work and become empowered to support their children's learning and development.
- Teachers and school management benefit from an increased ability to understand family views and cultures and a greater sense of community.
- Through collaborating with schools, communities have increased access to education opportunities and support services for families.

### THE DEPARTMENT OF BASIC EDUCATION'S SCHOOL-PARENT-COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT FRAMEWORK HIGHLIGHTS SIX KEY ASPECTS FOR EFFECTIVE SCHOOL-PARENT-COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT:

1. COMMUNICATION
2. PARENTING
3. LEARNING AT HOME
4. DECISION-MAKING
5. VOLUNTEERING
6. PARTNERING WITH THE COMMUNITY

School leaders can promote gender equality and break down stereotypical ideas about gender by supporting effective engagement around gender issues across all six areas.

**KEY MESSAGE:  
SUPPORT EFFECTIVE  
SCHOOL-PARENT-  
COMMUNITY  
ENGAGEMENT  
TO PROMOTE  
GENDER EQUALITY**

### HOW?

- 1 **FACILITATE EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION ABOUT GENDER ISSUES AND GENDER-RESPONSIVE PRACTICES (COMMUNICATION).**
- 2 **ENABLE CAREGIVERS TO SUPPORT THEIR CHILDREN'S HOLISTIC DEVELOPMENT (PARENTING, LEARNING AT HOME).**
- 3 **FOSTER COLLABORATIVE SCHOOL-PARENT-COMMUNITY RELATIONSHIPS TO SUPPORT GENDER-RESPONSIVE PRACTICES (DECISION-MAKING, VOLUNTEERING, PARTNER WITH THE COMMUNITY).**



#### RELEVANT POLICY AND PROTOCOL DOCUMENTS:

School – parent – community engagement framework, 2016



#### LINK TO TEACHERS' GUIDE:

Interactions beyond the classroom: Using your interactions with school staff, parents and the wider community to promote and encourage gender equality.  
PAGES 47-51

21. School – parent – community engagement framework, 2016

# 1 FACILITATE EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION ABOUT GENDER ISSUES AND GENDER-RESPONSIVE PRACTICES (COMMUNICATION)



Regular and genuine communication is essential for developing and maintaining relationships and partnerships that strengthen the school's ability to create a gender-responsive environment for young learners. It involves information sharing and opportunities to learn about each other – creating an equal exchange between parents, communities and the school.



## USE OCCASIONS LIKE OPEN DAYS AND PARENT MEETINGS TO HAVE DISCUSSIONS ABOUT GENDER ISSUES.

Raise awareness of the persistence of gender stereotyping and how this affects young children and the community at large. For example, you could hold an evening event for parents and caregivers in your school community to help people understand the importance of promoting gender equality when engaging with young children.

It is important to include frequent communication around policies related to child protection, corporal punishment and gender-based violence. Use various communication channels to create awareness among all stakeholders of the policies and mechanisms in place at the school to prevent and deal with these incidents.



## CREATE OPPORTUNITIES FOR PARTICIPATORY DISCUSSIONS, WHERE PARENTS AND THE COMMUNITY CAN SHARE THEIR PERSPECTIVES.

Because gender inequality affects everyone, it is important that spaces are created for participatory discussions within the school, giving everyone the opportunity to contribute. Community members and groups should be given an opportunity to share their knowledge and perspectives on promoting gender equality. Schools should also seek advice from parents about their children's needs and aspirations, and make joint decisions.



## 2 **ENABLE CAREGIVERS TO SUPPORT THEIR CHILDREN'S HOLISTIC DEVELOPMENT (PARENTING, LEARNING AT HOME)**



### **COLLABORATE WITH PARENTS AND SCHOOL STAFF TO IMPROVE PARENTING SKILLS AND BEHAVIOURS AT HOME. (PARENTING)**

FOCUS AREAS COULD INCLUDE:

- Learning through play and through interactions.
- The importance of involving male caregivers.
- Positive discipline and boundaries.
- Communicating with children to build strong relationships.
- Ways to talk about gender in an affirming, inclusive and developmentally appropriate way.

To ensure good attendance at events, schools should ask parents what they want to know, and what they want included so that the support and engagement is needs-based and has their buy-in.



### **ENCOURAGE FAMILIES TO RECOGNISE LEARNING-AT-HOME OPPORTUNITIES TO STRENGTHEN THE MESSAGES THAT CHILDREN RECEIVE AT SCHOOL (LEARNING AT HOME).**

THIS COULD INCLUDE:

- Reinforcing the important role of play, regardless of parents' education levels.
- Encouraging parents to learn *from* their children so that parent and child learn together.
- Supporting families with gender non-conforming children to acknowledge and encourage their child's strengths and unique skills.
- Sharing learnings from workshops and meetings with practical and appropriate take-home material, such as flyers, tip sheets or follow up telephonic messages.



### **3 FOSTER COLLABORATIVE SCHOOL-PARENT-COMMUNITY RELATIONSHIPS TO SUPPORT GENDER-RESPONSIVE PRACTICES (DECISION-MAKING, VOLUNTEERING, PARTNER WITH THE COMMUNITY)**



#### **INCLUDE PARENTS AND COMMUNITY MEMBERS IN DECISION-MAKING (DECISION-MAKING).**

Parents, learners and community members should be included in the school decision-making process related to governance issues such as school vision, school dress code or uniform, fees policy, code of conduct and types of services offered at the school. For effective decision-making, it is important to make sure that SGB membership is inclusive and reflective of the diversity of the parent body by asking for volunteers, but also approaching parents individually.



#### **ENCOURAGE COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION IN SCHOOL-BASED ACTIVITIES (VOLUNTEERING).**

Volunteering offers a way to encourage participation of parents and the community in school-based activities. Towards this aim, school leaders should identify skills that parents can use to contribute to the school.

For example, parents could contribute to making gender-neutral learning materials for the school, or the school can organise a book-making day where parents collaborate with the teachers to make story books that reflect different family structures and examples of gender diversity from the community. Parents who cannot write can tell the teachers exactly what to write for them on each page.

Parents and other community members can come to talk about the work that they do. The school can seek out role models in the community that break through gender stereotypes.





## **PARTNER WITH THE COMMUNITY FOR SHARING OF KNOWLEDGE AND RESOURCES (PARTNER WITH THE COMMUNITY).**



Collaborative relationships between the school and wider community will strengthen the ability of schools and families to support learning and development outcomes. Partnering with the community is also an effective way of optimising the use of resources within the school's immediate surroundings. It adds to the school's base of expert knowledge, networks, financial support and physical resources. Examples of partnering with the community to promote gender equality include:

- Inviting a role model from the community to come to the school for an event to affirm the importance of gender equality.
- Sourcing community help to offer co-curricular activities to learners such as photography, art, dance, drama and music (and making sure that all learners regardless of their sex are encouraged to participate).
- Identifying what the community can do to support the school in areas such as anti-bullying, the development of social skills and respect for diversity, or preventing gender discrimination.
- Working with community members to ensure that learners travel safely to and from school.
- Partnering, where appropriate, with non-governmental organisations, agencies, businesses or other organisations to support gender-responsive teaching and learning.
- Establishing partnerships and share practices related to gender-responsiveness with other schools.
- Increasing appreciation of the importance of children's development and respect for its workforce in the community and among community leaders.

A gender-responsive project within the school and its participatory approach can also serve to promote, market and distinguish a school. You could, for example, hold a gender day once a year where gender issues and policies are shared and discussed with parents.

In South Africa we celebrate Human Rights Day on 21 March each year. Schools could partner with communities to support International Day Against Homophobia and Transphobia (IDAHO) on 17 May. This day promotes respect for LGBTI people world-wide. We can also join in solidarity with LGBTI people on LGBTI Pride Day. This day celebrates pride in one's sexual identity.



# ADDITIONAL RESOURCES



## CORPORAL PUNISHMENT



### RELEVANT POLICY AND PROTOCOL DOCUMENTS:

Protocol to Deal with Incidences of Corporal Punishments in Schools, 2019

### HITTING CHILDREN TEACHES VIOLENCE NOT PEACE, DISRESPECT NOT RESPECT, CONFLICT NOT RESOLUTION.

Corporal punishment is a violation of Article 19 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, which has been signed by all African countries. Corporal or physical punishment has been prohibited in South African schools since 1996. However, many children continue to be assaulted in the name of “discipline” and adults responsible for educating children still attempt to justify the infliction of pain on the developing bodies and minds of those in their care.

#### ‘CORPORAL’ OR ‘PHYSICAL’ PUNISHMENT:

Any punishment in which physical force is used and intended to cause some degree of pain or discomfort, however light. Most involves hitting (‘smacking’, ‘slapping’, ‘spanking’) children, with the hand or with an implement – a whip, stick, belt, shoe, wooden spoon, etc. But it can also involve, for example, kicking, shaking or throwing children, scratching, pinching, biting, pulling hair or boxing ears, forcing children to stay in uncomfortable positions, burning, scalding or forced ingestion (for example, washing children’s mouths out with soap or forcing them to swallow hot spices).

#### CORPORAL PUNISHMENT AND GENDER:

Corporal punishment is part of a manifestation of gender-based violence in that it serves the same purpose of exerting power and control as do other forms of gender-based violence. Breaking cycles of violence requires greater attention to the gendered nature of corporal punishment. This is imperative, given that boys are significantly more likely to experience corporal punishment, which reinforces gender stereotypes and notions of violent masculinities at a young age. While not ignoring the significant risk of other forms of violence faced by girls, breaking cycles of violence requires a greater understanding of how norms are internalised, and the role played by corporal punishment in instilling these.

#### SCHOOL LEADERSHIP HAS THE RESPONSIBILITY TO UPHOLD A BAN ON CORPORAL PUNISHMENT IN THEIR SCHOOL. EFFECTIVE IMPLEMENTATION REQUIRES:

##### PREVENTING THE USE OF CORPORAL PUNISHMENT

A school leader can shape school policy relating to classroom management and punishment. Taking a stance against corporal punishment, including pinching and beating, contributes to creating a safe environment for all learners.

- Conduct widespread public education and awareness raising, among adults and children, about the prohibition of corporal punishment and the reasons for its prohibition.
- Disseminate information on the dangers of corporal punishment and its consequences.
- Identify key public figures and a wide range of partners who can support implementation of the law and transformation of attitudes.
- Evaluate the impact of measures, through a baseline survey and regular follow-up surveys, interviewing children and parents.
- Ensure that parents/guardians have access to the school's Code of Conduct for Learners and related documents. Parents should be aware of their rights to advocacy and of avenues open to them should they have grievances relating to the school's management of learner behaviour.
- Include gender-responsiveness and the use of non-violent forms of discipline, such as positive reinforcement systems and clear expectations, in the school's code of conduct for teachers.
- Advise the school team against using harsh language and promote acceptable consequences for undesirable behaviour. Encourage the use of positive reinforcement systems, like giving compliments or giving symbolic rewards, to prevent undesirable behaviour.
- A proactive instead of a punitive approach should be adopted. It is essential to move away from relying on punitive strategies that control and instil fear among learners. Steering away from these methods creates an environment that is conducive to learning, and implementing a restorative approach empowers learners, educators, school staff and parents to deal with conflict in more positive ways.
- Professional development in classroom management may be necessary for the teachers. Good classroom management reduces poor behaviour and thus helps reduce the temptation to make use of strong language or corporal punishment.

### **EQUIPPING TEACHERS WITH THE NECESSARY POSITIVE, NON-VIOLENT DISCIPLINARY TECHNIQUES**

A safe school is dependent on adequately trained and equipped educators and management who can respond constructively towards learner ill-discipline.

- Ensure clear direction and training for all school staff and other adults who come into contact with children, through in-service training on the law and on positive, non-violent disciplinary strategies, to support and enforce prohibition.

#### **WHAT IS POSITIVE DISCIPLINE?**

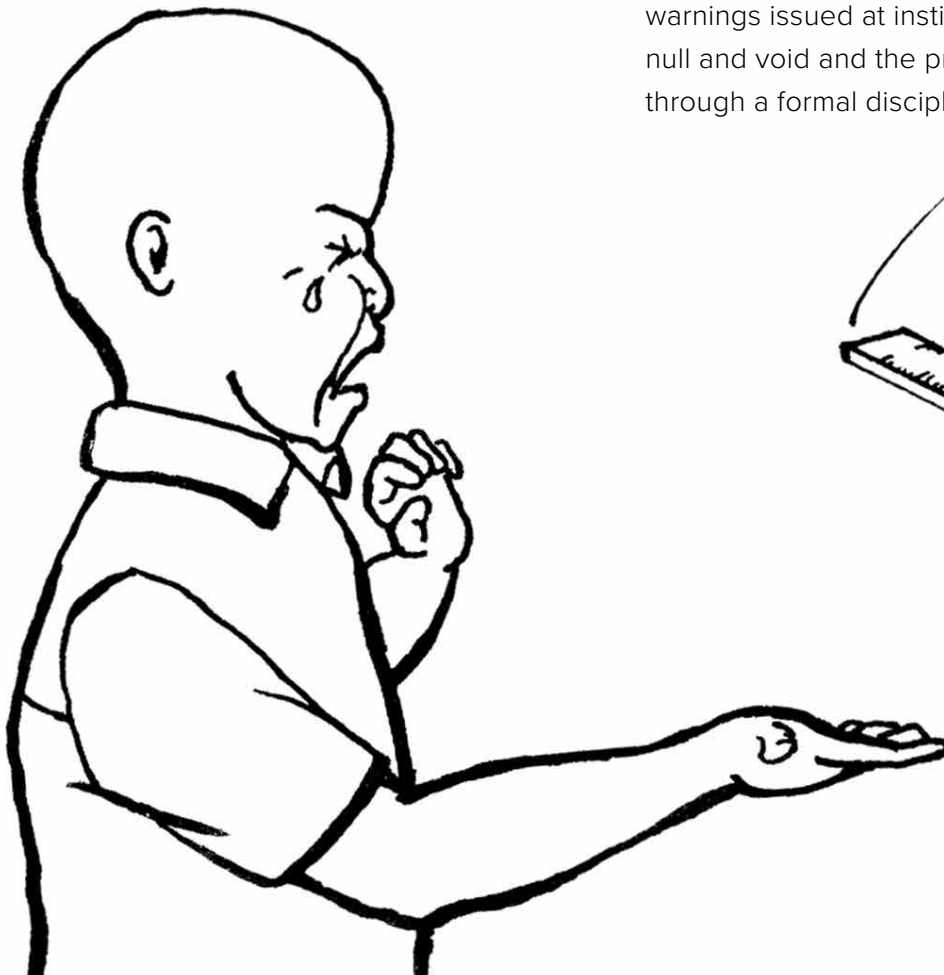
Since the goal of punishment is to inhibit unacceptable behaviour, people often use the terms "punishment" and "discipline" interchangeably. The two terms, however, mean different things. Discipline aims to teach a child the difference between acceptable and unacceptable behaviour through the process of teaching, firmness and reminders. The goal is to attain controlled, purposeful behaviour.

#### **EXAMPLES:**

*Consequences are used to teach life lessons that prepare children to become responsible adults, rather than being punitive.*  
*Explaining misbehaviour and finding problem-solving solutions together with the child.*  
*Modelling appropriate behaviours*

## RESPONDING APPROPRIATELY WHEN THE PROHIBITION OR CORPORAL PUNISHMENT IS BREACHED

- Establish a range of appropriate responses and sanctions to address the use of corporal punishment by teachers – for example, make compliance with prohibition a condition of employment and breaching of the prohibition punishable as misconduct.
- Monitor compliance with the prohibition through school monitoring mechanisms, including confidential interviews with staff and children with all necessary safeguards.
- Establish independent complaints procedures for children, staff and other adults, ensuring protection for those who report the use of corporal punishment.



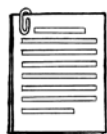
## REPORTING REGULATIONS

*(for more details, see the DBE's Protocol to Deal with Incidences of Corporal Punishments in Schools, 2019)*

- Get as much information as possible from the complainant (learner) about the allegation, through a written statement.
- Forward all the relevant documents together with a report by the Head of the Institution to the Directorate: Dispute Management at Head Office and mark them "Urgent".
- The District Office and/or Head Office will investigate the matter and forward a report with recommendations for the Head of Department's approval. Where an educator is found guilty, disciplinary action will be instituted and the matter will be reported to SACE.
- Under no circumstances should cases of corporal punishment be dealt with in terms of the informal disciplinary hearing procedure. All cases should be heard in a formal disciplinary hearing. Any sanction, e.g., warnings issued at institutional level, will be null and void and the process will be redone through a formal disciplinary hearing.



## GENDER BASED VIOLENCE



### RELEVANT POLICY AND PROTOCOL DOCUMENTS:

Protocol for the management and reporting of sexual abuse and harassment in schools, 2019

Children's Act, 2005 (Act 38 of 2005)

Criminal Law (Sexual Offences and Related Matters) Amendment Act 32 of 2007

According to the Global Guidance on Addressing School-Related Gender-Based Violence<sup>22</sup>, millions of children are affected by school-related gender-based violence (SRGBV). It is defined as *acts or threats of sexual, physical or psychological violence occurring in and around schools, perpetrated as a result of gender norms and stereotypes, and enforced by unequal power dynamics.*

A school leader can promote a gender-responsive school environment and thus prevent gender-based violence from happening by having an open dialogue about the topic with the school team. This can be further reinforced by creating awareness among all stakeholders of the policies and mechanisms in place at the school to prevent and deal with incidents of SRGBV. These policies will be most successful if they are created in consultation with all the staff at the school, across all sections. Policies on the prevention of violence should cover the following elements:

### DEFINING SEXUAL AND GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE<sup>23</sup>:

Sexual violence includes acts of rape and sexual harassment and involves any form of unwanted touching of genitals or any other part of the body that makes the young person feel uncomfortable.

It may or may not include penetration. Sexual violence also includes one person forcing another to touch them, or anyone else, in a sexual way against their will, as well as including forcing someone to watch them, or others, having sex or engaging in sexual activity, or exposing a child to pictures of sexual activity. Sexual violence most commonly occurs between people of different sexes, and most commonly is perpetrated by males against females. However, sexual violence between young people of the same sex, and by females against males, is increasingly common and is increasingly reported.

### SEXUAL ABUSE

According to section 1 of the Children's Act, 2005 (Act 38 of 2005), "sexual abuse", in relation to a child, means:

- a. sexually assaulting a child or allowing a child to be sexually assaulted.
- b. encouraging, inducing or forcing a child to be used for the sexual gratification of another person.
- c. using a child in or deliberately exposing a child to sexual activities or pornography.
- d. procuring or allowing a child to be procured for commercial sexual exploitation or in any way participating or assisting in the commercial sexual exploitation of a child.

22. UNESCO. (2015). School-related gender-based violence is preventing the achievement of quality education for all. Policy Paper 17. Retrieved from [unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0023/002321/232107e.pdf](https://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0023/002321/232107e.pdf)

23. Protocol for the management and reporting of sexual abuse and harassment in schools, 2019

## **SEXUAL OFFENCES**

“Sexual offences” in terms of chapters 2, 3 and 4 and sections 55 and 71 (1,2) of the Criminal Law (Sexual Offences and Related Matters) Amendment Act 32 of 2007, include:

Rape, compelled rape, sexual assault, compelled sexual assault and self-sexual assault, compelling or causing persons to witness a sexual offences, sexual acts or self-masturbation, exposure or display of or causing exposure or display of genital organs, anus or female breasts (“flashing”), engaging sexual services, as well as incest, bestiality and sexual acts with corpse. Abuse shall also be inclusive of attempting, conspiring, incitement or inducing another person to commit sexual offence and trafficking in persons for sexual purposes.

## **HARASSMENT**

Harassment means directly or indirectly engaging in conduct that the respondent knows or ought to know:

- a. causes harm or inspires the reasonable belief that harm may be caused to the complainant or a related person by unreasonably
  - i. following, watching pursuing or accosting of the complainant or a related person, or loitering outside of or near the building or place where the complainant or a related person resides, works, carries on business, studies or happens to be;
  - ii. engaging in verbal, electronic or any other communication aimed at the complainant or a related person, by any means, whether or not conversation ensues; or

- iii. sending, delivering or causing the delivery of letters, telegrams, packages, facsimiles, electronic mail or other objects to the complainant or a related person or leaving them where they will be found by, given to or brought to the attention of, the complainant or a related person; or;
- b. amounts to sexual harassment of the complainant or a related person;

## **SEXUAL HARASSMENT**

Sexual harassment may include unwelcome physical contact, verbal or non-verbal conduct. It may include discriminatory or offensive behaviour on the basis of the gender or sexual orientation of a person. Sexual harassment is not limited to situations where an unequal power relationship exists between parties involved and can be committed by or against any person regardless of gender, sex or sexual orientation.

With reference to The Protection from Harassment Act (no. 17 of 2011), sexual harassment means:

- a. unwelcome sexual attention from a person who knows or ought reasonably to know that such attention is unwelcome;
- b. unwelcome explicit or implicit behaviour, suggestions, messages or remarks of a sexual nature that have the effect of offending, intimidating or humiliating the complainant or a related person in circumstances, which a reasonable person having regard to all the circumstances would have anticipated that the complainant or related person would be offended, humiliated or intimidated;
- c. implied or expressed promise of reward for complying with a sexually oriented request; or
- d. implied or expressed threat of reprisal or actual reprisal for refusal to comply with a sexually oriented request.

**USE THE SEXUAL BEHAVIOUR GUIDE TO DISTINGUISH BETWEEN SERIOUS, CONCERNING AND AGE-APPROPRIATE SEXUAL BEHAVIOUR FOR CHILDREN (AGES 5-8 YEARS) AND TO DETERMINE WHICH ACTIONS TO FOLLOW:**

THIS IS A GUIDE ONLY. It is not exhaustive.

All behaviour must be considered in its contexts and these will include a wide variety of cultural, religious and social values. 'Context' also includes factors such as the physical and intellectual capacity or the mental health of the child/young person and these contextual factors must be taken into consideration. Intervention must occur with all sexual behaviour that is considered concerning or serious.

<p><b>SERIOUS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• behaviour which is excessive, secretive, compulsive, coercive, degrading or threatening</li> <li>• significant age, developmental and/or power difference between the individuals involved</li> <li>• represents a serious risk to the mental or physical health of the individual or others</li> </ul> <p><b>RESPONSE:</b> Immediately intervene, report, monitor and document</p>	<p><b>CONCERNING</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• outside age-appropriate sexual behaviour in terms of persistence, frequency, type</li> <li>• inequality in age or developmental abilities between the individuals concerned</li> <li>• behaviour which is unusual or different for a particular individual</li> <li>• causes discomfort in others</li> </ul> <p><b>RESPONSE:</b> Intervene, plan in consultation with others, refer if appropriate, monitor and document</p>	<p><b>AGE APPROPRIATE</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• age appropriate sexual behaviour which is spontaneous, curious, mutual and easily distracted or redirected</li> <li>• involves equals in terms of age and developmental status</li> <li>• interest in sexual matters is balanced with interest in other parts of life</li> <li>• other people are unharmed and unaffected</li> </ul> <p><b>RESPONSE:</b> Use as an opportunity to discuss social expectations regarding appropriate public and private behaviour</p>
<p><b>EXAMPLES OF BEHAVIOURS IN 5 TO 8 YEAR-OLDS:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• persistent masturbation, particularly in front of others</li> <li>• sexual behaviour engaging significantly younger or less able children</li> <li>• sneaking into the rooms of sleeping younger children to touch or engage in sexual play</li> <li>• simulation of sexual acts that are sophisticated for their age (e.g. oral sex)</li> <li>• persistent sexual themes in talk, play, art etc.</li> </ul>	<p><b>EXAMPLES OF BEHAVIOURS IN 5 TO 8 YEAR-OLDS:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• questions about sexual activity which persist or are repeated frequently, despite an answer being given</li> <li>• writing sexually threatening notes</li> <li>• engaging in mutual masturbation</li> <li>• use of adult language to discuss sex (e.g. 'Do you think I look sexy?' or 'Look at my dolls—they're screwing')</li> <li>• single occurrence of peeping</li> </ul>	<p><b>EXAMPLES OF BEHAVIOURS IN 5 TO 8 YEAR-OLDS:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• masturbation to self-soothe</li> <li>• increased curiosity in adult sexuality (e.g., questions about babies, gender differences)</li> <li>• increased curiosity about other children's genitals (e.g., playing mutual games to see or touch genitals)</li> <li>• telling stories or asking questions, using swear words, 'toilet' words or names for private body parts</li> <li>• increased sense of privacy about bodies</li> </ul>

## MANAGEMENT AND REPORTING OF SEXUAL ABUSE AND HARASSMENT IN SCHOOLS

Having transparent referral, reporting and disciplinary procedures is important in severe cases of SRGBV, but even for less severe instances of violence it is important to have clear and transparent procedures in place. Intervening in the early stages of SRGBV is often a lot easier than dealing with cases that have worsened into severe forms of violence.

Suspected or confirmed cases of sexual abuse, rape, physical violence, and unrest amongst learners resulting in violence must immediately be reported to the local police station linked to the school.

Suspected or confirmed cases of sexual abuse, rape and physical violence against learners in the home must be reported to the local police or the school social worker in terms of the Children's Act, Sexual Offences Act and Child Justice Act.

### **AS THE SCHOOL LEADER, YOU SHOULD BE FAMILIAR WITH YOUR RESPONSIBILITIES IN TERMS OF PROTECTING LEARNERS AND REPORTING ANY GBV-RELATED INCIDENTS:**

#### **PRINCIPALS**

- Ensure the SMT is aware of their duty of care to all learners in *loco parentis*, including the alleged victim, alleged perpetrator (if he or she is a learner) and any other learner who may have been indirectly affected by sexual abuse or harassment.
- Report any incident or suspicion of sexual abuse and harassment within 24 hours.
- Refer the victim immediately to psycho-social support if deemed appropriate.
- Ensure the Hearing Commission (Disciplinary or Tribunal, depending on the level of offence) attends to reported incidents or suspicion of sexual abuse and harassment where a learner is the perpetrator. This is set out in chapter 4 of the Protocol for the management and reporting of sexual abuse and harassment in schools, 2019 and in more detail, the Example of a School Code of Conduct. Collect progress reports from the Hearing Commissions and, in the event of a learner being the victim, provide feedback to the victim and victim's parent/s or guardian.

#### **SMTs**

- All members of the SMT must be familiar with the contents of the Protocol for the management and reporting of sexual abuse and harassment in schools, 2019
- A member of the SMT must assist the person affected by sexual abuse and/or harassment by, if required, referring them to the appropriate institutions that offer support and provide ongoing monitoring and additional academic support in the case of learner victims of sexual abuse and/or harassment.

#### **EDUCATORS**

- Must provide a safe and private space for the learner to disclose the details of the incident and keep information shared with them confidential.
- Report any incident or suspected incident of sexual abuse and harassment to the Principal or a member of the SMT if the Principal is the alleged offender.
- Observe any changes in the learner's behaviour following the report and refer to the Principal (or member of the SMT) if necessary.
- Ensure that the guidelines and procedures for the reporting of sexual offences are covered within predetermined lessons and refresh learners' awareness of these procedures periodically.

#### **REPORTING**

Establish clear procedures for **learners to be able to report incidents anonymously** to the School Safety Officer or the Principal. It is very important that learners are able to report anonymously. This builds trust between educators and learners, helps to build ownership of school safety within the whole school community, and reduces the fear of learners being victimised because they have reported a threat or incident.



## BULLYING



### RELEVANT POLICY AND PROTOCOL DOCUMENTS:

Challenging homophobic bullying in schools, Department of Basic Education  
National School Safety Framework, 2015

In its *School Safety Framework*<sup>24</sup> the Department of Basic Education indicates that bullying is not something that educators should or have to accept and that bullying is not a normal part of growing up. Bullying involves one or more people singling out and deliberately and repeatedly hurting or harming physically or mentally another person or group of people. Bullying targets one particular person or group repeatedly over a period of time; and always involve an imbalance of power. Bullies have more power than the person or people being bullied. This power may come from, amongst others, differences in age, physical strength, and status or popularity. Bullying can take different forms, which may sometimes happen concurrently, or may happen singly: physical, verbal, non-verbal, social, sexual and cyberbullying.

There are many different forms of bullying (e.g. *physical bullying, verbal bullying, non-verbal bullying, social bullying, cyberbullying, sexual bullying and homophobic bullying*<sup>25</sup>). Often when children display non-traditional gender behaviour, other children might comment (e.g. “boys can’t wear dresses!”), or treat them differently (e.g. “I don’t want to play with him, he acts like a girl” or pushing a girl away trying to play with a truck,

encouraging other children to ignore or not play with a child who is gender non-conforming). It is important that schools help children grow in their understanding of the difference between teasing and bullying, while also encouraging children to treat one another with respect, demonstrate empathy and appreciate diversity.

### WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN BULLYING AND TEASING?

Teasing is different from bullying. It is important to know the difference, as both learners and educators sometimes dismiss bullying as, “only teasing”, when, in fact the “teasing” is causing physical and psychological harm. The difference between teasing and bullying lies in the relationship of the bully and victim, and in the intent of the interaction. Teasing tends to be good-natured; the intention is not to harm or make the other person feel bad. Teasing becomes bullying when a person deliberately sets out to hurt someone. Bullying usually, although not always, occurs between individuals who are not friends. There is also usually a power difference between the bully and the victim. For instance, the bully may be bigger, tougher, or physically stronger. They may also be able to intimidate others or have the influence to exclude people from their social group.

24. National School Safety Framework, 2015

25. Challenging homophobic bullying in schools, Department of Basic Education



School staff should be aware of *homophobic bullying* – a specific form of bullying that occurs when bullying is motivated by prejudice against LGBTI people. Any person can be the target of homophobic bullying, regardless of their gender identity or sexual orientation – especially if they are perceived to be different in some way. Children who display non-traditional gender behaviour or who do not conform to typical gender norms might become subjected to homophobic bullying.

**THE DEPARTMENT OF BASIC  
EDUCATION'S SCHOOL SAFETY  
FRAMEWORK PROVIDES A NUMBER OF  
STEPS IN PREVENTING AND ADDRESSING  
GENERAL BULLYING IN SCHOOLS:**

- Set up and enforce school rules and policies on bullying.
- Provide on-going training to school administrators, teaching and non-teaching staff as well as other school role-players on how to prevent bullying in early childhood.
- Increase adult supervision in potential bullying hot spots and equip school staff to deal with bullying incidents.
- Focus class time on bullying prevention where the aim is to change norms around bullying.
- **It is important that a school's *anti-bullying policy* includes all members of the school community, including LGBTI adults and young people, and that the *school's ethos* ensures that all learners feel safe and protected.**

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