

NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

WRITTEN REPLY

QUESTION 271.

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271. Ms P Marais (EFF) to ask the Minister of Basic Education: to ask the Minister of Basic Education:

(a) What sustainable intervention plans does her department have in place for children who have not yet been placed in schools in various provinces and (b) by what date will she implement such interventions to ensure that the specified children find placement?

NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

WRITTEN REPLY

QUESTION 271.

Response

In terms of section 3 of the South African Schools Act, as amended, each MEC for Education is required to ensure that there are enough school places so that every child of compulsory school-going age who lives in his or her province can attend school. Furthermore, section 12 of the South African Schools Act, as amended, requires the MEC for Education to ensure the provision of public schools for education of learners out of funds appropriated for this purpose by the relevant provincial legislature. The placement of learners in public schools is therefore undertaken by provinces.

However, the Department of Basic Education (DBE), in collaboration with Provincial Education Departments (PEDs), implements various intervention strategies to ensure that all learners find placement in schools. Given that school placement is a provincial competency, the DBE works closely with PEDs to monitor, support and track placement progress, particularly in high-pressure areas.

To address learner placement challenges, the following interventions have been put in place:

1. Provision of Scholar Transport: In instances where local schools have reached capacity, learners are provided by PEDs with scholar transport to neighbouring schools with available space to ensure uninterrupted access to education.
2. Consultations with School Governing Bodies (SGBs): PEDs are engaging with SGBs to assess whether additional learners can be accommodated beyond the stated capacity of some schools, where space and resources permit.
3. Retention of Grade 7 Learners in Primary Schools: In cases where secondary school placements are constrained, some primary schools have been permitted to temporarily retain Grade 7 learners who have passed, ensuring that they remain in a structured learning environment while alternative placements are finalised.
4. Conversion of Schools to Address Demand: In areas where there is an oversupply of primary schools and a shortage of secondary schools, PEDs are considering converting certain primary schools into combined or secondary schools to accommodate growing learner numbers.
5. Deployment of Mobile Classrooms: As a short-term relief measure, mobile classrooms are being supplied to high-demand schools to increase capacity while long-term infrastructure planning is undertaken.

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QUESTION 271.

In addition to the above, PEDs are required to prioritise the development of new public schools and the expansion of existing public schools to meet the admission demands in their respective provinces. The DBE provides planning and monitoring support to PEDs in this regard.

The DBE has advised that, as of 5 March 2025, a total of 12,981,000 applications for new and re-enrolment placements across Grades R to 12 were received. Out of these, 12,978,929 learners (99.98%) have already been placed in schools, while 2,071 learners (0.02%) are still awaiting final placement.

Focusing specifically on new entry grades (i.e. Grades R, 1 and 8), a total of 2,774,919 applications were received. Of these, 2,773,804 learners (99.96%) have been placed in schools, while 2,071 learners (0.02%) are still in the process of being placed.

All provinces are in the process of finalising the placement of unplaced learners. The above numbers are therefore dynamic and change on a weekly basis. The DBE continues to work closely with PEDs to ensure that every learner has access to a school. The placement process is expected to be completed by the end of March 2025.

Through continuous engagement with PEDs, school governance and leadership and relevant stakeholders, the DBE remains committed to ensuring that no learner is left without a school placement and that all children receive the education they are entitled to.