

**NATIONAL ASSEMBLY**

**WRITTEN REPLY**

**QUESTION 282.**

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**INTERNAL QUESTION PAPER: 02/2025**

**282. Ms N R Mashabela (EFF) to ask the Minister of Basic Education: to ask the Minister of Basic Education:**

(1) Whether all special needs schools are adequately staffed and resourced for the 2025 academic year; if not, how is her department addressing the shortage of assistive devices and learning materials for learners with special needs; if so, what are the relevant details;

(2) whether her department has allocated sufficient funds to ensure smooth school operations at the special needs schools in the 2025 academic year; if not, what is the position in this regard; if so, what are the relevant details;

(3) what steps have been taken by her department to curb financial mismanagement and corruption in special needs schools;

(4) whether there are any health measures in place to manage any potential outbreak of infectious diseases in such schools; if not, why not; if so, what are the relevant details?

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##### **Response**

The Department of Basic Education (DBE) does not directly manage staffing, resources or funding allocations for special needs schools, as these fall under the jurisdiction of Provincial Education Departments (PEDs).

The responsibility for ensuring that all special needs schools are adequately staffed and resourced for the 2025 academic year therefore lies with the respective PEDs.

The DBE has procured Curriculum Assessment Policy and Statement (CAPS) textbooks Master copies in Braille and Large Print from Pioneer Printers and Blind-SA. These resources were shared with PEDs for use by their respective schools and have been made available on the DBE website.

The question should be directed to the relevant PEDs for a detailed response on how they are addressing shortages of assistive devices and learning materials.

The allocation of funds for the operation of special needs schools is managed by PEDs. Queries regarding budget sufficiency for the 2025 academic year should be referred to the relevant PEDs.

Measures to curb financial mismanagement and corruption in special needs schools fall within the jurisdiction of PEDs. The DBE provides oversight and guidance, but PEDs are responsible for implementing financial controls, audits and accountability mechanisms at the school level.

The management of infectious disease outbreaks in special needs schools is coordinated at the provincial level in collaboration with health departments. The relevant PEDs should be approached for details on health and safety protocols in their respective provinces.

To support schools (including special needs schools) in managing potential outbreaks of infectious diseases, the DBE has implemented and is implementing several interventions, including:

- DBE Circular to schools with safety tips and Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) in case of foodborne illnesses;
- Minister's 2025 Back to School campaign, which includes awareness initiatives on foodborne illnesses;
- Production of educational materials and key health messages for dissemination from January 2025 onwards;

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- Incorporation of health awareness messages in the Ministerial Announcement of the 2024 National Senior Certificate Results, which were televised to millions of viewers. During the live broadcast, National School Nutrition Programme (NSNP) videos were aired;
- Production of videos for television and audio for radio to spread awareness;
- Live broadcasts by community radio stations in areas visited by the Minister as part of the Back to School Campaign;
- Digital media campaign, including the design of posters and infographics;
- Review of tuckshop/vendor guidelines to improve food safety standards;
- School Readiness Monitoring (SRM) to include oversight of the programme; and
- Intensified workshops on food safety to equip schools with the necessary knowledge and procedures.

These interventions aim to strengthen school preparedness, enhance public awareness, and ensure safer learning environments for all learners, including those in special needs schools.