

NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

WRITTEN REPLY

QUESTION 5364.

DATE OF PUBLICATION OF INTERNAL QUESTION PAPER: 19/09/2025

INTERNAL QUESTION PAPER: 39/2025

5364. Mr V Pambo (EFF) to ask the Minister of Basic Education:

Whether, in light of the disparities in numbers of schools in provinces that show a huge backlog in the provision of education to learners with disabilities, there are any plans in place to address the specified backlog challenges; if not, why not; if so, what are the relevant details?

NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

WRITTEN REPLY

QUESTION 5364.

Response

The Department of Basic Education (DBE) acknowledges the disparities in the number of schools catering to learners with disabilities across provinces, resulting in a significant backlog in providing equitable access to education for these learners.

In terms of the **Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996**, and the **South African Schools Act, 1996 (Act No. 84 of 1996)**, every learner has the right to basic education. This includes learners with disabilities, as affirmed by **Education White Paper 6 on Special Needs Education: Building an Inclusive Education and Training System**, which provide the framework for improving access, support, and resourcing of education for learners with disabilities.

To address the backlog and progressively realise inclusive education, the DBE and Provincial Education Departments (PEDs) are implementing the following interventions:

- **Early identification, prevention and intervention:** Strengthening the implementation of the **Policy on Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support (SIAS)**, with a strong focus on children from birth to 4 years and in the Foundation Phase. Early identification is critical to ensuring that learners with disabilities receive timely and appropriate support.
- **Teacher development in inclusive education:** Training of teachers in specialised areas of inclusive education to improve capacity to teach and support learners with disabilities. For instance, the DBE recently held a three-day workshop on the teaching and support of autistic children, involving officials from all PEDs. This forms part of the DBE's **Annual Performance Plan (APP)** commitments, ensuring that inclusive education is available in ordinary schools as envisaged in White Paper 6.
- **Mobilisation and placement of out-of-school learners with disabilities:** In November 2023, the Director-General issued **Circular S28 of 2023**, guiding PEDs on placing out-of-school children with disabilities, particularly those in community-based special care centres, into schools. As a result, **226 learners were placed in 2023/24** and a further **403 learners in 2024/25**.
- **Monitoring and reporting:** The DBE tracks the number of learners with disabilities in both special and ordinary public schools as a performance indicator in the APP. This enables continuous monitoring of progress and informs planning to expand access.

NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

WRITTEN REPLY

QUESTION 5364.

In addition to these interventions, the DBE continues to work with PEDs to:

- Expand **full-service schools** and **special schools** to ensure learners with disabilities can access education closer to their communities, particularly in rural areas where backlogs are most severe;
- Provide appropriate **Learning and Teaching Support Materials (LTSM)**, including braille workbooks, large print materials, and South African Sign Language (SASL) resources, to ensure curriculum accessibility; and
- Incorporate inclusive education priorities into **infrastructure planning**, supported by the **Education Infrastructure Grant (EIG)**, ensuring that new and upgraded facilities meet universal access standards.

The DBE remains committed to addressing the historical backlog in access to education for learners with disabilities and is strengthening collaboration with provinces, communities and partners to accelerate progress.