

NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

WRITTEN REPLY

QUESTION 5380.

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5380. Ms L H Arries (EFF) to ask the Minister of Basic Education:

With reference to the R10 billion that was made available for early childhood development (ECD), what (a) measures will her department implement to ensure that all ECD centres benefit from the specified funds and (b) steps will be taken to guarantee that all qualified ECD practitioners receive a stipend from her department?

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Response

(a) The R10 billion allocation for Early Childhood Development (ECD) has been approved for implementation over the Medium-Term Expenditure Framework (MTEF) cycle. For the 2025/26 financial year, an amount of R2 billion will be transferred to the Department of Basic Education (DBE) as part of the first phase of implementation.

It is important to note that not all ECD centres will benefit directly from this allocation. The DBE has developed eligibility criteria that prioritise children in poverty wards, particularly those from households that cannot afford fees, as well as vulnerable children and children with disabilities. The targeting has been undertaken in collaboration with Provincial Education Departments (PEDs) to ensure equitable access across the system.

Only ECD programmes that are Silver or Gold registered in line with the National Integrated ECD Policy and registration framework will qualify for funding. This approach ensures compliance with quality standards and accountability in the use of public funds. The DBE will monitor the implementation of this grant on a continuous basis through existing reporting mechanisms, including monthly and quarterly performance reviews.

(b) In terms of the Conditional Grant Framework, 40% of the allocation is dedicated to supporting stipends for practitioners and staff employed in eligible early learning programmes where children are subsidised. The DBE's role is to support and improve the value of stipends for qualified ECD practitioners rather than to serve as the direct employer, as ECD centres operate as independent entities under the management of registered service providers.

The DBE continues to work with provinces to ensure that the grant reaches practitioners in qualifying programmes and contributes to improving both the quality of early learning and the conditions of the ECD workforce.

The DBE remains committed to expanding access to quality early childhood development opportunities for all children, particularly those in under-served communities. The phased implementation of this grant represents a critical investment in the foundational learning years and in strengthening the professionalisation and sustainability of the ECD sector.