



GAUTENG PROVINCE

EDUCATION
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

Circular 03/2014

Date: 8 August 2014

Topic

**THE PROHIBITION OF PUBLIC SCHOOLS FROM
RELEASING LEARNERS FROM SCHOOL DURING INTERNAL
ASSESSMENTS/EXAMINATIONS**

Enclosures

None

Distribution

- ✓ The Principal and staff of all Public Ordinary Schools and Schools for Learners with Special Education Needs;
- ✓ All Chief Directors and Directors at Head Office and District Directors;
- ✓ Circuit Managers, Cluster Leaders and District Assessment Teams;
- ✓ Curriculum Officials at Head Office and Districts; and
- ✓ Members of Governing Body Associations
- ✓ Teacher Organisations and Unions

Enquiries

Directorate: Public Ordinary Schools

Tel 011 355 0482

On request, this Circular will be made available in isiZulu, Sepedi and Afrikaans within 21 days.

Also available on the GDE website at: www.education.gpg.gov.za

Office of the Head of Department

Room 1009, 111 Commissioner Street, Johannesburg
PO Box 7710, Johannesburg, 2000

Tel: (011) 333 5546 Fax: (011) 333 5546

E-mail: ceogde@gpg.gov.za or Boy.Ngobeni@gauteng.gov.za

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 A school has a duty to protect every learner's fundamental right to education and a learner is obligation to attend school punctually and regularly unless there is a valid reason for his/her absence. The Policy on Learner Attendance, effective from 1 January 2011, is compulsory for implementation by all Public Schools.
- 1.2 This policy seeks to promote punctual and regular attendance at public schools and sets out procedures for managing and monitoring learner attendance, including over the examination periods. The South African Schools Act (Section 3) provides for action to be taken by the Head of Department, if a learner of does not attend school without a valid explanation.

2. PURPOSE

The purpose of the Circular is to:

- a) provide guidelines to schools on the attendance of learners and the need for teaching and learning during internal examinations and all other assessments during the course of the year.
- b) replaces Circular 30 of 2000

3. SCOPE AND APPLICATION

This Circular applies to all Public Schools.

4. DEFINITIONS

The definitions of terms used in the Circular are the same as defined in the relevant legislation.

5. LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK

- 5.1 The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996 (Act No. 108 of 1996), as amended.
- 5.2 National Education Policy Act, 1996 (Act No. 27 of 1996), as amended.

- 5.3 The South African Schools Act (SASA), 1996 (Act No. 84 of 1996), as amended.
- 5.4 The Employment of Educators Act, 1998 (Act No. 76 of 1998), as amended.
- 5.5 Gauteng School Education Act, 1995 (Act No. 6 of 1995), as amended.
- 5.6 The National Curriculum Statement Grades R – 12 as published in Government Gazette No. 34600 of 12 September 2011 comprising the following policies:
 - 5.6.1 National Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statements for all the approved subjects for Grade R-12 (CAPS).
 - 5.6.2 National Protocol for Assessment Grades R – 12 (NPA).
 - 5.6.3 National Policy Pertaining to the Programme and Promotion Requirements of the National Curriculum Statement Gr. R-12 (N4PR).
- 5.7 Regulations pertaining to the National Curriculum Statement Grade R – 12 as published in Government Gazette No. 36041 and 36042 of 28 December 2012 as amended.
- 5.8 Regulations pertaining to the Conduct, Administration and Management of the National Senior Certificate, Government Gazette No. 31337 of 29 August 2008 as amended.
- 5.9 Policy on Learner Attendance, as published in General Notice 361 of Government Gazette No. 33150 of 4 May 2010.

6. ATTENDANCE OF LEARNERS

- 6.1. With the exception of Grade 12 learners, a learner may not take leave from school to study for examinations or when examinations have ended.
- 6.2. Grade 12 learners may take study leave to prepare for the examinations five school days before the first day of the exams. Such learners need not attend school on days when they do not write exams.

- 6.3. Learners from Grades 1 to 11 must attend school every day up to and including the last day of the term.
- 6.4. Valid reasons for absence during Internal School Based Assessments as outlined in Chapter 3, paragraph 8.6 of the National Protocol for Assessment are:
- (a) illness, supported by a valid medical certificate, issued by a registered medical practitioner;
 - (b) humanitarian reasons, which includes the death of an immediate family member, supported by a death certificate;
 - (c) the learner appearing in a court hearing, which must be supported by written evidence; and
 - (d) any other reasons as may be accepted as valid by the Head of the assessment body or his or her representative.
- 6.5. Valid reasons for absence during External Examinations as outlined in Chapter 4, paragraph 12.1 in the National Protocol for Assessment are:
- (a) In the case of illness or any other circumstances beyond the control of the learner, medical certificates, affidavits or acceptable proof are to be provided by the candidate and countersigned by the Principal of the school of attendance before submission to the Provincial Department of Education. Where the authenticity of a candidate's claim is in doubt, the Principal of the school of attendance is to advise the Head of Department in writing, and then investigate the matter further.

7. SCHOOL MANAGEMENT PROGRAMME

- 7.1. It is the responsibility of each school to plan the school programme for the periods during and after the examinations until the last day of the school term, and to inform all learners, parents and district offices accordingly. Therefore, it is necessary to develop a Management Plan for educators to follow for the periods when there are no examinations for grades 1 to 11.

- 7.2. The school timetable must include a daily registration period of no more than 10 minutes to enable a class teacher to mark the class register outside notional time.
- 7.3. Schools must submit their examination timetables for to the District for approval.
- 7.4. Mid-year and end of year examinations should not start earlier than 21 days before the end of the second and fourth terms for Secondary Schools and 15 days for Primary Schools. No examinations may start before the stipulated periods. However, schools may apply to their District Directors for permission to start practical examinations earlier in certain subjects. Such an application should reach the district director no later than 2 months prior to the intended date of the examination.
- 7.5. No schools may close earlier than 13h00 during the period when examinations are written. To ensure the safety and transport of learners, parents must be informed of the closing time of the school timeously.
- 7.6. Schools may not inform the learners that it is each learner's decision whether or not to attend school on the days that they are not writing examinations.
- 7.7. All teachers are expected to be at school for the full school day each day (35 hours per week) during the period when examinations are written, irrespective of whether they have invigilation duties or not.
- 7.8. Foundation phase teachers and learners should continue with the normal school programme, during the examination period.

8. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILTIES OF PRINCIPALS WITH REGARD TO LEARNER ATTENDANCE

The Principal:-

- 8.1. is responsible for developing a culture of punctual and regular attendance, in the school.
- 8.2. must in consultation with staff, RCL and SGB members develop a School Policy on Learner Attendance.

- 8.3. must contact the parent if a learner is absent for 3 consecutive school days without a valid reason .
- 8.4. must charge the learner with breach of the school's code of conduct for learners if despite the intervention of the principal, a learner persists in being absent without a valid reason.
- 8.5. cancel the learner's attendance record in the class register if the learner is absent for 10 consecutive school days. A learner's record cannot be retained in the class register when he/she is no longer attending school.
- 8.6 must ensure that all educators submit the annual formal programme of assessment to the School Management Team before the start of the school year and that a school assessment plan in each grade is developed. This assessment plan is provided to learners and parents in the first week of the first term by the School Assessment Team.
- 8.7. must compile, verify and sign the school quarterly return on learner attendance according to the template provided and submit to the district office either electronically or in hard copy by not later than one week after the beginning of the following school term.
- 8.8. must monitor and analyse learners' attendance rates by grade and must include such information in the reports that he/she makes to the Head of Department or SGB in terms of Section 16A of SASA.
- 8.9. must consult with the cluster leader in order to find an acceptable solution if, during the NSC examination period, learner attendance is likely to be disrupted by accommodation difficulties or the absence of teachers due to examination marking duties.
- 8.10. must ensure that teachers who are allocated responsibilities for school attendance, understand the importance of accurate record-keeping and careful monitoring and that they carry out their responsibilities, appropriately.
- 8.11. must submit the school's examination timetable prior to the examinations to the district for approval.

9. RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE EDUCATORS WITH REGARDS TO REGISTERS

9.1. The class teacher:-

9.1.1. is responsible for compiling and marking the class register during the class registration period of no more than 10 minutes on each school day, maintaining it accurately.

9.1.2. is responsible for recording school attendance every term, in every learner's profile.

9.1.3. must inform the principal when a learner is absent without explanation for three consecutive school days and draw the principal's attention to cases of repeated absence so that the matter may be followed up with the parents in an appropriate manner.

9.2. the subject teacher is responsible for marking the period register, maintaining it accurately. If the teacher has reason to believe that a learner is absent from a period without a valid reason he/she must report such absence to the principal. The period register must be marked at least once a month in every period on a day designated by the principal. However, the principal may direct that the period register be marked more frequently.

9.3. All registers must be returned to the school office daily, for safe-keeping.

10. RESPONSIBILITY OF DISTRICTS

10.1. Monitor class registers when visiting the schools and ensure compliance.

10.2. Collate school quarterly attendance returns from all schools.

10.3. Analyse school quarterly attendance returns to identify patterns of absence in schools.

10.4. Take appropriate follow-up action in the case of schools that have high rates of learner absence.

- 10.5. The districts must bring this circular to the attention of all Principals and School Governing Bodies and give appropriate direction and management support to schools.
- 10.6. Approve all examination timetables prior to the exams and monitor the implementation thereafter.

11. ASSESSMENTS /EXAMINATIONS

11.1. School-Based Assessments, including examinations, is conducted by the school throughout the year on a continuous basis. In all grades, the School-Based Assessment component is all the formal tasks including the mid-year and September examinations.

11.2. Annual National Assessments (ANA):

Schools are provided annually with the timetable and assessment guidelines for:

11.2.1. The writing of Annual National Assessments.

11.2.2. Failure to adhere to the prescribed dates and times will constitute an assessment irregularity.

11.2.3. Schools must bear in mind that the days on which the ANA is written, are ordinary school days and that teaching and learning must resume immediately after each assessment has been completed.

11.2.4. Monitoring of the ANA will be undertaken by district and provincial officials as well as representatives of the Department of Basic Education.

12. ARRANGEMENTS FOR TRIAL/PRE-LIMINARY AND YEAR-END EXAMINATIONS

12.1 Grade 4 to 11 learners

11.1.1. A learner has a responsibility to attend school punctually and regularly.

12.1.2. Learners in the above-mentioned grades may not take leave from school to study for examinations or when examinations have ended.

12.2 Grade 12 learners

Grade 12 learners may take study leave to prepare for the National Senior Certificate (NSC) examinations five days before the first day of the NSC examination. Such learners need not attend school on days when they do not write examinations and after completing examinations.

13. TEMPORARY CLOSURE OF A SCHOOL

13.1. In terms of section 7 of the Gauteng Schools Education Act, the Head of Department may close a school temporarily in case of an emergency.

13.2. A School Governing Body may apply to the Head of Department in terms of paragraphs 3.1.7 and 3.1.8 of the National School Calendar Policy for permission to close a school temporarily for religious commemorations (if a majority of learners in the school are members of the faith in question), or for sporting or cultural events. In either case, the school may be temporarily closed for no more than two school days per year.

13.3. A learner may not be marked absent due to temporarily school closure; the appropriate notation shown in schedule 1 of the Learner Attendance Policy must be used.

14. COMPLIANCE

Schools are requested to refrain from illegal practices that infringe on the learners' basic rights to education as stated in the Constitution, SASA and the Policy on Learner Attendance. The full use of teaching time during the academic year is compulsory.

SIGNED: BOY NGOBENI
HEAD OF DEPARTMENT
DATE: 2014- 08- 07