



basic education
Department:
Basic Education
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

Enquiries: Dr JJ Joshua
Tel: 012 357 4500
Email: joshua.j@dbe.gov.za

**TO: HEADS OF PROVINCIAL EDUCATION DEPARTMENTS
DISTRICT DIRECTORS
SCHOOL PRINCIPALS
SCHOOL GOVERNING BODY ASSOCIATIONS**

CIRCULAR No. S4 of 2020

We regret the uncertainty caused in the education sector around the deletion of the phasing in of Pre-Grade R in the amended Directions published under Government Notice No. 357, in Government *Gazette* No. 43488 of 29 June 2020.

Dealing with an important issue of Pre-Grade R that has two Departments overseeing the same function has proved to be challenging. Please take note that the Department had to act speedily in order to prevent a potential conflict with the Department of Social Development, and to ensure that any embarrassment to government is abated.

The South African Schools Act, 1996 (Act No.84 of 1996) only regulates up to Grade R. The Department therefore had to accede to the Department of Social Development's assertion that Pre-Grade R is Early Childhood Development (ECD) and falls within the purview of the Children's Act, 2005 (Act No.38 of 2005) (the Children's Act). Therefore, since the Department of Social Development is the custodian of the Children's Act they will issue Directions on this area of competence.

Having said that, I, however, wish to clarify that on 1 July 2020, the Minister of Basic Education consulted with the Minister of Social Development on the phasing in of Pre-Grade R. The Ministers agreed that in the meantime those schools that have already phased in Pre-Grade R; using the deviation process set out in the Directions published by the Department; do not have to reverse their decision. In other words, those schools may continue with Pre-Grade R. There was also agreement between the Ministers that only those schools that have complied with the minimum health, safety, and social distancing measures will be allowed to phase in Grade R provided that a public school must also have all the COVID-19 essentials in place.

The Department is currently in the process of endeavouring to resolve this issue amicably with the Department of Social Development so that their Directions provide the necessary clarity on ECD in schools.

Yours sincerely,

**MR HM MWELI
DIRECTOR-GENERAL
DATE: 1 JULY 2020**