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Institutional Management and Governance Minute: 0001/2025

To: Deputy Directors-General, Chief Directors, Directors, Deputy Directors: District Corporate Services, Circuit Managers, Heads: Management and Governance, Principals and Chairpersons of governing bodies of public schools

**Subject: Responsibility regarding School Self Evaluation (SSE) and School Improvement Plan (SIP)**

1. The purpose of this minute is to provide clarity to principals and governing bodies on how to refine the completion and successful implementation of the basic annual management processes of SSE and the SIP as collaborative, multi-stakeholder, and inter-related processes. This minute must be read in conjunction with Circular 62/2021, dated 08 September 2021.
2. The SSE and the SIP are inter-related and participatory instruments which are aimed at creating a culture of self-improvement within a school by assisting it to assess itself critically and identify and address challenges to school performance.
3. Together, the two instruments provide a formalised and structured approach to school improvement over the course of an academic year.
4. This minute underscores the importance of completing these two sets of annual management instruments accurately and the continuous development, management and monitoring thereof.
5. This minute is issued to clarify and provide further explanation of Circular 0062/2021. It provides detailed guidance on the completion of the School Development Plan (SDP), SSE, SIP, SIP Action Plans and the Annual Performance Improvement Plan (APIP) on CEMIS.

## 6. School Self Evaluation

- 6.1 The SSE process is designed to incorporate input from the entire school community (School Management Teams (SMTs), educators, governing bodies, parents/guardians, and learners) on the school's current state and to identify the barriers hindering its performance.
- 6.2 During the SSE process it is important to identify the most critical areas of the school that need to be developed.
- 6.3 Without the involvement of the entire school community in the improvement process, it is possible that critical challenges facing the school might be overlooked and not be included in the SSE.

## 7. School Improvement Plan

- 7.1 The SIP is the action plan that allows the school to highlight various challenges and develop interventions to mitigate areas of risk for poor performance identified in the SSE.
  - 7.2 Ultimately, it provides the framework for setting specific goals and targets aimed at improving various aspects of the school.
  - 7.3 It is a vital step in the basic annual management process to ensure that challenges and the most critical areas for improvement are effectively addressed; therefore, schools that do not complete the SIP accurately may neglect to focus on improving the key areas for improvement as identified during the SSE.
8. If schools do not complete the SSE and SIP instruments accurately, the district may be unaware of the true challenges that are faced by its schools.

## 9. Completing the SSE

- 9.1 The SSE instrument should be completed with input from the SMT, the governing body and any other stakeholder with an interest in the improvement and development of the school.
- 9.2 This will guarantee that a comprehensive list of challenges is incorporated into the SSE instrument.
- 9.3 The SSE instrument uses a rating scale to identify and prioritise improvement areas for a school that must be implemented over the course of an academic year.
- 9.4 Ratings should be a true reflection of the actual situation at the school; therefore, for example, schools should not give a rating of 4 when the situation requires a lower score.

- 9.5 Providing detailed comments for areas of poor performance where a rating of 1 (Needs urgent attention) or 2 (Needs improvement) is recorded, will assist the school in developing specific action plans to address specific challenges. If this is not done, it could affect the process of addressing the challenges at the school negatively.
- 9.6 Where comments are included for a low rating, it should provide meaningful information regarding the deficiency. Meaningful information is any knowledge or information that will provide insight and a clearer understanding of the deficiency. For example, a low score in learner involvement in lessons may provide insights into the root cause of the deficiency and highlight the need for targeted interventions, such as interactive teaching methods or better use of technology in lessons.
- 9.7 All principals are expected to conduct a comprehensive SSE in order to formulate the three-year SDP, then extract the one-year SIP, and populate the SIP Action Plans. The subject improvement plan is part of the SIP and is captured under Learner Achievement (focus area 6) and referred to as the AIP. The draft SIP should be aligned with the draft workplans of principals in accordance with the Quality Management System (QMS) as per Circular 0062/2021.
- 9.8 The SSE process must be discussed at governing body meetings.
- 9.9 The SSE instrument on CEMIS has been amended to include a declaration that it was tabled and approved by the governing body; thus it requires the signature of the governing body chairperson as evidence of approval of the SSE.
- 9.10 The SSE should be reviewed by all stakeholders (the principal, governing body and SMT) to ensure completeness and accuracy of ratings prior to finalisation.

## 10. **Completing the SIP**

- 10.1 SIP Action Plans should focus on three aspects: people, data, and processes. Ongoing human resource development is a way to contribute to improved learner performance. Accurate data must be utilised or gathered to inform interventions. Improvement plans should not merely be about the formulation of documents, for example, policies, job descriptions, etc. The coordinator of each action that has been identified as the responsible person to formulate the project plan, which includes interventions, actions, targets, milestones, and time frames, must consider these three aspects.
- 10.2 The challenges and areas needed for immediate improvement identified in the SSE should be addressed in the SIP which is aimed at identifying the key interventions that will lead to school improvement.

- 10.3 Schools should utilise the results of the SSE process and then, informed by the Annual Academic Performance Report together with the provincial Systemic Testing Programme, National Senior Certificate examinations diagnostic reports, educator development information from the QMS processes, and building blocks completed by principals, prioritise improvement activities for inclusion in the SIP.
- 10.4 Schools should select a certain number of priority interventions which is possible for them to implement within a year. The number of interventions/activities for areas of development should, therefore, be realistic and manageable, ensuring they can be effectively implemented within a year. As a guideline, focusing on three to five priority interventions can help ensure meaningful improvement. It is important that priority areas selected can actually be implemented with the available resources.
- 10.5 The descriptions of activities and interventions in the SIP must be clear, specific, and actionable. Guidelines such as the specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, and time-bound (SMART) criteria should be followed.
- 10.6 By implication, interventions that are not SMART will fail to address the challenges captured in the SIP successfully.
- 10.7 The interventions must be tailored to the needs and environment of the school and be attainable over the course of an academic year.
- 10.8 Interventions that are clear, specific, and context-based will assist with the implementation as well as the quarterly progress reporting thereof.
- 10.9 Principals must ensure that the responsible person/s for the SIP Action Plans know/s exactly what must be done, by when, and that they are able to report on the progress of the implementation of the documented interventions.
- 10.10 Principals are also required to table, discuss, and obtain approval in a governing body meeting prior to the final sign off.
- 10.11 The SIP must be discussed during governing body meetings on a regular basis to monitor progress and to ensure that the interventions are implemented as intended. This will contribute to an evidence-based implementation process.
- 10.12 The SIP must be signed off by the principal on CEMIS as evidence of approval of the SSE process by the governing body, only after a duly convened and duly quorate meeting.

## 11. Quarterly monitoring

- 11.1 Schools are required to monitor and submit quarterly progress reports against its SIP.
- 11.2 It is expected of schools to provide detail of the actual progress of the interventions/activities documented in the SIP in addressing the challenges at the school on a quarterly basis.

## 12. Role of school

- 12.1 Since the executive authority for the professional management of schools is vested in the principal supported by the governing body, the principal will be responsible for carrying out an internal evaluation of the school through the SSE process and develop a credible SIP, annually, in line with the requirements of the School Evaluation Authority policy.
- 12.2 The primary responsibility of the SMT is to coordinate the input from the various grades concerning areas for improvement, including identifying subject areas that require improvement and for developing the SIP Action Plans as contemplated in Circular 0062/2021.
- 12.3 In addition, the SMT is responsible for the quarterly monitoring of the implementation of the SIP Action Plans, especially with regards to areas for improvement in specific/identified subject areas; this can include analysing learner performance data to identify strengths and weaknesses within these identified areas.
- 12.4 To ensure proper oversight, the SMT should:
- (a) Track progress against SIP timelines and address any delays.
  - (b) Support and mentor staff in achieving SIP objective and interventions.
  - (c) Introduce monthly reporting processes, based on the type of intervention.
  - (d) Evaluate the effectiveness of interventions and recommend necessary adjustments.
  - (e) Hold regular SIP review meetings to assess progress and decide if adjustments are needed.
- 12.5 Principals are required to table, discuss, and obtain approval for the SSE and SIP during governing body meetings prior to final sign off.
- 12.6 The minutes of these meetings should be detailed and reflect an accurate summary of what was discussed regarding the SSE and SIP.
- 12.7 Principals should ensure that the roles and responsibilities are clear for all role players/ stakeholders involved with the development, management, completion and monitoring of the SSE and SIP. They should also keep a list of all the role players/stakeholders in the SSE.

- 12.8 The role of the SMT in developing, managing, and implementing the SSE and SIP is planning and overseeing effective implementation. The SIP Action Plans should be coordinated by various staff members, ensuring that each element of the SIP is properly addressed. This collaborative approach not only distributes responsibility effectively but also ensures that all staff members are familiar with the plan, increasing the likelihood of efficient execution across all aspects.
- 12.9 The role of the governing body regarding the SSE and SIP is primarily focused on providing oversight to ensure the documents are accurately completed, incorporating inputs from all role players/stakeholders, and align with the school's mission and objectives.
- 12.10 Principals must ensure the implementation of the interventions of the SIP and ensure that these are specific and clear; he/she also needs to ensure that the responsible person knows exactly what must be done, by when, and is able to report on the progress on the implementation of the intervention.
- 12.11 Principals must ensure that the SSE is reviewed by all stakeholders/role players to ensure completeness and the accuracy of ratings prior to finalisation.
- 12.12 Principals should also ensure that a detailed and accurate report is compiled on the progress with the implementation of the various interventions of the SIP and should be available as part of the SIM instrument.
- 12.13 Principals are advised to liaise timeously with the district if guidance and assistance are required with the completion of the SSE and SIP instruments to ensure accurate completion thereof.

### 13. **Role of the district**

- 13.1 District offices must provide enough guidance and support to schools with the completion of the annual management process.
- 13.2 They should also reinforce the importance of the accurate completion of the SSE and SIP processes to ensure that all challenges affecting the schools are documented.
- 13.3 The SSE and SIP instruments must be informed by an evidence-based evaluation approach where decisions, ratings, and progress are based on solid evidence. For example, for the SSE schools should use data on learner performance, classroom observations, feedback from parents/guardians and governing bodies. The school should then rate its performance based on this evidence. For the SIP, the school could, for example, use data to set specific and measurable targets, like increasing learner reading proficiency by 10% over the next year. Progress can be tracked with ongoing evidence, including exam and assessment results.

- 13.4 The districts should provide training, guidance, and assistance to newly appointed and acting principals to ensure efficient and effective implementation of all annual management processes.
- 13.5 Principals and SMT members should be trained and equipped to manage the schools' challenges by specifically using these two annual management instruments.
- 13.6 There should be a review of the SSE instrument by principals, SMTs, governing bodies and district office to ensure all areas are evaluated and correctly rated.
- 13.7 There should be evidence of reviews conducted in schools by district offices on the content of the SIP and progress on the implementation thereof. Evidence should be in the form of quarterly review meetings conducted with schools to assess the content of the SIP and to monitor the progress of the implementation. During these meetings schools present detailed reports on their progress such as addressing learner absenteeism, etc. The district should provide feedback and/or flag areas where targets were not met, identify areas needing additional support and ensure that adjustments to the SIP are made.
14. Please bring the content of this minute to the attention of all relevant staff and stakeholders.

**SIGNED:** AJE MEYER

**DEPUTY DIRECTOR-GENERAL: INSTITUTION DEVELOPMENT AND COORDINATION**

**DATE:** 2025-02-06