

## STATEMENT BY MINISTER DEBBIE SCHÄFER

### WESTERN CAPE MINISTER OF EDUCATION

**Date: 2 July 2020**

**Release: immediate**

*Note to editors: a soundbite from Minister Schäfer is attached.*

### **Grades R, 6 and 11 will return to class on Monday 6 July 2020**

We have noted the statement by the national minister regarding today's discussions in the Council of Education Ministers. We welcome the differentiated approach to phasing in grades that has been provided for, and the ability for schools to adopt a slightly slower phasing in approach should they need to do so.

Grades R, 6 and 11 must return to school on Monday, while schools may delay the return of the remaining grades scheduled to have returned next week (grades 1, 2, 3 and 10). Further details will be given at the media briefing this weekend as announced by the national minister.

According to section 7 of the directions gazetted by the national minister on 23 June 2020, schools that are ready to do so may bring in grades other than those specified if they wish to do so, and must notify the Head of Department accordingly. At all times, the required safety protocols must continue to be followed, regardless of the number of grades present at school. The WCED may inspect schools indicating that they are doing this, and if they are found not to be compliant, their permission may be revoked.

In addition, the directions of 23 June make provision for the Head of Department to grant parents who are anxious about their children attending class during the global pandemic a conditional exemption from sending their children to school. This will be conditional on parents taking responsibility to oversee their children's learning at home, and to collect

from and deliver to their child's school whatever work is required. The duration of the exemption will be dependent on a continuing assessment of the status of the epidemic. As previously said, learners who have high-risk comorbidities may be kept at home by their parents, also on condition that they take responsibility for their learning at home, and on provision of medical evidence.

Applications must be made to the Head of Department via the school principal. The relevant forms will be sent to schools in the next two days.

We appreciate that this is a difficult and uncertain time as we all adapt to the challenge of educating children in the context of a global pandemic. We again thank the officials, school staff, SGBs and parents who have worked hard to get our schools ready to accept more grades.

We trust that all these options will serve to alleviate the majority of fears that have been expressed recently.

[ENDS]