

# School Fees and Exemption

A school fee is an agreed amount of money that parents pay to schools, aimed at improving the quality of education of learners. School fees may not include registration fees, administration or other fees. The school may not charge further fees for additional subjects chosen by learners from the school programme.

According to SASA all SGBs of public schools must supplement government funding, by charging school fees and doing other reasonable forms of fund-raising. The right not to charge school fees will be limited to the schools that have been declared 'no fee schools'. The names of the 'no fee schools' will be published in a Provincial Gazette and the criteria to determine the 'no fee schools' will be based on the economic level of the community around the school.

The school fund is a combination of school fees, the fundraising money and donations. It is the responsibility of the SGBs to ensure that all these funds are kept and managed in one bank account. No public school should have more than one account.

A public school has the right to take legal action against a parent who does not pay school fees, but only after the exemption criteria have been applied and the parent is still liable to pay such fees. The learner must remain in school while the case is on.

A learner cannot be excluded from participation in any official school programmes due to non-payment of school fees by the parent. A school may not retain a learner's report because the parent cannot afford to pay school fees.

## Exemptions from Payment of School Fees

The exemption from payment of school fees is a mechanism government has put in place to assist parents to access quality education for their children, irrespective of their background or financial constraints. Exemptions must be calculated retrospectively from the beginning of the year, if the parent qualifies.

Parents who cannot afford to pay school fees must apply to the SGB for conditional, partial or full exemption from paying school fees. Application forms can be obtained from the SGB through the principal of a school. Public schools must inform parents of the criteria and procedures and assist them in applying for exemption from paying school fees. The SGB must inform the applicant of the outcome of the application in writing within 7 days after assessing the application for exemption.

**Schools must not charge school fees for orphans.**

If a parent is not satisfied with the SGB decision related to full or partial exemption, he/she may appeal to the Head of Department against the decision of the school within 30 days after receiving the school's decision. It is the responsibility of every public school to assist the parents in lodging appeals.

## Voluntary Contributions

Any parent, including those granted any type of exemption, can make voluntary contribution to the school fund. Contributions can be in the form of money, in kind or in the form of any service a parent may render to a school.

## Assistance to Parents Applying for Exemptions

Each public school is encouraged to establish a School Fees Committee. The chairperson of this committee must be a member of the SGB. The function of the committee is to administer all issues pertaining to school fees such as collection of school fees, reporting to the SGB on income from school

fees and to assist parents apply for school fee exemptions.

This committee considers the applications for exemptions and provides the SGB with recommendations. A parent who, for whatever reason, needs assistance to apply for exemption or lodge an appeal, may request the school fees committee chairperson or any members of the School Fees Committee to assist him or her in making the application.

If no assistance is given to the parent after he or she has requested it, the principal of the school concerned must assist the parent in such an application or appeal if requested to do so by the parent. No applicant may be disqualified on the ground that his or her application form is either incomplete or incorrectly completed. The School Fees Committee must respond in writing to the parents on the outcome of their application within 14 days of applying.

## Appeals for Declined Exemptions

A parent whose application has been declined by the SGB has the right to lodge an appeal with the Head of Department of that province within 30 days after notification of that decision. The principal or School Fees Committee must offer a parent this opportunity and assistance by providing and explaining the appeal form to the parent.

The parent appealing must provide the Head of Department with:

- Reasons for appeal
- All relevant information pertaining to the appeal

The Head of Department shall request the SGB chairperson to forward within 14 days:

- A copy of the minutes of the meeting of the SGB at which the application was discussed and a decision taken;
- Any comments the SGB wishes to make with regard to the application; and
- Any other information relevant to the appeal.

The Head of Department will then: Within 14 days after receipt of the documentation from the parent notify the SGB chairperson of the appeal that has been lodged; Inform the SGB that it cannot take any action against the parent until the appeal is heard; Within 7 days of deciding on the appeal, inform the SGB and the appellant in writing of his/her decision and the reasons thereof.