

PRIMARY & SECONDARY
SPECIAL EDUCATION NEEDS (SEN)

YEAR 2020

**SCHOOLS (PRIMARY & SECONDARY) - CHILDREN WITH
DISABILITIES – ADMISSION
(11.08.2020)**

(No. B/544) **Dr. M. Gungapersad (Second Member for Grand’Baie & Poudre d’Or)** asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Education, Tertiary Education, Science and Technology whether, in regard to children with disabilities, she will state the number thereof admitted in the primary and secondary schools, respectively, indicating the number of schools having taken measures to ensure the provision thereto of all pedagogical facilities and easy access to classrooms and other spaces.

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Education, Tertiary Education, Science and Technology (Mrs L. D. Dookun-Luchoomun): Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that the total number of learners with disabilities admitted in primary schools is 65, of which 17 are in the Government Special Education Needs Integrated Units; 28 in the Special Education Needs Resource and Development Centres; 13 in mainstream Primary Schools; 6 in SEN Schools run by NGOs, and one in the private fee paying school.

With regard to admissions in secondary schools, 32 learners are in the State Secondary Schools and 43 are in Private Grant Aided Secondary Schools.

Mr Speaker, Sir, a number of measures have been implemented at the level of my Ministry for the revision of pedagogical facilities for learners with disabilities. The main ones are –

- the provision of adapted textbooks for learners with visual and hearing impairment;
- the provision of personal computers fitted with screen readers and screen magnifier software for visually impaired learners;
- the provision of brail displays for blind learners;

- the support of assistant teachers as well as carers;
- extra assistance from the educators and support teachers;
- the provision of assistance for reading and writing assessment and examinations as well as provision of extra time when asked for;
- assistance of specialist teachers, interpreters for learners with hearing impairment in secondary schools and for examination purposes as well, and
- provision of adapted furniture and wheelchairs when asked for.

In addition, arrangements are being made for the procurement of braille notes for blind students in secondary schools. Work is also being done for the development of adapted curricula for learners with disabilities.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to inform the House that as at date all primary schools having learners with disabilities and 43 State Secondary Schools have already undergone infrastructural works with regard to ease access to classrooms and other spaces. I am further informed that private schools are also developing barrier-free facilities.

The following infrastructural works have been carried out in all State Schools having learners with disabilities:

- Ramps and handrails to facilitate access to classrooms;
- covered links between building blocks to facilitate access to learners using wheelchairs in schools where the specialist rooms are located on the first floor;
- adapted toilets and in certain schools, alighting base for safe access to school yard.

Such works are being carried out in all our schools in a phased manner. Specialist rooms such as computer rooms, science labs and other facilities like music rooms and libraries are situated on the ground floor in such schools, where necessary classrooms for learners with disabilities are located on the ground floor. The services of carers are provided to students requiring the same and, in addition, Mr Speaker, Sir, the taxi fares to travel to school are refunded by the Ministry of Social Integration, Social Security and National Solidarity for students who are suffering from muscular dystrophy and mobility problems and for blind students as well.

Dr. Gungapersad: Thank you, hon. Minister. Can the hon. Minister inform the House whether any survey has been carried out to find out the number of children with disabilities who have not sought admission in primary schools?

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Mr Speaker, Sir, every year, at the time of admission, we make special appeal to parents for them to get their children admitted. No such surveys have been carried out but what is being done right now, we are trying to get some communication with the Ministry of Health and Wellness so that we start getting a data and we are also linking up with the Ministry of Social Security to get the required data.

Dr. Gungapersad: We are fully embarked in the second term of the school calendar and it is with serious concern that we note that some of these children with disabilities have not received their textbooks as at now when I am talking to you.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that schools have been given the books. However, if the hon. Member has any case of students who still haven't received the books, I'll be most grateful if he could forward me the name of the students so that necessary is done.

Dr. Gungapersad: I will do so. Now, some children who are visually impaired and who are blind have made a request whether it would be possible if the Ministry could provide to them what we call a talking calculator which will help them, especially with maths as a subject.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Mr Speaker, Sir, we will look into the matter and try to see whether this would be possible.

Mr Speaker: Last supplementary!

Dr. Gungapersad: During recess time, there are many children with disabilities who are kept cloistered, locked into their classrooms and they do not have access to outdoor activities. Will it be possible to look into the matter so that these children are provided the opportunities to go outdoor, definitely under the supervision of someone, so that they also they can have recreational activities?

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Mr Speaker, Sir, all students having mobility problems or severely disabled do get the support not only of an Assistant Teacher in class for academic tasks but also the carer who allows them to move around in the school with their support.