

Ministry of Education & Human Resources

**Norms and Standards
for
Special Education Needs
Schools**

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Preamble

The vision of this Ministry for the Special Education Needs (SEN) sector is that no child is left outside the education system on account of his/her disability. All children should have access to quality education that realizes their learning potential and maximises their education, promotes lifelong learning and allows parents and guardians to take an active part in their children's education and training. SEN has become a priority domain and the Ministry is ensuring quality Education for All (EFA) goals. In this context, a framework with Norms and Standards has been worked out to cater for the individual and specific needs of these children in line with the National Strategic Paper '*Special Education Needs and Inclusive Education in Mauritius- 2006*'. The framework aims at:

- (a) Ensuring quality through proper mandatory norms and standards for the holistic development of the child;
- (b) Facilitating registration/renewal of new/existing Special Education Needs schools;
- (c) Providing a child-centered approach through the development of specific norms and standards for schools, classrooms and pedagogical materials; and
- (d) Ensuring the staff and the community are provided with appropriate training facilities by the Mauritius Institute of Education (MIE) or any other recognized institution.

Special Education Needs (SEN) schools

For the purpose of this document, a SEN school shall be defined as "*A school that provides educational services to children with special education needs due to disabilities such as motor, physical, visual, auditory, intellectual or due to other specific educational needs*".¹

¹ National Strategic Paper '*Special Education Needs and Inclusive Education in Mauritius- 2006*', p 48.

Classification of disabilities

A Committee comprising of representatives from the Ministry of Education and Human Resources, NGOs and other stakeholders worked on the classification of disabilities. The recommendation for the purpose of classification by the Committee is at **Annex I**.

Introduction

This document provides guidelines of the Norms and Standards in SEN schools and procedures for registration/renewal of special schools in Mauritius. It is to be used by Head of Schools to ensure compliance with the basic requirements for the smooth functioning of the school.

Norms and Standards for SEN schools

The Norms and Standards are to ensure that the requirements of the Education Act are being, or will be met.

School Registration

All schools should apply for registration with the Ministry responsible for the subject of Education, hereinafter referred as Ministry. (See **Annex II**).

A. School Governance

1. Democratic principles

There should be a Vision and Mission statement for each school.

2. Guiding Principles

All schools should abide to the provision of the Education Act 1957, as subsequently amended, and all its ensuing regulations.

3. Admission to a SEN school

All children admitted to a SEN school should have a medical certificate attesting their disability or a psychologist's report detailing their learning disability.

4. Register of enrolments

A register of enrolments for each child should be kept.

5. Minimum school population

A school shall have a population of not less than 10 children.

6. Age of children

The age of a child admitted in a SEN school shall be between 5 and 20 for children with special needs.

7. Ratio

The recommended ratios for effective and efficient teaching/learning are:

i. Teacher : Pupil ratio

The recommended **Teacher : Pupil** ratio is **1 : 7**.

ii. Teacher : Assistant Teacher ratio

The recommended **Teacher : Assistant Teacher** ratio is **2 : 1**.

iii. Pupil : Carer ratio

The recommended **pupil : carer** ratio is **15 : 1**.

iv. Classroom : Caretaker ratio

The recommended **Classroom : Caretaker** ratio is **8 : 1**.

Note: However, exceptions will be made depending on the level of impairment, in which cases the above ratios may be reviewed by the Ministry.

8. Staff qualification

i. Teacher

No person shall be eligible to teach unless he/she holds:

- (a) Cambridge School Certificate; and
- (b) Certificate in Special Education (CSE) from the Mauritius Institute of Education (MIE); or
- (c) Equivalent qualifications to (a) and (b) acceptable to the Ministry.

Note: Those already in post but not possessing qualifications as above will be given a moratorium period of three years to follow an appropriate course in Special Education Needs from the MIE.

ii. **Assistant Teacher**

No person shall be eligible to teach unless he/she holds a Cambridge School Certificate or any equivalent qualification acceptable to the Ministry.

- iii. Any person not possessing qualifications at 8.i. and 8.ii. but with a disability and having at least five years' teaching experience in a specific domain such as in the teaching of Braille, Sign Language or other specific domain will be eligible to be employed to teach in his/her field of specialization.

9. Specialist Support Services

Children should receive regular and adequate professional support, follow-ups and therapy by medical and paramedical staff individually at schools or in the Special Education Needs Resource and Development Centres. Such support should be incorporated in the Individual Education Plan/Profile book and should be in line with the development of the child.

10. Staff responsibilities

The roles and responsibilities of all employees should be clearly spelt out in their job description/work contract.

It is recommended that the **Code of Ethics** (at **Annex III**) be respected by all employees.

11. Parents-Teachers Association

A Parents-Teachers Association should be set up in each school to engage fully parents and foster partnership with the community.

12. Disciplinary policy

Policies relating to student and teacher discipline; based on principles of fairness should be developed by each school.

B. Curriculum

1. Curriculum

Schools should adhere to the Curriculum framework prescribed by the MIE. It caters for a planned and structured programme to develop learners' knowledge, skills, attitudes, daily living skills, and Technical Vocational and Education Training (TVET) needed to complete schooling.

2. Time-Table

A time-table showing the distribution of workload should be available.

C. Pedagogical Materials and Adapted Furniture

1. All schools should be equipped with the appropriate pedagogical materials and adapted furniture according to the types of disabilities they cater for (see **Annex IV**).
2. Pedagogical materials including toys should be hazard free to the health and safety of the children with disabilities.
3. There should be at least either one change table, or bench, or couch appropriate to the students and their disability in each school.

D. Student Learning Outcomes

1. A Special Needs Profile Book should be kept for each child to record ongoing assessments, monitoring and evaluation of children's performance.
2. An Individual Education Plan (IEP) should be maintained and implemented for each child. Both the Special Needs Profile Book and the IEP should be worked out in collaboration with the school management.

E. Care, Safety, and Welfare of Children

1. Student safety and welfare

- i. The protection, care, safety, and welfare of children should be in accordance with the **Occupational Safety, Health and Welfare Act 2005** (at **Annex V**).
- ii. A constant on-site and off-site supervision of children should be exercised at all times by the staff, including during outings and educational tours.
- iii. First-aid kits should be available in the Manager's and/or Head-Teacher's office.
- iv. School yards and playgrounds, wherever available, must be fenced or closed at all

times as a safety measure; they should be clear from any potential hazards.

- v. Chemicals and dangerous products (detergent, disinfectants, washing powder), if any, should be kept under lock and key in a safe place and out of reach of children.
- vi. Any incident occurring should immediately be reported to the SEN Desk at the Ministry, MITD House, Phoenix. A full report of the incident should be sent as per proforma at **Annex VI** to the SEN desk or the relevant Zone directorate at moesendesk@mail.gov.mu or by fax on 696 59311. A log book of all incidents should be kept.

2. Emergency Management Plan

A SEN School Flooding Committee shall be set up at the beginning of each academic year and will comprise the Manager, two Educators, and one parent from the Parent Teachers Association. It shall meet at the beginning of each term and as often as the need arises. Head of Schools should ensure they are familiar with the protocols set in the “Protocol for closing of schools in exceptional circumstances arising from torrential rains and flooding SEN Schools”, annexed at **VII**

3. Safety issues

(a) Cleaning and maintenance of water tanks

- i. Water tanks should be cleaned and maintained at regular intervals (at least once a term, during school holidays) to enable storage of water in good condition for safe consumption by children.
- ii. The Health Certificate issued by the Ministry of Health and Quality of life should be clearly affixed.
- iii. Hot water outlets to the bathrooms should be fitted with thermostats and have security taps to avoid scalding.
- iv. Hot water pipes should be insulated and out of reach of the pupils.

(b) Sanitary measures

- i. Bins should be placed in appropriate locations throughout the school premises.

- ii. School should also be equipped with a large, well-covered garbage bin.
- iii. Sweeping of classrooms and dusting of furniture should be carried out daily in the morning prior to the resumption of classes.
- iv. For every **ten (10)** pupils with disabilities, there should be:
 - a. a supply of diapers for young children;
 - b. adapted and well-equipped toilet facilities according to the specific disability requirements.

(c) Electrical safety measures

- i. Electrical outlets on walls should be covered.
- ii. No electrical cords should be plugged in and left around for the children to play with.
- iii. Fans in rooms should be placed out of reach of the children. Fans and lights should be switched off when leaving a classroom, office room or any other room.
- iv. All heating and cooling units should be adequately guarded and regularly maintained to prevent accidental contact with hot surfaces and sparks or flames.
- v. Bare or live wires should be replaced immediately.

(d) Other security measures

- i. No animal or livestock, which are likely sources of infection or which may be detrimental to the well being of the children, should be allowed in the school premises.
- ii. Safety nets should be placed in areas where bird infestation is likely to constitute a hazard.
- iii. Vehicles should be parked in parking space where they would not constitute a risk to the safety of the children. Proper accommodation should also be made for adapted parking spaces.
- iv. Schools should ensure no unauthorized persons are allowed in the school premises at any time. Visitors should report to the reception and a visitors' log book is to be kept at all times.

F: Food and Nutrition

1. Where applicable, children should be provided with a well-balanced meal daily.
2. Any person employed to prepare and to serve meals to the pupils during school hours should possess a Food Handling Certificate (FHC) as per section 37 of the **Food Regulations 1999** (at **Annex VIII**) and to abide to the regulations made by the Minister under **section 18 of the Food Act** as stipulated in the **Government Gazette of Mauritius No. 74 of 15 August 2009 (at annex IX)**

Note: Those not possessing an FHC may apply for same at the Health Office nearest to their place of residence. A list of the 13 Health Offices in Mauritius is at **Annex X**.

3. School should ensure that food served:
 - i. is fresh; and
 - ii. meets each student's dietary requirements.

G: Infrastructure

1. Fire extinguishers should be placed at strategic points as required by the Government Fire Services and as stipulated in section 74 of the **Occupational Safety and Health Act 2005**.
2. Prospective Schools should apply to the Municipal City Council, Municipal Town Council or District Council, as the case may be, for 'an Outline Planning Permission or a Building and Land Use Permit' as per Section 117(2) of the **Local Government Act 2011** (at **Annex XI**).

3. Classroom Norms

- i. Classrooms should be well-lit and aerated.
- ii. Ramps should be provided to wheelchair users. Such ramps should not be inclined to more than 15 degrees to the horizontal to enable children to have greater mobility and access across the school. It is further recommended that doorways be wide enough to allow for smooth manoeuvres of wheelchairs.

- iii. Hand rails should be placed in areas so that students have greater mobility across the school and for their safety.
- iv. A minimum of 1 square metre should be allocated per child in classrooms. This space may be increased to 1.5 square metres for a child with disability to allow for wheelchairs, walking frames, adapted furniture and/or other special equipment used, where necessary.
- 4. Braille signage and appropriate color bands should be displayed to guide children with visual impairment.
- 5. Flashing bells should be used to inform children with hearing impairment of recess and breaks and to warn them of any eventual dangers/hazards. Visual posters may also be used for the same purpose.

Conclusion

The Ministry of Education and Human Resources has, in close collaboration with strategic partners, NGOs running Special Education Needs schools, come up with this document. The aim of this document is to provide uniformity in the SEN sector with regards to school governance, curriculum framework, student learning outcomes, pedagogical materials and facilities, food and nutrition and infrastructure. All the above will enhance the care, safety and quality of education for children attending special education needs schools.

References

Ministry of Education and Human Resources. (2006). National Strategic Paper '*Special Education Needs and Inclusive Education in Mauritius- 2006*', p 48.

World Health Organization. (2002). *Towards a Common Language for Functioning, Disability and Health ICF*.

Retrieved from <http://www.who.int/classifications/icf/training/icfbeginnersguide.pdf>

Classification of disabilities

Classification Of Disabilities	Categorisation	WHO ICF Code²
Physical disabilities	(a) Orthopaedic <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Bones affected causing mobility problems (ii) Joints and articular cartilage affected (iii) Muscles and ligaments are affected (b) Neurological <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Spinal cord Injuries (ii) Spinal deformity (iii) Spina bifida (iv) Hemiplegia (v) Cerebral Palsy (vi) Sensory Integration deficits (vii) Visual Spatial Perception 	
Social, Emotional and Behavioural Disturbance	(a) Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Predominantly hyperactivity (ii) Predominantly inattentive (iii) Combined hyperactive - impulsive and inattentive (b) Schizophrenia (c) Anxiety Disorders (Social Anxiety, Obsessive Compulsive Disorder, Post Traumatic Anxiety, Separation Anxiety leading to school phobia, General Childhood Anxiety) (d) Emotional and Behaviour Disorders and Antisocial Personality Disorder	

² (2002). *Towards a Common Language For Functioning, Disability and Health ICF*. Geneva: World Health Organization.

Intellectual and Brain-Related Disabilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) Specific learning difficulties <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Dyslexia (ii) Dysgraphia (iii) Dyspraxia (iv) Dyscalculia (v) Gifted (b) Autism (c) Pervasive Developmental Disorders (d) Foetal alcohol syndrome (e) General development delay (f) Genetic syndromes (Down syndrome, Fragile X syndrome, Williams syndrome) (g) Epilepsy and epileptic syndromes (most common: Grand Mal, Petit Mal, Salam Spasm) 	<p>d130-d159 For basic learning</p> <p>d160-d179 Applying knowledge</p>
Hearing and visual Impairment		<p>b230-b249 for Hearing b210-b229 for Visual disorders</p>
Communication Disorders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) Speech disorders (b) Language disorders 	<p>d310-d329 Communicating-receiving d330-d349 Communication-producing</p>
Multiple Disabilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Restricted Movements - Cerebral Palsy - Skeletal Deformities - Sensory Disorders - Seizure Disorders - Lungs And Breathing Control - Other Medical Problems 	
Other health-related disabilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) Cancer (b) Chemical dependency (c) Diabetes mellitus (d) Epilepsy and other seizure disorders (e) Epstein Barr Virus or Chronic Fatigue Syndrome (f) Human Immunodeficiency Virus (g) Lyme's disease (h) Lupus erythematosus (i) Multiple Sclerosis (j) Renal disease or failure 	

Registration of SEN schools

All Special Education Needs schools should apply for registration with the Ministry responsible **for the subject of Education, hereinafter referred as Ministry.**

1. Applicants should also ensure they have all relevant clearances from other local authorities (fire, health, environment, and local bodies such as district council/municipality) prior to the visit and evaluation/assessment of school inspectors. In addition to satisfying the health and safety norms and standards, the building should be in a good condition with appropriate facilities to allow children with physical and sensory-motor disabilities to have easy access.
2. Upon assessment of the educational facilities offered, an NGO operating a special school may obtain a provisional registration of **one year** issued under section (9) of the Education Act provided they meet the basic standards for registration as laid down by the Ministry.
3. No school shall begin to function unless it has been registered by the Ministry of Education and Human Resources.
4. A school will be considered for registration if it is an institution providing educational services to not less than **ten (10)** children with disabilities.
5. An application for the registration of a school shall be made by the person desirous of becoming manager of such school not later than **31 July** of the year preceding the year in which the proposed school is to begin to function.
6. Such application shall be made in the prescribed form and shall be accompanied by the documents specified therein.
7. On receipt of any such application, the Minister may, subject to section (10) of the Act and after such inquiry as he may cause to be made, register or refuse to register the school.
8. Only duly registered schools are eligible for the educational Grant-in-Aid.
9. The manager of every school shall, by the 5th of each month, submit to the Ministry the

attendance of the pupils and staff for the preceding month.

10. Suspension and/or cancellation of registration

i. Where a registered school fails to comply with the present Regulations, the Ministry may, **after giving the Manager a reasonable delay to make appropriate improvements**, suspend or cancel its registration.

ii. Right of appeal

Where an application for registration of a SEN school has been rejected or cancelled by the Ministry, the aggrieved party may appeal to the Ministry within 21 days of the date on which he/she has been so notified.

iii. Validity

A Registration Certificate is valid for a period of two years and may be renewed.

11. A SEN school shall be under the responsibility of a manager and no manager shall be responsible of more than one school.

12. The Ministry may from time to time issue such directions and guidelines as it deems fit for the effective running of the school.

13. No person shall be registered to work in a special school unless:

- i. they hold the prescribed qualifications or equivalent thereof acceptable to the Ministry;
- ii. they produce satisfactory evidence of being medically and constitutionally fit to perform the duties of the relevant post;
- iii. they produce a Certificate of Morality issued by the appropriate authority in Mauritius;
- iv. they are over 18 years of age.

14. Where a Registered staff member, including the ancillary staff, fails to comply with the present regulations, the Ministry may de-register them from exercising the functions of the post to which they were employed.

15. Every manager shall keep:

- i. an admission register of children;
- ii. an attendance register of children;

- iii. a register of teaching and non-teaching staff;
- iv. an inspection register;
- v. a visitors' book;
- vi. an inventory of furniture, equipment, toys & books;
- vii. a Health Record Card for each pupil;
- viii. Incident Log Book.
- ix. Early departure Log Book

16. Every teacher shall keep:

- i. a lesson plan and lesson notes;
- ii. a weekly plan of work;
- iii. an individual portfolio for all children.

17. An person designated by the Ministry may at any reasonable time visit a school to :

- i. verify that the specified norms and standards are implemented;
- ii. inspect any official document deemed to be mandatory under these regulations;
- iii. verify issues relating to Health and Safety.

18. Hours of operation of the school

- i. the teacher/pupil contact hours shall be 6 hours daily or as approved by the Ministry for specific disability with opening hours being between 09 00 to 15 00 hrs;
- ii. there shall be 3 terms for each academic year ,which shall be the same as those of the primary sector or as otherwise approved by the Ministry;
- iii. activities and child-minding services may be provided outside normal school hours and school term.

List of Equipment and Adapted Furniture

(This is not an exhaustive list but a guideline)

- (a) Office equipment: telephone, computer, photocopier, fax machines, display boards.
- (b) Teaching materials: whiteboard, hand-outs, kitchen paper, stationery, paint, picture books.
- (c) Pedagogical materials such as: educational toys, charts, flashcards.
- (d) Audio-visual equipment such as: audio player, television set, overhead or LCD projector, computer, VCD / DVD educational software, appliances and tablets.
- (e) Indoor games: dominoes, ludo, scrabble, carom board, snakes and ladders and so on.

Equipment specific to each disability – some examples:

(a) For students with Visual Impairment:

Course material in Braille, large print on disk, Perkins Keyboard, Braille embossers, Braille slates, abacus for the blind, specialist equipment, talking calculators, computers with speech synthesisers, Braille transcribers and note takers, text scanners.

(b) For students with Speech or Language Difficulties:

Text phone, communication aid, computers and e-mail facilities, picture symbols, augmentative language devices, speech to text devices.

(c) For those with Physical Impairment:

Adapted furniture, wheelchairs, parallel bars, walking frames, foam mattresses, giant blocks, physically accessible telephones, adapted computers with switch operation or voice input.

(d) For students with Hearing Impairment:

Flashing lights, vibrating pads, visual aids with sign language, hearing-aids, magnetic loop amplifiers.

(e) For students with Intellectual Impairment:

Visual aids, adapted pedagogical toys, interactive learning aids.

(f) For students on the Autism Spectrum Disorder:

Social stories, daily routine calendars, pictorial dictionaries, sensory materials that stimulate the visual, audio and olfactory systems, and adapted furniture.

Health Offices in Mauritius

Health Office	Contact number
Bambous	452-0133
Bel Air	419-2429
Curepipe	696-2854
Flacq	413-2555
Mahebourg	631-9556
Port-Louis	212-2098
Rivière du Rempart	412-8035
Rose-Belle	627-4526
Rose-Hill	466-1765
Pamplemousses (SSRN)	243-3993
St Pierre	433-4240
Souillac	625-5521
Vacoas	696-4197

Incident Information Report

Any incident occurring should immediately be reported to the SEN Desk at the Ministry, MITD House, Phoenix by fax on 6965931 or by email at moesendesk@mail.gov.mu

Name of school:.....

Date of incident:.....Place;..... Time:.....

Name of pupil involved:.....

Name, address and Tel No of responsible party:

.....

Any other person involved:.....

Date of birth if student is above 18 years:.....

Immediate action taken by Head of School (in chronological sequence):

Date	Time	Action taken

Remedial Action and Preventive Measures taken

.....
.....

Were there any witnesses at the time of the incident? Please indicate

1.

2.

Name:.....

Signature:.....

Date:.....

Head of School