

Governance & Community Leadership

Guidelines for School Governing Bodies



A Quick-Start Guide for School Governing Bodies

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Introduction

School Governing Bodies (SGBs) have a long political history in South Africa.

Their establishment is rooted in the ideas expressed by South Africans when the Freedom Charter was drafted at Kliptown on 26 June 1955.

The Freedom Charter begins:

“We, the people of South Africa, declare for all our country and the world to know that South Africa belongs to all who live in it, black and white, and that no government can justly claim authority unless it is based on the will of the people...”

The first clause of the Freedom Charter states: *“The people shall govern!”*

It is in this spirit that SGB members should approach their roles and responsibilities to uphold the rights of all learners, parents, educators and non-educators.

This Quick-Start Guide has been prepared to assist SGB members in this regard. The intention is to highlight essential aspects of your work as a SGB member. Included in the guide is a checklist that you can use to keep track of areas in which your SGB is compliant as required by the South African Schools Act, 84 of 1996 (SASA). Please refer to this checklist regularly, and work on the sections in which improvement is needed. It is hoped that, in this way, your SGB will progress and improve its effectiveness.

Use the guide for your own empowerment too.

Please note that this guide in no way provides all the answers but will hopefully present enough information to ensure a solid start to your participation and eventual success. More information on aspects covered in this Quick-Start Guide can be found in policy documents and other materials available from your District Office and your provincial department of education.

Important Legislation

Before anything else, you need to check that your School Governing Body secretary has a file with the latest copy of SASA. SASA should be consulted whenever your SGB needs clarity about its roles and responsibilities.

South African Schools Act (SASA)

SASA is the most important legal document governing schools. The Act outlines the:

- Powers and duties of SGBs
- Nature of their composition
- Procedures that schools should follow to provide quality education for all learners

SASA sets uniform standards for the education of learners, and for the organisation, governance and funding of public schools throughout the country.

In addition to SASA, SGB members should be aware of the following legislation:

National Education Policy Act (NEPA)

This Act provides for a national policy of education. This includes the determination of policy on salaries and conditions of employment of educators.

Employment of Educators Act (EEA)

This Act regulates the conditions of service of educators. These include: working hours, disciplinary issues and retirement.

Personnel Administrative Measures (PAM)

The Personnel Administrative Measures is a government notice which provides guidelines for dealing with matters affecting educators. These include:

- The duties and responsibilities of educators
- The appointment of educators
- Leave measures and
- Procedures to deal with grievances of educators

Public Finance Management Act (PFMA)

This Act regulates how all public funds should be spent. All funds that are received by a school must be considered to be public funds, and accounted for as required by the Public Finance Management Act, 1 of 1999.

Getting started

Election of office-bearers

Within 14 days of the SGB election, the principal is required to call a meeting so that SGB members can elect their office-bearers, i.e. a chairperson (who must be a parent), treasurer and secretary. These office-bearers and the principal form the SGB executive committee.

Orientation of School Governing Body members

It is recommended that the principal uses the election meeting to hold an orientation workshop. The purpose of this workshop is to ensure that all SGB members are informed about their roles and responsibilities.

At the orientation workshop the principal needs to make sure that the following are in place:

1. All stakeholders are represented on the SGB. The stakeholders are learners from Grades 8 to 12, parents, educators and non-educators.
2. The SGB has elected office-bearers - at least a chairperson (who must be a parent), treasurer and secretary. The office-bearers and the principal form the executive committee.

At the orientation workshop, the **principal** needs to:

1. Explain the purpose of the SGB to its members (SASA, Section 20).
2. Inform the office-bearers (executive committee) of their **individual and joint responsibilities**.

At the orientation workshop, **SGB members** need to:

1. Agree on a schedule of SGB meeting dates for the year so that members can plan accordingly.
2. Decide on the committees of the SGB and who is to serve on them. Remember, all SGB committees must be chaired by a SGB member.
3. Determine when and how these committees will report to the SGB.
4. Make arrangements for the handover of responsibilities by outgoing SGB members.

School Governing Body roles and responsibilities according to the South African School's Act, section 20

The SGB must make sure that the school is run in the best interests of all stakeholders. It stands in a position of trust towards the school. Members must always put the interests of the school ahead of any personal benefit.

Remember that the SGB is not involved in the day-to-day running of the school. That is the work of the principal and the educators.

Let's look at some of the SGB roles and responsibilities as found in the SASA. SASA, section 20, requires SGBs to undertake the following:

- Promote the best interests of the school and ensure its development
- Adopt a constitution
- Adopt the mission statement of the school
- Adopt a code of conduct for learners at the school
- Determine the admission policy of the school
- Determine the language policy of the school
- Determine the policy for religious observances at the school

SASA expects SGB members to work cooperatively with the principal and School Management Team (SMT). The SGB thus needs to:

- Support the principal, educators and other staff of the school in the performance of their professional functions
- Decide on school times
- Maintain and administer the school's property, buildings and grounds
- Encourage learners, parents, educators and non-educators to offer voluntary services to the school
- Make recommendations to the provincial Head of Department on the appointment of educators
- Make recommendations to the provincial Head of Department on the appointment of non-educators

School Governing Body meetings

The SGB must meet at least once a term.

A quorum of the governing body is 50% (fifty percent) plus 1 (one) of the members eligible to vote on its relevant business.

For SGB meetings to be productive, the following matters should receive attention:

1. Are members given at least seven days' notice of meetings?
2. Are agendas issued to members before the meeting?
3. Are the agendas set by the chairperson and the principal?

4. Do the agendas include:
 - Teaching and learning matters
 - Discipline matters of learners
 - School finances
 - SGB committee reports
5. Are minutes recorded at each meeting?
6. Are these minutes read / taken as read at the subsequent meeting?
7. Are matters arising in the minutes discussed and decisions taken on actions to be taken?
8. Are the minutes adopted by the SGB and signed-off as a correct reflection by the chairperson?
9. Are members of the SGB who fail to attend three consecutive meetings without notifying the chairperson (this can be done via the secretary) of their intended absence informed that this is a resignation? (if so entered in the SGB constitution)

School Governing Body constitution

The South African Schools Act, 84 of 1996 (SASA), section 18, requires that every SGB develops and adopts a constitution, and submits it to the District Office of their provincial department of education.

This constitution specifies how the SGB will conduct its own affairs. The SGB constitution is very important since it provides the legal authority to adopt other policies. Section 18 of SASA also provides information about the minimum required content of a SGB constitution. The SGB constitution must provide for:

- A meeting of the SGB at least one every school term
- Meetings of the governing body with learners, parents, educators and other staff at the school, respectively, at least once a year
- Recording and keeping of minutes of governing body meetings
- Making available SGB minutes for inspection by the Head of Department
- Reporting on SGB activities to learners, parents, educators and other staff of the school at least once a year

The SGB constitution should contain more than the minimum prescribed content so that it can provide useful operational guidelines.

The following additional content is recommended:

- A summary of the powers and functions of a SGB. (See especially SASA, sections 20 and 21)
- The composition of the SGB as defined by SASA and the Provincial Gazette, No. 2721,15 March 2012
- The SGB election procedures as defined by SASA and the Provincial Gazette
- The procedures to be followed when filling vacancies
- Eligibility of members of the SGB, including the process to be followed, when the child of a member no longer attends the school
- The roles and responsibilities of SGB office-bearers
- The nature of committees established by the SGB
- Protocol for conducting ordinary and annual meetings
- Means of amending the SGB constitution

The constitution needs to be adopted within 90 days of the SGB election and forwarded to the relevant District Official, normally the Circuit Manager.

School Governing Body financial responsibilities

According to SASA, the SGB is responsible for the financial oversight and accountability of a school's finances. This gives it enormous responsibility. This means that SGB members are responsible for overseeing the following financial actions:

- Preparation of an annual budget
- Establishment and administration of a school bank account into which all money received by the school must be paid
- Raising revenues (funds), including voluntary contributions to the school in cash or some other form
- Preparing annual financial statements according to the prescribed guidelines
- Reporting annually to learners, parents, educators and non-educators
- Compiling monthly and quarterly financial reports

It is important, therefore, that the SGB puts into place financial procedures and systems, and delegates financial responsibility to various persons and committees.

It is equally important that the SGB monitors and controls all financial income and expenditure against a budget which it has recommended to the parents and which they have agreed to.

To make sure that all finances are used properly, the SGB must describe the roles and responsibilities of the following committees and people clearly:

Financial roles and responsibilities of SGB committees

- Finance committee: oversees the implementation of the financial decisions of the SGB and assists in the effective oversight of the school finances
- Procurement committee: is responsible for ensuring that the process of selecting, buying and stocking goods is done in an accountable and wise way

Financial roles and responsibilities of specific people

- The SGB treasurer is the chairperson of the school Finance Committee. In this position the treasurer governs the functioning of all the financial operations of the school
- The school finance officer is responsible for implementing the financial policy and procedures agreed upon by the SGB and principal and to process financial transactions and activities in line with these
- The principal is the accounting officer of the school

Financial systems and procedures that the SGB should oversee

The SGB needs to make sure that the financial resources of the school are used effectively and that adequate internal controls are maintained over these. Important systems and procedures that the SGB needs to monitor are listed below:

- All money received by the school must be receipted
- All income must be recorded in the receipts cash book
- Money must be placed in a safe place and deposited into the bank regularly
- A school is allowed to have only ONE bank account
- All expenditure is entered into the cash payments journal
- All goods and services must be requisitioned with the proper support documentation
- Requisitions must be duly authorised as per the finance policy
- All payments are made by cheque (or EFT) and no cash cheques are made
- The SGB must:
 - (i) appoint the signatories to the bank account and
 - (ii) appoint persons to authorise requisitions
- Finance committee meetings must be held once a month where financial statements of income and expenditure are presented for the month in question
- Financial reports must be submitted to the SGB at its meetings, and be open to scrutiny

- An assets register must be kept and updated regularly
- Stocktaking should take place once a year and a report made on this to the SGB
- The SGB must appoint an auditor (from the database of auditors provided by the provincial department of education). The auditor checks the school's financial records and documentation
- This financial statement must be submitted to the District Office by June of the following year i.e. financial statement for 2016 by June 2017
- All financial records must be properly filed
- A petty cash register must be in place and controlled
- Petty cash must only be used for small amounts in the day-to-day running of the school
- The SGB should determine the maximum amounts per item

Related to all of the above-mentioned procedures, is the fact that the SGB has to draw up and adopt a financial policy that will regulate its financial workings. It is the responsibility of the SGB to check that all financial dealings at the school are in line with its financial policy. Any deviation from this policy must be treated as a serious matter and the SGB must act accordingly.

Budgets

A budget is an estimate of the school's income and expenditure for the year. It is a financial plan for achieving goals set out in the:

- School development plan
- School year plan

Preparing a budget

The finance committee is responsible for co-ordinating the preparation of the budget each year.

When undertaking their responsibility to prepare the budget, it is important for the members of the finance committee to:

- Distribute budget preparation forms to all members of the school community who spend the school's money, e.g. the principal, school management team, subject heads, grade heads, sports and cultural activity coaches, learner representatives (Grade 8 - 12) as well as members from the SGB
- Identify the broad areas of expenditure e.g. administration, human resources, curriculum, co-curriculum, maintenance, repairs and improvements, cleaning materials, entertainment, scholar transport, nutrition, and Grade R. These are called cost centres.
- Identify the line items to be included in each cost centre. For example, the cost centre, administration, would include items like stationery, photocopying, computer maintenance, and telephone.

The budget process

The budget is drawn up by the finance committee in consultation with the relevant stakeholders at the school. This budget must be presented to the SGB for discussion and approval before being presented to parents at a yearly budget meeting.

At this meeting the parents can ask questions about the budget. Parents are then given an opportunity to indicate in a vote whether they accept the budget. If the majority of parents accept the budget, this budget then becomes the budget for the forthcoming school year. Minutes must be kept of this budget meeting, as well as a register of all parents who attended.

The finance committee accepts responsibility to check that the school's income and expenditure happens as set out in its budget. The finance committee should strictly monitor all expenditure. Before any purchase can be made, a requisition form should be completed and presented for approval.

No exceeding of any budget amount must be allowed, unless prior approval from the SGB has been obtained.

Policy development and implementation

In a school, a policy can be seen as a general plan of action or steps to be followed to deal with particular issues. For example, schools can have policies that deal with:

- Language of instruction
- Admission of learners
- Transportation of learners
- Safety of learners and staff
- Financial matters (the financial policy). In order to ensure that the finances in public schools are effectively controlled, it is important to develop a sound financial policy for the school. The financial policy should guide all the school's financial activities. Using the policy as a guide, the school can determine whether its financial management is effective.

School policies are thus guidelines for action in the day-to-day running of a school. They are useful in that they ensure fair methods, which all stakeholders know and agree to, of dealing with issues. School policies are also an effective means of communicating the values incorporated in the school's vision and mission statements, and its constitution.

The South African Schools Act, 84 of 1996 (SASA) empowers the SGB of a school to determine various policies of the school.

It is important to note that while the SGB can decide which policies the school needs, it does not develop the policies alone. The whole school community should be involved in the development of school policies.

Policies developed by a SGB should:

- Reflect the vision and mission of the school
- Be developed in consultation with all those who have an interest
- Be approved by the governing body and
- Be easy to carry out

The process for developing a policy for your school should be underpinned by the following principle:

Policy development is an inclusive and participative process

Once the policy is developed, all stakeholders should be educated on its content and how it will apply within the school system.

The SGB is responsible for monitoring policy implementation as well as the evaluation of whether the policy addresses the needs of the school. If the policy is not effective, the SGB should decide how it should be revised.

A drafted school policy is of no value if those concerned do not ensure that its stipulated procedures are not fully implemented in the school

All school policies should be reviewed annually to ensure that they remain up to date and in line with the school's vision and mission.

Conclusion

The following section contains a checklist that you can use to keep track of the areas in which your SGB complies with SASA and areas which need improvement. It is hoped that you will use this to promote the steady improvement in the effectiveness of your SGB. Please remember that the Quick-Start Guide has been developed to highlight some key aspects of the work that SGB members need to undertake. The Guide does not provide all the answers. And so you are encouraged to obtain more detail on the roles and responsibilities of SGB members from our other modules as well as the District Office of your provincial department of education.

Checklist

Please use this checklist to help you to determine the degree to which your SGB follows the required procedures.

The checklist corresponds with the sections in the Quick-Start Guide.

	YES	NO
Orientation of SGB members		
<i>The principal needs to make sure that the following are in place</i>		
All stakeholders are represented on the SGB. The stakeholders are learners from Grades 8 to 12, parents, educators and non-educators.		
The SGB has elected office-bearers - at least a chairperson (who must be a parent), treasurer and secretary. The office-bearers and the principal form the executive committee.		
<i>The principal needs to</i>		
Explain the purpose of the SGB to its members (SASA, section 20).		
Inform the office-bearers (executive committee) of their individual and joint responsibilities.		
<i>The SGB members need to</i>		
Agree on a schedule of SGB meeting dates for the year so that members can plan accordingly.		
Decide on the committees of the SGB and who is to serve on them. Remember, all SGB committees must be chaired by an SGB member.		
Determine when and how these committees will report to the SGB.		
Make arrangements for the handover of responsibilities by outgoing SGB members.		

	YES	NO
SGB roles and responsibilities		
<i>Policy (SASA, section 20)</i>		
Promote the best interests of the school and ensure its development.		
Adopt a constitution.		
Adopt the mission statement of the school.		
Adopt a code of conduct for learners at the school.		
Determine the admission policy of the school.		
Determine the language policy of the school.		
Determine the policy for religious observances at the school.		
<i>Oversight (monitoring)</i>		
Support the principal, educators and other staff of the school in the performance of their professional functions.		
Decide on school times.		
Maintain and administer the school's property, buildings and grounds.		
Encourage learners, parents, educators and non-educators to offer voluntary services to the school.		
Make recommendations to the provincial Head of Department on the appointment of educators.		
Make recommendations to the provincial Head of Department on the appointment of non-educators.		
<i>SGB Meetings</i>		
The SGB meets at least once a term.		
The SGB members are given at least seven days' notice of meetings.		
Agendas are issued to members before the meeting.		
The agendas are set by the chairperson and the principal.		
The agendas include <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teaching and learning, • Discipline matters of learners, • School finances, and • SGB committee reports 		

	YES	NO
Minutes are recorded at each meeting.		
The minutes are read / taken as read at the subsequent meeting.		
All matters arising in the minutes are discussed and decisions are taken on actions to be taken.		
The minutes are adopted by the SGB and signed-off as a correct reflection by the chairperson.		
Members of the SGB who fail to attend three consecutive meetings without notifying the chairperson (this can be done via the secretary) of their intended absence are informed that this is a resignation (if so entered in the SGB constitution).		
SGB financial responsibilities		
<i>Financial governance</i>		
Prepare an annual budget.		
Establish and administer a school fund into which all money received by the school must be paid.		
Raise revenues, including voluntary contributions to the school in cash or some other form.		
Open and maintain a bank account.		
Prepare annual financial statements according to the prescribed guidelines.		
Report annually to learners, parents, educators and non-educators.		
Compile monthly and quarterly reports.		
<i>Roles and responsibilities of committees and people</i>		
The SGB determines the roles and responsibilities of the following committees and people:		
• Finance committee		
• Procurement committee		
• The SGB treasurer		
• The school finance officer		
• The principal		

	YES	NO
<i>Financial systems and procedures that the SGB should oversee</i>		
All money received by the school is receipted.		
All income is recorded in the receipts cash book.		
Money is placed in a safe place and deposited into the bank regularly.		
The school has only ONE bank account.		
All expenditure is entered into the cash payments journal.		
All goods and services are requisitioned with the proper support documentation.		
Requisitions are duly authorised as per the finance policy.		
All payments are made by cheque (or EFT) and no cash cheques are made.		
The SGB:		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • appoints the signatories to the bank account and 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • appoints persons to authorise requisitions They are responsible for ensuring that money is spent according to the school's budget. 		
Finance committee meetings are held once a month where financial statements of income and expenditure are presented for the month in question.		
Financial reports are submitted to the SGB at its meetings, and are open to scrutiny.		
An asset register is kept and updated regularly.		
Stocktaking takes place once a year and a report is made on this to the SGB.		
The SGB appoints an auditor (from the database of auditors provided by the provincial department of education). The auditor checks the school's financial records and documentation.		
This annual financial statement is submitted to the District Office by June of the following year i.e. financial statement for 2016 by June 2017.		

	YES	NO
All financial records are properly filed.		
A petty cash register is in place and controlled.		
Petty cash is only used for small amounts in the day-to-day running of the school. The SGB determines the maximum amounts per item.		
The school has a financial policy that regulates its workings.		
Preparing a budget		
The finance committee co-ordinates the preparation of the budget.		
The finance committee draws up the budget in consultation with all the relevant stakeholders at the school.		
The finance committee presents the budget:		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Firstly, to the SGB for discussion and approval, 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Secondly, to parents at the yearly budget meeting. 		
Parents are given an opportunity to indicate in a vote whether they accept the budget as the school budget for the forthcoming school year.		
Minutes are kept of this budget meeting as well as a register of all parents present.		
The finance committee accepts responsibility to check that the school's income and expenditure happens as set out in its budget.		
Policy development and implementation		
The SGB members know that they are responsible for all school policy development.		
The SGB members make sure that policy development is an inclusive and participatory process.		
The SGB monitors and evaluates the school's policies regularly.		
The SGB reviews all school policies annually.		

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7 Upper Dickens Street

Central

Port Elizabeth

6001

South Africa

Email: admin@siyawela-rts.co.za

www.siyawela-rts.co.za

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OUR VISION

For all schools in South Africa to become effective self-managing institutions that provide quality teaching and learning.

OUR MISSION

To provide training programmes that:

- are aligned to the needs of the South African education system, and
- help school communities make a valuable contribution to the education of their children.

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