

HOW WELL HAVE FULL-SERVICE SCHOOLS BEEN PREPARED FOR DISABILITY-INCLUSION?

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1 WHAT ARE FULL-SERVICE SCHOOLS?

Full-service community schools were originally conceptualised as integrated centres of health, social care, and education in the USA (Dryfoos, 1996, 1998). The concept was adapted for South Africa and identified as a key strategy for inclusive education in the 2001 Education White Paper 6.

According to Education White Paper 6, full-service schools are a cadre of specially-designated schools that should be resourced and developed to act as pioneering inclusive schools. The Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support Policy of 2014 describes full-service schools as “ordinary schools that are inclusive and welcoming of all learners in terms of their cultures, policies and practices.... These schools will be *strengthened* and *orientated* to address a full range of barriers in an inclusive education setting” (Department of Basic Education, 2014).

Full-service schools should provide examples of best practice which could be applied to all ordinary schools in the future (Department of Basic Education, 2010). As such, full-service schools are intended to be an interim strategy. Ultimately, learners with disabilities should be accommodated at schools in their neighbourhood, where they should have access to all programmes of support (Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support Policy, 2014).



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Full-service schools, like ordinary schools, should be supported by **district-based support teams** and **special school resource centres**, when needed. Specialist staff in the **district-based support team** should provide input in identifying barriers to learning, identifying learner support needs, and developing individual support plans in full-service and ordinary schools alike. Full-service and ordinary schools should also receive health screening from the Integrated School Health Programme, which was introduced in 2012 to provide immunisation services and health and sensory screening in schools.

Full-service schools were piloted in South Africa from 2004 to 2009. By 2020, there were 848 designated full-service schools (Department of Basic Education, 2020). Further designation of full-service schools was halted from 2019 to 2022 to give the Department of Education time to link full-service schools to special school resource centres and outreach teams (Department of Basic Education, 2019).

Funding guidelines which offered additional funding for full-service schools were proposed in 2018 but have not been finalised. As a result, full-service schools receive the same staff allocation and per-learner funding allocation as ordinary schools. Hence, full-service schools have, essentially, been specially designated but have not been specially resourced.

2 MONITORING AND EVALUATION OF FULL-SERVICE SCHOOLS

Ambitious guidelines for full-service schools were developed in 2010, but there has been very little monitoring of performance against these guidelines (Watermeyer et al., 2016). Enrolment of learners with disabilities in full-service schools is not regularly reported (Watermeyer et al., 2016). This makes it difficult to judge the extent to which this group of schools is opening its doors to learners with disabilities.

A 2019 audit of 87 full-service schools by the Auditor-General found that, in most instances, designation had not been followed up with resourcing or capacity building. No business plans existed at the provincial level to resource, convert or capacitate full-service schools to fulfil the role outlined in the 2010 Guidelines (Department of Basic Education, 2019).



Recently, there have been calls to abolish full-service schools as this 20-year-old strategy is seen to have detracted from efforts to make all schools disability-inclusive. (Equal Education Law Centre, 2022).

This brief assesses the support available to full-service schools, and teacher training and enrolment of learners with disabilities in these schools. By providing new evidence on several aspects of disability inclusion in full-service schools, this research should inform ongoing policy discussions on whether full-service schools are still an appropriate strategy in South Africa.

3 DATA AND METHODS

This policy brief reports an analysis of the School Monitoring Survey (SMS) 2017, a survey of 1 000 primary and 1 000 secondary schools, which included 95 full-service schools. The survey and sample characteristics are described in detail elsewhere (Deghaye, 2021; Deghaye, 2023). This is the largest available sample of school-level data for full-service schools and offers some important insights into the performance of this group of schools. Schools in the Free State, Northern and Western Cape are over-represented in the sample. This means the sample is not nationally representative of all full-service schools and the results cannot be generalised to all full-service schools. Instead, the results are reported for full-service schools *in this sample*.

SMS 2017 data was used to assess how well full-service schools in the sample performed against some criteria in the 2010 Guidelines for Full-service Schools and against a nationally representative sample of ordinary schools on various aspects of disability inclusion.

In addition, data on the total enrolment of learners with disabilities (collected in the Annual School Surveys 2011 to 2014) was analysed for all full-service schools that had been designated by 2011.



THIS POLICY BRIEF REPORTS AN ANALYSIS OF THE SCHOOL MONITORING SURVEY (SMS) 2017, A SURVEY OF 1 000 PRIMARY AND 1 000 SECONDARY SCHOOLS, WHICH INCLUDED 95 FULL-SERVICE SCHOOLS.

4 FINDINGS: SCHOOL MONITORING SURVEY 2017

4.1 Are schools aware of their full-service designation?

17% of full-service schools in the sample incorrectly reported that they were *not* full-service schools. This suggests that communication on the designation of individual schools has been inadequate.

4.2 Are teachers in full-service schools well-prepared to support learners with disabilities?

The 2010 guidelines emphasise the importance of teacher training in full-service schools. According to the guidelines:

- All teachers should have the skills and knowledge they need to support one another and ensure the success of all learners,
- Staff should receive ongoing continued professional development in inclusive education and disability sensitisation training, and
- The principal is expected to have considerable knowledge and skills in translating the principles of inclusive education into practice.

Across all six indicators of teacher training in SMS 2017, full-service schools significantly outperformed ordinary schools, as shown below. A substantially higher proportion of teachers in full-service schools had received training on curriculum differentiation or on setting assessments for learners who are experiencing learning barriers. 78% of respondents from full-service schools had been trained in both topics. This suggests that teachers in full-service schools have received more extensive training than teachers in ordinary schools. Multivariate regression analysis (presented in detail in Deghaye, 2023) shows that full-service schools are 35% more likely to have more than 20% of their teachers trained in learning barriers than other ordinary schools.

TABLE 1: Indicators of teacher training status, by school designation

PROPORTION OF SCHOOLS WHERE AT LEAST ONE TEACHER HAS:	FULL-SERVICE SCHOOLS	ORDINARY SCHOOLS
Formal qualification in special or remedial education	0.61	0.44
Training in identifying or supporting learning barriers	0.94	0.73
Formal/informal training on curriculum differentiation	0.84	0.56
Formal/informal training on setting differentiated assessments	0.80	0.42
<i>Both</i> training in curriculum differentiation and differentiation of assessments	0.78	0.39
Proportion of schools where:		
Principal has received any training on identifying/supporting learning barriers	0.91	0.46
More than 20% of teachers trained about learning barriers	0.78	0.40

All differences are statistically significantly different, $p < 0.01$, using two-sample Wilcoxon rank-sum. Source: SMS 2017 teacher & principal questionnaires. Weighted analysis of full sample. Note: Respondents were asked to report the training provided by their own school, the provincial education department, or training that they initiated themselves.

4.3 How well are full-service schools performing against the 2010 guidelines?

Overall full-service schools performed better than ordinary schools in various indicators which relate to criteria in the full-service school guidelines. Table 2 summarises the key findings of SMS 2017 against some of the criteria in the 2010 Guidelines for Full-service Schools.

TABLE 2: Indicators of performance in SMS 2017, mapped against criteria in 2010 guidelines for full-service schools

FULL-SERVICE SCHOOLS SHOULD HAVE ADDITIONAL SUPPORT PROGRAMMES AND STRUCTURES FOR TEACHING AND LEARNING	Nearly all full-service schools (89-100%) had a school-based support team.
	Support programmes not measured.
DISTRICT-BASED SUPPORT TEAM SHOULD SUPPORT CURRICULUM DIFFERENTIATION IN FULL-SERVICE SCHOOLS	School-based support teams in full-service schools were 17% more likely to receive support at a district support visit than teams in similar ordinary schools. <u>Coverage:</u> 83–95% of school-based support teams in full-service schools in the sample received district support visits in 2017.
	Full-service schools were more likely than ordinary schools to receive e-learning support and be visited by the district LTSM coordinator in 2017.
FULL-SERVICE SCHOOLS SHOULD COLLABORATE WITH OTHER SCHOOLS IN THE AREA	Full-service schools are more likely to participate in Professional Learning Communities than ordinary schools.
FULL-SERVICE SCHOOLS SHOULD ACTIVELY WORK TO IDENTIFY, ADDRESS, REMOVE, OR REDUCE BARRIERS IN PRACTICES AND POLICIES	Regression analysis shows full-service schools in this sample were 18 to 21% more likely to have completed the <i>Support Needs Assessment</i> or other screening forms for one or more learners than other comparable schools. <u>Coverage:</u> 75–91% of full-service schools have completed these forms for at least 1 learner.
	A much higher proportion of full-service schools reported being able to screen at least some of their learners for learning difficulties.
	Only 4% of respondents in full-service schools spontaneously mentioned external barriers to learning when asked about the learning barriers experienced by learners in their school.
FULL-SERVICE SCHOOLS SHOULD WELCOME OUTSIDE SPECIALIST SUPPORT FOR INDIVIDUAL LEARNERS (FROM LEARNING SUPPORT FACILITATORS, TO COUNSELLORS, SPEECH-, PHYSIO- AND OCCUPATIONAL THERAPISTS)	Regression analysis shows full-service schools were 14 to 16% more likely than ordinary schools to receive a visit from a psychologist, therapist, learning support specialist, district-based support team member or health official in 2017.
	<u>Coverage:</u> 59–83% of full-service schools received such visits in 2017.

Note: Criteria in column 1 are selected from the 2010 Guidelines for Full-service Schools. Coverage rates reflect 95% confidence interval. LTSM: Learning & Teaching Support Materials.

4.4 Physical accessibility in full-service schools

According to the Minimum Norms and Standards for School Infrastructure (2013), every school must have at least one wheelchair-accessible toilet by 2030. All new schools must adhere to the principles of Universal Design and must be accessible to all, including wheelchair users (Department of Basic Education, 2013). The norms do not require that existing full-service schools are retro-fitted to ensure they are accessible to all. But when additions, alterations, or improvements are made to existing schools, the principles of Universal Design must be followed.

The analysis showed that:

- 89% of full-service schools in the sample had wheelchair-accessible main entrances.
- Approximately half the full-service schools in this sample had a wheelchair-accessible toilet.
- Multivariate analysis shows full-service schools are 15% more likely to have a wheelchair-accessible toilet than ordinary schools.

5 FINDINGS: ANNUAL SCHOOL SURVEYS 2011–2014

5.1 Are full-service schools more likely to enrol learners with disabilities than ordinary schools?

Regression analysis of Annual School Survey enrolment data shows that full-service schools were 23 to 34% more likely to report disability enrolment than other ordinary schools in 2011, 2013 and 2014¹. However, although full-service schools were doing better than ordinary schools, 45 to 53% of full-service schools did not enrol any learners with disabilities in 2013. Many full-service schools were either not actively identifying or enrolling learners with disabilities or were not adequately reporting enrolment. This substantial gap suggests that enrolment reporting has not been used to monitor the performance of full-service schools and to hold them to account in the past.

6 DISCUSSION

Generally full-service schools performed better than ordinary schools in almost all of the indicators of disability-inclusion that were measured in SMS 2017. However, coverage for all indicators measured (except school-based support teams) is unacceptably low. The low proportion of full-service schools visited by specialists (psychologists, therapists, learning support specialists, district-based support team members or health officials) in 2017 is especially worrying. Further, almost one in five of the full-service schools surveyed was not aware of their schools' designation. These results suggest that, on average, full-service schools are unlikely to be meeting the mandate set in the 2010 guidelines. The poor performance of full-service schools is probably linked to the lack of additional funding for these schools. It is difficult to imagine how full-service schools could reach the mandate set for them, without receiving additional funding.

¹ For details of the regression analysis, see Deghaye (2023).

These results show that training levels are higher in full-service schools than in ordinary schools. This suggests that full-service schools have been prioritised in the provision of training. However, the current analysis cannot determine the quality of this training. According to a previous report, curriculum differentiation training often comprises a 5-day orientation course, which is unlikely to equip teachers to implement curriculum differentiation effectively (Watermeyer et al., 2016). The 2019 audit concluded that 51% of school-based support teams and educators at full-service schools had not received adequate training to plan and implement inclusive education. Thus, even though this study shows training levels in full-service schools are higher, they are likely still insufficient.

Several aspects of the full-service school guidelines (Department of Basic Education, 2010) were not measured in SMS 2017. Many of these aspects need to be assessed by *learner-level indicators* or in *qualitative* research. For example, research is needed to show whether full-service schools:

- ensure additional support is available based on learners' individual needs,
- implement the concepts of universal design for learning and reasonable accommodation,
- can identify and address practices which create learning barriers, and
- have a school culture of mutual respect and non-discrimination,

7 RECOMMENDATIONS

The data shows that substantial investment will be needed to ensure that all full-service schools have at least one wheelchair-accessible toilet by 2030 (as required by the 2013 school norms). However, this is only one aspect of Physical accessibility. Disability accessibility of schools needs to be assessed much more thoroughly than in SMS 2017. In healthcare, simplified disability-accessibility checklists have been shown to be a useful tool for rapidly assessing disability accessibility of clinics (Hanass-Hancock et al., 2023). A similar tool should be developed for schools.

The gaps identified in this study are closely linked to the lack of additional funding for full-service schools. If full-service schools are to remain as a key strategy for inclusive education,

1. The 2018 draft funding guidelines relating to full-service schools must be finalised and converted into funding norms urgently,
2. Funding should be made available immediately as the budget impact is small. Funding of full-service schools cannot be implemented in a phased manner, as suggested to parliament (Department of Basic Education, 2020), and
3. The role of full-service schools and designation of individual schools must be more clearly communicated by DBE.

If these conditions cannot be met, the full-service school strategy should be immediately abolished.



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