

REVISED GUIDELINES  
FOR  
THE OPENING OF PRIVATE  
AND  
OTHER SCHOOLS  
IN  
THE GAMBIA

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*DEPARTMENT OF STATE FOR EDUCATION  
BANJUL, THE GAMBIA  
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## 1. INTRODUCTION

***DEFINITION:*** In these Guidelines, a school is " **an assembly of not less than ten pupils meeting for the purpose of receiving regular instruction, but does include a class for religious instruction, a continuation class or a literacy class**".

The Government of the Gambia is committed to encouraging the private sector and non-governmental organizations as well as local communities to actively participate in the task of providing greater access to education at all levels and in improving the quality of education in general .

In this connection the following guidelines have been prepared to assist private organizations, NGOs, local communities and individuals wishing to open schools in The Gambia. While this guidelines are not intended to be unduly restrictive, they attempt to define more closely the responsibility of the Department of State for Education in ensuring that the quality of education offered in The Gambia is consistently high ; that it is relevant to the needs of the individual and the country; and that it is at all times consistent with the objectives of the national Education Policy 1988-2003

Furthermore, because of the heavy demands, that the implementations of this new policy will place on the Department of state for Education's limited financial resources, it is clear that the education budget will not be able to sustain further, increases in grant in aid assistance to schools in the foreseeable future. Private schools, therefore, will have to be self-financing when they first open. As indicated in the guidelines, some schools may be eligible to apply for limited Government support after they have been in existence for a period of at **least five years**. The extent of this support will depend on the prevailing Government policy on assistance to such schools and **on the availability of financial resources**.

The Department of State for Education will continue to welcome esquires from individuals and from organizations interested in the opening of private schools and will provide necessary professional and technical advice on the siting of new schools and on the planning and implementation of new school building projects.

**NB: ALL APPLICATIONS MSUT REACH THE OFFICE OF THE PERMANENT SECRETARY, DEPARTMENT OF STATE FOR EDUCATION NOT LATER 31<sup>ST</sup>. JANUARY OF THE PRECEEDING SCHOOL YEAR INTENDED FOR THE OPENING OF THE SAID SCHOOL. (This is to enable the Department to guide interested parties to fulfil the basic requirements in readiness for a genuine start without sacrificing " QUALITY".**

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## 2. GUIDELINES FOR THE OPENING OF A SECONDARY SCHOOL.

Any organization or individual wishing to open a secondary should comply with the following terms and procedures:-

1. An application to open a secondary school should comply with the following terms and procedures;-
  - a A site plan of the school together with details of the construction program , including dimensions for each building proposed.
  - b. the type of school, the number and type of classes and the medium of instruction proposed.
  - c. the number, qualifications and nationality of teaching staff.
  - d. the nature of interest in or tenure of land to be possessed by the proposed school.
  - e A development plan for the school projecting size, rate of growth and proposed management structure.
  - f Capital and recurrent cost projections for constructing and operating the school, together with evidence **that adequate finance** will be available to run the school **without government financial support.**
2. **Provisional** approval may be granted by the Secretary of State provided that;
  - a The proposed **site is acceptable** to the Department of State for Education;
  - b The organization or individual submitting the application agrees;-
    - i. To comply with **school building standards** laid down by the Department of State for Education
    - ii To run the school in accordance with the objectives of the **Education Policy 1988-2003;**
    - iii To admit students to the school **without discrimination**, in accordance with the provisions of the **Education Act.**

- iv To open the school in an area that satisfies the **school mapping** requirements of the Department of State for Education.
  - v. In case of non-Gambian individuals or organisations, at least one Gambian counterpart will be required among the proprietors.
  - vi. To produce for inspection or other purposes:
    - (a) any books or registers kept in connection with the school.
    - (b) any information with regards to the care and tuition of pupils, the names and qualifications of staff and generally with regard to the management of the school.
    - (c) annual education statistics to the Department of State for Education as required by Planning, Policy Analysis, Budgeting and Research Directorate (PPABRD).
3. A school should only start operating if:
- (a) the above mentioned conditions are fully met.
  - (b) the consent in **writing** of the Secretary of State for Education is obtained; which must be produced for inspection.
4. Any individual or organisation granted provisional approval to operate a school shall **re-apply for permanent approval at the end of the third year of operation**. Permanent approval will only be granted by the Secretary of State for Education provided that it is deemed fit by the Department of State for Education for the school to continue to operate as a private school.
5. A Secondary School opened on a non profit making basis by a religious, charitable or philanthropic organization may apply for Government financial assistance **after a period of five (5) years** provided that it:
- establishes a Board of Governors on which the Department of State For Education is represented,
  - admits candidates through the admission procedures operated by the Department of State for Education, and
  - agrees to submit its financial accounts to the Department of State for Education for audit on annual basis.

**Government financial support will not be granted automatically** but will be dependent on **prevailing Government policy on assistance** to such schools and the availability of financial resources.

Any school that receives government financial assistance, i.e. **grant-in-aid** has to **charge fees in accordance to government rates**.

- 6 Such a school has to have:
- (i) a graduate educationist as the principal.
  - (ii) the staff should be of university graduate standard.
  - (iii) at least 30% of the staff should be Gambian nationals.
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### **3. GUIDELINES FOR THE OPENING OF AN UPPER BASIC EDUCATION SCHOOL.**

Any organization or individual wishing to open an upper basic school should comply with the following terms and procedures:-

1. An application to open an upper basic school should be written to the Permanent Secretary, Department of State for Education and comply with the following terms and procedures;-
  - a A site plan of the school together with details of the construction programme , including dimensions for each building proposed.
  - b the type of school, the number and type of classes and the medium of instruction proposed.
  - c the number, qualifications and nationality of teaching staff.
  - d the nature of interest in or tenure of land to be possessed by the proposed school.

- e A development plan for the school projecting size, rate of growth and proposed management structure.
  - f Capital and recurrent cost projections for constructing and operating the school, together with evidence **that adequate finance** will be available to run the school **without government financial support.**
2. **Provisional** approval may be granted by the Secretary of State provided that;
- a The proposed **site is acceptable** to the Department of State for Education;
  - b The organization or individual submitting the application agrees;-
    - i. To comply with **school building standards** laid down by the Department of State for Education.
    - ii To run the school in accordance with the objectives of the **Education Policy 1988-2003;**
    - iii To admit students to the school **without discrimination**, in accordance with the provisions of the **Education Act.**
    - iv To open the school in an area that satisfies the **school mapping** requirements of the Department of State for Education.
    - v. In case of non-Gambian individuals or organisations, at least one Gambian counterpart will be required among the proprietors.
    - vi. To produce for inspection or other purposes:
      - (a) any books or registers kept in connect with the school.
      - (b) any information with regard to the care and tuition of pupils, the names and qualifications of staff and generally with regard to the management of the school.
      - (c) annual education statistics to the Department of State for Education as required by the Planning, Policy Analysis, Budgeting and Research Directorate (PPABRD).
3. A school should only start operating if:
- (a) the above mentioned conditions are fully met.

(b) the consent in **writing**, of the Secretary of State for Education is obtained; which must be produced for inspection.

4. Any individual or organisation granted provisional approval to operate a school shall **re-apply for permanent approval at the end of the third year of operation**. Permanent approval will only be granted by the Secretary of State provided that it is deemed fit by the Department of State for Education for the school to continue to operate as a private school.
5. An upper basic School opened on a non profit making basis by a religious , charitable or philanthropic organization may apply for Government financial assistance **after a period of five (5) years** provided that:
  - it establishes a Board of Governors on which the Department of State For Education is represented,
  - admits candidates through the admission procedures operated by the Department of State for Education and
  - agrees to submit its financial accounts to the Department of State for Education for audit on annual basis.

**Government financial support will not be granted automatically** but will be dependent on **prevailing Government policy on assistance** to such schools and the availability of financial resources.

Any school that receives government financial assistance, i. e. grant-in-aid has to **charge fees in accordance with government rates**.

- 6 Such a school has to have:
  - (i) an educationist as the principal of not lower Higher Teachers Certificate (HTC) level qualifications.
  - (ii) the staff should be of HTC standard.
  - (iii) at least 30% of the staff should be Gambian nationals.

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#### **4. GUIDELINES FOR THE OPENING OF LOWER BASIC EDUCATION SCHOOL.**

##### **A. Government-supported Community Primary Schools**

1. Any community wishing to have a primary school opened in its area , should apply in writing through the Principal Education Officer to the Permanent Secretary, Department of State for Education, specifying the exact location of the proposed school, together with details of the village / villages forming its catchment area.
2. If the Secretary of State for Education is satisfied that a school be opened in the area proposed, approval will be granted provided that the community provides the following facilities:
  - a **Adequate land with space** for a school garden, a play ground and for future expansion duly allocated for the purpose of a primary school and clearly demarcated by a hedge or fence..
  - b **At least one standard, three-classroom block** with headmaster's office and store constructed **according to standards approved by the Department of State for Education.**
  - c Adequate sanitation facilities for boys and girls.
  - d A well or piped water supply.
3. The community will be responsible for the proper maintenance of the above facilities until such a time that government can take charge /control.
4. When the above requirements have been met, the Secretary of State for Education may approve the opening of a school as a Government School . The Department of State for Education will then provide teachers to start the school in accordance with its normal staffing policy.

## **B. Other Primary Schools**

Any organization or individual wishing to open a primary school in The Gambia should comply with the following terms and procedures:

- 1 An application to open a primary school should be submitted in writing to the Permanent Secretary, Department of State for Education, enclosing
  - a A site plan of the school together with details of construction programme, including dimensions for each building proposed.
  - b. the type of school, the number and type of classes and the medium of instruction proposed.



- c. the number, qualifications and nationality of teaching staff.
  - d. the nature of interest in or tenure of land to be possessed by the proposed school.
  - e. **A development plan for the school** , projecting the size and rate of growth and details of proposed management structure;
  - f. **Capital and recurrent cost projections** for constructing and running the school, **together with evidence that adequate financial resources** will be available to run the school without Government financial support.
2. **Provisional** approval may be granted by the Secretary of State provided that;
- a. The proposed **site is acceptable** to the Department of State for Education;
  - b. The organization or individual submitting the application agrees;-
    - i. To comply with **school building standards** laid down by the Department of State for Education
    - ii. To run the school in accordance with the objectives of the **Education Policy 1988-2003**;
    - iii. To admit students to the school **without discrimination**, in accordance with the provisions of the **Education Act**.
    - iv. To open the school in an area that satisfies the **school mapping** requirements of the Department of State for Education.
    - v. In case of non-Gambian individuals or organisations, at least one Gambian counterpart will be required among the proprietors.
    - vi. To produce for inspection or other purposes:
      - (a) any books or registers kept in connect with the school.
      - (b) any information with regard to the care and tuition of pupils, the names and qualifications of staff and generally with regard to the management of the school.

(c) annual education statistics to the Department of State for Education as required by the Planning, Policy Analysis, Budgeting and Research Directorate (PPABRD).

3. A school should only start operating if:
  - (a) the above mentioned conditions are fully met.
  - (b) the consent in **writing** of the Secretary of State for Education is obtained; which must be produced for inspection.
4. A primary school opened on a non profit making basis by a religious, charitable or philanthropic organization may apply for Government assistance after a **period of five (5) years**, provided that it follows a six years teaching program leading to the award of the primary school certificate approved by the Department of State for Education; and follows current Government policy of free primary education. Government support **will not be automatic but will be dependent on prevailing Government policy on assistance to such schools and the availability of financial resources.**

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**N. B.** *For a private primary school, the conditions in terms of ownership and staffing are as in the cases above i.e. for secondary and upper basic levels, except that the principal and staff should be of Primary Teachers Certificate Level.*

## **5. GUIDELINES FOR THE OPENING OF A NURSERY /ECD SCHOOL.**

Any organization or individual wishing to open a nursery school should comply with the following terms and procedures:-

1. An application to open a nursery school should be submitted in writing to the Permanent Secretary Department of State for Education accompanied by:-
  - a A sketch plan of the proposed nursery school building and its location, together with details of any additional physical facilities proposed.

The location of a nursery school should be such that it is within reasonable distance away from hazardous environment e.g. main roads, markets, dumping sites etc. The site should be spacious enough to cater for both learning and playing grounds for children and should be properly fenced.

All nursery school buildings must be on one floor only (i.e. no nursery school building is allowed on a storey building).

- b Evidence of possessing **adequate financial resources** to provide both the physical and the materials required for the effective operation of a nursery school **without any financial assistance from Government.**
2. The application may be approved by the Department of State for Education provided that the organization or individual agrees:-
    - a To employ staff who are qualified or who are trainable for nursery school education;
    - b To enroll not more than 30 children per class, and
    - c To the inspection of the school by Department Of State For Education inspectors at any time.
  3. Schools wishing to enroll one-year old children and under are required to employ a qualified nursing assistant.
  4. Non-Gambians wishing to invest in this sector are required to go into partnership with a qualified Gambian holding 49% of the shares.
  5. All nursery schools are required to register with the A. E. C. E.
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## **6 GUIDELINES FOR THE PROVISION OF GOVERNMENT ASSISTANCE TO MADRASSAS ( ARABIC - ISLAMIC - SCHOOLS)**

**NB** These guidelines reflect government’s desire to collaborate with these institutions to increase access to education. No attempt will be made to divert them from their basic objective of providing religious education, but Government is interested in assisting these schools to ensure that the education they offer is comparable with that of the other schools in both scope and quality.

The Department of State for Education proposes to offer professional and technical assistance to Madrassa schools which are formally recognized for this purpose by the Department of State .

The criteria for receiving support will include the following:

- a. Compliance with stipulated regulations for opening and operations of schools
- b. Acceptance of the same internal efficiency indicators and standards of quality assurance set by the Department of State for Education:
  - Size and teacher-pupil ratio of 45:1
  - English as compulsory subject on the curriculum
  - 880 hours of instructional hours per annum.
- c. A harmonized core curriculum with conventional schools.
- d. Operation within the agreed framework for a period of at least 5 years before consideration will be given for any further support beyond the initial provisions.

This assistance may include the following:-

- a. The provisions of English textbooks and teachers' guides through the loan/ rental scheme as appropriate, for English Language.
- b. Technical assistance and advice on classroom construction.
- c. Professional assistance with the development of curriculum and instructional materials and the professional advisory services of the Department of State's Inspectorate.
- d. Inclusion in primary school building program where and when possible organized by the Department of State for Education, and the Department's support for applications for assistance from overseas funding agencies for the construction of Madrassa schools and the training of Madrassa teachers.

To qualify for formal recognition by the Department of State For Education a Madrassa school must meet the following criteria:-

- a. It should offer English, Mathematics, Science and Social and Environmental Studies as core subjects throughout the course of study. The standard to be obtained in English is the Primary School Certificate or in the case of Junior Secondary school the Junior Secondary school Leaving Certificate.
- b. It should teach the curriculum / syllabus approved by the Department of State for Education.

- c It should be adequately staffed to meet the requirements of the course or courses offered.
- d It should have a minimum enrollment of hundred (100) pupils.

NB: However, where there exists two schools in one village, and none can have the required number of students stipulated above, the two schools should merge into one with a common administration.

- e It should be well-established and properly run **in accordance with the Education Policy (1988 - 2003 )**; with buildings, furniture and standard of equipment acceptable to the Department of State for Education.

**CERTIFICATION:**

- a. The certificates that will be issued to all Madrassa graduates should be the same as those offered in conventional schools. The marks and grades should be printed both in Arabic and English.
  - b. The certificates will bear the signature of the Director of Basic Education, Department of State for Education and the Principal of the Madrassa Institute the child is graduating from.
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