

MURIEL BRAND SCHOOL

CRITERIA FOR ADMISSION (Part of Admission Policy)

Introduction

Muriel Brand School is a school for learners with special education needs. These learners experience barriers to learning and development. The school was originally designated to cater for learners with cerebral palsy. Over time, the school has developed the specialized expertise required to meet the needs of other forms of neurological disabilities, including learners with specific learning disability. Currently, in line with education White Paper 6 on Special Needs Education (to be read with GDE Circular 31/2009), the school will also consider admission for any learner who experiences barriers to learning that cannot be addressed in the mainstream school system. (It must, however, always be clear that it is in the learner's best interest to be placed in this school).

Specific Criteria

The specific criteria for disabled learners are as follows:

1. Cerebral Palsy (including other neurological conditions)
 - a. Diagnosis by an appropriately qualified medical doctor, physio, speech or occupational therapist.
 - b. Three years of age or older
 - c. Must be able to benefit from the educational programme offered, as determined by a multi-disciplinary team assessment.
 - d. Not be able to benefit from placement in an ordinary school.
 - e. Permission from the parent.

2. Other physical disability
 - a. Diagnosis by an appropriately qualified medical doctor or physiotherapist.
 - b. Three years of age or older
 - c. The school must have the capacity to deal with the medical requirements of the condition.
 - d. Must be able to benefit from the educational programme offered, as determined by a multi-disciplinary team assessment.
 - e. Not be able to benefit from placement in a mainstream school.
 - f. Permission from the parent.

3. Specific Learning Disability
 - a. Diagnosis by an appropriately qualified educational psychologist or remedial therapist.
 - b. Must be of compulsory school age, i.e. the learner may only be admitted in the year he/she turns 7 years.
 - c. Must be able to benefit from the educational programme offered, as determined by a multi-disciplinary team assessment.
 - d. Not be able to benefit from placement in a mainstream school.
 - e. Permission from the parent.

4. Other Barriers to Learning

- a. In accordance with Education White Paper 6 on Special Needs Education, the school will also consider admission for any learner who experiences barriers to learning that cannot be addressed in the mainstream school system.
- b. The proviso is that we must be able to ethically meet the educational and physical needs of such learners. In the event of us not being able to meet these needs, all efforts must be made to arrange placement in a school better able to do so. So called slow learners will not be admitted, as their needs will be better served by vocational education in special classes or vocational schools.

5. Additional Issues to be Considered

- a. No learner may be excluded from admission due to race, ethnicity or social status, colour, sex, disability, sexual orientation, religion, conscience, culture, language, HIV/AIDS-status, or any other illness (provided the illness does not hold a high risk of infection for other learners or staff).
- b. Medical care: Learners who need high levels of medical care (i.e. incontinent learners), can only be admitted if the school has the capacity to adequately manage their problem. Pre-schoolers will, however, normally be admitted for humanitarian reasons to avoid hostel placement in a more suitable school. They will then be transferred when they start Grade 1.
- c. Sensory disabilities: Deaf learners who need to sign and blind learners who need Braille, will not be admitted. This is due to the fact that the school does not currently have the capacity to address their communication needs. Pre-schoolers will, however, normally be admitted for humanitarian reasons to avoid hostel placement in a more suitable school. They will then be transferred when they start Grade 1.
- d. Severely mentally retarded learners who qualify for admission due to their primary diagnosis (i.e. cerebral palsy), will normally not be able to cope with the curricular requirements of the school (even in special classes and with OBE). Because of the difficulty judging mental ability in pre-schoolers, they will be admitted on a six month to one year trial. In cases where there is no doubt about their intellectual capacity, learners will be placed directly in a school for learners with severe mental handicap. Intellectual capacity is not to be determined by means of IQ, although IQ tests may serve as supplemental information. The child's ability to benefit from the programme offered is to be determined by means of criterion referenced assessment instruments developed by the HOD of the relevant phase (i.e. pre-primary, foundation, intermediate), in conjunction with the assessment instruments used by occupational and speech therapists.
- e. Language: Learners whose home language is neither of the languages of learning and teaching (LOLT – Afrikaans & English) at the school, present specific challenges to the school. Brain injured learners have great difficulty acquiring second and third languages. They do not typically learn languages as incidentally as normal children. They have to be taught new languages.

- f. Pre-primary school children who qualify for admission, whose home language is not the LOLT, will be admitted to the school, even if they have had no prior exposure to the LOLT.
- g. In the case of school age learners who qualify for admission, whose home language is not the LOLT and who have had insufficient exposure to the LOLT, their parents will be advised to apply to a school where they can be taught English through the medium of their vernacular. The reason for this is that speech and language therapy is often not successful with these learners and that learners who are intellectually more capable, are in danger of having to be transferred to special classes and even training centres due to lack of progress. Research has found that the most effective means of teaching brain injured children a new language is to do it in a group environment through the medium of their vernacular. Should parents, however, insist on placement in Muriel Brand School, such learners will be placed. Regrettably such placements are often to the learner's disadvantage.
- h. Behaviour: Learners with severe behavioural difficulties will not be considered, especially if these involve aggression and criminality. This is due to the physical vulnerability of physically disabled learners, as well as due to brain injured learners. In addition, being more easily influenced the school does not have the capacity to manage the increased level of supervision required by such learners.

6. Age/Grade Norms

While it is not possible to follow age/grade norms rigidly in special education, the age/grade norms that will act a guideline are as follows:

- Grade Number + 6, i.e.
- Grade 1 + 6 = age 7
- Grade 4 + 6 = age10
- Grade 9 + 6 = age 15