GHANA NATIONAL COUNCIL OF PRIVATE SCHOOLS

MOTTO: REDEFINING THE ROLE OF PRIVATE EDUCATION

*In case of reply, the number and date of this letter should be quoted.* **GNACOPS31/11/26**

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**PRESS RELEASE**

## UPHOLDING BECE INTEGRITY WHILE GUARANTEEING FAIRNESS FOR EVERY GHANAIAN CHILD

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**ACCRA, 23 November 2026 –** The Ghana National Council of Private Schools welcomes the directive by the Honourable Minister for Education, Haruna Iddrisu, to stop pupils in Junior High School Forms One and Two from prematurely sitting the Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE), including the two-year examination ban for offenders. We endorse its central objective: to protect the integrity of our national examination system and restore proper academic progression. At the same time, we call on the Ministry of Education, the Ghana Education Service (GES) and the West African Examinations Council (WAEC) to ensure that this discipline is matched by demonstrable fairness in examination administration and in access to senior high school.

Our support is principled, not conditional upon institutional convenience. Private schools cannot credibly demand fairness from public authorities while tolerating practices that compromise educational standards. Equally, the State cannot credibly demand discipline from schools and parents without guaranteeing fairness in return. Discipline and fairness are not competing demands. They are inseparable duties.

### 1. EDUCATION IS A PROCESS, NOT A SHORTCUT

The BECE is not merely a single examination to be conquered by a gifted pupil. It is the culmination of a structured learning journey that builds academic competence, character, judgment, social maturity, and readiness for the next stage of education. A child who demonstrates exceptional ability still deserves the full benefit of the curriculum and developmentally appropriate learning experiences.

WAEC's published rules establish that the BECE for school candidates is intended for pupils in the third year of junior high school. The assessment combines 30 per cent continuous assessment with 70 per cent external examination performance. A premature registration raises serious questions about the completeness and authenticity of the candidate's school records. Where records are fabricated or improperly substituted, the problem ceases to be mere acceleration; it becomes an issue of examination integrity. We therefore call schools and parents, in both the public and private sectors, to reject any attempt to circumvent these requirements.

We further support credible pupil records, effective candidate verification, clear guidelines, and proportionate enforcement with proper notice and an opportunity to correct genuine administrative errors. Children must be protected from decisions made for them by adults, and responsibility for organized misconduct must also extend to any school officials or intermediaries involved.

### 2. LET US ALSO ADDRESS THE PRESSURES THAT FUEL THE PRACTICE

A prohibition may stop an act; lasting reform must also address its incentives. Many parents understandably seek the strongest educational opportunities for their children. Private-school operators have, over the years, expressed concern about how examination outcomes and the Computerised School Selection and Placement System (CSSPS) affect their pupils' prospects of securing places in highly sought-after public senior high schools.

One prominent issue is the priority of placement arrangement for pupils from public basic schools. We recognize the legitimate social objective of assisting children from underserved communities. We do not oppose equity measures designed to compensate for genuine educational disadvantages. However, equity should be carefully targeted at disadvantage and transparently administered; it should not create an enduring perception that a child is penalized simply because the parents chose a duly recognized private basic school.

Public information about the applicable Category A placement quota has not always been consistent: the 30 per cent public-school reservation was publicly reported as reduced to 15 per cent in 2025, while subsequent ministerial reporting has again referred to 30 per cent. We respectfully call for one definitive, published statement of the rule currently in force, its legal or policy basis, eligibility conditions, duration and measurable outcomes. All parents deserve certainty before choosing schools and registering candidates.

When families fear that school type rather than individual merit and legitimate disadvantage may determine opportunity, some may be tempted to transfer children or seek irregular examination registration. Such decisions are not justified by perceived unfairness. Nevertheless, policymakers must confront the risk that opaque placement arrangements can unintentionally create perverse incentives. To remove those incentives, we must make lawful progression both credible and worthwhile.

## 3. FAIR EXAMINATION TREATMENT MUST BE DEMONSTRABLE

We acknowledge concerns voiced by private-school stakeholders about disappointing BECE outcomes and perceived disparities in grading and placement. These concerns are not baseless. They arise from the lived experience of schools, teachers and parents who have compared their candidates' BECE results and placements with their established performance, and the pattern recurs too consistently to be waved away. So long as it remains unexamined and unexplained, it will continue to feed the very anxiety that drives some parents to push children through grades prematurely in search of an advantage. If we are serious about ending grade-leaping, this concern must be addressed, not dismissed. Public confidence cannot depend on assurances alone; it is strengthened by transparent procedures and independent scrutiny.

We invite WAEC, the Ministry and the GES to facilitate a technically credible review of patterns in BECE outcomes by school category, controlling where feasible for prior attainment, subject, district and other relevant factors. We ask for accessible explanations of marking, moderation, continuous assessment verification, results review and the independent remedies available to aggrieved candidates. Where findings reveal irregularity, corrective action must be prompt; where no irregularity is established, the evidence should be made public to dispel suspicion.

## 4. WHAT INTERNATIONAL PRACTICE TEACHES US

Well-regulated education systems ordinarily organise pupils through prescribed year groups and assess departures from the normal pathway through transparent, child-centred procedures. In England, for example, decisions about admission outside a child's normal age group are made individually, with attention to the child's best interests and the educational consequences of missing a year. The lesson is not that all advanced countries impose an absolute ban on every form of acceleration. Rather, academic progression must be governed by clear rules, properly documented decisions and the welfare of the child—not informal arrangements driven by examination pressure.

Ghana should insist on the same discipline: no unauthorised leap into a terminal national examination, no incomplete or invented continuous assessment, and no advantage secured through a change of school identity. Exceptional learning needs can be addressed through enrichment and appropriately supervised support without undermining national examination eligibility.

## 5. OUR CALL FOR A FAIR AND LASTING REFORM

**First,** enforce the BECE eligibility requirements uniformly across public and private schools, with reliable enrolment histories, continuous assessment records and transparent sanctions for institutional misconduct.

**Second,** publish and explain the current CSSPS priority placement rules, including all public-school reservations, the remaining merit-based allocation and the basis on which candidates compete for each category of place.

**Third,** review whether socioeconomic disadvantage, location and school-level deprivation can be better reflected in equity measures than a simple public-versus-private distinction, while protecting disadvantaged pupils.

**Fourth,** establish a joint technical dialogue among the Ministry, GES, WAEC, CSSPS administrators and representative private-school bodies to examine placement concerns and documented allegations of irregular grading.

**Fifth,** publish school-type-disaggregated BECE and placement statistics with appropriate context, a credible results-review pathway and periodic independent audits of candidate records and placement decisions.

**Sixth,** educate parents and headteachers on the importance of full basic education, the official transfer process and the consequences of premature registration, while providing fair procedures for children inadvertently affected by adult misconduct.

## 6. A SHARED NATIONAL RESPONSIBILITY

Let us be unmistakably clear: we stand with the Honourable Minister and WAEC in rejecting premature BECE registration. We also stand with the child in a rural public school who needs genuine affirmative support, and with the child in a private school who deserves an impartial examination and a fair chance at secondary education. Our position is not a demand for special treatment for private schools. It is a demand that no Ghanaian child be disadvantaged merely by the ownership status of the school he or she attends.

If we are to end the temptation to bypass classes, we must remove both the shortcuts and the fears that make those shortcuts attractive. Rules must be firm; opportunities must be fair; decisions must be transparent. That is how trust is rebuilt. That is how educational integrity is defended.

We offer our full cooperation in the implementation of lawful BECE eligibility controls and request urgent engagement with the Minister, WAEC and GES on the related questions of equitable assessment and school placement. Let Ghana build an educational system in which parents do not feel compelled to move their children from one sector to another in pursuit of a fair hearing, and in which every child can advance through learning, not manipulation.

May our national commitment be clear: one standard of examination integrity, one standard of justice, and an equal measure of dignity for every Ghanaian child.

Thank you. God bless our children, our schools and the Republic of Ghana.

**Issued by: Leadership of Private Schools in Ghana**

For delivery by the designated President / representative at the press conference

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