

PRE- TAKING LEGISLATURE TO THE PEOPLE (PRE-TLP) REPORT OF THE PORTFOLIO COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION; CULTURE, SPORT AND RECREATION CONDUCTED AT VAALRIVIER SPECIAL SCHOOL AND ISIFISOSETHU PRIMARY SCHOOL IN LEKWA LOCAL MUNICIPALITY, 24 AUGUST 2016 – DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

1. INTRODUCTION

The Taking Legislature to the People (TLP) event will take place in Lekwa Local Municipality from 12 – 16 September 2016. As part of the preparations for the event, the Portfolio Committee on Education; Culture, Sport and Recreation (the Committee) undertook preliminary TLP oversight visits from 24-25 August 2016 in Lekwa.

The Committee visited two (2) schools of the Department of Education (the department), namely Vaalrivier Special School and Isifisosethu Primary School. The House resolutions emanating from this Committee report will be referred to the Department of Education for necessary interventions and report back to the Legislature before the main TLP event.

2. PURPOSE OF THE OVERSIGHT VISITS

The purpose of the pre-TLP oversight visits to these schools was to assess the delivery of education services by the Department of Education, in particular Special Education and infrastructure delivery (sanitation programme and classrooms).

3. METHOD OF WORK

The Committee researcher conducted preliminary visits to the schools and presented the research findings of that visit to the Committee on 16 August 2016. Subsequently the Social Cluster pre-TLP oversight visits programme was approved and circulated to the Committee.

The Gert Sibande District Management of the Department, Lekwa Local Municipality and was Gert Sibande District Municipality were invited to accompany the Committee on the oversight visits. The Committee considered its draft pre-TLP report on 30 August 2016.

4. GENERAL OBSERVATIONS

- a. Both principals were well-supported by their School Management Team (SMT) and School Governing Body (SGB).
- b. The SGB's were properly constituted and functional, very involved in the running of the school. They conducted regular meetings and parents were supportive.
- c. The acting District manager, circuit manager, Physical Resources Planning sub-directorate and the Inclusive Education and Curriculum Enrichment Directorate were present at the oversight visits. The Lekwa West circuit manager did not attend the oversight visit to Isifisoethu Primary School.
- d. Both schools had infrastructure challenges (insufficient toilets and classrooms).
- e. There is a need for more special schools in Gert Sibande district and another primary school in Extension 6, which is one of the most rapidly growing areas in Lekwa.

5. INTERACTION WITH THE SCHOOL MANAGEMENT AND THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

5.1. VAALRIVIER SPECIAL SCHOOL

Background

Vaalrivier Special School falls under the Lekwa East circuit (Circuit Manager - Ms SM Ndlovu). Lekwa East circuit consists of 29 schools in total. There are two (2) special schools in the district, namely Vaalrivier Special School and George Hofmeyr Girls' School.

The school was opened on 01 August 1944 as an industrial school for boys and was later changed to a child and youth care centre (CYCC) for boys. The school is situated on 118 hectares of land, the building structures occupying 40 hectares thereof.

On 01 January 2014 the Department of Education changed the school's status from a CYCC to a Special School admitting only boy learners who are mildly intellectually disabled (MID). Its aim is to educate and train learners to be integrated into the labour market and make a meaningful contribution to society.

Presentation by the School Management:

Mr William Viviers, the School Principal shared the following with the Committee in his presentation on the school profile and challenges:

- The Department of Education intends to increase the enrolment at the school from 2017 onwards and eventually phase in girls at the school. This was a serious concern to the School management as the school was originally built to accommodate only 160 boys, yet currently the enrolment is 182, which is already straining the resources.
- The existing ablution facilities are not sufficient; more toilets need to be built urgently to accommodate an increased intake in the 2017 academic year.
- By 2018 the Department intends to have enrolled 300 learners at the school, including girls, yet there are no ablution and accommodation facilities for girls.
- The intake of girls would also mean that training facilities such as hair and beauty care/ nail technology facilities/ consumer studies/ home economics would have to be constructed at the school.
- Currently the school has adequate teachers; the only vacancies are the school Nurse and Occupational therapist. There was a shortage of qualified Technical Educators in 2015, but the SGB has appointed two (2) student educators.
- The school is very old; it was constructed in 1944. However, the buildings are generally well-maintained by the SMT and the SGB.
- Many of the roofs of buildings on the premises need urgent renovation and painting but the school does not have sufficient amount of paint. One (1) of the four hostels is no longer safe for accommodating learners and is need of renovation.
- The school is supplied with adequate water, electricity, a landline telephone and fax facility, as well as internet service.
- School fees are R 2 500 per annum, but the school applies the departmental policy whereby certain categories of parents are partially or fully exempted from paying school fees based on their level of income.

The school has the following infrastructure and facilities:

Item	No.
Classrooms	15 (of which 9 are built from asbestos)
Computer Room	1
Library	1
Technical Workshops	4 (Welding & Metal Work, Plumbing, Woodwork and a Basic Centre)
School Hall	1
Staffroom	1
Admin Block	1
Ablution facility	1
Hostel	4 (each accommodates up to 40 learners)

The post establishment at the school is as follows:

- 14 Post Level 1 educators
- 4 Post Level 2 HOD's
- 1 Deputy Principal on Post Level 3
- 1 Psychologist on Post Level 3
- 1 Principal on Post Level 4

The school also has a social worker and a remedial therapist, but the occupational therapist post is vacant. The school also has the following administrative staff:

- 7 Administrative clerks (1 vacant post)
- 1 Nurse (vacant)
- 10 Groundsmen (2 vacant posts)
- 4 Cleaners
- 1 General Foreman
- 1 General Store Assistant
- 2 Housekeeping Supervisors
- 13 Household Aids (4 vacant posts)
- 12 Child and Youth Care Workers

5.2. OBERVATIONS AND COMMENTS ON VAALRIVIER SPECIAL SCHOOL

The Committee noted the following from the deliberations:

- a. In the current academic year the school is offering classes from Grade 5 to Grade 9. However, the Committee was informed that the Department plans to introduce a Grade 10 class in 2017.
- b. The school is currently exceeding its capacity to accommodate learners, as there are four (4) hostels each taking up to 40 learners, which equals 160 learners. It was also noted that one of the hostels is not suitable for accommodating learners and is therefore in urgent need of renovations. The Committee acknowledged all the concerns of the school, noting that the current resources and capacity of the school will not accommodate the reported plans of the Department to increase the intake at the school from the current 182 to 300 by 2018.
- c. Due to limited delegation of powers of the District office, the acting District manager and his team were not able to supply the Committee with accurate information as to whether the school was included on the priority list to receive toilets by the 31 December 2016 deadline in terms of the Minimum Norms and Standards for Basic Services in schools.

- d. The Basic Education system provides for learners to attain an NQF level 1 qualification at the end of Grade 9. However, it was noted that the school was issuing report cards instead of certificates to Grade 9 learners upon completion of their studies. This exit qualification is critical as it provides access to academic, technical pathway (TVET Colleges FET phase) or direct access to the world of work. However, the Committee noted that the Department was not quality assuring this process.
- e. The school adapts the departmental curriculum to suit the learners, who are categorized as mildly intellectually disabled (MID). Learners enrolled in the school are referred by psychologists through the Department's referral system.

Eradication of asbestos classrooms

The Committee indicated that the department should implement a plan to eradicate the nine (9) unsafe and unhealthy structures. The health hazard to the learners and educators is a serious matter, more so because the school has learners with intellectual difficulties.

Technical workshops

There is a need for ceiling extractor fans in the workshops. The school appreciated the R250 000.00 received from the Department (R50 000.00 donation from Nelson Mandela Celebrations and R200 000.00 grant funding from Rhandza Zikolo xa Vena Campaign). The money was for installation of extractor fans in the welding and metal workshops. The SGB reported that they had already obtained quotations for the extractor fans. During the inspection *in loco* the Committee noted that some of the machinery in the welding workshop was very outdated, although they were still in working condition.

Security Services

The school reported to the Committee that the termination of the security company's contract by the Department in 2015 had resulted in four (4) burglaries at the school due to the number of security guards reduced from six (6) to two (2). The copper cables were stolen and the school replaced them from their own funds. Moreover, the school had to hire a private security company (Kasselman Security) in Standerton to provide additional security at night, which has amounted to a monthly fee of R9 175.00. There have been no burglaries since the security company was hired.

Security cameras, lights, an alarm system, safety doors and burglar proofing have been installed on the premises, which cover vulnerable spots such as the computer room, technical workshops, administration offices and copper cables.

Certification

The Committee noted that the Department was not involved in quality assuring the process of learners exiting the school. Moreover, the school indicated that they did not have the human resources to administer this process.

5.3. FINDINGS

The Committee made the following findings for **VAALRIVIER SPECIAL SCHOOL**:

- (a) If the school is not included on the priority list for provision of basic services (ablution facilities) by 31 December 2016, it will not be ready to accommodate the planned introduction of the Grade 10 class in 2017. The Gert Sibande District office was not able to provide assurance to the Committee and the school regarding this matter.
- (b) The Department's policy decision to phase in girl learners at the school over the next two years is not feasible.
- (c) The SGB has secured a quotation of R314 000.00 with the plans to construct additional toilets needed at the school.
- (d) There are nine (9) asbestos classrooms that are a health hazard and need to be replaced with brick classrooms.
- (e) One (1) of the four hostels is no longer safe for use and is in need of urgent renovations. There are also some of the roofing that needs urgent renovation and painting but the school does not have sufficient amount of paint. During the inspection *in loco* the Committee observed that some machinery in the welding workshop was very outdated although they were in working condition.
- (f) There has been an increase of burglaries at the school due to the reduction of security guards at the school. The security contract was terminated in 2015 and as a result, the school has hired a private security company that is costing them R9 175.00 per month from its own funds.
- (g) The vacant Nurse position and the occupational therapist post are critical posts that should be filled.

- (h) The school does not issue certificates to Grade 9 learners upon completion of their studies. Furthermore, the school does not have sufficient capacity to do and the Department is reportedly not involved in this process.

5.4. RECOMMENDATIONS

After the deliberations and inspection *in loco* at Vaalrivier Special School, the Committee recommended that the Department must:

- (a) Ensure that the school has sufficient capacity and resources to accommodate the planned introduction of the Grade 10 class in 2017. Submit a detailed costed report by 09 September 2016 on how the Department plans to phase in the changes it envisages at the school.
- (b) The Committee advises the Department to not phase in girl learners at Vaalrivier Special School but to utilize the nearby George Hofmeyr Special School for that, as it is a girls' school. The concept paper or study conducted that informed this decision by the Department must be submitted by 09 September 2016.
- (c) Urgently engage the SGB and District office regarding the R314 000.00 quotation and plans that have been secured by the SGB to construct the toilets needed at the school. Provide a progress report by 09 September 2016.
- (d) Eradicate the nine (9) asbestos classrooms and provide mobile classrooms to the school immediately, while the process of eradication is underway.
- (e) Investigate all maintenance and equipment needs of the school and have a plan in place to address these needs. Provide a progress report by 09 September 2016.
- (f) Meet with the Department of Community Safety, Security and Liaison and ensure that the security guards are increased at the school and that the school be assisted to pay the R9 175.00 monthly security company fee it is paying from its own funds.
- (g) Ensure that the Nurse and occupational therapist posts are filled. Provide a progress report by 09 September 2016.
- (h) Ensure that the Grade 9 exit qualification process at the school is monitored and quality assured as this is a critical pathway for learners to further their training and seek employment. Provide a progress report by 09 September 2016.

5.5. ISIFISOSETHU PRIMARY SCHOOL

Background

The school falls under the Lekwa West circuit. It was founded in 1994 and is situated in Extension 6, when it was newly established. This is one of the most rapidly growing areas of Lekwa (Ward 7) and the Committee noted with concern that the current enrolment of 1 355 could increase in the near future, making it necessary for a new primary school to be built in Extension 6.

The school started operating in makeshift structures (shacks) from Grade R because young learners could not walk the long distance to the main township of Sakhile. By 2001 when the school was allocated a site by the Department of Education, they were still using the shacks as classrooms. In 2003, the Japanese government offered the South African government a donation and the Department of Education identified Isifisosethu Primary School as a beneficiary for the construction of 19 classrooms and ablution facilities.

The school offers education to learners from Grade R to Grade 6. Enrolment for the 2016 academic year, inclusive of Grade R is 1 355 learners.

The District office (Physical Resources Planning) confirmed to the Committee that:

- Isifisosethu Primary School is included on the list for implementation of Phase 2 of the departmental sanitation programme.
- Construction of four (4) classrooms has been approved and the appointment of the contractor by the Department of Public Works; Roads and Transport is awaited.
- Nine (9) mobile classrooms will be supplied to the school within three weeks from 24 August 2016. The challenge is transporting of the mobiles to the school.

Subsequent to the Committee oversight visit on 24 August 2016, the Committee received additional information that shed new light on what the Physical Resources Planning sub-directorate confirmed to the Committee during the interactions. **(See attached email from Principal S. Mazubane as Annexure A to this Committee report).**

Presentation by the School Management:

Mr Sazi Mazubane, the School Principal shared the following with the Committee in his presentation on the school profile and challenges:

- a. The school does not have an administration block.
- b. The Foundation Phase has no Early Childhood Development (ECD) classrooms.
- c. There are no offices for the two Deputy Principals and four HOD's (they are currently occupying shacks).
- d. There are no toilets for the teachers and the learner toilets are insufficient. Five (5) toilets cater for 625 boys (1 toilet: 125 learners) and nine (9) toilets cater for 574 girls (1 toilet: 64 learners).
- e. The curriculum is aligned with CAPS (Curriculum and Policy Statement).
- f. The Department has supplied correct and sufficient LTSM for the school.
- g. The Department has also provided workbooks which are also used to enhance teaching and close the content gaps not covered by the educators.
- h. The school's academic performance is very good despite the lack of classrooms; Grade R, Grade 1 and Grade 5 performed above 80% in the past three years (2014 – June 2016). There is a serious challenge in the Grade 6 Mathematics results that are low due to the situation of the appointed teacher, who has been on sick leave and there are constantly substitute teachers coming in for two or three months and then they leave the school when they get permanent or other employment.
- i. This leads to an unstable learning environment for the children.

5.6. OBSERVATIONS AND COMMENTS ON ISIFISOSETHU PRIMARY SCHOOL

The Committee made the following observations during the deliberations:

- a. The school is situated in one of the most rapidly growing areas of Lekwa Local Municipality (ward 7). It already has an enrolment of 1 355 learners and in the near future there may be a need for another primary school in Extension 6.
- b. There is serious over-crowding in the Foundation Phase (Grade R) where learners are still accommodated in the shacks that were constructed by the SGB at the time in 1994. The Grade 5 class is also experiencing this problem.
- c. The South African Democratic Teacher's Union (SADTU) Branch Secretary addressed the Committee, reiterating that the school was promised an administration block and extra classrooms and that service delivery was long

overdue. They hoped that after the Committee's visit, the Department would deliver as promised.

- d. Two (2) of the 19 classrooms constructed from the Japanese government donation were converted to accommodate the administrative staff and teachers. The Department later constructed another two (2) classrooms and three (3) toilets.
- e. The Committee is cognizant of the fact that construction of administration blocks at all schools has been put on hold until 2020 to prioritize the basic services programme as prescribed by the national Department of Basic Education and the eradication of unsafe structures at schools as prioritized by the Province.
- f. Currently there are no vacant positions at the school. All SMT posts are filled.
- g. Five grade R practitioners are employed by the school; four (4) of them meet the minimum requirements of NQF level 5 and one (1) is unqualified (no Grade 12).
- h. Educators take leave at a reasonable rate and (normal sick leave, maternity leave and special leave for examination purposes). Learner absenteeism is not a problem.
- i. According to the Department, each learner has access to a text book and there is a textbook retrieval system in place to collect all textbooks at the end of the year.

5.7. FINDINGS

The Committee made the following findings on **ISIFISOSETHU PRIMARY SCHOOL**

- (a) There is serious over-crowding of learners at the school due to the shortage of classrooms especially for Grade R and Grade 5. The District office confirmed that Construction of four (4) classrooms has been approved and appointment of the contractor by the Department of Public Works; Roads and Transport is awaited. It was also stated that nine (9) mobile classrooms will be supplied to the school within three weeks from 24 August 2016, which will be the week of the TLP.
- (b) The school is situated in one of the most rapidly growing areas of Lekwa Local Municipality (ward 7). It already has an enrolment of 1 355 learners and in the near future there may be a need for another primary school in Extension 6.
- (c) There are no teacher toilets and the current learners' toilets are insufficient to cater for the learner population. The District office confirmed that the school is included on the departmental list for implementation of Phase 2 of the sanitation programme.
- (d) The school does not have the following important infrastructure:
 - The school does not have a library;

- There is no administration block;
 - The 2 Deputy Principals and 4 HODs have no offices (use makeshift structures)
 - There is no proper “kitchen” structure to prepare food for the learners;
 - The area used to cook and store the food and ingredients are unhygienic.
- (e) There is one (1) unqualified Grade R practitioner at the school.
- (f) The Grade 6 Mathematics teacher has been on sick leave for a long time and the constant influx of substitute teachers has led to an unstable environment for the children and poor results in this subject.
- (g) The school does not have sports fields/facilities to cater for different sporting codes (soccer, netball, volleyball and cricket). The community of ward 7 also does not have access to sports facilities.

5.8. RECOMMENDATIONS

After the deliberations and inspection *in loco* at Isifisosethu Primary School, the Committee recommended that the Department must:

- (a) Ensure that the Department of Public Works; Roads and Transport appoints the contractor to construct the four (4) classrooms as confirmed by the District Office during the pre-TLP visit. The nine (9) mobile classrooms must also be delivered to the school within three weeks from 24 August 2016, which is the week of the TLP. Provide a progress report by 09 September 2016.
- (b) Meet with the Lekwa Local Municipality to discuss the feasibility of building a new school in Extension 6 (ward 7). Provide a progress report by 09 September 2016.
- (b) Ensure that Phase 2 of the Department’s basic services programme for sanitation is implemented at the school by the 31 December 2016 deadline. Provide a progress report by 09 September 2016.
- (c) Provide a mobile library for the school and a temporary kitchen structure for cooking and food storage. Indicate the plan of the Department with timeframes to assist the school with an administration block and offices for the SMT members. Provide a progress report by 09 September 2016.
- (d) Ensure that the unqualified Grade R practitioner is enrolled at the Early Childhood Development Institute (ECDI) for the relevant training and qualification.

- (e) Urgently review the situation of the Grade 6 Mathematics teacher and consider offering the teacher an option of ill health retirement. As much as the situation is a delicate matter, the children need to have stability in the learning environment and the Department must ensure that the Grade 6 Mathematics results improve by the end of the 2016 school year.
- (f) Provide the necessary sports fields and facilities/ sport combo court for the school so that it can cater for the various sporting codes (soccer, netball, volleyball and cricket). The Department must ensure that there is an improvement in the quality of sporting activities and facilities at this school and the community of ward 7.

6. CONCLUSION

The Chairperson would like to thank the Honourable Members of the Committee for their constructive input during the pre-TLP oversight visits in Lekwa Local Municipality. The support staff of the Legislature is also appreciated for their assistance to the Committee.

The attendance of the Gert Sibande District Management and the Lekwa Local Municipality during the Committee's visits is acknowledged, as well as the support of the Gert Sibande District Management of the Department of Education is acknowledged.

The Chairperson requests the House to adopt this report with its findings and recommendations. The Department is expected to implement the House Resolutions herein and submit a progress report to the Legislature by 09 September 2016.



HON. VV WINDVOËL (MPL)



DATE

**CHAIRPERSON: PORTFOLIO COMMITTEE ON
EDUCATION; CULTURE, SPORT AND RECREATION**

Marilyn Varda

From: Mazubane Sazi <mazubane@yahoo.com>
Sent: 01 September 2016 12:00 AM
To: Victor Windvoel; Marilyn Varda
Subject: PROGRESS REPORT ON ISIFISOSETHU PRIMARY SCHOOL INFRASTRUCTURAL PROBLEMS.

Dear Chairperson of the Portfolio Committee on Education

We appreciate the visit the committee paid to Isifisoethu Primary School in Lekwa Municipality on Wednesday August 24, 2016. What we liked much was that the decisions of the meeting were business-like and time bound, which makes it easy to follow-up on the implementation thereof.

On Wednesday August 31, 2016 I had a meeting with the official of the department of education at the district of Gert Sibande, Mr D Phungwayo. This official was present at the meeting at Isifisoethu and he is the one who was giving information to the meeting, as the person who is responsible for infrastructure at the district.

In the meeting at Isifisoethu, Mr Phungwayo committed in no uncertain terms that the school would be receiving four brick and mortar classrooms soon. He said all preparatory processes had been completed and the department is waiting for the contractor to begin with the work of construction. We took that information and communicated it to all our stakeholders, namely, all staff members of the school as well as parents. The expectation created is that construction can begin in no time.

It with a very heavy heart that we have to report that all that has now changed. In the meeting I had with Mr Phungwayo on 31 August 2016, he is now saying that the issue of building four classrooms does not appear in the priority list of the province, so it is not something that can happen within a period of three years. Yet our SGB chairperson took to the platform in the Portfolio Committee meeting to clarify that the SGB had been to the office of the Chief Director of infrastructure at head office the previous week, and the discovery was that there was no reflection of Isifisoethu in the priority list of projects to be undertaken soon.

But the district insisted that the project of the four classes was just waiting for the contractor to begin. Now all of that is changing completely!

Chairperson, we feel the Portfolio Committee meeting with stakeholders at Isifisoethu Primary was deliberately and knowingly misled. False hopes were created and yet the official knew it very well that what he was saying was a complete misrepresentation of facts. We do not believe that this is how the officials of the department are supposed to manage the department, with untruths.

We are, therefore requesting you chairperson to intervene and correct this situation.

Yours truly

Mazubane Sazi
(School Principal)

Sent from my iPad

