

REPORT OF THE PORTFOLIO COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION; CULTURE, SPORT AND RECREATION ON THE TAKING LEGISLATURE TO THE PEOPLE (TLP) IN GOVAN MBEKI LOCAL MUNICIPALITY, 12 - 13 SEPTEMBER 2017

OVERSIGHT VISIT TO VUKANINI COMBINED SCHOOL – DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

1. INTRODUCTION

Section 118 (1) (a) and (b) (i) of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa empowers a provincial legislature to facilitate public access to and involvement in its oversight processes. The Mpumalanga Provincial Legislature conducted the Taking Legislature to the People (TLP) event at Govan Mbeki Local Municipality from 11 – 15 September 2017.

The Portfolio Committee on Education; Culture, Sport and Recreation (the Committee) has a mandate in terms of Rule 119 of the Rules and Orders of the Mpumalanga Provincial Legislature to hold the Department of Education (the Department) accountable through various oversight mechanisms during the course of a financial year. The Department is responsible for Outcome 1 of the Provincial Outcomes (to provide quality basic education).

House resolutions emanating from this oversight visit report will be referred to the Department for implementation and report back to the Legislature.

2. PURPOSE OF THE TLP OVERSIGHT ACTIVITIES

As part of the TLP event, the Committee engaged in the following activities:

- (a) Joint Social and Economic Cluster **Public Hearing** on 12 September 2017
- (b) Oversight visit to **Vukanini Combined School** on 13 September 2017

The purpose of each of the above-mentioned activities was as follows:

- (a) To solicit inputs of the community regarding service delivery by the Department;
- (b) To assess the condition of the school infrastructure at Vukanini Combined School and the quality of teaching and learning;

3. METHOD OF WORK

In preparation for the TLP visits, the Research Unit conducted preliminary visits to projects of the Department in Govan Mbeki Local Municipality. The approved programme for the TLP oversight activities was circulated to the Committee and stakeholders.

The Committee issued invitations to the Department, the Department of Public Works, Roads and Transport (DPWRT), Provincial Treasury, the Office of the Auditor-General SA, the Office of the Public Service Commission and SALGA. The Department was requested to ensure that the School Management Team (SMT), School Governing Body (SGB), Representative Council of Learners (RCL) and any friends of the school should be present at the visit. Invitations were also extended to the South African Police Services (SAPS), as well as teacher unions SADTU, NAAPTOSA and PEU.

Subsequently the Committee met on 04 October 2017 to consider and adopt its draft TLP report. The House resolutions emanating from this report were referred to the Department for implementation and report back to the Legislature.

4. GENERAL OBSERVATIONS

The following was noted at the public hearing on 12 September 2017:

The community raised an issue about the delayed construction of Jackie Manana School. The HOD reported that the delay was due to challenges in identifying another site. The Municipality committed to continue the process to identify a suitable site in consultation with the Department of Education. The HOD committed that construction on the said school should begin at the end of 2018/19 financial year as the planning and design stage would only be completed once the new site is identified.

The following was noted at Vukanini Combined School on 13 September 2017:

- The school infrastructure was dilapidated (buildings, roofing, ceilings and floors in the classrooms, as well as the ablution facilities and administration block).
- The principal retired in 2015 and the post has been vacant since that time; the deputy principal has been the acting principal.
- There is a strong influence of drug lords who are operating in the community.

- The premises were not well-secured (palisade fence did not go right around the school) and there was inadequate access control at the gate.
- The ward councillor, Department of Correctional Services and the South African Police Service were doing their best to assist the school where necessary.

5. INTERACTION WITH THE DEPARTMENT, SCHOOL MANAGEMENT AND STAKEHOLDERS, 13 SEPTEMBER 2017

The Hon MEC for Education was not able to join the Committee's visit as she was still on sick leave. The HOD was attending an EXCO meeting in Govan Mbeki Local Municipality. The Department was represented by the Acting District Director, Mr. PP Magagula, the acting Circuit Manager (Mr. N Mabala), the Chief Director Infrastructure and senior officials from the Office of the MEC and the Office of the HOD.

The Acting principal was accompanied by her SMT and staff members (the visit was after school hours), the SGB and the RCL leadership (two girl learners from Grade 8 and 9). Also in attendance were the ward councillor, the Department of Correctional Services, the South African Police Service (SAPS) and teacher unions SADTU and NAPTOSA.

Presentation by the Acting Principal

The Committee noted the detailed presentation of the school profile and the school improvement plan, as well as the subject performance improvement plan. Clarity-seeking questions were raised in relation to the information presented and the Committee interacted with the Department, the school management and stakeholders.

It was noted that the school was opened in the early 1940's in Emzinoni Township as a means of eradicating the learning and teaching that used to be done in local churches. It was thus the only primary school in the township at that time. It was located in the old location in 6th street, but later moved to its current location of 343 56th Avenue also in Emzinoni township.

Representative Council of Learners (RCL)

In the interaction with the RCL (two female learners from grade 8 and 9) they raised the issue of the poor building infrastructure and the lack of a computer laboratory. The Department was encouraged to ensure that teachers and learners are continuously supported and that measures are put in place to ensure that challenges are addressed. The Committee also urged the learners to meet with their peers and as leaders they should

come up with solutions to the problems. It was noted that the RCL's need training and development, as well as mentoring in order to be effective.

INPUTS BY THE SCHOOL GOVERNING BODY

The SGB raised a concern about the poor communication between parents and teachers. The main challenge was the shortage of textbooks (4 learners sharing one book). It was raised that parents did not want to contribute towards textbooks while they were waiting for the Department to deliver.

The Committee also urged the SGB to ensure that the Safety Committee looks into the matter of poor access control at the gate and the inadequate fencing around the school property. The SGB was also urged to ensure that the school safety plan is in place.

INPUTS BY SOUTH AFRICAN DEMOCRATIC TEACHERS UNION (SADTU)

The SADTU representative (a teacher) appreciated the Committee's visit and was hopeful that the issues relating to their teacher members would be attended to by the Department.

He raised concerns about the difficult working conditions of the teachers, especially the non-filling of vacant posts (positions filled in acting capacity for too long).

INPUTS BY DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONAL SERVICES (DCS)

The Committee was impressed by the school's partnership with the Department of Correctional Services (DCS); they were very involved in doing minor maintenance jobs such as fixing chairs and desks (welding) and other odd jobs. However, the DCS indicated the challenge of funding for materials such as paint, tiles etc, stating that they had more than enough manpower in their skills programme but could do more if they could be provided with the relevant materials. The Committee called on the Department and the SGB to take leadership in this situation and ensure that the DCS be provided with the necessary materials to assist the school.

It was further noted that the DCS was also providing motivational talks to the learners as part of their skills programme under Social Responsibility; this included other schools in the municipality. The DCS indicated

INPUTS BY SOUTH AFRICAN POLICE SERVICES (SAPS) EMZINONI

Constable Mtsweni from the Social Crime Prevention unit indicated that they were always visiting the school and were very involved in the school. The school was implementing the adopt-a-cop programme. The Committee urged the school and its Safety Committee to further engage SAPS on the issues of gate access control and inadequate security on the premises while there is no proper fence.

6. FINDINGS IN RELATION TO VUKANINI COMBINED SCHOOL

After its deliberations with the Department, school management and stakeholders, the Committee made the following findings:

- 6.1.** The principal post has been vacant since 2015 when the principal resigned.
- 6.2.** The SGB is functional and has implemented the required policies, a constitution, school improvement plan (SIP) and code of conduct. However, the SGB requires more training on the alternatives to corporal punishment.
- 6.3.** The infrastructure at the school is old and in a very poor condition; the school is in need of a revitalization programme.
- 6.4.** The school has an over-crowding problem due to the shortage of classrooms.
- 6.5.** The school was in the process of receiving additional (top-up) textbooks from the Department; there is also a shortage of learner furniture.
- 6.6.** Ablution facilities at the school are in a very poor condition and are insufficient in relation to the number of learners.
- 6.7.** The school is not properly fenced and is at risk during and after school hours; there is one operational gate at which there is inadequate access control.
- 6.8.** The school has access to wi-fi and 26 tablets for the learners but there are no computers.
- 6.9.** There are some criminal elements from the community (drug lords) which are targeting the learners.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Committee recommended that the Department must implement the following and provide a progress report by 30 November 2017 in each case:

- 7.1.** Ensure that the principal post is on the November 2017 Vacancy List and that it is prioritized to be filled by the end of the 2017 academic year.
- 7.2.** Conduct SGB training workshops for Govan Mbeki Local Municipality on the alternatives to corporal punishment.
- 7.3.** The Hon MEC must ensure that the Rhandza Xikolo xa wena programme is implemented at the school by January 2018.
- 7.4.** Provide mobile classrooms for the school to address the over-crowding situation.
- 7.5.** Ensure that the top-up process addresses all the textbook shortages at the school and provide a progress report to confirm this.
- 7.6.** Ensure that the school has proper and sufficient ablution facilities by the end of the 2017/18 financial year.
- 7.7.** Assist the school and the SGB to ensure that the palisade fencing surrounds the entire school; tighter access control must be provided at the gate.
- 7.8.** Assist the SGB to engage social partners to make provision for computers for the learners.
- 7.9.** Ensure that the school has a sound Safety Plan in place; the SGB must be assisted to harness social partners, in particular SAPS, Department of Correctional Services and Department of Social Development, to combat challenges in the socio-economic context, such as the issue of drug lords targeting the learners.

8. PUBLIC HEARING AT EMZINONI STADIUM, BETHAL

The Social Transformation Cluster TLP public hearing was held on 12 September 2017 in conjunction with the Economic Transformation Cluster.

Government departments MEC's, HOD's and senior officials were present, as well as the Steve Tshwete Local Municipality Executive Mayor, Speaker, Chief Whip, councillors and CDW's. Other stakeholders included the Office of the Auditor-General, Office of the Public Service Commission and SALGA.

The following issues pertinent to the Department of Education were noted:

Ward	Issue
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There was one issue noted by the Committee regarding the delayed construction of Jackie Manana School.

The HOD of the Department of Education responded to the community as follows:

- The delay was due to challenges in identifying another site. The Municipality committed to continue the process to identify a suitable site in consultation with the Department. The HOD committed that construction on the said school should begin at the end of the 2018/19 financial year as the planning and design stage would be completed once the new site is identified.

8.1. FINDING IN RESPECT OF THE PUBLIC HEARING

The Committee made the following finding:

- (a) The Department has not delivered the proposed Jackie Manana School in Govan Mbeki Local Municipality due to issues regarding site identification.

8.2. RECOMMENDATION IN RESPECT OF THE PUBLIC HEARING

The Committee recommended that the Department must implement the following:


- (a) Continue liaising with the Municipality to identify a suitable site for construction of the proposed Jackie Manana School. The planning and design must be completed in the 2017/18 and 2018/19 financial years for construction to commence at the beginning of the 2019/20 financial year, as committed by the HOD.

The House is requested to adopt this oversight report with its findings and recommendations. The Department is required to implement the House Resolutions contained in this Committee report and submit a progress report to the Legislature by 30 November 2017.

9. CONCLUSION

The Chairperson would like to thank the Honourable Members of the Committee for their constructive input during the oversight visit to Vukanini Combined School and the Public Hearing which were conducted during the Taking Legislature to the People (TLP) activities at Govan Mbeki Local Municipality.

The Committee appreciated the interaction with the Department of Education, the MRTT, Govan Mbeki Local Municipality and all stakeholders who participated in the activities of the Committee during the TLP. A word of appreciation is extended to the Legislature support staff for the support provided to the Committee.



HON. VV WINDVOËL (MPL)

13/10/2017

DATE

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