

# **REPORT OF THE PORTFOLIO COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION; CULTURE, SPORT AND RECREATION – DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION**

## **OVERSIGHT VISIT ON STEVE TSHWETE BOARDING SCHOOL & MKHULU COMBINED SCHOOL CONDUCTED ON 31 JULY 2019**

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### **1. INTRODUCTION**

The Portfolio Committee on Education; Culture, Sport and Recreation (the Committee) has a mandate in terms of Section 114 (2) (b) of the Constitution of South Africa (Act 108 of 1996) to oversee the performance of the Department of Education (the Department) read in conjunction with Rule 131 of the Rules and Orders of the Mpumalanga Provincial Legislature, 2013 (the Rules) to hold the Executive accountable for the use of voted funds.

The Committee exercises oversight on the activities, plans and strategic objectives of the Department which respond to Outcome 1: (improve quality of basic education and Outcome 5 (a skilled and capable workforce to support an inclusive growth path).

### **2. PURPOSE OF THE OVERSIGHT VISIT**

The Committee undertook this oversight visit to assess the Department's progress in implementing House Resolutions from the previous oversight visits to **Steve Tshwete Boarding School** and **Mkhulu Combined School** on 15 March 2017.

### **3. METHOD OF WORK**

Invitations were duly issued to relevant stakeholders - Department of Education, Steve Tshwete Local Municipality, Department of Public Works, Roads and Transport (DPWRT), Provincial Treasury, Auditor-General SA, Office of the Public Service Commission, Department of Social Development, South African Democratic Teachers' Union (SADTU), National Association of School Governing Bodies (NASGB), South African Principal's Association (SAPA) and South African Police Service (SAPS).

An updated progress report on the 2017 TLP House Resolutions was presented to the Committee during the visit on 31 July 2019 and was duly incorporated into this report. Subsequently the Committee considered and adopted its draft report. House resolutions emanating from this report are referred to the Department for implementation and report back to the Legislature.

## **4. STEVE TSHWETE BOARDING SCHOOL**

### **4.1. Brief Background**

The boarding school is situated on Portion 27 of Elandslaagte farm, within Somaphepha village in the Steve Tshwete Local Municipality. It was officially opened in July 2016 and caters for Grades R to 12. The Department closed down six farm schools which had multi-grade classes.

2019 was the first year of Grade 12 learners since the school opened; there were 8 learners enrolled in Grade 12. It was noted that these learners were the product of multi-grade teaching until Grade 9 and so only had normal teaching and learning in grade 10 and 11. There was thus a serious content gap for the class of 2019, which requires more support and intervention by the curriculum section if the learners are to produce better results in the 2019 NSC examinations.

### **4.2. Interaction with the Department, SMT, SGB, RCL and sector stakeholders**

The Committee had a fruitful interaction with the Department, school management team (SMT), SGB, RCL and sector stakeholders at the briefing session held at Steve Tshwete Boarding School.

Apologies were received from MEC Majuba and the acting HOD, Mr. JR Nkosi. The Department's delegation was thus led by Mr. MJ Lushaba, the Chief Director District Coordination, supported by Mr. J Nsibande (Director: Ayilhlome Ifunde) and Mr. DM Maja (Director: Nkangala District) and his management team (including circuit managers).

Other stakeholders in attendance were the Department of Public Works, Roads and Transport, the Steve Tshwete Local Municipality, the South African Democratic Teachers Union (SADTU) and the South African Principal's Association (SAPA).

### **Briefing by the Department on the death of school children at Nelson Ngubeni Primary School in Steve Tshwete Local Municipality**

Before the Department presented the updated progress report on House Resolutions emanating from the 15 March 2017 visit, the Committee noted the reports in the national news media on the morning of 31 July 2019 about the deaths and hospitalization of learners at Nelson Ngubeni Primary School, reportedly due to consumption of poisoned popcorn outside the school premises.

The Committee requested a briefing on the matter, which was provided by the Chief Director District Coordination. It was noted that the Department was investigating the fatal incident and that the families were being supported. The Hon MEC could not attend the oversight visit as he had gone to visit the families of the deceased and hospitalized learners to offer support and assistance. It was further noted that the District was liaising with the families for the funeral arrangements and that a report with recommendations on the matter would be released after the investigation had run its course.

#### 4.3. UPDATED PROGRESS REPORT ON 2017 TLP HOUSE RESOLUTIONS

The first progress report on the House Resolutions from 15 March 2017 was submitted to the Legislature by 30 June 2017 (as reflected in the table below).

The Committee was satisfied with the updated progress report and after further discussion with the Department and the school, noted that the school was functional, infrastructure was generally in good condition, with a few minor maintenance issues in need of ongoing attention. Steve Tshwete Boarding School has received attention on many of the issues which were raised by the Committee in March 2017.

**The following updated progress was presented to the Committee on 31 July 2019:**

	<b>Resolutions</b>	<b>1<sup>st</sup> progress report</b>	<b>Updated Progress</b>
<b>7.1</b>	<b>Consider re-classification of the boarding school and ensure that the school has a Deputy Principal and adequate teachers.</b>	The resolution of the committee was considered. <b>The Deputy Principal Post was filled, including teacher posts.</b>  The only remaining vacant post of the Head of Department. The post was advertised in the November 2016 vacancy list.	The <b>Head of Department</b> post was filled on 01 January 2018.  <b>DONE</b>
<b>7.2</b>	<b>Ensure that the school develops, adopts and correctly implements all relevant policies.</b>	Policies were drafted, adopted and issued it to staff members by 30 June 2017.	Policy implementation was monitored by the SMT and circuit manager. <b>DONE</b>
<b>7.3</b>	<b>Ensure that the SGB attends capacity building training in governance, administration and financial management.</b>	The Principal conducts on-going capacity building in all SGB meetings and Teacher Development and Governance has already conducted workshops	The Department trained the SGB on Democratic School Governance in 2018/19 & School Development Plan & Financial Management in 2019/20. <b>DONE</b>

	Resolutions	1 <sup>st</sup> progress report	Updated Progress
7.4	a) Ensure that the maintenance personnel and groundsmen are properly trained to effectively maintain the sewer treatment plant; they must be adequately skilled to do on-site maintenance jobs requiring plumbing, electrical and general maintenance.	The grounds men and the maintenance personnel were taken through capacity building workshops.	<p>The Department reported that groundsmen and maintenance personnel were trained during capacity building workshops and on the job training was continuously administered by supervisors. <b>DONE</b></p> <p>The Committee's previous concern was that groundsmen should be trained to promptly attend to minor maintenance issues that would go unattended until they were fixed much later by a service provider or the Department of Public Works (such as leaking toilets, fitting of light bulbs).</p>
	b) Ensure that the municipality comes on board to assist with the sewerage spillage problem	The Department engaged the municipality with regard to the sewer. The Department will consider outsourcing sewer plant maintenance of all boarding schools with sewer plants to a service provider. The Department is finalizing the sewer plant maintenance plan.	<p>The Department appointed a service provider to render the sewer plant maintenance.</p> <p>The sewer plant was attended to and was functional. <b>DONE</b></p>
7.5	The SMT and Hostel staff must implement a safety and security plan with immediate effect and ensure that effective systems are in place to deter learners from vandalizing the school facilities.	The school developed and adopted a Safety Policy.	The implementation of the School Safety Policy was monitored; the school reported less number of incidences of a safety and security nature. <b>The school improved significantly on safety and security.</b> The school fence is concrete palisade and there was a recommendation of also putting razor wire so as to

	Resolutions	1 <sup>st</sup> progress report	Updated Progress
			fortify security in the school surrounding. A professional security company was hired by the department to take care of the school property, surrounding and the human capital of the institution. No vandalism is experienced by the school. <b>DONE</b>
7.6	<b>The Department must ensure that the school does not bear exorbitant costs involved in operationalizing the borehole pumps. All the school assets must be adequately insured against theft and damage.</b>	<p>Water challenges were addressed on 2 June 2017.</p> <p>The boreholes inside the school were reported functional.</p> <p>The challenge was with the borehole which was outside the school yard as a result of the water pump that was stolen.</p>	<p>The Department has not made further investments on the outside borehole due to previous incidences of theft. The school was functioning with the inside borehole only. The water was sufficient for daily consumption i.e. cooking, washing and overall running of the school. However it was not sufficient to cater for the irrigation system.</p> <p><b>DONE</b></p>
7.7	<b>The service provider must repair the roof leakages in the Grade R dormitory and admin block, and the power failures at Block C and H dormitories at own cost.</b>	All roofs were repaired and no further leaks were reported	The school has to date not experienced challenges with roof leakages. It was noted that all roofs were repaired; there were no more leakages. <b>DONE</b>
7.8.	<b>The Department must ensure that the soil erosion problem and collapsing retention wall are effectively addressed by the contractor.</b>	The retaining wall at the kitchen/hall was fixed. The retaining wall at the boys' dormitories also collapsed, The contractor will finalize works on the collapsed wall on 28 June 2017.	The retaining walls at the kitchen/hall and the boys' dormitories were fixed by the contractor, as recommended by the Committee. <b>DONE</b>
7.9	<b>The school clinic must always be functional. Challenges must be addressed and interventions put in place.</b>	The School clinic is functional and basic equipment and medication is made available by the SGB. There is a positive partnership with the local	No updated progress; status quo remained the same. The clinic was functional; basic equipment, medication and medical

	Resolutions	1 <sup>st</sup> progress report	Updated Progress
		hospital and clinic due to collaboration between Department of Health and Department of Social Development to ensure medical assistance as and when required.	assistance was provided. The school had its own bus to transport learners to the nearest hospital or clinic if necessary.  <b>DONE</b>
7.10	<p>Provide the following at the school</p> <p>a) ICT infrastructure and equipment (computers) – for a functional computer laboratory.</p> <p>b) Access to reliable cellular network.</p> <p>c) Install telephone landline.</p>	<p>Landline telephone, WI-FI and cellular network reception was still a challenge.</p> <p>The school received Maths, Life Sciences and Physical Science apparatus. However, the installation of a wireless connection was in progress by Telkom.</p> <p>The challenge was that Telkom had no communication infrastructure in that area to enable them to connect the landline.</p> <p>The district was working on installing a satellite dish.</p>	<p>a) The school will be provided with computers in the 2020/21 financial year.</p> <p>b) The cellular network issue was not resolved as this was dependent on the provision of infrastructure by Vodacom, Telkom service providers.</p> <p>c) Installation of telephone landline has not been achieved; however the school has a designated cellular phone.</p> <p>Service Providers will continue to be engaged to resolve the challenge.</p> <p><b>IN PROGRESS</b></p>

#### 4.4. OBSERVATIONS

In addition to the above updated progress, the Committee observed the following on the progress made to date at the school since the previous visit:

- The following updated progress was noted on the **post provisioning**:
  - Appointment of a second Deputy Principal and 2 educators;
  - 16 posts on Household were interviewed and awaiting appointment;
  - 16 laundry posts and 6 child minder posts were also awaiting appointment.

- These positions have created jobs for the local community members who initially depended on working in farms and getting poor wages.
  - There is no qualified nutritionist or quality controller to monitor the handling and preparation of food for the learners.
- **Water and sanitation** - sewer plant challenges were resolved; the Department appointed a company to maintain it. The Municipality also assists in the maintenance of the sewer plant. The school obtains water from three electric powered boreholes and water tanks. There was no shortage of water.
  - **Electricity** is supplied by ESKOM and the school also uses solar power.
  - On the Committee's previous visit there were a number of **over-aged learners**, noting that majority of learners come from farming communities and they started school when they were older than the usual school going age. Some learners beyond the school going age were still in the lower grades, of which the school and the Department must intervene and place these learners correctly in line with the departmental admission policy and regulations.
  - **Library** – books were outdated; the shortage of relevant books was still not addressed (reference and reading books). However, a good relationship with Steve Tshwete Municipality Library allows for inter-library book exchange.
  - **Internet** - there was no connectivity at all and this will ultimately hinder the school from participating in the digital revolution. Routers supplied by the Department were not being used due to poor connectivity.
  - **Laboratory** – The severe shortage of science equipment was still not addressed.

#### 4.5. FINDINGS

The Committee made the following findings for **Steve Tshwete Boarding School**:

- a) There were 16 Household posts, 16 laundry posts and 6 child minder posts that were awaiting appointment. The school had no qualified nutritionist.
- b) A school improvement plan (SIP) was in place and implemented, although it was a living document subject to continuous review, in line with the school's challenges.
- c) The Committee commended the fixing of the sewer plant, which was reported as functional and maintained by an appointed service provider.

- d) Capacity building for the SGB members is an ongoing matter to be attended to; workshops on governance, administration and financial management were held for the SGB in the 2018/19 and 2019/20 financial years.
- e) A school safety plan was in place and implemented, which resulted in decreased cases of vandalism and theft of school property and resources.
- f) The boreholes in the school yard were operationalized but those outside the school yard school were non-operational. Thus there was no water for irrigation.
- g) The Department has planned to provide computers for the school in the 2020/21 financial year.
- h) The school library books were outdated.
- i) The cellular network was still inadequate (connectivity only at certain places on the school property) and there was still no telephone landline. The Department was in the process of engaging service providers Telkom and Vodacom on this matter.

#### 4.7. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Committee resolved that the Department must implement below recommendations for **Steve Tshwete Boarding School** and submit a **progress report by 30 September 2019**:

- a) Ensure that all the vacant posts are filled as outlined in finding (a) above. Furthermore, any vacancies that arise in future must be filled timeously.
- b) Monitor the school's implementation of its school improvement plan (SIP) in line with operational challenges during the 2019 school year and review it where necessary.
- c) Ensure that the sewer plant is properly maintained by the service provider to avoid further spillages. Provide a progress report on the functionality of the sewer plant.
- d) Implement capacity building programmes for the SGB members until the end of their term. These programmes must be prioritized for incoming SGB members as well.
- e) Assist the school to closely monitor the implementation of its school safety plan, such that vandalism and theft of school resources do not recur.
- f) Operationalize the boreholes outside the school property in a cost-effective way so that there is sufficient water supply for irrigation purposes.



- g) Deliver the computers to the school as planned for in the 2020/21 financial year. The progress report must indicate timelines for delivery and specifications of items.
- h) The Department must ensure that relevant books are provisioned for the school library. The school should also facilitate inter-library book exchange with the local municipal libraries to ensure that learners have access to relevant library books.
- i) Fast track the engagements with Telkom to install the telephone landline, which is long overdue and with Vodacom to ensure stronger network access at the school.

## **5. MKHULU COMBINED SCHOOL**

### **5.1. Interaction with the Department, SMT, SGB, RCL and sector stakeholders**

The SMT, SGB and RCL of Mkhulu Combined School were in attendance at the briefing session held at Steve Tshwete Boarding School on 31 July 2019. The Department presented an updated progress report on the 2017 TLP House Resolutions and the Committee interacted with the Department and the leadership of this school.

### **5.2. Brief overview**

The school was established in 1982 as a result of the closure and merging of six (6) farm schools namely: Shalom, Sihlangene, Ndlela, Lamulela, Njabulo and Augtine. The school offered Grade R to Grade 12.

Historically, Mkhulu Combined School was the only school in the area offering secondary school education; hence the school was overcrowded (1 105 learners) with few classrooms.

In the Committee's previous visit it was noted that the building infrastructure was old and unsafe. Classrooms were insufficient, in poor condition and some were unsuitable for teaching and learning (built out of corrugated iron/steel).

In response to the infrastructure challenges at the school, the Department took a decision to construct a **new school** in Doornkop to alleviate the overcrowding and unsafe structures.

The school had adequate sanitation facilities (pit latrines and flushing toilets) serviced by a borehole and a septic tank.

The learner teacher ratio was 1:50 in GET band and 1:45 in FET band, which exceeded the Department norm of 1:35.

The principal was appointed on 10 April 2018; there were 2 deputy principals, 5 HOD's, 26 post level 1 educators, 2 admin staff and 1 general worker.

Regarding academic performance, the school has been performing above the district and provincial target of 70% in Grade 12 for the past 5 years as follows: 86% in 2014; 83% in 2015; 73% in 2016 and 82% in 2018.

The school improvement plan (SIP) was in place (including a SWOT analysis of the school). The SGB was functional and supportive towards the principal and the school. Parental involvement and attendance at SGB meetings was good.

The Quality Learning and Teaching Campaign (QLTC) was supporting the school, which included mobile clinic visits to the school.

### 5.3. UPDATED PROGRESS REPORT ON 2017 TLP HOUSE RESOLUTIONS

The 1<sup>st</sup> progress report on the House Resolutions from 15 March 2017 was submitted to the Legislature by 30 June 2017 (as reflected in the table below).

The Committee noted from the updated progress that although the school infrastructure as it currently stands was still in the same condition since 2017, most of the issues were in the process of being addressed.

**The following updated progress was presented to the Committee on 31 July 2019:**

	<b>Resolutions</b>	<b>1<sup>st</sup> Progress report</b>	<b>Updated Progress</b>
1.	<b>Ensure that the vacant Principal and HOD Social Sciences posts are filled.</b>	The Principal post has not yet been advertised because the Department has not issued a Vacancy List for 2017.  The school qualifies for 5 HOD posts and all the posts have been filled.	The Principal post was filled on 10 April 2018.  <b>DONE.</b>
2.	<b>Assist the school to implement its school improvement plan (SIP) effectively and put interventions in place to address all challenges indicated by the (then) acting principal.</b>	Support is given by the circuit manager in the implementation of the SIP	• Quarterly monitoring visits were conducted by district and head office officials. circuit managers continue to support the school. <b>DONE</b>

	Resolutions	1 <sup>st</sup> Progress report	Updated Progress
3.	<p><b>Implement a turnaround strategy to ensure that the matric pass rate does not continue to drop below 73% achieved in 2016. Provide a progress report by 30 June 2017.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <b>The Department reported that the following was done to improve matric pass rate:</b></li> <li>○ SMT workshops on curriculum management; Weekly short tests; Workshops for teachers on challenging topics identified by diagnostic and internal moderator's report. Maths teachers 1 + 4 content workshops per quarter.</li> <li>○ Classroom observations are conducted by subject advisors</li> <li>○ Lesson demonstration by subject; Support teachers on development, implementation and monitoring of the SPIP.</li> <li>○ All underperforming schools have been adopted by District senior managers. Extra / additional classes (morning, afternoon, Saturday and vacation classes). Radio lessons on topics identified as problematic. Camps for talented learners in Maths, Accounting, and Physics will be conducted. Learner camps at school once a term;</li> <li>○ Common assessments for schools that have performed below 60% in 2016 NSC results. Supplied learners with study guides in Accounting, Economics, Geography and Maths. Winter schools for 10 schools that performed below 60% in the 2016 NSC results. All schools that performed below 70% in the 2016 NSC will receive supplementary study materials such as Mind the gap, previous question papers and DVDs in various subjects.</li> </ul>	<p>A detailed analysis of the 2018-year end and 2019 midterm results was conducted.</p> <p>The Department continued to administer the said strategies to improve results.</p> <p><b>The school's Grade 12 performance improved to 82% in 2018.</b></p> <p><b>DONE</b></p>

	Resolutions	1 <sup>st</sup> Progress report	Updated Progress
4.	<b>The Department must implement its plan to construct a new school at Doornkop, as indicated during the committee's visit. Provide a progress report by 30 June 2017 on key milestones and timeframes for the 2017/18 financial year.</b>	The project was deferred to the next financial year due to budgetary constraints as the department is dealing with Norms and Standards for the provision of Water, Sanitation and Electricity to schools, however the project is in the planning and design stage in this financial year.	The construction of the new Doornkop is currently underway (in phases). <b>Phase 1 is at 60% progress</b> , entails provision of basic services that include fencing, 35 ablutions, general house, water and electricity. Phase 2 will commence in the 2020/21 financial year. It was that the construction of the new school at Doornkop will provide relief for the overcrowding at Mkhulu in the near future. <b>IN PROGRESS</b>
5.	<b>Address the shortage of classrooms at the school. The progress report submitted on 30 June 2017 must reflect on:-</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• delivery of mobile classrooms</li> <li>• interim admin block; LAB</li> <li>• ICT infrastructure &amp; services</li> <li>• Telephone landline.</li> </ul>	The Department is still finalizing the mobile classrooms acquisition plan, considering other pressing needs of the Department.  If funds permit Mkhulu will also be considered.	The school received a donation of 2 mobile classrooms. A needs assessment indicated that the school did not require additional classrooms ( <b>due to the construction of the new school at Doornkop</b> ).  <b>DONE</b>
6.	<b>Ensure that the school addresses the necessary plumbing work required on the toilets and that they are adequately cleaned.</b>	The paper budget was transferred to the school account to address the plumbing challenges.	The plumbing issues were addressed and toilets were cleaned. Vodacom assisted with tiling of the sanitation facilities. <b>DONE</b> .
7.	<b>Ensure that municipal rates for utilities used by schools, especially no-fee schools are decreased. Update the committee on the provincial discussions with COGTA, SALGA and ESKOM regarding high utilities bills for schools.</b>	The Department will engage COGTA and the relevant service providers in this regard.	The school is able to pay the rates as they are now more manageable.  <b>DONE</b> , but no update on the discussions with COGTA regarding high utilities bills.

	<b>Resolutions</b>	<b>1<sup>st</sup> Progress report</b>	<b>Updated Progress</b>
8.	<b>The departmental monitoring unit must ensure that buses are roadworthy and that all scholar transport contracts are properly managed. Improve parent communication.</b>	The Department monitored the scholar transport challenges and these issues were also discussed with the implementing agent DPWRT.	New applications for scholar transport were made to DPWRT in the 2019/20 financial year. The Department was still waiting for a response from DPWRT. <b>IN PROGRESS</b>
9.	<b>The National Schools Nutrition Programme (NSNP) must benefit all learners enrolled at the school.</b>	All learners are benefiting from the school nutrition programme.	Status quo as previous progress remains. <b>DONE</b>
10.	<b>Regarding safety and security of school, the following must be addressed and a progress report by 30 June 2017:</b> a) <b>An effective school safety plan must be put in place;</b>  b) <b>The adopt-a-cop programme must conduct more random searches on drug abuse and violent behavior by learners.</b>	a) The school safety committee is effective and functioning.  b) The school has adopt-a-cop as per the co-operation between the DBE and SAPS.  c) A date has been set for a random search and seizure (31 July 2017)	a) Functionality of the school safety committee is continuously monitored by the Department.  b) The Department continues to conduct the random search and seizure programme. <b>DONE, but must continue.</b>
11.	<b>Ensure that the required learner furniture and textbooks are delivered to the school. Provide a progress report by 30 June 2017.</b>	There are no funds allocated for the provision of learner furniture.  The school has not received any textbook top-ups.	The school is prioritized to be supplied with furniture and <b>top-up textbooks in the 2019/20 financial year.</b> <b>IN PROGRESS</b>
12.	<b>Follow up with DPWRT on of scholar transport provision for Bankfontein and Hlalamnandi learners and communicate with the community.</b>	Bankfontein and surrounding areas learners who did not qualify for provision of scholar transport were provided with bicycles (Shovakalula).	The status quo is as per the previous progress report.  However, new applications for scholar transport were submitted to DPWRT, for approval. Daily challenges were still experienced by learners to get to school. <b>IN PROGRESS</b>

#### 5.4. OBSERVATIONS

- The Committee appreciated the filling of the vacant principal post by 10 April 2018. According to the Department the school qualified for 5 HOD's, of which there were already 5 HOD's at the school. The indicated post of HOD for Social Sciences was thus not filled.
- The school converted two classrooms to cater for the lack of a school library and computer laboratory. It was noted that VODACOM had donated 60 Laptops and was currently renovating the computer lab, installing security cameras, burglar bars, alarm system and internet connectivity. 10 teachers were trained on how to use internet for research, to cascade the digital information search to the learners.
- The school was operational from Grade R to Grade 12. However, the Department planned to split the school into two schools (Grade R to Grade 6 and Grade 7 to 12). This entailed the construction of a new primary school at Doornkop.
- The Department reported that the Committee's concerns about the **high municipal rates (utilities) bill** as raised during the previous visit, had been addressed during the engagement with COGTA and other stakeholders. The utilities bill was reportedly manageable and the school was able to pay it.
- **School Safety** - The functionality of the school safety committee was continuously monitored by the Department. However, main challenges of drug usage, bullying, bunking and absenteeism remained at the core of the school's challenges despite ongoing search and seizure and the adopt-a-cop programme. The poor fencing was still not addressed, thus vandalism and break-ins continued as the school was far from the village (an easy target).
- **Scholar Transport** - the poor condition of buses (ageing and un-roadworthy) was a serious matter as 98% of the learners qualified for scholar transport. Overloading and late arrival of buses were reported challenges. It was noted that some parents, due to poor understanding of the department's scholar transport policy, stalled the buses because their children were not allowed on the buses in terms of the policy.
- The Department's discussions with the DPWRT about scholar transport challenges experienced by the school and parents were noted. There were 400 learners who did not qualify and this causes quarrels between learners who used the bus on a first arrival basis. The Department reduced the number of buses to these 400 learners who did not qualify and provided bicycles for them instead.

## 5.5. FINDINGS

The following findings were made for **Mkhulu Combined School**:

- a) A school improvement plan (SIP) was in place and implemented, although it was a living document subject to continuous review, in line with the school's challenges.
- b) The classrooms were still unsafe and unsuitable (some corrugated iron classrooms) and the school fence was still in a very poor condition.
- c) To alleviate overcrowding the Department plans to split the school (Grade R to 6 and Grade 7 to 12) and to construct a new school at Doornkop. It was noted that Phase 1 (fencing, 35 ablutions, water and electricity) was at 60% progress and that Phase 2 (construction of the school) was to commence in the 2020/21 financial year.
- d) Water and sanitation was adequate (pit latrines and functional water-borne toilets); the borehole was well-serviced by the Department and the Municipality. The septic tank was maintained by the Municipality but at a steep cost which was consuming a large portion of the school budget.
- e) The school is prioritized for provision of school furniture and top-up textbooks during the 2019/20 financial year.
- f) The under-performance in Grades 9 and 10 persists yet Subject Advisors take long to visit the school.
- g) Scholar transport provision remains a problem due to poor communication of the policy and poor monitoring and implementation thereof by the DPWRT. However, the Department was awaiting a response from the DPWRT in respect of the new scholar transport applications made for the 2019/20 financial year.
- h) School safety and security was also still a big challenge at the school, indicating that the school safety committee, safety plan and adopt-a-cop were ineffective to date.
- i) The school has over-aged learners and this was negatively affecting the school's performance and functionality. According to the South African Schools Act, 1996 the cut-off age is 21 yet there were reportedly some 24 year old learners at the school.

## 5.6. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Committee resolved that the Department must implement the below recommendations for **Mkhulu Combined School** and **submit a progress report by 30 September 2019**:

- a) Monitor the school's implementation of its school improvement plan (SIP) in line with operational challenges during the 2019 school year and review it where necessary.
- b) Assist the school to develop and implement an infrastructure improvement plan (with timeframes) to address the unsafe and unsuitable classrooms and the poor fencing.
- c) Submit a detailed progress report on the planned splitting of Mkhulu Combined School **and** a technical progress report on the construction of the new school at Doornkop, as per the milestones and allocated budget for Phase 1.
- d) Assist the school to manage the costly maintenance of its septic tank and to ensure that the borehole remains well-serviced and functional.
- e) Deliver the textbooks and school furniture to the school (as per the requisitions) as prioritized by the Department for the 2019/20 financial year.
- f) Make an urgent intervention to improve curriculum support by Subject Advisors to Mkhulu Combined School as well as other circuits in Steve Tshwete Municipality.
- g) On the issue of scholar transport, the Department must implement the following:
  - (i) Fast track the processing of new applications for scholar transport for the 2019/20 financial year, as submitted to the DPWRT.
  - (ii) Update the Committee on addressing of scholar transport challenges in the 2019 school year, including the learners who walk from Bankfontein.
  - (iii) Provide proof of activities to strengthen communication with the school and parents on the content and implementation of the scholar transport policy.
- h) The school must have an effective safety plan and a functional safety committee in place to deal aggressively with drug abuse, vandalism and theft. The progress report must indicate successes in terms of these intervention measures.
- i) The Department must intervene in the matter of over-aged learners at the school, in line with the South African Schools Act, 1996 and the Department's admission policy.



## 6. CONCLUSION

The Chairperson would like to thank the Honourable Members of the Committee for their constructive input during the oversight visit in Steve Tshwete Local Municipality. The Legislature support staff were also thanked for the support provided to the Committee.

The Committee appreciated the interaction with the Department and sector stakeholders in attendance, in particular the SMT, SGB and RCL of Steve Tshwete Boarding School and Mkhulu Combined School.


The House is requested to adopt this oversight report of the Committee with its findings and recommendations.

**The Department must implement the House Resolutions in this Committee report and submit a progress report to the Legislature by 30 September 2019.**



**HON. NE HLOPHE (MPL)**

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



**DATE**

