

REPORT TAKING LEGISLATURE TO THE PEOPLE (TLP) OVERSIGHT VISITS OF THE PORTFOLIO COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION; CULTURE, SPORT AND RECREATION CONDUCTED AT THANDUXOLO SPECIAL SCHOOL IN EMALAHLENI LOCAL MUNICIPALITY, 14 MARCH 2018 – DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

1. INTRODUCTION

The Mpumalanga Provincial Legislature conducted the Taking Legislature to the People (TLP) event at Emalahleni Local Municipality from 12 – 16 March 2018.

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 Mpumalanga Provincial Legislature to hold the Department of Education (the Department) accountable through various oversight mechanisms during the course of a financial year, one of them is conducting oversight visits to schools funded by the Department. The Department implements two of the Provincial Outcomes, namely Outcome 1 (to provide quality basic education) and Outcome 5 (a skilled and capable workforce to support an inclusive growth path). In the light of this mandate, the Committee visited the **Thanduxolo Special School** in Klarinet, Emalahleni.

2. METHOD OF WORK

In preparation for the TLP visit, the Research Unit conducted preliminary visits to projects of the Department in Emalahleni Local Municipality (the Municipality) and identified projects to be visited by the Committee. The approved TLP Social Cluster oversight visit programme together with the relevant invitations were issued to the Committee and all stakeholders.

Subsequently the Committee met on 18 April 2018 to consider and adopt its draft report. The House resolutions emanating from the report will be referred to the Department for implementation and report back to the Legislature.

Invited stakeholders included the Department; Mpumalanga Regional Training Trust (MRTT), the Management and School Governing Body of Thanduxolo Special School, the Municipality (Office of the Executive Mayor, Office of the Speaker, Municipal Manager and councillors); the Department of Public Works, Roads and Transport (DPWRT); Provincial Treasury; Office of the Auditor-General SA, Office of the Public Service Commission; South African Local Government Association; House of Traditional Leaders; South African National Association for Special Education (SANASE), the South African Police Service (SAPS), the Department

of Social Development, teacher unions SADTU, NAPTOSA and NATU, as well as the South African Principals Association (SAPA).

3. PURPOSE OF THE OVERSIGHT VISIT

The purpose of the TLP oversight visit to the Thanduxolo Special School on 14 March 2018 was to assess the provision of quality “special education” by the Department and the functionality of this special school.

4. GENERAL OBSERVATIONS

The term “special educational needs” refers to children who have learning problems or disabilities that make it harder for them to learn than most children of the same age.

Thanduxolo Special School is a good story to tell; it is well-constructed, well-managed and is serving the needs of the community of Klarinet and surrounding areas in Emalahleni. The principal appreciated the school building, but indicated to the Committee that the classes were overcrowded, making it difficult to teach the required curriculum and also not compliant with the expected teacher to learner ratio and learner to classroom ratio. The Committee also resolved that the principal must submit within seven days, a list of critical resources needed for the school.

The Committee was briefed by the Department and the school management in one of the classrooms at the school. The Municipality was represented by Councillor Malahle from Extension 15, who indicated that she regularly worked closely with the school principal.

At the time of the Committee’s visit the Department had an acting MEC (Hon SJ Manzini) who was not able to attend due to concurrent TLP oversight visit of the Economic Cluster. The Head of Education, Ms. M Mhlabane and the Nkangala District Director, Mr. JJ Mabena welcomed the Committee and gave a brief overview of the school before handing over to the school principal, Mrs. C Habile, to present a detailed profile of the school to the Committee and all the stakeholders present.

The Committee interacted with the principal, the SGB members, the Department and the stakeholders in attendance on the achievements and main challenges of the school, as indicated in the circulated school profile. After the deliberations, the Committee conducted an *in loco* inspection of the school, whereby the classrooms, mobile kitchen, woodwork and home economics centre and the toilets were inspected.

5. INTERACTION WITH THE DEPARTMENT AND SCHOOL MANAGEMENT

5.1. Establishment of the school

Thanduxolo Special School started as a centre for people with disabilities in 1992 at an old school in Thushanang Location, Church Street, Kwa-Guqa, initiated by former school principals, teachers and social workers, managed by volunteers and supported by local pastors. In 1997 posts were advertised by the Department of Education for seven (7) educators and a principal; the school was officially registered and provided with an EMIS number. In 1998 the then principal together with the SGB identified an empty school building which was utilised as offices by the Educational Psychologist and Speech Therapist. The school management requested the Department of Education for permission to relocate to those offices. The Department approved the request, realizing the need for the school to have its own premises. In 2013, construction of a new school in Klarinet Extension 3 began, where the school is currently situated.

5.2. Provision of Special Education

The school started operating in 2014 as a school for children with severe intellectual disabilities (SID). It is one of the few inclusive schools in the Province that specializes in barriers to learning.

The Department of Education caters for three types of Special Schools:

- Inclusive schools
- Schools for learners with mild intellectual disabilities (MID)
- Schools for learners with severe intellectual disabilities (SID)

In each class there are learners who have multiple disabilities as mentioned below:-

Specific Learning Disability
Severely Intellectually Disabled
Epileptic
Physical Disabled
Behavioural Problem
Autistic

Learners with Profound Intellectual Disabilities (LPID)

As from the 2017/18 financial year, the Department has received a new conditional grant from National Treasury, namely the LPID grant.

South African National Association for Special Education (SANASE)

The special schools of the Department have a good relationship with SANASE, which is composed of parents and principals of special schools. The Provincial Chairperson of SANASE was in attendance at the Committee's visit on 14 March 2018. He expressed his appreciation for the LPID grant and indicated the importance of all educators in public schools to have training in special needs education. This was due to the fact that some children could actually remain in the mainstream schools (full service schools).

5.3. Admission Policy and Enrolment

Learners are admitted to the school based on the referral system by the Department's psychologists and independent psychologists. Admission is guided by the Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support (SIAS) documents. Learners with severe intellectual disability (SID) are admitted from the age of 5 to 18 but this can be extended to 21 years upon the recommendation of the school. The principal indicated that the admissions policy catered for referral of learners throughout the year.

The school enrolment in 2018 (by the time of the Committee's visit) was 242 learners. The Committee noted that the enrolment has been steadily declining over the past three years and requested clarity on whether 242 learners qualified the school for a deputy principal. It was also reported by the principal that the waiting list was very long and included children from all four education districts of the Province.

The learner-teacher ratio is 1 teacher to 5 learners (1:5). According to White Paper 6 on Inclusive and Special Schools, a school with 120 learners qualifies to have 24 professionally qualified teachers. However Thanduxolo Special School does not comply with the expected norm as the classes are over-crowded

New Curriculum for special schools

It was noted that the approach to learners with special education needs (LSEN) has changed in the 2018 academic year due to the newly developed Differentiated Curriculum Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS). Before the Differentiated CAPS was introduced, the adapted CAPS was used, which had no specific policy for the SID schools.

The challenge in offering the new academic subjects from grades 4 to 5 is that there are no Workbooks for those grades as the school had previously only been offering academic subjects up to grade 3. The Differentiated Caps requires learners to be grouped according to their ages whereas up to 2017 the learners were grouped according to their abilities and

strengths. The challenge is that the work becomes difficult and workload of the learners increases. Introduction of the Home Language is also a problem because learners and educators speak different home languages and the choice of one language will be difficult.

With the implementation of the National Differentiated CAPS it will become necessary for learners to rotate between workshops for skills subjects.

Subjects Offered up to 2017	Subjects offered from 2018
<p>Academic subjects:- English (First Additional Language) Mathematics Life Skills</p>	<p>Academic Subjects: Grades R - 3 English (First Additional Language) Home Language Mathematics Life Skills</p> <p>Academic Subjects: Grades 4 - 5 English (First Additional Language) Home Language Mathematics Life Skills</p>
<p>Skills subjects Wire mesh-making Gardening Hairdressing Woodwork Consumer Studies : Food Production and Hospitality Crafts : Leatherwork General Crafts Consumer Studies: Sewing) Nail and beauty</p>	<p>Skill Subjects Grade 4 – 5 Woodwork Agricultural Studies : Gardening Arts and Crafts Consumer Studies:- Food Studies; Sewing Personal Care:- Beauty and Nail Technology Technology (To be introduced) Hairdressing</p>

Skills Subjects

Introduction of skill subjects has also proven to be a challenge in that it requires trained educators in those skills and presently no educator has been trained; they use their little knowledge gained through life experiences.

Assessment

Due to the nature of the mental disabilities that the learners are experiencing, continuous assessment of informal and formal activities is conducted on a daily basis. Like the curriculum, the assessment is also differentiated to meet the needs of the individual learners in a class group. All learners in the group are evaluated on the same content areas, but because it is necessary to straddle the content to address the needs of the individual learners the assessment is conducted on different levels.

A learner's progress can never be compared with that of other learner; rather, progress is measured against the outcomes as they are described in the curriculum. Progress from one level is not determined by academic achievement but by chronological age of the learners:

Level R – ages 5, 6, 7 and profound learners do level R

Level 1 – ages 8, 9

Level 2 – ages 10, 11

Level 3 – ages 12, 13

Level 4 – ages 14, 15

Level 5 – ages 16, 17 and 19

Provision for sports in the new curriculum

The principal expressed concern about the new curriculum requirement that learners should be in class for teaching and learning 27,5 hours a week, indicating that this did not include hours for sports activities. According to the principal, the Department of Culture, Sport and Recreation had declared Wednesdays to be a sports day. Presently, the learners spend 25 hours a week in class.

The principal was of the view that the 27.5 hours should include sports, to accommodate the learners' short concentration span.

5.4. SMT Functionality

The school has a full complement of the Senior Management Team (SMT) which is functional, consisting of the Principal, Deputy Principal and three (3) Education Specialists.

The SMT ensures that effective teaching and learning takes place, which implies lesson planning and monitoring of curriculum implementation at the different levels into which the curriculum is divided. Each member of the SMT monitors a group of levels and holds group level meetings to discuss progress, challenges and strategies for improvement.

Group level workshops are also conducted to assist teachers to implement the new differentiated CAPS (Curriculum and Policy Statement) and develop strategies to do group lesson planning assessment and provide support. The SMT holds monthly staff meetings to discuss urgent circulars from Head Office and other relevant matters pertinent to teaching and learning, teacher development through the Integrated Quality Management System (IQMS) and staff development plans.

Staffing

The following staffing was reflected in the school profile:

Principal	Deputy principal	HOD	CS 1	Administrator	Occupational Therapist	SASO	G/Worker
1	1	3	15 (1)	2	1	4 (10)	3

Staff shortage

The school has a shortage of one (1) educator and ten (10) classroom assistants. Classroom assistants are important in special schools as the learners need special attention; they cannot be left unattended if the teacher has to attend to something urgent outside of the classroom. It was noted that there is an urgent need to employ these classroom assistants.

Educator qualifications and employment

REQV 13	REQV 14	REQV 15	REQV 16
1	5	8	1

Most of the educators have basic REQV 13 plus further training in special education through workshops and further study, thereby acquiring the necessary skills and knowledge to teach learners with special education needs. The Committee commended that some of the current educators had started out as volunteers with no matric, but now they have qualifications.

Support provided by the Department of Education

The school indicated the following support provided by the Circuit, District and Province:

- Regular communication/telephone calls and monitoring visits by circuit office
- Personnel administrative matters
- Monitoring of Infrastructure
- Meetings and Teacher Development Workshops

Sick leave by educators

The Committee raised a concern about the high percentage (49%) of educators taking sick leave, considering the staffing challenges raised by the school.

Occupational Therapist

An Occupational Therapist aims to help people complete the functions of their everyday lives. In the case of learners with special needs, this includes:

- Cognitive functioning (school)
- Play
- Socializing
- Exploring

Reflected below are the responsibilities of the Occupational Therapist based at the school:

- Serve on the Admissions committee and assess every new learner to ensure correct placement and the appropriate therapy needed;
- Refer children within the multi-disciplinary team (speech therapy, social worker and psychologist);
- Case management –includes all stakeholders (parents, teacher, doctor, psychologist) if important decisions need to be taken regarding the learner;
- Direct therapy happens on an individual basis as well as in groups;
- Indirect therapy given through teacher education and parent education.
- Therapy programmes that focus on:
 - Learners up to 12 years– fine motor, gross motor, visual perceptual skills;
 - Learners from 12 to 16 years – higher functioning visual perceptual skills;
 - Learners from 16 to 18 years – community based education and pre-vocational skills that will prepare the learners for the school-to-work programme that will be implemented later this year;
 - Physical therapy: hand therapy, wheelchair dexterity, strengthening programmes

The following challenges regarding Occupational Therapist were indicated:

- **Insufficient space** for optimal therapy, especially for groups of 9-10 learners doing gross motor programmes. If therapy is done outside, it is subject to the weather.
- **Insufficient equipment and resources** – visual perceptual games, beads/tweezers/string for fine motor skills, gym ball, balance beams, skipping rope, small table and chairs, standardized assessment tools, hammock, sensory equipment, pretend play.
- **Insufficient information in learner files** - diagnosis, medication, reports / assessments from multi-disciplinary team members.
- **Heavy load for one therapist** – 1 therapist for >200 learners, unable to provide intensive therapy.
- **Multi-disciplinary team** – Although SID is the main disability there are other secondary complications like speech difficulties and severe behavioural problems.

Social worker for the school

The Committee advised that the Department should approach the Department of Social Development to provide the services of a Social Worker for the school. This was welcomed by the school principal in the spirit of Batho Pele principles.

5.5. SGB Functionality

At the time of the Committee's visit, the school had a newly elected SGB; the members attended the visit. The Committee reiterated the importance of the incoming SGB being properly inducted and trained on their roles and responsibilities.

The school profile indicated that the following employees were paid by the SGB: one (1) administrator; three (3) general workers and six (6) security guards.

Management of school finances

The SGB has the required Finance sub-committee, which is responsible for consultation with parents and the school for finalization and approval of the budget. The relevant financial policies were also reported to be in place.

Departmental allocation

In addition to the allocation from the Department, the school also charges school fees. The allocation from the Department in the 2018 academic year is as follows:

Allocation in May	Allocation in November
R 754 490	R 754 490

School and community relations

The principal reported that relations with the community were good, citing various school activities that the community participated in. The principal indicated that the community participated in the school's activities such as celebrations of achievements and send-off functions for learners who participate in the national team and compete internationally. Children from neighbouring communities also take part in the Special Olympics sporting event held at the school and also utilise the school premises for cross country activities. The school also provided space in its premises for the Department of Home Affairs for application of birth certificates for children of Klarinet.

However the Committee raised a concern about the high rate of vandalism, burglaries and theft by certain elements in the community. It was also noted that the Quality Learning and

Teaching Campaign (QLTC) at the school was not fully operational; the Committee urged the school and the SGB to address this matter as the QLTC is a bridge to assist relations between the SGB and the school and the community.

5.6. School Infrastructure

The school has 14 classrooms, an administration block, a therapist and teacher work station. There are also workshops or specialist classrooms for the Skills Subjects as required by the new Differentiated CAPS curriculum being implemented in 2018. It was reported that the 14 classrooms were overcrowded. Other than that, the school infrastructure was admirable.

There is also a swimming pool which is not completed yet; it will be used to develop the learners' fine motor skills.

Ablution facilities

It was noted from the school profile that every class has a toilet, a bathroom and a sickbay.

Teachers	Number of toilets	Learners	Number of toilets
Male	2	Boys	14
Female	3	Girls	14



Splash swimming pool



Learners in the classroom

5.7. Scholar transport

The school indicated a critical challenge in this regard. It was noted that the Department has provided the school with a 22 seater bus but it was indicated that there was no driver for the bus. Due to the complicated routes from different areas of eMalahleni, Middelburg, Ogies, Kriel, Hendrina, surrounding mines and farms, the bus has not been transporting learners to and from school. The routes were reported as follows:

- Hendrina 85 km
- Rietspruit 68 km
- Lanfloop 45 km
- Zaaihoek 20 km
- KwaGuqa extensions 23 km

The principal stated that if this 22 seater bus would be used, the last group of learners would arrive at school when it was time to go home. As a result of these challenges, parents resorted to organizing private transport for their children but this was extremely dangerous as some learners are deaf and need assistance.

Learners commuting

From	Number of learners
Klarinet Ext 3 Walking	25
Coronation	5
Down town	1
Duvapark	1
Kasbamu	1
Klarinet Ext 4	1
Klarinet Ext 6	11
Klarinet Ext 7	3
Klarinet Ext 8	8
Klipfontein	4
Kriel	1
Kwaguqa Extentions	82
Kwaguqa Location	52
Maddel park	1
Mgewani	1
Middleburg	17
Overline	3
Phola Ogies	3
Rietspruit	4
Tasbet Park	2
TOTAL	242

The Committee noted that this scholar transport challenge pointed to the need for a boarding facility at the school to alleviate the specific challenges encountered to date.

The school principal elaborated on some examples of the specific challenges experienced in relation to scholar transport, indicating that learners were recently in a kombi which started to burn while transporting learners back home. Fortunately the driver noticed this and managed to stop the kombi to assist the learners to get off the kombi. The principal further indicated that some learners travel on overloaded kombis, some taxi drivers abuse the learners by letting them push the taxi when it broke down; there was also a reported accident at Kromdraai involving an un-roadworthy taxi which was speeding to avoid traffic officers. The principal indicated that pick-up times by private transport are as early as 05:30 am and drop off as late as 17:00, while learners remain hungry on the taxi. There was also a reported incident whereby a learner had an epileptic seizure on the taxi. The principal further stated that some learners walked about 23km to school from as far as Kwa-Guqa (various extensions) while others also hitch-hiked.

5.8. National School Nutrition Programme (NSNP)

The school does not have a constructed kitchen; it makes use of a mobile kitchen which is parked on the school grounds. The space in the mobile kitchen is limited and the necessary equipment such industrial sink and water pipes cannot be installed. However, the Committee noted that the NSNP at the school was functional as food items were delivered on time and meals were prepared for the children, served daily at 10:00.

5.9. Safety and security

The school reported a high rate of burglary and theft in the area. The problem arose from the fact that the security company employed by the Department of Public Works when the school was handed over, was not paid after six months of being on site at the school. As a result the guards left the school, which was when the burglaries started. The SGB intervened by appointing six (6) guards. The two they provided were attacked and held at gunpoint and kept hostage while the admin block was broken into and all the computers were stolen.

5.10. School hall

The school indicated that there was no school hall where learners would play indoor games such as table tennis, rowing, and assembling on rainy days, during winter and for school functions. The hall would also be used as a dining hall where learners could also be taught table manners and related skills. Furthermore, the principal indicated that the hall would enable the school to host district departmental activities for special schools.

6. FINDINGS

The Committee made the following findings for Thanduxolo Special School:

- 6.1. There is overcrowding at the school as the current 14 classrooms accommodate more children than the required norm.
- 6.2. The school complied with the Committee's request to submit within seven (7) days a list of critical resources needed for effective functioning of the school (list attached).
- 6.3. Staffing shortages include one (1) teacher and ten (10) classroom (SASO) assistants.
- 6.4. Teachers at the school are not adequately trained to teach Skills Subjects in the new Differentiated Curriculum and Policy Assessment Statement (CAPS), which will be implemented at all Special Schools in 2018.
- 6.5. The school had a lack of workbooks for Grades 4-5 Academic Subjects.

- 6.6. The school was not benefitting from the 22 seater bus provided by the Department in 2014 due to the complex scholar transport routes and that the bus did not cater for children with special needs. The challenges indicate a need for a boarding facility.
- 6.7. There is a long waiting for admission to the school.
- 6.8. The new SGB for the school was elected on 10 March 2018.
- 6.9. The Quality Learning and Teaching Campaign (QLTC) is not fully functional.
- 6.10. The school did not have an effective Safety Plan in place, thus the high rate of vandalism and burglaries.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings above, the Committee recommended that the Department must implement the following and **provide a progress report by 31 May 2018:**

- 7.1. Address the overcrowding challenge at the school to ensure that the school complies with the required norm.
- 7.2. Urgently attend to all the issues on the school's submitted list of critical needs.
- 7.3. Fill the vacancies for the one teacher and ten classroom (SASO) assistants.
- 7.4. All teachers at the school must be adequately trained to teach Skills Subjects as required by the new Differentiated CAPS curriculum being implemented in 2018.
- 7.5. Ensure that workbooks for Grades 4-5 academic subjects are delivered to the school.
- 7.6. In consultation with the Department of Public Works; Roads and Transport, urgently address the school's frustrations to date in relation to scholar transport provision. The school must be provided with a boarding facility as soon as possible; submit the proposed plan and budget in this regard.
- 7.7. Urgently attend to the long waiting list for the school, so that all learners with special educational needs must have access to the services provided by the Department.
- 7.8. Ensure that the newly elected SGB is properly supported and that it undergoes all the required training in order to fulfill all its legal obligations.
- 7.9. Ensure that the Quality Learning and Teaching Campaign (QLTC) is functional.

- 7.10. Assist the school management and the SGB to develop an effective Safety Plan for the school and to urgently facilitate an Imbizo with the South African Police Service (Witbank Cluster) and stakeholders in school safety and security.

8. JOINT ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL CLUSTER PUBLIC HEARING

The joint public hearing was conducted on 15 March 2018 at the TLP main venue, Sy Mthimunye Stadium in Ackerville.

Some of the service delivery issues raised by the community pertaining to the **Department of Education** were noted as follows:

- The community requested a University in Nkangala district
- Children attending Special Schools did not get employment easily and they suffered from social stigmas by the community
- There is a lack of assistance for children living with disabilities
- There is no school for the deaf
- Ward 15 needs a high school
- A primary school is needed in Kriel and they only have one (1) high school. They were promised another high school in 2010.

8.1 RECOMMENDATION IN RESPECT OF THE PUBLIC HEARING ON 15 MARCH 2018

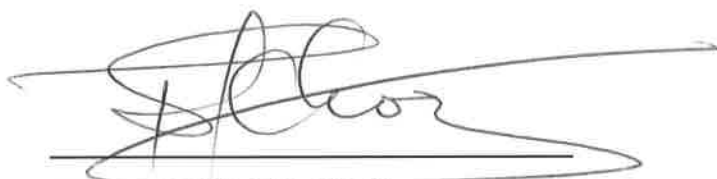
- a) The Department is requested to investigate the above-mentioned concerns raised by the community of eMalahleni Local Municipality and subsequently provide a progress report to the Committee by 31 May 2018.

9. CONCLUSION

The Chairperson of the Portfolio Committee would like to thank the Honourable Committee Members for their constructive input during the TLP oversight visit to Thanduxolo Special School in Emalahleni Local Municipality on 14 March 2018.

The Committee extends its sincere appreciation to the Department of Education and all stakeholders for their contributions during the visit. The Committee also acknowledges the support of the Legislature officials.

The Committee therefore requests the House to adopt this report with its findings and recommendations. The Department is required to implement the House Resolutions in this Committee report and submit a progress report before 31 May 2018.



**HON. TS KHOZA (MPL)
CHAIRPERSON: PORTFOLIO COMMITTEE ON
EDUCATION; CULTURE, SPORT AND RECREATION**

26/04/2018

DATE