

OVERSIGHT VISIT REPORT OF THE PORTFOLIO COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION; CULTURE, SPORT AND RECREATION

TAKING LEGISLATURE TO THE PEOPLE (TLP) IN STEVE TSHWETE LOCAL MUNICIPALITY: VISIT TO STEVE TSHWETE BOARDING SCHOOL & MKHULU COMBINED SCHOOL ON 15 MARCH 2017; PUBLIC HEARING ON 16 MARCH 2017

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 Steve Tshwete Local Municipality from 13 – 17 March 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, which is providing Quality Basic Education to learners and Outcome 5, which is a skilled and capable workforce to support an inclusive growth path.

As part of the TLP event, the Committee undertook oversight visits to two schools in the Steve Tshwete Local Municipality (the Municipality) and also participated in the Joint Social and Economic Cluster Public Hearing to listen to the concerns of the community relating to delivery of government services. 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 OVERSIGHT VISITS AND PUBLIC HEARING

The purpose of the TLP oversight visits conducted on 15 March 2017 and the Public Hearing conducted on 16 March 2017 was as follows:

- (a) To assess the Department's progress in addressing the concerns of the Committee on the overall functionality and infrastructure of **Steve Tshwete Boarding School** as raised during the first visit to the school on 02 February 2017;
- (b) To assess the overall functionality and infrastructure of **Mkhulu Combined School**;
- (c) To solicit the concerns of the community regarding delivery of services by the Department.

3. METHOD OF WORK

In preparation for the TLP visits, the Research Unit conducted preliminary visits to projects of the Department in the Municipality and identified projects to be visited by the Committee.

The findings on the state of education service delivery in the Municipality were captured in a research report, which was considered and approved by the TLP Political Steering Committee. The report and an approved programme for the TLP oversight activities was circulated to the Committee and relevant stakeholders such as the Municipality, the Department, Department of Public Works, Roads and Transport (DPWRT), Provincial Treasury, the Office of the Auditor-General SA and the Office of the Public Service Commission.

For the Steve Tshwete Boarding school, the Committee conducted an initial visit to the school on 02 February 2017 and the report was considered and adopted on 07 March 2017, with the progress report due by 30 April 2017. At the follow up visit conducted during the TLP on 15 March 2017 the Department provided progress on the issues raised by the Committee on 02 February 2017. The progress report on the House Resolutions for the 02 February 2017 visit was subsequently submitted and incorporated into this report.

Subsequently the Committee met on 09 May 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. OVERSIGHT VISIT TO STEVE TSHWETE BOARDING SCHOOL, 15 MARCH 2017

4.1. Brief Background

The school is the 5th boarding school constructed in Mpumalanga since 1994. It was officially opened in July 2016 and has incorporated six farm schools with multi-grade classes which were closed down by the Department. It is situated on Portion 27 of Elandslaagte farm, within Somaphepha village in the Steve Tshwete Local Municipality of Mpumalanga Province.

4.2. Interaction with the Department, Boarding School management and stakeholders

At a briefing held at the school, the HOD of the Department and the District Director for Nkangala presented a progress report on the issues raised by the Committee during the 02 February 2017 visit. The Chief Director: District Co-ordination, the school principal, his management team (SMT), the School Governing Body (SGB) and the Learner Representative Council (LRC) were present. The Steve Tshwete Local Municipality and the South African Democratic Teachers Union (SADTU), the Department of Public Works, Roads and Transport as well as the Office of the Auditor-General were also in attendance.

4.3. PROGRESS ON ISSUES RAISED DURING THE COMMITTEE'S OVERSIGHT VISIT CONDUCTED ON 02 FEBRUARY 2017

| ISSUE RAISED/CHALLENGE | PROGRESS AS AT 15 MARCH 2017 |
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| <p>Sewer treatment plant</p> <p>It was discovered during the first visit that the sewer treatment plant was not adequately maintained by the school. The Committee noted that the on-site maintenance staff was not properly trained on operations and maintenance of the sewer plant (and other general maintenance issues).</p> | <p>The Department reported that the school was requested to maintain the sewer plant on a daily basis and to make use of chlorine as required. It was pointed out that this was not being done, which had resulted in the over-flowing of the sewer plant.</p> |
| <p>Water shortage</p> <p>The Committee had noted the water shortage at the school and the proposed long term plans of the Municipality for provision of bulk water infrastructure. In the meantime the school had two boreholes for water supply, but the amount of water being pumped to the reservoir was not sufficient for the school's everyday use. The Committee noted the need for strengthened security measures to guard against theft of the school's resources, which were State resources.</p> | <p>The Department reported that a third borehole was drilled on the adjacent farm to supplement water supply to the school and solar panels were installed to operationalize the borehole. However, the solar panels were stolen twice and as an interim measure the contractor procured a generator, which was mounted on a trailer and towed 2km to the borehole on a daily basis. This was however, adding to the operational costs for the school account.</p> |
| <p>Leaking roofs in the facilities</p> <p>The Committee had noted the leaking roof in the dining hall area and in the Grade R dormitory at the hostel Block E.</p> | <p>The Department reported that the contractor was still on site and would fix the ceiling in the dining hall and the kitchen but not in the classrooms and admin block, as those leakages resulted from the installation of CCTV cameras by another service provider who drilled holes in the roof to install conduits but did not seal the holes.</p> |
| <p>Leaking ablution facilities, blocked drains, broken doors, door handles and windows</p> <p>The Committee had noted the leakages in the toilets, which according to the school and the Department were due to elements of vandalism by the learners. The Committee noted that the</p> | <p>The Department reported that the learners were contributing to this challenge by deliberately removing taps and flushing mechanisms, as well as disposing of unwanted materials in the ablution facilities that has resulted in blocked drains.</p> |

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| <p>SMT and Hostel Staff will need to put in place stringent systems to deter the learners from vandalizing the facilities. Furthermore, the Committee advised the principal to appoint groundsmen who have basic skills in plumbing, electrical and general maintenance so as to attend to such incidents on site and quicker than a service provider.</p> | <p>The Department indicated that the on-site foreman/groundsman will attend a refresher course on maintenance procedures.</p> |
| <p>Placement of the 21 year old learner The Committee had resolved that this learner be removed from the Grade 3 class as this created a threat of potential age exploitation to the young children. The 21 year old reportedly had the mentality of a 4 year old.</p> | <p>The Department reported that it was dealing with this matter through its Inclusive Education Directorate and the Department of Social Development to find placement for the learner at a suitable alternative learning institution. Progress will be provided in the 30 April 2017 report due for submission.</p> |
| <p>SGB issue relating to the R4 million paper budget for the school The Committee had noted that the SGB did not understand the concept of paper budget, hence this mistaken view that the Department owed them R4 million in cash transfer.</p> | <p>The Department acknowledged that the SGB was in need of capacity building on governance and financial management.</p> |
| <p>Strengthening of the palisade fencing with barbed wire. The Committee had noted with concern that some learners were escaping through the palisade fencing. The principal had suggested barbed wire be installed on each side of the fence to deter learners.</p> | <p>No progress was reported on this matter. However, the Department indicated that they will continue working with the SGB to see how best to address the matter. The HOD indicated that barbed wire on the palisade fencing would be included in the design for all new boarding schools to be built. See progress report on House Resolution 9.</p> |
| <p>Installation of 256 dormitory doors The Committee had noted this SGB project to install 128 cubicle doors each at the boys and girls dormitories to create more privacy for the learners, which was in progress at the time of the visit on 02 February 2017.</p> | <p>The Department reported that the project was not yet completed and that it depended on fundraising by the SGB. The principal could not give a definite timeframe for completion.</p> |

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| <p>Equipping of the laboratory</p> <p>The Committee noted that the laboratory was well built but not yet equipped. It was emphasized that the school must have a fully-fledged library, laboratory and ICT facilities.</p> | <p>No progress was reported on this matter during the TLP visit. The HOD was requested to provide a timeframe for delivery of the equipment.</p> <p>See progress report on House Resolution 10.</p> |
| <p>Power failures at the dormitories</p> <p>It was reported that there were power failures in the dormitories on Blocks C and H.</p> | <p>Regarding the power failures, the Department reported that upon further investigation it was discovered that this was caused by illegal connection into the distribution box by the service provider who installed the CCTV cameras in the dormitories. The contractor has not agreed to fix this as it is the responsibility of the CCTV service provider.</p> |
| <p>Falling retaining walls</p> <p>It was also reported that the retaining walls were falling as a result of soil erosion.</p> | <p>The Department reported that the contractor was still quantifying the work in this regard and would soon resume the job.</p> |

4.4. PROGRESS REPORT ON HOUSE RESOLUTIONS FROM THE 02 FEBRUARY 2017 VISIT

The Department submitted the following progress report on House Resolutions:

| RECOMMENDATION | PROGRESS REPORTED AS AT 08 MAY 2017 |
|---|---|
| <p>1) Ensure that the school improvement plan (SIP) is finalized and implemented. Provide a progress report by 30 April 2017 on the interventions in place to address each challenge at the school, with timeframes for completion.</p> | <p>The school has developed a school improvement plan (SIP) and it is being implemented. The SIP was submitted to the Committee.</p> |
| <p>2) Ensure that all the reported infrastructure and technical defects are fixed by the contractor before the retention period ends. Provide a technical progress report by 30 April 2017 on the completion of all infrastructure works.</p> | <p>The Department reported as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Department of Education wrote to the service provider to ensure that the defects at the school are attended to. • A technical progress report was received from the appointed consultants; the report and submitted to the Committee. |

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| | During the TLP visit, it was reported that the leakage of the roof and the distribution box fault was as a result of the work done by the security company that installed CCTV cameras. |
| 3) Develop and implement a long term sustainable solution to the bulk water reticulation system at the school in consultation with the Steve Tshwete Local Municipality. Submit a proposed plan and a technical progress report by 30 April 2017. | The Department has engaged DPWR&T and to liaise with Steve Tshwete Municipality through the professional service provider (Civil Engineer and Principal Agent). It is envisaged to be completed by the end of July 2017. |
| 4) Ensure that the 120 beds and bedding, as well as the 136 mattresses are procured and delivered to the school; these assets must be properly recorded and managed. Provide a progress report by 30 April 2017. | The Department will procure the beds and bedding with the new budget in 2017/18 financial year by the 30 June 2017. |
| 5) Finalize the draft departmental policy on the general and financial day-to-day operations of the Province's boarding schools and ensure that it is adopted and implemented. Provide an update by 30 April 2017 and submit the policy. | The Department submitted its draft policy on the general and financial day-to-day operations of the Province's boarding schools. The policy will be approved by the Department by the end of May 2017. |
| 6) Make an arrangement for the 21 year old learner enrolled in the Grade 3 class to continue his learning at an alternative learning institution. Provide a progress report in this regard by 30 April 2017. | The departmental psychologists are still busy with the learner to find an appropriate placement. The Department apologized for having failed to complete this before the start of the second term as committed at the meeting during the TLP on 15 March 2017. The Department assured the Committee it was dealing with the matter according to the due sensitivity and urgency. |
| 7) The maintenance team at the school must consist of groundsmen who are multi-skilled and able to perform small | The recommendation was noted by the Department; in future they will consider appointing groundsmen who are multi-skilled and |

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| <p>maintenance jobs on site. The monitoring of the cleaning staff must also be strengthened, in particular those responsible for the sewer treatment plant, toilets and the library. Provide a progress report by 30 April 2017.</p> | <p>able to perform small maintenance jobs on site. The school has also established a maintenance team which has commenced with work. Leaking toilets have been fixed. The boarding master is monitored by the Principal to maintain the cleanliness of the facilities.</p> |
| <p>8) Ensure that all the planned ICT resources for the school, including Wi-Fi service are delivered and that the telephone landline is connected. Provide a progress report by 30 April 2017.</p> | <p>The Department reported that four (4) Interactive boards and 20 Tablets have been procured and delivered to the school, but they were awaiting installation. The envisaged date of installation will be before the end of June 2017</p> |
| <p>9) Ensure that learners do not leave the school premises without permission. Provide a progress report by 30 April 2017 on the strengthened security measures in place, in particular on the palisade fence.</p> | <p>The Department reported the following security measures in place:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are six (6) Security Guards per shift: three (3) Security Guards are responsible for patrolling the premises whilst the other 3 managing the main entrance. • Cameras were installed. • The process to procure and install razor wire to strengthen the palisade was underway. <p>The Department acknowledged that the reinforcing of the palisade fencing will be taken into consideration in the specifications for all future boarding schools constructed.</p> |
| <p>10) Provide the school with the necessary scientific equipment and chemicals for the laboratory and ensure that the library is fully stocked with sufficient and relevant books. Submit a progress report by 30 April 2017.</p> | <p>The Department reported as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The school has received Mathematics, Life Sciences and Physical Sciences kits. The replenishment of consumables is the responsibility of the School Governing Body through the allocated paper budget. The Department will transfer the 50% of the paper budget by 30 June 2017. |

4.5. FURTHER OBSERVATIONS ON THE STEVE TSHWETE BOARDING SCHOOL

4.5.1. It was observed that the following factors, if not adequately addressed are threats to the success of the boarding school:

- Inadequate measures to address vandalism of the facilities by the learners
- Exposure of younger learners to unwholesome conduct of older learners
- Inadequate support for effects of bullying, fighting, smoking, drugs and sexual exploitation
- Inadequate support for learners from child-headed households and very poor families
- Inadequate monitoring and management of the scholar transport contract by DPWRT
- Inadequate staff provisioning
- Inadequate security and insurance to protect state resources against burglary and theft
- Inadequate monitoring and maintenance of school infrastructure
- Inadequate water treatment that could lead to water-borne diseases
- Inadequate resourcing for the laboratory, library and other special centres such as the clinic
- Inadequate provision of ICT equipment and infrastructure
- Inadequate assets and contract management (e.g. beds, mattresses and laundry services)

4.5.2. Provisioning of staff and proposed re-classification of the school

The principal had indicated that the school was under-staffed by two (2) educators. The Committee observed that with an enrolment of 1 036 learners as at 15 March 2017, the school qualified for a Deputy Principal. The Department was advised to consider re-classification of the school and make necessary arrangements to appoint a Deputy Principal and need for two (2) additional teachers.

4.5.3. Medical facilities at the school

The school has a mini-clinic on site to attend to health needs of the learners. There are two qualified nurses based at the clinic.

4.5.4. Learner Representative Council (LRC)

In the interaction with the LRC, the chairperson (a female learner) appreciated the new boarding school, especially the accommodation and sporting facilities. She also indicated that the academic results, although good at 68.8% for 2016, must improve. The Committee had noted in the first visit on 02 February 2016 that the curriculum delivery and support at the school were very good. 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.

4.5.5. Cellular network; ICT services, library and laboratory

The school did not have good cellular network coverage and did not have a telephone landline connection. The Committee emphasized that the school must have a fully-fledged library,

laboratory and ICT infrastructure and services. It was noted that 20 tablets were delivered to the school; however, the principal indicated that the school was also in need of 20 computers.

5. INFRASTRUCTURE REPORT BY THE DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS, ROADS AND TRANSPORT (IMPLEMENTING AGENT)

During the Committee's first visit on 02 February 2017, the implementing agent was not present but they were in attendance during the TLP visit of the Committee.

The Committee had noted the infrastructure defects (snag list). The Department had agreed to report the issues to the implementing agent so that the contractor could attend to them before the end of the retention period, which was said to be the end of July 2017. The implementing agent reported that the professional team and the contractor were addressing the following matters arising on site and were working towards closing out the project:

- drilling of the 3rd borehole to address water shortage;
- purchasing and towing of a generator to the borehole pump which was 2km away;
- fixing the collapsing retaining walls; and
- fixing roof leakages and ceiling boards in the classrooms, dining hall and kitchen.

There was also the problem of a leaking roof in the Grade R dormitory and power failures in Block C and H dormitories. These were not addressed by the contractor, as it was discovered to be the fault of another service provider who had drilled holes in the roof to install the CCTV cameras and failed to seal the holes (thus causing the roof to leak when it rained) and also doing an illegal connection into the distribution box when installing the CCTV cameras.

The implementing agent submitted the following project information on 15 March 2017, during the TLP visit, which the Committee noted as follows:

| Scope of work | |
|---------------|--|
| | Admin block |
| | 28 classrooms |
| | Library |
| | Computer Laboratory, Science Laboratory |
| | 8 Toilet blocks |
| | 3 X Grade R accommodation blocks |
| | 4 x Girls accommodation blocks |
| | 4 x Boys accommodation blocks |
| | Kitchen, Laundry, Multi-purpose Hall |
| | Generator room |
| | Janitor room |
| | Security guardhouse, concrete palisade fence |
| | Ramps, rails and steps |
| | Parking, paving |
| | Grade R classrooms |
| | Sports facilities |
| | Change rooms |

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| Contractual and professional information | |
| Contract amount | R377 879 430.67 |
| Professional fees | R44 500 000.00 |
| Contract start date | 19 August 2015 |
| Planned end date | 19 August 2016 |
| Actual completion date | 23 May 2016 |
| Contract period | 12 months |
| Principal agent | MSK Group |
| Quantity Surveyor | Morei Matji & Associates |
| Structural civil engineer | Monde consulting |
| Electrical and mechanical engineers | Risimati Engineers |
| Architects | MSK Group Holdings |
| Contractor | Clear Choice Builders, CIDB grade 9 |
| Job creation | |
| | 385 people employed: |
| | 35 men, 65 women, 285 youth |

Monitoring by the implementing agent

The DPWRT reported to the Committee that during the implementation of the project, monitoring and controls were done as follows:

- progress assessment was done on a weekly basis during site meetings; and
- the client department received monthly reports

6. FINDINGS

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

- 6.1. The school has a shortage of two (2) teachers and does not have a deputy principal.
- 6.2. As a newly established institution, the school did not have all the relevant school policies in place yet. There was a school improvement plan (SIP) in place, but it needs refining.
- 6.3. The SGB has not undergone the necessary training on governance, administration and financial management.
- 6.4. The maintenance staff did not maintain the sewer treatment plant as required; this had resulted in the hazardous situation of overflowing sewerage into the adjacent farm.
- 6.5. The school is facing a threat of vandalism of the facilities by the learners and theft of school resources such as the solar panels which are used to power the borehole pumps.
- 6.6. The contractor purchased a generator to assist in powering the borehole pumps while replacement solar panels were being procured; however the transporting of the generator to the pumps has increased the operational costs of the project.

- 6.7. The implementing agent failed to monitor the service provider who had drilled holes in the roofs of the Grade R hostel and the admin block to install CCTV cameras; the failure to seal the holes resulted in roof leakages and further damage to the walls.
- 6.8. The contractor was in the process of addressing the retention wall that was collapsing due to soil erosion.
- 6.9. The school has a mini-clinic on site, with two qualified nurses to attend to the health needs of the learners.
- 6.10. The school's computer laboratory was not functional (no computers and ICT infrastructure); there was no cellular network coverage and no telephone landline.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Committee recommended that the Department must implement the following:

- 7.1. Consider re-classification of the boarding school and ensure that the school has a Deputy Principal and adequate teachers. Provide a progress report by 30 June 2017.
- 7.2. Ensure that the school develops, adopts and correctly implements all the relevant policies; provide a progress report by 30 June 2017.
- 7.3. Ensure that the SGB attends capacity building training in governance, administration and financial management. Provide a progress report in this regard by 30 June 2017.
- 7.4.
 - (a) Ensure that the school 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.
 - (b) Ensure that the Municipality comes on board to assist with the eradication of the sewerage problem.
 - (c) Provide a progress report on the above by 30 June 2017.
- 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. Provide a progress report by 30 June 2017.
- 7.6. 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. Provide a progress report by 30 June 2017.

- 7.7. The service provider must repair the roof leakages in the Grade R dormitory and admin block, as well as the power failures at Block C and H dormitories at own cost. Provide a progress report by 30 June 2017.
- 7.8. The Department must ensure that the soil erosion problem and the collapsing retention wall are effectively addressed by the contractor. Provide a progress report by 30 June 2017.
- 7.9. The school clinic must always be functional. Provide a progress report by 30 June 2017 on the functionality of the clinic, indicating challenges to date and interventions put in place.
- 7.10. Ensure that the following are provided at the school and submit progress by 30 June 2017:
- (a) ICT infrastructure and equipment (computers) – for a functional computer laboratory;
 - (b) Access to reliable cellular network; and
 - (c) Installation of a telephone landline.

8. OVERSIGHT VISIT TO MKHULU COMBINED SCHOOL, 15 MARCH 2017

At a briefing session at the school, the HOD of the Department and the District Director for Nkangala presented the school profile. The MEC was also in attendance. The school principal, his management team (SMT), the SGB and the Learner Representative Council (LRC) were present. The Steve Tshwete Local Municipality, the South African Democratic Teachers Union (SADTU), the Department of Public Works, Roads and Transport as well as the Office of the Auditor-General were in attendance.

8.1. Brief overview of the school

The School was established in 1982 as a result of the closure and merging of six (6) farm schools namely: Shalom, Sihlangene, Ndelela, Lamulela, Njabulo and Augtine. It is the only school in Doornkop that is offering secondary school education; hence the school is overcrowded with learners (1 105 enrolment).

8.2. Staff establishment

One (1) Principal – there was an acting principal at the time of the Committee's visit
 Two (2) Deputy Principals
 Five (5) HODs – there was a shortage of one (1) HOD, of which interviews were conducted
 26 Post Level 1 educators
 Two (2) administration staff
 One (1) general worker

The learner teacher ratio on the GET band was 1:50 and on the FET band it was 1:45, which exceeds the norm set by the Department in this respect.

Educator qualifications

| Below REQV 13 | REQV 13 | REQV 14 | REQV 15 | REQV 16 |
|----------------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| 1 | 3 | 21 | 4 | 5 |

A majority of educators in the school are on REQV 14. Most educators are teaching as per their subject specialization. The school also has a Code of Conduct, which is implemented and adhered to by learners and staff.

8.3. Observations on the school building infrastructure

Shortage of classrooms

The school building infrastructure is old and unsafe. It was noted that the school has 14 classrooms that are in poor condition and cannot accommodate all the learners. The classrooms are overcrowded and some are built of corrugated iron or steel, such that in winter they become too cold and in summer they become too hot. There are also leakages when it rains. There is a great need for classrooms to be constructed noting that the school offers Grade R to Grade 12.

Administration Block

The school does not have an administration block. A classroom was converted to be utilized for this purpose. Furthermore, part of this classroom is used as a storeroom for the school.

Ablution facilities

There was an ablution block on the premises, with flushing toilets for boys and girls. However, they were in need of some plumbing repair work and they were not kept in a clean and hygienic condition. It was also noted that there was a shortage of water supply.

ICT Infrastructure

The school does not have internet access, as well as a telephone and fax landline. Computers were once donated by TELKOM; however they were stolen due to the lack of a security system.

Poor condition of roads and bridges

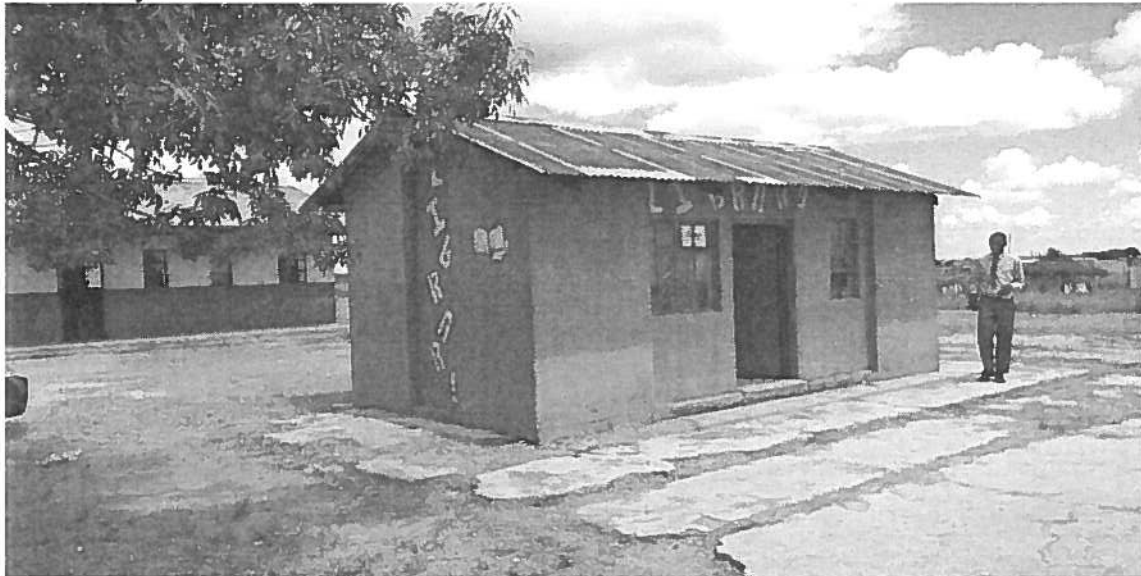
The bridges over the rivers in the area were reportedly in a poor condition. Access to the school was by farm roads, which has challenges of its own when there are heavy rains.

Lack of facilities

The school does not have a science laboratory and a computer laboratory. There is also no school hall. The school has a makeshift library that is assisting most of the learners; however it is too

small and in no way meeting the specifications of a school library resource centre. The community library at Doornkop area was too far (more than 60km away).

School Library



8.4. Observations on the administration and general functionality of the school

School management

The school had an acting principal, as the principal retired at the end of 2016. The leadership structure was in place (fully constituted, functional and supportive SMT and SGB).

The acting principal indicated that there was a shortage of one (1) HOD for Social Sciences, of which interviews have already been conducted. The acting principal continued to raise further issues on the school management and staffing, which were not in the school profile presented to the Committee. He was requested to submit a written report indicating all the issues he was raising, with progress made on intervention measures that were put in place.

The SGB is functional; it was noted that parent meetings have already been scheduled for the whole year. Parent meetings are held on a monthly basis and it was noted that the meetings were well-attended. The school has a school improvement plan (SIP) in place, which includes a SWOT analysis of the school.

Quality Learning and Teaching Campaign (QTLC)

It was also noted with appreciation that the Quality Learning and Teaching Campaign is active in the school; nurses come to the school with mobile clinics to vaccinate learners.

Academic performance

The school is performing above the district and provincial target. However, the matric results showed a regression from 86% in 2014 to 83% in 2015 and 73% in 2016.

Learner furniture

The school has a shortage of learner furniture, which is mostly felt during examinations sessions where the one learner per desk principle is implemented.

Provision of LSTM

The school has a shortage of textbooks especially in the following Subjects: Geography, Tourism, Zulu and Religion Studies because most learners are in the general stream. There are also not enough textbooks for the learners in Grade R.

Provision of scholar transport service

The principal indicated that 98% of the learners needed scholar transport and that the poor condition of the buses was a serious matter. He had held a meeting with the Department of Public Works, Roads and Transport (DPWRT) on 14 March 2017 regarding the scholar transport challenges. The Committee raised a concern that the DPWRT managers responsible for scholar transport were not present at the oversight visit. The DPWRT was requested to submit a written report on the challenges raised during the visit, such as the poorly managed scholar transport service by the DPWRT, with remedial action.

The main challenge noted was that the buses were not roadworthy and in some cases overloaded. The buses also arrived late at school due to some parents reportedly preventing them because their children were not allowed on the buses.

The Committee noted that there was a lack of communication about the departmental Transport Policy in that not all parents and learners were aware of the criteria for qualifying for scholar transport to school. It was also noted that the current 5-year contract with the service provider (since mid-2014) was not taking into account the increased number of learners from the surrounding areas that needed to be ferried to the school.

There was also an indication that isiNdebele speaking learners were not transported on the buses due to a misunderstanding about their reasons for attending Mkhulu Combined School, which the Department clarified was a curriculum matter regarding their choice of isiNdebele as a subject.

School safety and security

The school is well fenced but it was reported that learners and some community members make holes in the fence to access the school premises. It was also noted that computers were stolen from the school due to the lack of a proper security system.

The school improvement plan (SIP) identified a threat of drug abuse (nyaope) amongst learners and it was noted by the Committee that the school was implementing the Adopt-a-cop programme, by which random searches had been conducted. However, the Committee advised that the police presence at the school should be permanent, such as a mobile satellite office.

The Committee agreed that some of challenges faced by the school should be addressed by the SGB. Furthermore, the ward councillors should always be involved in the activities of the SGB and Community Policy Forum (CPF) structures in the communities.

National School Nutrition Programme (NSNP)

The school is participating in the NSNP, however the Committee noted that not all learners were benefiting from this service, as the contract reportedly only catered for 833 learners out of 1 105 learners enrolled in the school.

It was reported that food was delivered on time by trained food handlers but the place used to prepare food was an open area with just a shelter and no walls. The storeroom for the ingredients was also in a poor condition. The Committee noted that the challenges in this regard were exacerbated during rainy periods.

8.5. REMARKS BY THE MEC FOR EDUCATION

The MEC indicated her gratitude to the Committee for visiting Mkhulu Combined School. She also refuted the claims by the SADTU chairperson who indicated that she had promised a school to the community of Doornkop.

The Department did not have the money in 2017/18 to build new schools, as the priority focus was still on compliance with the norms and standards for basic services, mainly on sanitation.

The cost of mobile classrooms was expensive, almost equal to the cost of building a new brick and mortar classroom. However, the Department provided mobiles to schools that were in dire need.

The MEC informed the Committee that the matter of high utilizes bills for electricity and rates was being discussed at national level by National Treasury, COGTA, SALGA, ESKOM and the Minister of Basic Education. The process had only just begun to unfold at the Provincial level.

The MEC further indicated that the money for payment of utilities was located in the budget of the Department of Public Works, Roads and Transport (DPWRT) but when ESKOM shuts off the power to schools, it is the MEC and HOD of Education who must ensure that means are made to provide power to the schools.

8.6. INPUTS BY THE SCHOOL GOVERNING BODY

The SGB indicated to the Committee that parents attended meetings and were co-operative. It was noted that members of the Representative Council of Learners (RCL) were not able to interact with the Committee as they were busy with lessons (the visit was conducted in the morning session).

8.7. INPUTS BY SOUTH AFRICAN DEMOCRATIC TEACHERS UNION (SADTU)

The SADTU Chairperson appreciated the Committee's visit to Mkhulu Combined School and was hopeful that the issues relating to their teacher members would be attended to by the Department.

He raised concerns about the working conditions of the teachers and the slow transformation in the staff composition at many schools in the Municipality.

The school's high utilities bill was also discussed; it was alluded to earlier by the MEC for Education that this was a national issue, of which the discussions were beginning to unfold at a provincial level. The Committee took note of this important matter and agreed to resolve on it at a later stage in the Legislature, in conjunction with the Portfolio Committee on Co-operative Governance and Traditional Affairs.

8.8. COMMENTS BY THE STEVE TSHWETE LOCAL MUNICIPALITY

The MMC in attendance noted the concerns raised by the Committee, including the high utilities bill, indicating that she would report on these matters in the upcoming Council meeting. She further indicated that the Municipality was proud of the good academic performance of its schools and wanted to see further improvement.

9. FINDINGS

The following findings were made for Mkhulu Combined School:

- 9.1. The principal post is vacant (principal retired at the end of 2016) and interviews for the HOD Social Science post have been conducted.
- 9.2. The school has developed and put in place a school improvement plan (SIP). The acting principal indicated additional challenges at the school, which were not on the school profile presented during the Committee's visit.
- 9.3. The overall academic performance of the school was good. However, the matric pass rate has regressed from 86% in 2014 to 73% in 2016.

- 9.4. The Department has acquired a site in Doornkop for the construction of a new school in the 2018/19 financial year (FY), of which the planning phase will be done in the 2017/18 FY.
- 9.5. The following was noted on the physical resources (infrastructure) at the school:
- (a) There is a serious shortage of classrooms; 14 of the classrooms are overcrowded and affected by adverse weather conditions. The Department committed to provide mobile classrooms for the school.
 - (b) There is no admin block, laboratory and school hall for inter alia writing of exams.
 - (c) The school library does not meet required standards for a library;
 - (d) There is no telephone landline and no ICT services and infrastructure.
- 9.6. The school has adequate basic services such as flushing toilets for males and females; however, the toilets need some plumbing repair work and cleaning.
- 9.7. The MEC informed the Committee that the Minister of Basic Education had started discussions with COGTA, SALGA and ESKOM regarding the high utilities bills that schools were receiving from municipalities and that the provincial discussions were now underway.
- 9.8. (a) The Scholar Transport contract with the service provider was poorly managed by the DPWRT. Late-coming of learners was influenced by buses not arriving on time; buses are also not roadworthy.
- (b) Parents were uninformed about the contents of the Scholar Transport policy.
- 9.9. The National Schools Nutrition Programme (NSNP) was allegedly only catering for 833 of the 1 105 enrolled learners at the school. The food handlers also faced difficult conditions when preparing food, such as being affected by bad weather due to lack of proper shelter.
- 9.10. Regarding safety and security at the school, the following was noted:
- (a) Security measures were inadequate despite the fence and a gate that locks;
 - (b) Learners and community members were vandalizing the fence, resulting in theft of school assets such as donated computers;
 - (c) The adopt-a-cop programme is being implemented at the school but there is still the prevalence of drug abuse by the learners (in particular nyaope).
- 9.11. The school has a shortage of learner furniture and LTSM (textbooks in Geography, Tourism, Zulu and Religion Studies, as well as workbooks for Grade R.

10. RECOMMENDATIONS

After considering its findings, the Committee recommended that the Department should implement the following for Mkhulu Combined School:

- 10.1. The Department must ensure that the vacant principal and HOD Social Sciences posts are filled. Provide a progress report by 30 June 2017.
- 10.2. The Department must assist the school to implement its school improvement plan (SIP) and effectively and provide progress by 30 June 2017 on the interventions put in place to address all the challenges indicated by the acting principal.
- 10.3. The school must implement a turnaround strategy to ensure that the matric pass rate does not continue to drop below the 73% achieved in 2016. Put measures in place in line with the target for 2017 and provide a progress report by 30 June 2017.
- 10.4. The Department must implement its plan to construct a new school at Doornkop, as indicated during the Committee's visit. Provide a progress a report by 30 June 2017 on the key milestones and timeframes for the 2017/18 financial year.
- 10.5. The Department must address the shortage of classrooms at the school and provide a progress report by 30 June 2017 on the delivery of mobile classrooms, interim measures to provide the school with an admin block, laboratory, ICT services and a telephone landline.
- 10.6. Ensure that the school addresses the necessary plumbing work required on the toilets and that they are adequately cleaned. Provide a progress report by 30 June 2017.
- 10.7. The Department must 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 by 30 June 2017.
- 10.8. The Department must a monitoring unit to ensure that buses are roadworthy and that all scholar transport contracts are properly managed. Communication with parents and schools must also improve. Provide a progress report by 30 June 2017.
- 10.9. The National Schools Nutrition Programme (NSNP) must benefit all learners enrolled at the school. The Department must support the school to address all the challenges in relation to the NSNP and provide a progress report by 30 June 2017.
- 10.10. Regarding safety and security of the school, the following issues must be addressed and a progress report provided by 30 June 2017:

- (a) An effective school safety plan must be put in place;
- (b) The adopt-a-cop programme must be intensified by conducting more random searches aimed at deterring drug abuse and violent behaviour by learners.

10.11. The Department must ensure that the required learner furniture is delivered to the school. Provide a progress report by 30 June 2017 on delivery of learner furniture, as well as the required Geography, Tourism, Zulu, Religion studies textbooks and Grade R workbooks.

11. PUBLIC HEARING AT THEMBA SENAMELA STADIUM, MHLUZI

The Social Transformation Cluster TLP public hearing was held at Themba Senamela Stadium on 16 March 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 were present. Other stakeholders included the Office of the Auditor-General and the Department of Rural Development and Land Reform.

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

| Ward | Issue |
|--------|--|
| Ward 9 | <p>Complaints about some farm schools that have not closed down; they wanted their children to be accommodated at the Steve Tshwete boarding school.</p> <p>Boarding school learners only go home once per school term;</p> <p>There were complaints about the poor provision of scholar transport service at Bankfontein and Nasaret.</p> |

The Hon MEC for Education responded to the concerns of the community as follows:

- There were some farm schools which were not feasible to close down and transfer those children to the Steve Tshwete Boarding School.
- The Department continued to support such schools, for example Bankfontein school, with its 500 learners and 22 teachers.
- The schools which were closed down were multi-grade schools where one teacher was teaching all the subjects.

- Regarding young children (e.g. Grade R) going home only at the end of the quarter, the MEC indicated that the Boarding School policy of the Department stipulated that children should remain at school for the whole term, with parental visits allowed. The Department had consulted extensively with parents in this regard in terms of the departmental policy.
- The Department has limited budget but is trying to assist learners with the relevant scholar transport, in line with the departmental policy on scholar transport.

12. FINDING IN RELATION TO THE PUBLIC HEARING

The Committee noted that:

- (a) There were schools in Steve Tshwete Local Municipality which the Department could not close down and those which did not qualify for provision of scholar transport in accordance with the departmental policy on scholar transport (e.g Bankfontein and Hlalamnandi). However, the MEC undertook to request the implementing agent (DPWRT) to assist qualifying schools with the relevant mode of transportation for the affected learners.

13. RECOMMENDATION


- 13.1. The Department must follow up with the DPWRT about the provision of scholar transport for Bankfontein and Hlalamnandi learners and ensure that the community is informed accordingly. Provide a progress report by 30 June 2017.

14. CONCLUSION

The Chairperson would like to thank the Honourable Members of the Committee for their constructive input during the Taking Legislature to the People (TLP) oversight activities and public hearings at Steve Tshwete Local Municipality. A word of appreciation is extended to the Legislature support staff for the support provided to the Committee.

The Committee appreciated the interaction with the MEC for Education, the HOD and senior officials of the Department, as well as the Steve Tshwete Local Municipality and all the stakeholders who participated in the oversight visits and public hearing during the TLP.

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 June 2017.**



HON. VV WINDVOËL (MPL)

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

09/05/2017

DATE