

WESTERN CAPE PROVINCIAL PARLIAMENT



REPORT OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION ON ITS OVERSIGHT VISIT TO THE NED DOMAN HIGH SCHOOL IN ATHLONE

07 MARCH 2023

REPORT

The Standing Committee on Education (hereafter the Committee) having conducted an oversight visit to the Ned Doman High School in Athlone on 7 March 2023, reports as follows:

The delegation

The delegation of the Standing Committee on Education included the following Members:

Baartman, DM (DA) (Chairperson of the Committee)
Cassiem, A (EFF)
Fry, C (DA)
Plato, D (DA)
Sayed, MK (ANC)

Apologies

Christians, FC (ACDP)

The following parliamentary official accompanied the committee:

Ms. W Hassen-Moosa, Procedural Officer

1. Overview

The purpose of the visit was to assess the overall performance of the school, the state of the school and the challenges facing the school.

2. Visit to the Ned Doman High School in Athlone

Mr S G Philander, the Principal of the school and Mr D Cleophas, the Circuit Manager from the Metro Central Education District received the Committee.

2.1. Key aspects discussed at the school

Mr Philander gave the Committee an overview of the school's fundamental operations.

The Ned Doman High School is a Section 21 public high school of the Western Cape Education Department (WCED). It is responsible for purchasing textbooks, maintaining its facilities, paying its water and electricity bills, and running its finances. It falls under the Quintile 4 classification.

The school's infrastructure projects include the installation of solar support to help with the current loadshedding. Aside from this, the building's hall roof is leaking, and the vegetable garden needs to be improved to support the feeding scheme. The overall condition of the school is poor, and it needs a fresh coat of paint. In addition, the cleaning processes need to be improved.

The school offers various subjects such as Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics, and Agriculture. The school feeds 90 learners daily from the Nutrition Feeding Scheme. The school provides extra sessions to those learners with special needs, such as those with limited English proficiency.

Mr Philander informed the Committee that the school's governing body is operational and fully functional. The school has a well-designed Safety Plan with cameras all around the facility. The school's computer lab needs to be updated. It also faces various challenges due to its lack of proper facilities, such as a small playground that can't accommodate all the 670 learners, classrooms that are overcrowded, and staff who are overworked. In addition, the school struggles with its learner's lack of discipline and there is no parental involvement.

During the meeting, Mr Philander provided an update on the results of the Ice Spelling Test for Grades 8 and 9. The objective of the test is to establish the learners' spelling level and competence according to the various grades. Learners who wish to manage their Grade 9 material, should perform well at the spelling level of Grade 7. Although only 35% of learners are proficient in this subject, most of them fall under the third to fourth-grade range. The school's National Senior Certificate (NSC) results have improved significantly over the past five years. From 2019 to 2022, its pass rate increased from 63% to 79.6%.

In certain areas, fire extinguishers have been relocated to a central location due to the learners' activities. The only elevator in the school is not in working condition due to loadshedding, most of the doors and handles are missing.

The Mass Participation, Opportunity and Access, Development and Growth (MOD) Centre has a coach who is responsible for helping learners improve their skills in different sporting codes. The primary sports codes offered are basketball, tennis, and athletics and the secondary are netball, volleyball, soccer, cricket and rugby.

3. Public Comment

Ms Le Roux, the founder of the Parents for Equal Education SA (PEESA) informed the Committee that she filed a formal complaint with the WCED on behalf of Mr and Mrs Button. The complaint is against Mr Philander, Mr R Maree, Ms G Johnson, and Mr D Cleophas. She informed the Committee that senior officials of the WCED are investigating the matter.

She informed the Committee that on 3 February 2023, the school's management team and the principal detained two learners, including Mr Button's daughter, for several hours after they participated in a protest. Ms Le Roux alleged that learners were subjected to harassment and intimidation by the school's management and the principal.

The school has also been in the news for various reasons, such as refusing to provide final report cards to learners who have not paid their school fees.

Ms Le Roux continued to be made various slander allegations against the principal, Mr Philander, without adhering to the Chairperson's instructions. The Chairperson reminded everyone in the meeting to be cautious regarding possible defamation.

The Chairperson also reminded everyone in the meeting that the Western Cape Provincial Parliament Standing Rules are applicable to the meeting, specifically Rule 6 which states that "Members of the public attending a plenary sitting or a committee meeting, may not create or take part in any disturbance of the proceedings of the House or committee, and must obey the directions of the presiding officer."

Further, the Committee unanimously agreed to hear the direct testimony of Mrs Button, to avoid matters of 'hearsay'. No indication was given to the Committee that Ms Le Roux accurately represents

the views of Mrs Button or that Ms Le Roux may represent Mrs Button before the Committee. Despite the Committee unanimously agreeing to hear the direct testimony of Mrs Button, Ms Le Roux refused to allow Mrs Button to testify before the committee; and then subsequently left the meeting on her own accord.

4. Recommendations

The Committee RECOMMENDED that:

- 4.1. Mr Cleophas, the Circuit Manager, provides the letter issued by the WCED iro the investigation into the complaint submitted by Mr and Mrs Button to the WCED.
- 4.2. The WCED investigates the possibility of assisting the school with a generator to be used during load-shedding as cameras and elevators do not work during load-shedding.

5. Resolutions

- 5.1 The Committee RESOLVED that the WCED should brief the Committee on the Button's complaint after it has concluded its investigation.
- 5.2 The Committee RESOLVED to request the Speaker to consider instituting rules and/or procedures for when members of the public attending a committee meeting creates or take part in disturbance/(s) of the proceedings of the committee, and/or refuse to obey the directions of the presiding officer.

6. Conclusion

The Committee successfully concluded its oversight visit and took cognisance of the school's challenges including the issues raised during the visit.

7. Acknowledgments

The Committee thanked the WCED, the principal and the teachers at the school visited.



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ADV DM BAARTMAN, MPP
CHAIRPERSON OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION
WESTERN CAPE PROVINCIAL PARLIAMENT
DATE: 13 June 2023