

WESTERN CAPE PROVINCIAL PARLIAMENT



REPORT OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION ON ITS UNANNOUNCED OVERSIGHT VISITS TO THREE SCHOOLS IN THE METRO CENTRAL EDUCATION DISTRICT AREA

17 JULY 2020

REPORT

The Standing Committee on Education, having conducted unannounced oversight visits to the Oaklands Secondary School in Lansdowne, Groenvlei Secondary School in Lansdowne and Voorspoed Primary School in Hanover Park on 17 July 2020, reports as follows:

The delegation

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

Botha, LJ (DA) (Chairperson of the Committee and the delegation)
Allen, R (DA)
Christians, F (ACDP)
Sayed, K (ANC)

Apologies

Apologies were rendered on behalf of Members: Bosman, G (DA), Kama, M (ANC) and Makamba-Botya, N (EFF).

The following parliamentary official accompanied the delegation:

Ms. W Hassen-Moosa, Procedural Officer

1. Overview

The purpose of this visit was to allow members to assess how schools are dealing with the COVID-19 safety regulations and to check if all Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) was in place.

The Standing Committee on Education resolved to conduct the oversight visits to inspect the situation at schools in the Western Cape following the announcement of the decision to open schools for other grades during the COVID-19 epidemic.

2. Visit to the Oaklands Secondary School in Lansdowne on Friday, 17 July 2020

Mr. Jeffery, the acting Principal of the school received the Committee.

2.1. Key aspects pertaining to the walkabout at the school

- 2.1.1. The school is situated in a residential area opposite to the M5 freeway. There is only one remote controlled entrance to the school. There is security personnel present at the school. It has an alarm system and CCTV cameras that are monitored by the school's Secretary.
- 2.1.2. The school is fully enclosed with wire fencing of 1.8m, which surrounds the school. There are adequate ablution facilities.
- 2.1.3. The Acting Principal indicated that strict measures needs to be taken when allowing visitors onto the school premises and also ensured that Members of the Standing Committee adhered to the safety measures (PPE) put in place by the Western Cape Education Department (WCED).

- 2.1.4. Currently, 200 Grade 12 learners have returned to complete the academic year. Two of the learners were at home due to commodities and were doing distance learning with the school's assistance.
- 2.1.5. During the week of the visit, about 250 Grade 10 learners returned to school as per the schedule provided by the WCED and the Department of Basic Education.
- 2.1.6. The school achieved a 98% pass rate in 2019 and were hoping that they would be able to maintain their pass rate despite the COVID-19 epidemic which has taken away school days.
- 2.1.7. The school encourages learners to take Pure Mathematics instead of Mathematic Literacy.
- 2.1.8. The school has received Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) which includes masks, hand sanitisers and bleach. The school entrance displayed signs and posters indicating "No mask, No entry".
- 2.1.9. All learners get screened before entering the classroom. The screening checks temperature and COVID-19 symptoms.
- 2.1.10. Most Learners are from Khayelitsha and Philippi, with very few learners from Oakland.
- 2.1.11. Classrooms are spaced according to the social distance with no more than 20 learners per class.
- 2.1.12. The school provides school model packs for learners who have not yet started school every two weeks so that they can study at home.
- 2.1.13. There are no systems to support teachers so that they don't get "burn out."
- 2.1.14. There is no learner transport scheme at the school. Learners utilise public transport, which is a problem at times.
- 2.1.15. Before the COVID-19 pandemic, the teacher-learner ratio at the school was 1:50. During the lockdown, the school could only accommodate two grades per day to maintain the social distance in its classrooms, the teacher-learner ratio became 1:20.
- 2.1.16. The projectors are utilised even more now, but only seven out of 11 are working currently, and laptops are used for specialised teaching such as Pure Maths and Physical Science.
- 2.1.17. There is a feeding scheme at the school, and teachers also donate sandwiches to learners.
- 2.1.18. Four teachers have made applications in terms of comorbidities.
- 2.1.19. The school received great support from the District office.

2.2. Resolution

The Committee RESOLVED that the Chairperson, on behalf of the Committee, tables a motion in the House acknowledging the good work done by the management of Oaklands High School in dealing with the "unknown" COVID-19 pandemic at the school.

3. Visit to the Groenvlei Secondary School in Lansdowne on Friday, 17 July 2020

Mr. N.T Adamson, the Principal of the school, received the Committee.

3.1. Key aspects pertaining to the walkabout at the school

- 3.1.1. The school is situated between Lansdowne and Hanover Park, it is surrounded by 1.8m bulletproof fencing. There are only two entrances to the school, the main entrance gate and a pedestrian gate.
- 3.1.2. The school has an alarm system and CCTV cameras that are monitored by the receptionist and has a 24/7 security personnel at the school.
- 3.1.3. The school has adequate demarcated parking and ablution facilities. All external windows and doors are fitted with steel burglar bars and gates.
- 3.1.4. The crime rate in this area is very low. No criminal incidents were reported for the last twelve months.

- 3.1.5. Currently, the school has 120 Grade 12 learners that have returned to complete the academic year. Only two matric learners have withdrawn.
- 3.1.6. During the week of the Committee visit, about 221 Grade 10 learners returned to school, as per the schedule provided by the WCED and the Department of Basic Education.
- 3.1.7. Classroom sizes can accommodate about 20 learners.
- 3.1.8. Volunteers assist with the feeding scheme to provide learners with a hot meal daily. The school decided to continue feeding learners when the school was closed due to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- 3.1.9. 15 teachers have been tested for COVID-19, of which one teacher tested positive, and 14 tested negative.
- 3.1.10. The school has an isolation area for those learners that have a high temperature or COVID-19 symptoms.
- 3.1.11. The school took the initiative and planned for its re-opening from April 2020 in order to have its safety measures in place.
- 3.1.12. The school principal has comorbidities and can only be at the school on Fridays, but in his absence, the Deputy Principal of the School is the Acting Principal.
- 3.1.13. The school has received its PPE equipment, which includes masks, hand sanitisers and bleach. The school entrance displayed signs and posters indicating “No mask, No entry”.
- 3.1.14. All teachers and learners get screened for temperature and COVID-19 symptoms before entering the classroom. The school had to employ four of its former learners to assist with the screening process.
- 3.1.15. The school has employed a school physiologist to assist with those learners and teachers that are in quarantine.
- 3.1.16. The school developed a new policy in accordance with the COVID-19 guidelines of the WCED. The school has done everything themselves and has not received support other than the PPE equipment and the guidelines provided by the WCED.
- 3.1.17. The school has accommodation challenges. It can only accommodate three grades per day. Therefore they have scheduled Grade 12 learners to attend school from Monday to Friday. Grade 11 learners thrice a week. The other grades would only attend twice a week.
- 3.1.18. All grades except for Grade 12 would be assessed as follows: 80% on assessment and 20% on the final exams this is according to the guidelines provided by DBE and WCED.
- 3.1.19. The school provides school model packs every two weeks for those learners that have not yet started school so that learners can study at home.
- 3.1.20. Fridays are wellness days at the school for teachers. This is to show appreciation for the work they do.
- 3.1.21. There is a staff WhatsApp chat, which allows the school to engage with teachers in preparation for the next day.
- 3.1.22. Communication with parents takes place when the need arises.
- 3.1.23. The teacher: learner ratio before the National lockdown was 1:50 but now the school is dealing with smaller classrooms.
- 3.1.24. WCED provides Zoom meetings for subject support, which assists the school. Also, more teachers have to learn how to utilise the Zoom App for teaching. The assistance with the subject-related backing from the WCED was acknowledged by the school. The only downfall is the overload of paperwork that the school was currently experiencing.
- 3.1.25. The school achieved an 85% matric pass rate in 2019.

3.2. Information requested

- 3.2.1. The Committee requested the WCED provides a report on the rehabilitation of the Groenvlei School Hall. A request to fix the school was submitted eight years ago, and until to date the school indicted that it was still waiting for a feedback from the WCED on fixing the school hall.

- 3.2.2. The Committee requests that the WCED provides the numbers in regard to non-response on communication from schools to parents/guardians pertaining to those learners “whose grades” are already back at school. The Committee would like to know if the WCED is aware of these numbers, if so, it must provide the schools' breakdown on this.

3.3. Resolution

The Committee RESOLVED that the Chairperson, on behalf of the Committee, tables a motion in the House acknowledging the good work done by the management of the Groenvlei High School in dealing with the “unknown” COVID-19 pandemic at the school”.

4. Visit to the Voorspoed Primary School in Hanover Park on Friday, 17 July 2020

Mr. R.J. Esau, the Principal of the school, received the Committee.

4.1. Key aspects pertaining to the walkabout at the school

- 4.1.1. This school is next to the M7 freeway in Hanover Park. It is surrounded by palisade fencing and has one pedestrian gate and the main entrance gate. It is fitted with an alarm system which is dysfunctional due to vandalism.
- 4.1.2. During the day, there are voluntary community workers who render a security service at the school, at night, there are two security officers that patrol the school's perimeter.
- 4.1.3. This school is in a very volatile area, and the crime rate is very high due to gangsterism, substance abuse, domestic violence, housebreakings, theft, and vandalism.
- 4.1.4. All external windows and doors are fitted with steel burglar bars and steel gates.
- 4.1.5. During the week of the committee visit, Grade 6 learners started school as per the schedule provided by the WCED and the Department of Basic Education. Only 74 of 148 learners returned to school. Grade 3 was 20 of 147 learners. Grade 2 was 25 of 146 learners, and Grade 1 was 15 of 113 learners that returned to school from the start of July 2020. Grade 7 learner 122, but only 40% of those learners have returned to school. Over 224 parents applied for learners not to return to school. Even though letters were sent to parents, there was no response from parents.
- 4.1.6. The school has received its PPE equipment, which includes masks, hand sanitisers, and bleach. The school entrance displayed signs and posters indicating “No mask, No entry”.
- 4.1.7. All teachers and learners are screened before entering the classroom. The screening checks their temperature and COVID-19 symptoms. The school has received five thermometers but needs to purchase five more as they were not enough. Also, according to the Principal, the thermometers are not always accurate.
- 4.1.8. The school has an isolation area for those learners and teachers that have a high temperature or COVID-19 symptoms.
- 4.1.9. The school had six cases of learners who tested positive for COVID-19, all have since recovered, and are back at school.
- 4.1.10. The school doesn't allow its learners to bring their own regular school bags. It provides a unique school bag to each learner that is easy to sanitise and remains at school. Learners are not permitted to take the school bags home.

5. Matters arising

The Committee resolved that during this period of the National Lockdown (Level 3 to 1) the Standing Committee Members' would embark on visits to various schools across the province. It was also resolved that committee Members can claim from the Standing Committee on Education's budget for utilising their own vehicle to get to and from visits in order to maintain social distance.

5. Conclusion

The Committee successfully concluded its unannounced oversight visits and took cognisance of the urgency of the challenges experienced by the various schools that were visited. It was evident that the schools needed the Committee's support to succeed against the challenges noted in this report. The Committee would also like to acknowledge the outstanding initiative taken to prepare teachers, learners and parents for the reopening of the schools after the two months spent in Lockdown as part of the National Disaster.

6. Acknowledgments

The Committee thanks the WCED, principals, and teachers of all three schools visited.



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MS LJ BOTHA, MPP

CHAIRPERSON OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

WESTERN CAPE PROVINCIAL PARLIAMENT

DATE: 17 November 2020