



Wes-Kaapse Provinsiale Parlement Western Cape Provincial Parliament IPalamente yePhondo leNtshona Koloni

REPORT

The Standing Committee on Education having, conducted an unannounced oversight visit to Highlands Primary School in Mitchells Plain on 10 February 2015, reports as follows:

The Delegation

The delegation comprised of the following Members:

Kivedo, BD (DA) (Chairperson and the leader of the delegation)
Botha, LJ (DA)
Christians, FC (ACDP)
MacKenzie, RD (DA)
Olivier, RT (ANC)

The following Parliamentary officials accompanied the delegation:

Ms W Hassen-Moosa, Committee Co-ordinator
Mr A Barends, Driver

1. Introduction

The Committee resolved to undertake an unannounced oversight visit to Highlands Primary School in Mitchells Plain. During a prior Committee meeting, various concerns were raised about Highlands Primary School. This included management which includes the managing and infrastructure of the school. The main objective of the visit was to get an overall status of the school's operations.

As part of its oversight mandate, the Committee requested to be kept updated regarding the progress of infrastructure maintenance, upgrades and the daily management of all schools in the Districts.

The Committee envisaged that the oversight visit would assist the Committee in getting a clear picture of activities with regards to this school. This report discusses the Committee's findings and allegations gathered during the visit.

2. Overview

The delegation conducted an oversight visit to Highlands Primary School on Tuesday, 10 February 2015. The visit started with a meeting at 14:00 in the principal's office. During the visit Mr G Burgess, the principal, briefed the Committee on the status of the school and accompanied the Committee on a walk-about providing clarity on various questions posed by the Members.

3. Findings and Challenges

- 3.1 Upon arrival both the Principal and the Deputy Principal were not at the school and staff could not account for their whereabouts.
- 3.2 The Committee was then received by the Second Deputy Head of Department of the School, Mr Jacobs.
- 3.3 The Grade R classrooms consist of 30 to 35 learners per classroom without an assistant to assist teachers while classes are in session.
- 3.4 During the inspection of the school it was found that all Grade R classrooms had more than one window broken and boarded up with cardboards.
- 3.5 There was no security at the back gate of the school which left the school and especially the Grade R classes vulnerable to thieves and gangsters, as these Grade R classrooms are situated close to the back gate. There is neither supervision nor security when children are dropped in the morning. There is a volunteer parent acting as a security guard (that has no real security guard training, as indicated by her).
- 3.6 The Computer Application and Technology (CAT) Laboratories needs to be upgraded and additional computers are needed as learners tend to share computers.
- 3.7 The girls' toilets were dirty. Four of the ten toilets were either broken or do not have toilet brims. The one tap does not have a handle and one hand basin is leaking.
- 3.8 The school sports field needs assistance with upgrades.
- 3.9 The courtyard of the school is damaged.
- 3.10 The majority of parents of learners do not pay school fees and the school struggles to recover the school fees which subsequently hamper the functionality of the school.
- 3.11 The school does not have enough "buy in" from parents to participate in the school fundraisers and the academic work of learners.
- 3.12 The Mass Opportunity and Development Centre (MOD) at the school is operational but requires more assistance.

Alleged allegations received from teachers and parents who wish to remain anonymous:

- 3.13 It was alleged that a teacher and the caretaker were instructed by the principal, Mr Burgess, to walk for four kilometers to Samora Machel from the school accompanying a sick Grade R learner home. This means that about 30 learners were left unattended.
- 3.14 It was alleged that three learners (two boys and a girl) were playing sexual games behind the school building. The principal requested a teacher to speak to the learners' parents so they do not escalate the incident.
- 3.15 It was alleged that the School Governing Body chairperson, Mrs Woodman, has a stationery business.
- 3.16 It was alleged that the care-taker, Mrs Henecke, sells hot dogs, chicken and burgers as opposed to cleaning.
- 3.17 It was alleged that the school's tuck shop is managed by Mrs Burgess, the wife of the principal. The extent of her managing the tuck shop was not clarified, whether the proceeds go towards the school and whether a proper tender process was followed?
There are allegations of a rental fee, of R6 000 per month, being charged for the management of the tuck-shop. There is no clarity whether Mrs Burgess is complying with the rental agreement by paying the R 6000 per month to the school.
- 3.18 It was alleged that the principal allows learners from a higher grade to sit with Grade R learners, until late in the afternoon. Grade R teachers feel it is not their responsibility to look after learners from higher grades.
- 3.19 It was alleged that a Grade R teacher was abused by another teacher. When the abused teacher reported it to the principal, Mr Burgess did not keep record of it. She informed her husband who then reported it and suddenly a report appeared. The abused teacher's husband reported the incident to the Western Cape Education Department.

- 3.20 It was alleged that there is a high rate of learners being moved to other schools, due to mismanagement of the school.
- 3.21 It was alleged that the principal does not treat parents with respect and those who fail to pay the school fees, he sarcastically informs them “to go and sell their watches at Cash Crusaders so they can pay school fees”.
- 3.22 It was alleged that the teachers who cannot pay school fees of their children who attend the school, are having it deducted from their salaries by instruction of the Principal.
- 3.23 It was alleged that the principal and the deputy Principal, Ms Adams, did not show up for a parent teacher meeting scheduled for 7th February 2015. The principal did not tender an apology. Therefore leaving parents very angry and nearly assaulting those teachers who attended.

4. The Committee RECOMMENDED that the Department:

- 4.1 Should consider assisting the school in clarifying the role of the School Governing Body at the school.
- 4.2 Investigates the allegations highlighted in this report and provide the Committee with feedback within three months of receiving this report.

5. Conclusion

The Committee successfully concluded its unannounced oversight visit and took cognisance of the urgency of the challenges experienced at the school. The school needs support in their endeavors to succeed against the backdrop of the challenges noted in this report.

6. Acknowledgements

The Chairperson thanked the school leadership for their willingness to share valuable information with the Standing Committee.



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MR BD KIVEDO, MPP
CHAIRPERSON: STANDING COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

DATE: 21 July 2015