

PARLIAMENT OF THE PROVINCE OF THE WESTERN CAPE

ANNOUNCEMENTS, TABLINGS AND COMMITTEE REPORTS

WEDNESDAY, 14 DECEMBER 2016

COMMITTEE REPORTS

1. **The Standing Committee on Community Development and the Standing Committee on Education having conducted an oversight visit to the Autism Connect Learning Centre in Westridge, Mitchells Plain, on 27 September 2016 reports as follows:**

The delegation

The delegation comprised of the following Members:

Standing Committee on Community Development

Democratic Alliance

Botha, LJ (Leader of the delegation)

Wenger, MM

Mitchell, DG

African National Congress

Gopie, D

Standing Committee on Education

Democratic Alliance

Botha, LJ

MacKenzie, RD

Mitchell, DG (Alternative Member)

African National Congress

Olivier, RT

Apologies

Kivedo, BD (DA)
Christians, F (ACDP)

The following parliamentary officials accompanied the delegation:

Ms N Jamce, Committee Coordinator
Ms W Hassen-Moosa, Committee Coordinator

1. Introduction

This oversight visit was suggested by the Chairperson of the Standing Committee on Community Development who attended an Autism Connect learning Centre support session in May 2016. With this in mind, the chairpersons of both the Standing Committee on Community Development and the Standing Committee on Education decided to conduct a joint oversight visit to the Autism Connect Learning Centre (hereafter the Centre) as it is a responsibility of both the Department of Social Development and the Western Cape Education Department (hereafter the WCED).

The main focus of this oversight visit was to understand and observe how the Centre's interventions assist learners with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD).

The purpose of the Centre's interventions is child-specific, focusing on early-learning development. The Centre focuses on developing the child to be in school-readiness state. The Centre forms partnerships with mainstream and autistic schools as part of the feedback loop. Workshops for the entire family are facilitated to help parents, siblings and friends to develop the whole child.

The Western Cape Education Department has a directorate which is responsible for Specialised Education Support, which includes the expansion of inclusive education; support to special schools; psychological, social work, therapeutic, medical and related services; hospital schools; learning support to mainstream schools; literacy and numeracy support and the National School Nutrition Programme.

This report discusses the Committees' findings, concerns and recommendations gathered during the oversight visit.

2. Overview

The delegation conducted an oversight visit to the Centre on Tuesday 27 September 2016. The visit started with a meeting with the Director and departmental officials at 09:00, where, the Director, Ms N Ripepi, and Mr D Crowie, Vice-chairperson of the Board of the Centre, briefed the delegation on the status of the Centre. After the meeting, the delegation conducted a walkabout of the Centre's premises.

3. Findings and/or observations of the Committees on the activities of the Autism Connect Learning Centre

- 3.1 The Centre's programmes are based on the following structure:
 - 3.1.1 Individualised education programmes

- 3.1.2 TEACCH methodology
 - 3.1.3 Appropriate outdoor play and sports therapy
 - 3.1.4 Occupational therapy
 - 3.1.5 Speech therapy
 - 3.1.6 Empowering of educators
 - 3.1.7 Integrating learners and parents through connections with the larger autistic community
 - 3.1.8 Regular monitoring and feedback to parents
 - 3.1.9 Regular communication with the community
 - 3.1.10 Outreach and support to families
- 3.2 **The occupational therapists at the Centre** study human growth and development and a person's interaction with his/her environment through daily activities. Occupational-therapy intervention focuses on helping individuals to become as independent as possible in all areas of their lives. The process begins with assessing the functioning of the learners and, with the results, developing goals for each child. Individual or group sessions are provided in order to achieve these goals. Assessment results also allow the Centre to recommend the most suitable class for each child and to provide advice with regard to adjustments to the classroom environment and teaching methods.
- 3.3 **The Centre focuses on various activities, such as daily living (routine activities without needing assistance). School readiness works according to the criteria** set out by the Vera School that has identified certain skills required by learners in order to be accepted into the schooling system. The Centre focuses among others on the following areas: gross motor skills (using large muscle groups for controlled, goal-directed movements, such as climbing and ball skills), fine motor skills, **sensory processing and perceptual skills**.
- 3.4 The Centre's area of intervention is speech, language and communication therapy, which includes social interaction and augmentative and alternative communication (AAC).
- 3.5 The Department of Social Development provides a donation or grant for 19 of the 30 learners enrolled at the Centre. This is the only financial contribution received from the Department.
- 3.6 The monthly school fees per learner is R2 000 and the Centre also receives a donation or grant from the Department of Social Development of R1 072 per month per learner for 19 of the 30 learners registered at the Centre. The Centre requires R3 000 per month per child to provide all the services of the programme.
- 3.7 All teachers at the centre are in possession of an early-childhood-development-level qualification (ECD-level qualification). The Centre continuously attend training and workshops specific to autism. The Vera School has been a key partner in upskilling the staff.
- 3.8 The WCED informed the delegation about the pilot project that is currently underway to train ECD practitioners with a module in Autism Spectrum Disorder for 35 people over a six-month period.
- 3.9 The WCED provided insight into a vocational programme that has been developed by the Department of Higher Education for 14- to 18-year-olds and which is currently being tested. The programme will be shared with the Centre.

- 3.10 The WCED provided information about the implementation of the Education White Paper 6. The WCED will roll out this implementation including the following additions:
 - 3.10.1 In the last five years, the WCED added 35 new classes for autistic learners at the Rusthof and Chere Botha schools, thereby doubling the capacity.
 - 3.10.2 The Beacon and Atlantis schools were given another two prefabricated structures.
 - 3.10.3 The online human-resource-development package has been developed. It consists of six modules where people can learn and access information pertaining to disabilities and create a special-needs network.
 - 3.10.4 The Vera School offers a two-week course, while the Alpha School offers a programme to help parents. The Denver Model provides outside input to the community. The Swartland School offers the Natural Model for children and parents.
 - 3.10.5 The WCED is currently busy conducting research to understand why statistics show that 1 in 68 people is autistic, as opposed to 1 in 300 only 15 years ago.
 - 3.10.6 The Centre is currently registered as an independent school with the WCED. The application is in the process and will be completed by the end of 2016. Once the Centre has been registered as an independent school, additional funding and support from WCED will be possible.
 - 3.10.7 WCED officials committed themselves to engaging quarterly with the Centre to discuss progress.

4. Concerns

The delegation raised the following concerns:

- 4.1 The Department of Social Development only provides funding for 19 of the 30 learners at the Centre. This leaves the Centre to cover the shortfall.
- 4.2 There is currently no social worker at the Centre to provide staff with a session to “offload”, as working with learners with Autism at times could be emotionally demanding.
- 4.3 The delegation raised a concern regarding the waiting list of about 700 learners who still need to be placed at an autism school. According to the Centre, many children on the waiting list end up at day-care centres and could potentially never progress into a formal school.
- 4.4 The leasing agreement of the Centre is not conducive.

5. Recommendations

The delegation recommends that:

- 5.1 The Standing Committee on Education follows up on the status of registering Autism Connect Learning Centre as an Independent School with the WCED.
- 5.2 The WCED provides the delegation with the compliance tools as part of the Independent School criteria, specifically the compliance with regard to the premises.
- 5.3 Autism Connect Learning Centre keeps the Committees informed about fundraising events in order to assist in publicising its events to receive the maximum exposure.

- 5.4 The WCED assist the Autism Connect Learning Centre to expedite the process of finding a site.

5. Conclusion

The Committees successfully concluded their oversight visit and took cognisance of the great achievements of the centre and are of the view that this Centre can assist learners with autism.

6. Acknowledgement

The Chairpersons thanked the Centre for its willingness to share valuable information with the Standing Committees.

2. REPORT OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION ON AN OVERSIGHT VISIT TO TYGERBERG HOSPITAL SCHOOL IN TYGERBERG ON TUESDAY 30 AUGUST 2016

Draft Report of the Standing Committee on Education on its oversight visit to Tygerberg Hospital School in Tygerberg, dated 30 August 2016, reports as follows:

The Delegation

The delegation comprised of the following Members:

Democratic Alliance

Kivedo, BD (Chairperson and the leader of the delegation)

MacKenzie, RD

African National Congress

Olivier, RT (ANC)

African Christian Democratic Party

Christians, F (ACDP)

Apologies

Botha, LJ

The following parliamentary official accompanied the delegation:

Ms W Hassen-Moosa, Committee Co-ordinator

1. Introduction

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

This oversight visit was suggested by a Member of the Standing Committee who attended a briefing session of the Department of Health on the hospital schools at seven different facilities. The main focus of this oversight visit was to understand and observe how this school assists learners while they are in hospital. The purpose of the hospital school is to bridge the gap so that learners do not fall behind during the time that they spend in hospital.

The Western Cape Education Department has a Directorate which deals with Specialised Education Support include the expansion of Inclusive Education; support to special schools; psychological, social work, therapeutic, medical and related services; hospital schools; learning support to mainstream schools; literacy and numeracy support and the National School Nutrition Programme.

This report discusses the Committee's findings gathered during the oversight visit.

2. Overview

The Committee conducted an oversight visit to Tygerberg Hospital School on Tuesday, 30 August 2016. The visit started with a meeting with the Principal and the departmental officials at 14:00. During the oversight visit, the Principal, Ms SE Potgieter, briefed the Committee on the status of the school. After the meeting, the Committee conducted a walk about of the school premises.

3. Committee findings and/or observations on the activities of Tygerberg Hospital School

- 3.1. There are seven hospital schools across the Western Cape.
- 3.2. The Tygerberg Hospital School is a bridging and remedial school that assist learners with remedial work while they are in hospital until they are discharged.
- 3.3. Tygerberg Hospital School consists of Grade R to 7 and the Ithuba High School has learners from Grade 8 to 12.
- 3.4. The school has three classrooms which can accommodate 19 learners daily between 08:00 to 13:00.
- 3.5. The school has on average 1-200 to 1-400 learners during an academic school year.
- 3.6. Learners are referred to Tygerberg Hospital in the following ways:
 - 3.6.1 TBH Child and Adolescent Unit
 - 3.6.2 In-patients /TBH out-patients
 - 3.6.3 Lentegour Psychiatric Hospital
 - 3.6.4 Other hospitals
- 3.7. The language medium of instruction used by the school is Afrikaans and English. The school follows the *National Curriculum Statement* (NCS) and *Curriculum Assessment Policy Statements* (CAPS) curriculum with two languages, mathematics and life orientation as compulsory subjects. The Tygerberg Hospital school has no practical subjects e.g. Computer Science.

4. Conclusion

The Committee successfully concluded its oversight visit and took cognisance of the great achievements of the school and is of the view that this school assists learners while they are in hospital.

5. Acknowledgements

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