

PARLIAMENT OF THE PROVINCE OF THE WESTERN CAPE

ANNOUNCEMENTS, TABLINGS AND COMMITTEE REPORTS

TUESDAY, 28 SEPTEMBER 2021

COMMITTEE REPORT

REPORT OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION ON ITS OVERSIGHT VISIT TO THE NORTHPINE TECHNICAL HIGH SCHOOL IN NORTHPINE.

The Standing Committee on Education having conducted an oversight visit to the Northpine Technical High School in Northpine on 21 May 2021, 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, RI (DA)
Christians, FC (ACDP)
Sayed, MK (ANC)

Apologies

Apologies were rendered on behalf of Members: Bosman, G (DA), Brinkhuis, G (Al-Jamah), 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 get an understanding of the governance issues experienced by the Northpine Technical High School.

2. Visit to the Northpine Technical High School in Northpine

Mr Loubser, the Acting Principal and Dr. Van Der Voort, Circuit Manager received the Committee.

2.1. Key aspects pertaining to the presentation and walkabout at the school

2.1.1. Vacancies at the school

According to the school, the previous principal of Northpine Technical High School, Mr. Lerm, resigned at the end of January 2019. Mr. Pretorius was appointed as the Caretaker Principal from 1 March 2019 to 30 September 2019. Mr. Loubser (Deputy Principal) acted as the Principal from 1 October 2019 onwards.

Mr. Schereka, the previous District Director and Mr. Mofokeng, the previous Circuit Manager recommended Ms. N Mqumbisa, who was seconded to the Curriculum Unit at Metro East Education District to be appointed as the Caretaker Principal. During the first week of January 2020, the Head of the Western Cape Education Department, Mr. B Schreuder, turned down the recommendation to appoint Ms. Mqumbisa as the Caretaker Principal. Mr Schreuder informed the school that the permanently appointed Deputy Principal must act as a Principal until the post was filled.

The position of the Principal was advertised. Twelve applications were received for the position, three applicants were invited for interviews. Following the outcome of the Competency-based Assessment, the School Governing Body (hereinafter SGB) recommended the appointment of Mr. Bassier to the Head of the Western Cape Education Department. In December 2020, the Head of the Department informed the school that the recommended candidate was not suitable for the position and he would not appoint Mr. Bassier as the Principal. The position was re-advertised in Vacancy List 1/2021.

2.1.2. Invalidity of the WCED and SGB contracts

All SGB contracts positions were dealt with by SGB members.

According to the school, the renewal of the existing contract positions was done at the end of the 2020 academic year. Due to the total breakdown in the trust relationship with the previous SGB, the Acting Principal resorted to a recruitment and selection committee consisting of himself, Senior Management Team members of which two were members of the SGB and a neutral person to ensure transparency. Candidates were selected and invited for interviews. The official documents were signed by an educator member of the SGB on behalf of the secretary, and those documents were sent to the WCED for approval.

2.1.3. Communication and Transparency

A formal complaint was lodged by the Acting Principal, Mr. Laubser, to the WCED, which gave the reasons for distrust of the three parent members of the SGB and why they were not involved in the finalisation of the contracts.

2.1.4. Financial Mismanagement

POSTS / POSTE	ESTABLISHMENT 2018 DIENSSTAAT 2018	ESTABLISHMENT 2019 DIENSSTAAT 2019	LOSS / GAIN VERLIES / WINS
Posts determining school grading and number of promotion posts / Poste wat skoolgradering en getal bevorderingsposte beïnvloed			
Principal / Prinsipaal	1	1	0
Deputy Principal / Adjunk-prinsipaal	1	1	0
Departmental Head / Departementshoof	2	2	0
* Educator PL1: RPDM / Opvoeder PV1: HPVM	6	6	0
Educator PL1: Foundation Phase/Opvoeder PV1: Grondslagfase	0	0	0
Total / Totaal	10	10	0
Additional posts not influencing school grading and number of promotion posts / Addisionele poste wat nie skoolgradering en getal bevorderingsposte beïnvloed nie			
PL1 Post:Curriculum/PV1 Pos:Kurrikulum (Jan-Dec)	4	0	-4
PL1 Post: Growth / PV1 Pos: Groei (Jan-Dec)	2	0	-2
Total / Totaal	6	0	-6
Grand Total / Groototaal	16	10	-6

After receiving the school's staff establishment for 2019, the school applied to the WCED for additional posts for the 2020 academic year. In December 2019, the school was in dire need of six educators for 2020 and it could not provide either an academic or technical curriculum due to the loss of the six staff members.

At the end of March 2020, when the National lockdown was announced, the SGB permitted some staff members to receive an advance on their salary payments as they did not have enough money to carry them through the lockdown period. These staff members only received their salaries in the middle of the lockdown period. All staff members refunded the school in full after their WCED salaries were paid to them.

2.1.5. Acting Principal going into contract

At the first SGB meeting in January 2019, the then Deputy Principal, Mr Lerm requested permission to barter with a company to take the dunes of the school and in return, construct sports fields. The request was granted, and the process started. After Mr. Lerm resigned at the end of January 2019, Mr. Loubser continued with the process. He signed a Memorandum of Agreement with Sports Turf in which it was agreed that the company would assist in constructing sports fields for the school to the value of the amount of sand dunes removed from the premises. As this was a barter agreement, no money changed hands. Early in 2020, the SGB demanded that a contract be drawn up.

In June and July 2020, the school's external Auditors questioned this development at an SGB meeting. The Head of the Department, Mr Schreuder informed the school that the Acting Principal was not allowed to sign any agreement and that only the SGB Chairperson could. He also advised the school to seek permission from the WCED to partake in such ventures.

In light of these developments, all progress related to the sports fields' development was halted. The school drew up an application for the sports fields, and all unsigned documents were sent to the WCED, asking whether the documentation was sufficient for them to sign and send in a formal application. The outgoing SGB Chairperson did not sign the application.

At the end of 2020, the Acting Principal received a letter from the Minister of Education, Ms. D Schafer, stating that she cannot grant the request as the SGB did not sign the submission. A new application would be forwarded to the WCED under the auspices of

the newly elected SGB. Once the official permission is obtained, the completion of the project will resume.

2.1.6. Procedures followed regarding SGB elections

The school informed the Committee that procedures followed during the SGB elections were according to the requirements set out by the WCED. All processes were administered by an Electoral Officer. The election of parent members, educator and non-educator members, and the Representative Council of Learners (RCL) representatives to the SGB was completed. No disputes were raised or recorded.

2.1.7. Status of Walking Bus Volunteers

The school does not have any "Walking Bus" volunteers since the Municipality withdrew its sponsorship of the project and the school could no longer support the volunteers.

2.1.8. Feeding Scheme/Walking Bus Fundraiser

This fundraiser was a once-off event that took place after the Municipality withdrew its sponsorship. The school could not offer the volunteers any remuneration. Mr. Loubser requested the SGB to approve this event. The SGB duly approved the event and it took place.

2.1.9. Teacher-Learner Ratio at the School

The teacher-learner ratio for the 2018-2020 academic years was 17 educators to +/-350 learners, giving a ratio of 1:20. Northpine Technical High Schools is a Technical High School with technical centres, the school is also affiliated to the National Occupational Safety Association (NOSA), which requires a 1:15 ratio, and the school needs to adhere to those standards as well. Due to an aggressive marketing campaign during 2020, the school's learner enrolment increased to 502 learners, as a result the WCED granted the school five additional posts, bringing the school's ratio to 1:23.

2.1.10. National Senior Certificate (NSC) pass rate over the past three years

The table below illustrates the school's NSC pass rate from 2017 to 2020. Despite the school's learner achievement rates dropping between the 2017 and 2018 academic years, there has been an increase in the pass percentage from 2018 to 2020. Northpine Technical High School has been one of two high schools in the Circuit whose pass percentages have increased from the previous academic year. The school has an Academic Improvement Plan in place to ensure that the increase in learner achievement rates continues for the class of 2021. In this regard, the Circuit Office, supported by the Curriculum Advisors together with the support from the District Director and Deputy Director-General: Institutional Development and Coordination is constantly involved in supporting and capacitating management and the subject educators at the school.

2.1.11. National Senior Certificate for the past three years

Summary Report NSC Exam November 2020

METRO EAST **NORTHPINE TECHNICAL HIGH SCHOOL (1004497)**

	202011		201911		201811		201711	
Number Entered:	18		12		71		66	
Number Wrote:	17		8		69		66	
Number Passed:	11	64.7%	5	62.5%	38	55.1%	54	81.8%
Number Achieved Bachelors:	1	5.9%	1	12.5%	9	13.0%	3	4.5%
Number Achieved Diploma:	6	35.3%	4	50.0%	15	21.7%	33	50.0%
Number Achieved Higher Certificate:	4	23.5%			14	20.3%	18	27.3%
Number Achieved LSEN NSC:								
Number Achieved NSC:								
Number did not Achieve:	6	35.3%	3	37.5%	31	44.9%	12	18.2%
Number Incomplete:	1		4		2			

2.1.12. Challenges and Achievements

The school's most significant challenge was the distrust between the Acting Principal, Mr. Laubser, and three parent members of the SGB. The Acting Principal indicated that these parents plan to take-over the school and push their agenda, which negatively impacted all the processes of governance at the school.

The second challenge facing the school is that 26 of the 59 grade 12 learners are at risk of failing at the end of the year. In this regard, the school introduced a 7th period each day for all learners and included it as part of its timetable. There are also Saturday classes in place to assist the learners in mastering the curriculum content.

Despite these challenges, the school managed to improve its Grade 12 results (one of only two schools in the circuit), developed a great Marketing Strategy to increase learner numbers by 150, and motivated parents to pay school fees as the school has experienced financial difficulties.

3. Recommendation

The Committee RECOMMEND that another engagement be arranged with the school and the previous School Governing Body (SGB) members to discuss the understanding of the governance issues experienced at the school.

4. Conclusion

The Committee successfully concluded its oversight visit and took cognisance of the challenges experienced by the school. It was evident that the school 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 by the school to grow.

5. Acknowledgments

The Committee thanks the Acting Principal and the Circuit Manger of the school visited.