

# WESTERN CAPE PROVINCIAL LEGISLATURE

No 3 – 2026 Third Session, Seventh Parliament

THURSDAY, 14 MAY 2026 (Held over)

QUESTION FOR ORAL REPLY

## **5. Mr P Johnson to ask Mr D J Maynier, Minister of Education:**

What interventions are in place to protect learners' safety at schools?

Reply:

5.

### ***Collaboration with Law Enforcement:***

In partnership with the City of Cape Town, the Western Cape Education Department (WCED) has facilitated the deployment of 82 School Resource Officers (SROs) at schools within the Metro Districts.

A risk-based and needs-driven allocation model is used to determine which schools would receive SROs, i.e. where they are most likely to reduce immediate safety threats, stabilise high-risk school environments and support sustained safe teaching and learning conditions. The allocation is generally informed by a combination of safety risk indicators, contextual vulnerability and operational feasibility considering:

- Crime and incident data
- Geographic crime hotspots
- School safety profile and vulnerability
- Socio-economic and community context
- Strategic priority areas

### ***Area Based Teams (ABT):***

An Area Based Team (ABT) is a methodology applied in 16 priority areas across the Western Cape which brings together Law Enforcement agencies under the control of the South African Police Services (SAPS), national, provincial and local government role-players, as well as community-based structures, NGOs and experts aimed at coordinating and maximising collective impact.

### ***Schools at Risk:***

Schools at Risk are those where learners and teachers are negatively impacted by violence, bullying, harassment, the influence of substance use and gang violence.

In addition, a Memorandum of Understanding has been signed between the Department of Basic Education (DBE) and national South African Police Service (SAPS), which requires all schools to be linked to their local SAPS precinct, with the sector commander ensuring regular visits to the school and patrols in areas around schools during peak hours, such as the start and end of the school day.

**Partnerships:**

Schools are encouraged to collaborate with parents, community leaders, local organisations and government departments such as the Community Policing Forum, Neighbourhood Watch and law enforcement agencies to create a safer environment around schools.

A whole of society approach goes a long way in improving communities and in addressing the scourge of crime and violence. To this end, schools are reminded that it is important to involve the community in identifying the challenges and possible solutions.

**School Safety Committee:**

The WCED provides training to schools on the functionality of each School Safety Committee, which is a sub-committee of the School Governing Body (SGB).

A School Safety Committee can function proactively by ensuring the Nine Point Safe Schools Planning process is in place:

- Step 1 – Establish a School Safety Committee,
- Step 2 – Make safe part of the school's vision,
- Step 3 – Conduct a Safety Audit,
- Step 4 – Set major objectives,
- Step 5 – Develop a comprehensive safety plan,
- Step 6 – Select and implement strategies,
- Step 7 – Conduct an audit of SPs in the area,
- Step 8 – Create cluster structures, and
- Step 9 – Evaluate and assess progress periodically as determined by the School Safety Committee.

**Security infrastructure support:**

Schools are provided with the necessary security mechanisms, and trained in developing an effective access control policy and constantly reminded to ensure the effective implementation of the Access Control Policy.

Schools are also encouraged to liaise with their local police station to do periodic patrols. The armed response companies are also requested to do more frequent patrols, as we believe that visibility of law enforcement is a good deterrent to those who would want to unlawfully enter the school premises.

***Psycho-social support:***

The *Abuse No More Protocol* spells out in detail the roles and responsibilities of all parties in dealing with cases of abuse. It prescribes an approach for employees of the WCED to identify, intervene, report, and provide support in cases of child abuse, deliberate neglect and to children who are victims of sexual offences.

Bullying is regarded as serious misconduct, in terms of national guidelines and regulations published in terms of the South African Schools Act. Schools must deal with bullying in terms of their Codes of Conduct.

The WCED has published extensive guidelines online on managing discipline at schools, including dealing with bullying. Addressing bullying is part of the interventions as laid out in the National School Safety Framework.

Learners who experience abuse, bullying or any other safety risk at school can phone the Safe Schools' Call Centre on the toll-free number: 0800 45 46 47 for assistance.

The Safe Schools division provides extra-mural youth development programmes to build capacity for positive behaviour, addressing aggressive and violent behaviour.

Psychologists, counsellors and social workers are based at the District Offices and provide training for teachers in a variety of programmes, including:

- understanding behaviour,
- managing misbehaviour in the classroom,
- 'connecting' with troubled learners, and
- leadership training.

They also provide training programmes for learners covering areas such as anti-violence programmes, specific training in anti-bullying strategies, anger management strategies, diversion programmes for learners at-risk of suspension and/or expulsion etc. They also provide both individual and/or group counselling and therapeutic support to learners who report that they are being bullied.

All schools are encouraged to develop effective School-Based Support Teams (SBST) in order to provide an avenue of support for Educators who have to deal with learners who are experiencing or manifesting barriers to learning in their classrooms.

Staff from the Specialised Learner and Educator Support (SLES) component in the districts regularly conducts parenting skills training workshops at schools as well as providing information on effective child-rearing practices. This includes guidance for parents on how to assist their children to deal with the pressures exerted by social media.

***Safety education and awareness programs:***

Learners who participate in Safe Schools after school and holiday programs recognise the negative influences that social ills have on the lives of young people. The programmes attempt to restore positive values in their schools and communities, as a way of preventing these problems and reducing the negative impact on young people.

Learners gain knowledge and skills through life skill programmes, sports, arts and cultural activities. They are exposed to different kinds of information that assist them to make informed decisions and choices in life. Learners get the opportunity to learn leadership and strategic planning skills in participating in these programmes. At risk learners get involved in discussions and social activities with peers in an environment that encourages positive thinking and constructive behaviour and discourages self-destructive attitudes. Participation in annual camp outings allows learners to engage in adult supervised fun and educational activities outside of the school environment. The objective of these intervention programmes is to:

- Modify negative behaviour and attitudes,
- Reduce truancy and absenteeism,
- Engage active involvement in diversion programs i.e. sports, arts, culture,
- Create safe learning environments,
- Create opportunities for growth and development,
- Instil a sound value system,
- Provide training sessions on creative and constructive approaches to conflict resolution and peer mediation workshops which allows learners to teach other learners how to deal with problems and conflicts,
- Advocate for the elimination of harmful practices that are imposed on learners at risk,
- Provide life skills for learners at risk to prevent possible problems, or cope better with existing situations related to teenage pregnancy, gender-based violence, and other social problems,
- Share information with other learners,
- Outreach to communities through integrated holiday programs, and
- Provide a positive influence on learners and communities

***Gang violence:***

To a large extent, our schools provide safe havens for learners who live in communities plagued by violence and gangsterism. However, our schools are not immune from these social ills, because they are rooted in the communities they serve.

The WCED chairs the Priority Committee on School Safety within the ProvJoints, with representation by all departments whose goal is to promote safer school communities for learners and staff in the Western Cape through effective collaboration and partnerships.

The Anti-Gang Strategy Priority Committee of the ProvJoints is led by the Department of Police Oversight and Community Safety (POCS), which includes implementing anti-gang intervention programmes.

Our district offices work with schools to provide various forms of support, including gang-related behaviour problems.

These activities include:

- Back-to-School campaigns,
- Meetings with parents,
- Truancy reduction and operations,
- Crime awareness, and
- Positive behaviour programmes,
- Leadership camps, and
- Working with the Representative Council of Learners.

### ***Safety and security incidents:***

WCED has issued Circular 0005/2017 to all schools which outlines the protocol that must be followed when an incident happens at a school. This is also included in Chapter 4.1 of the Procedural Manual on *Managing Safety Security within WCED Institutions*.

In general, it is always preferable to keep a school open when an incident has occurred in the community, to keep learners off the street and in a safe place. Where we need to close a school early, it must be done in an orderly manner in coordination with the district, so the information we receive from SAPS is essential in making these decisions.

What has caused great concern is the amount of fake news about incidents that have occurred, or even incidents that never even happened, that causes parents to come to schools to fetch their children.

We appeal to everyone to be very cautious about what information you share when it has not been verified or does not come from official sources. Fake news makes it

much harder for our school staff and officials to handle safety incidents when they do arise.

***Reporting, monitoring and support systems:***

The WCED is committed to continuous monitoring and the implementation of innovative strategies to prevent safety incidents. A real-time monitoring system that allows for the immediate identification of potential risks through data analytics and reporting tools maintained by the WCED's Safe Schools Call Centre.

This system is integrated with existing school management platforms to track incidents of violence, bullying and other safety concerns, enabling proactive interventions. To ensure the effectiveness of these initiatives, the department regularly reviews and updates its safety protocols, involving key stakeholders in the process.

When reports are received by the Safe Schools Call Centre, they follow a structured process to ensure they are dealt with effectively and appropriately.

These are just some of the many initiatives and activities that our officials, school staff and wider school communities use to improve learner safety, and I appeal to our members to support them in their efforts.

**MINISTER OF EDUCATION**

**DATE: 21 MAY 2026**