



basic education

Department:
Basic Education
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

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BASIC EDUCATION DEPARTMENT BRIEFS PORTFOLIO COMMITTEE ON SCHOOL SAFETY

School safety came under the spotlight in Parliament today in a joint sitting of the portfolio committees of Basic Education and the Police. Members of Parliament from the two committees convened the meeting to get reports on measures being taken to address the safety of learners and teachers in schools.

Basic Education Minister Angie Motshekga today led a delegation of senior managers to the joint sitting of Basic Education and SAPS to deliberate on the issue of violence in schools.

The Minister said school violence was a matter of huge concern to the education system, as it had a negative impact on the work of the Department. "Bullying remains a major challenge, as it most often occurred in the classroom, generally in the absence of a teacher. The rate of bullying is high in terms of international standards and poorly managed schools tend to have more incidents of violence. Studies have shown that where communities take ownership of their schools, the rate of violence is low. School violence most often occurs on school premises, but it also takes place on the way to and from schools. Bullying is increasingly taking place online and with the use of mobile devices," she said.

Dr Granville Whittle, the Deputy Director-General at the Department of Basic Education, said the National School Safety Framework remained our primary strategic response to school violence. He said the framework was a comprehensive approach that coordinated and consolidated all school safety interventions in the sector. "It is based on a social ecological systems model, which locates the school within its broader community; it relies on collaboration and partnership. South Africa joined the Safe to Learn global campaign to end violence in schools, in partnership with UNESCO and UNICEF," he said. The legislative and policy environment is comprehensive and rights based.

Legislation bans corporal punishment, criminalises sexual abuse and exploitation of children, limits alcohol misuse and restricts firearms. There is clear political leadership and high-level commitment to address school violence and bullying. School safety is now one of six (6) apex priorities for the 6th Administration. Two protocols were introduced namely: Management of sexual abuse and harassment and Management of Corporal Punishment in 2018; Collective Agreement (3 of 2018) simplifies and consolidates prosecution of teachers accused of sexually abusing learners.

Partnerships with the Department of Justice and the Department of Social Development ensure improved vetting of teachers and other staff and the establishment of National School Safety Steering Committee with related government departments and social partners to better coordinate safety interventions.

In collaboration the Department has also embarked on interventions aimed at addressing hotspots for most at risk schools. Some of the measures include improving the built environment, such as considering learner safety when planning school infrastructure, as well as closure of taverns and liquor outlets in close proximity to schools, in partnership with the Department of Trade and Industry, SAPS and South African Local Government Association (SALGA). The measures also include search and seizures in partnership with SAPS and the provision of security guards to schools at risk.

A variety of activities involving a whole range of stakeholders will be undertaken to ensure each district has a **District Based Support Team in place**, School Safety Committees must be established as subcommittees of SGBs and these must link closely to Community Policing Forums and local police stations;

Learner Support Agents (LSAs) will be provided to all hotspot schools together with the provision of **counselling services to victims** (and perpetrators) of violence and abuse. Link schools to clinics and police stations, and improve access to services through better use of ICTs; Increase **provision of (school) social workers** through partnerships with DSD and universities; Increase the number of **safe hubs** with appropriate after-care programmes for children and youth.

Minister Motshekga reiterated the fact that community involvement was critical especially where projects were undertaken in schools, as it meant there were always adults assisting with monitoring. She said parents needed to play their part and support schools.

“Our main problem is learner on learner violence, which is taking place inside the classroom, so the issue of security guards and the police are welcome, but the key challenge is what learners do to each other,” the Minister said.

The Department would also implement specific **programmes for boys**, without neglecting the efforts to address the continued vulnerability of girls; and improve **access to sports, arts and culture** and other extra mural activities.

The SAPS said school based crime prevention would be intensified and that the collaborative agreement with DBE would be revised in order to make it more effective.

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