

NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

WRITTEN REPLY

QUESTION 5244

DATE OF PUBLICATION OF INTERNAL QUESTION PAPER: 12/09/2025

INTERNAL QUESTION PAPER: NO 38 – 2025

5244. Mr L M Komane (EFF) to ask the Minister of Basic Education:

What (a) are the reasons that her department is still forcing young and vulnerable primary learners to share school grounds with older secondary learners in combined schools across Limpopo and throughout the Republic (names and details furnished), despite clear evidence that this exposes children to bullying, violence, substance abuse and immoral behaviour and (b)(i) immediate steps will she take to separate primary learners from secondary learners in combined schools across Limpopo and throughout the Republic and (ii) date will the separation be implemented?

NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

WRITTEN REPLY

QUESTION 5244

Response

(a) The Department of Basic Education (DBE) is aware that a number of combined schools continue to accommodate both primary and secondary learners on the same premises. This situation largely arises from historical infrastructure and demographic patterns, particularly in rural areas where limited resources, vast travel distances and declining learner enrolment have necessitated multi-phase schooling on a single site.

In terms of the Regulations relating to Minimum Uniform Norms and Standards for Public School Infrastructure (published in Government Notice 4994 in *Government Gazette* 50876, dated 27 June 2024), schools are classified as either primary schools and secondary schools. Combined schools are therefore considered transitional institutions that remain in existence primarily due to infrastructure constraints and the limited availability of suitable sites for relocation or expansion.

The Limpopo Department of Education, informed by the *Guidelines for the Rationalisation and Realignment of Schools: A Holistic Approach*, has begun implementing a process to phase out combined schools through realignment into primary and secondary schools. However, the full implementation is constrained by budget limitations and the pace of classroom construction and school relocations.

(b)(i) In the interim, the DBE has directed Provincial Education Departments (PEDs), including Limpopo, to strengthen internal safety and management measures in accordance with the National School Safety Framework (NSSF) and the Implementation Protocol between the DBE and the South African Police Service (SAPS).

The Limpopo Department of Education has advised that, in line with Limpopo Circular No. 81 of 2025, and similar provincial directives, the following measures are being implemented to safeguard learners in combined schools:

- **Staggered break times:** Schools have been instructed to adjust timetables to ensure that primary and secondary learners take breaks at different times to minimise unsupervised interaction and potential bullying.
- **Separate sanitation and sports facilities:** Schools must provide secure age- and gender-appropriate facilities, as required by the Regulations relating to Minimum Uniform Norms and Standards for Public School Infrastructure.
- **Physical demarcation within shared premises:** Schools are encouraged to establish internal barriers or designated zones separating the

NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

WRITTEN REPLY

QUESTION 5244

primary and secondary sections to promote safety and age-appropriate environments.

- **Enhanced monitoring and oversight:** The Heads of PEDs and MECs for Education must ensure compliance with applicable requirements in the Regulations relating to Minimum Uniform Norms and Standards for Public School Infrastructure, as per Section 58C of the South African Schools Act. To support this work, the principal and governing body of each public school must provide the relevant PED with the information relating to such compliance, as per the requirements set out in Sections 16A, 20 and 59 of the South African Schools Act.

These interventions form part of the DBE's broader school safety agenda, ensuring that combined schools operate as safely as possible while longer-term infrastructure solutions are being implemented.

(b)(ii) In Limpopo, Circular No. 81 of 2025 on the Alignment of Schools (both public and independent) provides a framework for the realignment of combined schools into distinct primary and secondary schools. The process will be implemented progressively over the Medium-Term Expenditure Framework (MTEF), with priority given to districts where overcrowding or safety concerns are most acute.

At a national level, the DBE continues to support provinces through conditional grants such as the Education Infrastructure Grant (EIG) and the School Infrastructure Backlogs Grant (SIBG), which fund the construction of new schools and additional classrooms required for separation.

The DBE remains committed to ensuring that all learners, particularly younger and more vulnerable children, are educated in safe, age-appropriate and developmentally supportive environments, consistent with the constitutional imperatives of dignity, safety, education and the best interests of children.