

**NATIONAL ASSEMBLY**

**WRITTEN REPLY**

**QUESTION 455.**

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**INTERNAL QUESTION PAPER: 03/2025**

**455. Ms N V Mente-Nkuna (EFF) to ask the Minister of Basic Education: to ask the Minister of Basic Education:**

- (1) Whether her department is responsible for basic infrastructure of school buildings; if not, what is the position in this regard; if so,
- (2) whether she has been informed that Thandokhulu High School has been operating in an old dilapidated temporary structure for Grades 8 and 9 for more than six years which impact negatively on learning during bad weather conditions; if not, what is the position in this regard; if so, what steps will she take to ensure that the school is provided with solid infrastructure that will safeguard the well-being of the learners and teachers?

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##### **Response**

In terms of the South African Schools Act, read with the Government Immovable Asset Management Act, provinces are responsible for the provisioning, management and maintenance of public school infrastructure.

The Department of Basic Education (DBE) is responsible for setting norms and standards for public school infrastructure, while Provincial Education Departments (PEDs) are responsible for the implementation, maintenance and delivery of school infrastructure projects, including the provision of permanent structures. The DBE provides support and oversight to PEDs and, in some instances, implements projects through programmes such as the Accelerated Schools Infrastructure Delivery Initiative (ASIDI) and the Sanitation Appropriate for Education (SAFE) Initiative.

As MECs for Education and their respective PEDS are responsible for the provisioning, management and maintenance of public school infrastructure in their respective provinces but do not report directly to the Minister and Deputy Minister of Basic Education or the DBE, heightened collaboration and oversight between the national and provincial education departments is required to ensure that national priorities are effectively implemented at the provincial level. PEDs should not be returning funds to the National Treasury while public school infrastructure backlogs persist.

The Regulations Relating to Minimum Uniform Norms and Standards for Public School Infrastructure require PEDs to include their annual progress reporting information on how infrastructure backlogs will be addressed. PEDs are finalising infrastructure plans that identify outstanding backlogs and outline strategies to address them.

PEDs, in collaboration with the DBE where necessary, are continuously working to address infrastructure challenges in public schools. Plans for infrastructure improvement are prioritised based on available funding and urgency. The timelines for implementation are determined by PEDs based on their respective infrastructure delivery plans.

The Medium-Term Budget Policy Statement now outlines the integration of multiple conditional grants, including the Education Infrastructure Grant (EIG) and the School Infrastructure Backlog Grant. While this reform aims to streamline resource allocation, it reduces the ability of the DBE to directly influence infrastructure delivery at a provincial level. Consequently, provinces will play an even greater role in the implementation of public school infrastructure projects.

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Under the EIG, PEDs have submitted infrastructure plans that include the upgrading of existing facilities. These plans consider population growth, urbanisation and the distance learners travel to school.

The DBE is in the process of submitting a budget bid to the Budget Facility for Infrastructure (BFI) to supplement the EIG, assisting provinces in eliminating backlogs related to overcrowding, infrastructure deficiencies and inadequate classroom availability.

Accountability mechanisms will need to be strengthened to prevent systemic negligence and to ensure the safety and dignity of all learners. In this regard, the Minister of Basic Education intends to review the Regulations relating to Minimum Uniform Norms and Standards for Public School Infrastructure to ensure that they are clear, provide for clear oversight mechanisms and can lead to improvements in infrastructure delivery at a school level.

The questions concerning Thandokhulu High School (which is understood to be a public school in the Western Cape) fall under the executive authority of the MEC for Education in the Western Cape. The Honourable Member is kindly advised to refer these questions to the MEC for Education in the Western Cape in accordance with Section 92(3)(b) of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996 and Rule 134(5)(b) of the National Assembly Rules.