

NATIONAL COUNCIL OF PROVINCES

WRITTEN REPLY

QUESTION 348.

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348. Ms N N Chirwa-Mpungose (Gauteng: EFF) to ask the Minister of Basic Education: to ask the Minister of Basic Education:

Cases of bullying

(a) How many criminal cases have been lodged by (i) victims and/or (ii) parents of victims of bullying that occurred in schools in each province which are known by her department in the past two years to date, (b) in what ways is her department assisting the victims after the ordeals in each province and (c) how many cases of bullying are being reported internally in her department in all provinces?

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Response

The Department of Basic Education (DBE) does not centrally collect data on criminal cases lodged by victims or parents of victims of bullying. However, where such incidents are reported, they are dealt with in collaboration with relevant authorities, particularly the South African Police Service (SAPS), in line with the School Safety Protocol and Regulations for Safety Measures at Public Schools.

The DBE has a standing partnership with SAPS which ensures that each public school is linked to a local police station. This arrangement facilitates prompt responses to violent incidents, including bullying, and enables the SAPS to conduct search and seizure operations and awareness campaigns in schools. The National School Safety Framework (NSSF) remains the guiding policy for the basic education sector on managing and preventing all forms of school-based violence.

The DBE, through its Integrated School Health Programme (ISHP) and in partnership with the Departments of Health and Social Development, facilitates the provision of psychosocial support to learners affected by bullying. This includes:

- Referrals to health and counselling services via School-Based Support Teams (SBSTs);
- Deployment of Learner Support Agents (LSAs) in schools to assist vulnerable learners;
- Implementation of awareness campaigns on bullying, learner rights and mental health; and
- Ongoing Life Orientation lessons, which include age-appropriate modules on respect, diversity, responsible decision-making, and conflict resolution.

Furthermore, the DBE is developing a Positive Discipline Manual and finalising a comprehensive Anti-Bullying Strategy, which provides tools for schools to address bullying. The anti-bullying manual is expected to be finalised and released by June 2025.

Cases of bullying reported by Provincial Education Departments (PEDs) to the DBE are captured through district-level incident reporting systems, which are monitored at both provincial and national levels. These reports inform targeted support interventions and help strengthen school safety planning. However, exact figures are not available at national level and are managed by the PEDs.

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The DBE recognises that bullying and violence are often linked to, and form part of, broader challenges faced by learners. To holistically address these issues, the DBE works with a network of stakeholders, including government departments, academic institutions, development partners, NGOs and community-based organisations. Notable programmes include:

- The School Food Gardening Project (as part of the Quality Teaching and Learning Campaign (QLTC)), which provides learners with constructive engagement alternatives; and
- The rollout of Information, Education and Communication (IEC) materials for learners, teachers and parents.

The DBE has developed and monitors the implementation of the National School Safety Framework (NSSF) as the primary policy and operational guide for addressing school-based violence, including bullying. This framework provides schools with structured methods to prevent, identify and manage incidents of violence.

A key component of the framework is the School Safety Protocol, which facilitates partnerships between schools and local police stations. Through this initiative:

- Every public school is linked to a police station, ensuring immediate response to incidents of crime or violence;
- Regular school safety assessments are conducted to identify risks and implement necessary preventive measures; and
- School Safety Committees have been established, with a focus on ensuring their functionality and effectiveness in promoting learner safety.

In addition, public schools are required to develop and enforce Codes of Conduct for Learners, which outline clear expectations regarding behaviour and disciplinary actions for transgressions. The DBE has also strengthened anti-bullying efforts through awareness campaigns and peer support programmes aimed at fostering a culture of mutual respect among learners.

The DBE remains committed to ensuring that all learners can access education in a safe, inclusive and supportive environment. This is not just a policy obligation but a moral imperative to safeguard the dignity, health and future of all children in South Africa.