

NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

WRITTEN REPLY

QUESTION 5222

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5222. Mr S S Zibi (Rise Mzansi) to ask the Minister of Basic Education:

(1) What (a) total number of schools do not have enough classrooms and have had to shorten the school day in order to accommodate more than one class after another and (b) is the breakdown thereof in terms of the (i) name of each specified school, (ii) province where each school is located, (iii) location of each school in an urban or rural area and (iv) total number of classrooms needed by each school to fully accommodate their learners;

(2) how does she intend to address the (a) shortfall in classrooms and (b) missed teaching time suffered by learners as a result?

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Response

(1)(a) and (b) The Department of Basic Education (DBE) is not aware of any schools currently practicing platooning (i.e. the shortening of the school day to accommodate more than one class in the same classroom). Should information regarding any incidents of platooning be reported to the DBE, the DBE will take up the issue with the relevant Provincial Education Department (PED).

In terms of section 3 of the South African Schools Act, as amended, each MEC for Education is required to ensure that there are enough school places so that every child of compulsory school-going age who lives in his or her province can attend school.

Furthermore, section 12 of the South African Schools Act, as amended, requires the MEC for Education to ensure the provision of public schools for education of learners out of funds appropriated for this purpose by the relevant provincial legislature. The accommodation of learners in public schools is therefore the responsibility of provinces.

The role of the DBE, as the national department responsible for basic education, is to support, monitor and guide PEDs in their school provisioning, ensuring that no learner is left behind. As such, the DBE has been working closely with all provinces to ensure that the necessary infrastructure plans are developed and in place at a provincial level.

While MECs for Education are responsible for the provisioning of public school infrastructure in their respective provinces, they do not report directly to the Minister, Deputy Minister or the Department of Basic Education. This reality necessitates heightened collaboration and oversight 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.

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. Due to significant budget constraints, PEDs face challenges in accelerating the delivery of school infrastructure at the required scale.

The recent developments announced as part of the Medium-Term Budget Policy Statement must be noted, which outlined the integration of multiple conditional grants, including the Education Infrastructure Grant (EIG) and the School Infrastructure Backlog Grant (SIBG).

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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. All school infrastructure delivery will therefore be the sole responsibility of PEDs, funded primarily through the **EIG** and their equitable share allocations.

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

(2)(a) and (b) To address overcrowding and ensure that learners are accommodated in adequate facilities, the education sector has prioritised classroom provision within the current Medium-Term Expenditure Framework (MTEF). Specifically:

- **103 new schools** and **4 378 additional classrooms** are planned for delivery over the 2025 MTEF;
- Where necessary, **mobile classrooms** are being deployed as an interim measure to relieve pressure while permanent infrastructure is under construction;
- Provinces are encouraged to adopt **alternative building technologies (ABTs)** to accelerate classroom delivery in areas of greatest need; and
- District curriculum monitoring and after-school support programmes are being used to safeguard curriculum coverage and mitigate any potential loss of learning time.

The DBE remains committed to working closely with PEDs to address classroom shortages, reduce overcrowding and ensure that every learner is taught in a safe and dignified learning environment.