

NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

WRITTEN REPLY

QUESTION 5813. [1001]

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5813. [1001].Ms P P Mngadi (MK) to ask the Minister of Basic Education:

[Question submitted for oral reply now placed for written reply because it is more than quota (Rule 137(8))]

What are the reasons that she (a) failed to pursue action against those responsible for the misuse of funds intended to improve education infrastructure and (b) is not enforcing accountability on how the specified funds were used?

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Response

The Minister of Basic Education has, on several occasions, reiterated her firm commitment to fiscal discipline, transparency and accountability in the management of all funds allocated for school infrastructure.

In terms of the South African Schools Act, 1996 (Act No. 84 of 1996), read together with the Government Immovable Asset Management Act, 2007 (Act No. 19 of 2007), the provisioning, management, and maintenance of public-school infrastructure fall under the executive authority of Provincial Education Departments (PEDs). The role of the Department of Basic Education (DBE) is to set policy, exercise technical oversight, and ensure that provincial spending of conditional grants is compliant with national legislation and the Division of Revenue Act (DoRA).

The DBE maintains detailed infrastructure planning and performance information through the Infrastructure Reporting Model (IRM) and the Education Facilities Management System (EFMS), which track:

- Annual allocations and expenditure performance per funding stream;
- Contractors awarded infrastructure projects; and
- Estimated and actual completion rates, including explanations for delays and underperformance.

These systems are continuously reviewed and provide data to oversight institutions such as National Treasury, the Auditor-General, and the Portfolio Committee on Basic Education, allowing for early identification of fiscal risks or compliance gaps.

While systemic challenges, such as budget constraints, contractor underperformance, extreme weather conditions and community disruptions, have affected project timelines, these factors do not indicate widespread misuse of funds. However, where evidence of irregular expenditure or mismanagement emerges within the DBE, the DBE initiates appropriate consequence management processes, including referrals to law enforcement or investigative authorities. The DBE encourages provinces to follow the same approach.

To strengthen accountability and accelerate delivery, the DBE is implementing the sector-wide 10 Point Infrastructure Strategy, which includes:

- Standardising school designs and cost-optimisation models;
- Issuing revised guidelines for infrastructure maintenance;

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- Expanding consequence-management mechanisms for underperforming contractors and implementing agents; and
- Enhancing capacity building, mentoring, and technical oversight at provincial level.

The Minister has directed that these reforms be embedded within the national monitoring framework and linked to the Education Infrastructure Grant (EIG), ensuring that fiscal compliance and performance monitoring are enforced throughout the project lifecycle.

In conclusion, the Minister remains steadfast in upholding the principles of good governance and accountability. The DBE will continue to strengthen intergovernmental oversight, support institutional capacity development and ensure that every Rand spent on infrastructure contributes directly to safe, dignified and equitable learning environments for South African learners. Where any misuse of funds is detected, the Minister will not hesitate to take steps to ensure that the relevant authorities investigate and take decisive corrective action in line with the Public Finance Management Act.