

NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

WRITTEN REPLY

QUESTION 1777.

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1777. Ms N P Sonti (EFF) to ask the Minister of Basic Education: to ask the Minister of Basic Education:

In light of the high number of weapons discovered on learners at schools, what recent steps has she taken to encourage safety and security at all schools?

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Response

1. National School Safety Framework

The Department of Basic Education (DBE) and Provincial Education Departments continue to implement the National School Safety Framework (NSSF), which is a guiding framework in addressing all forms of violent incidents in schools including drug abuse. The NSSF empowers schools to identify and manage all safety threats in schools, establish school safety committees comprising of stakeholders such as teachers, police officers, school governing body members and learner representative council members. Furthermore, the NSSF also empowers schools to develop incident reporting mechanisms, establish collaborations with external stakeholders such as the South African Police Service (SAPS), the Department of Social Development and civil society organisations, develop school safety plans and policies to respond to safety challenges of drug abuse in schools.

Through the implementation of the NSSF, access control measures in schools are strengthened and awareness programmes on social ills by partner departments and civil society organisations are implemented in schools.

The DBE together with its partner the Wits Reproductive Health and HIV Institute further developed an NSSF digital training course for school communities, to enable them to access the training anywhere in the country. The course has been accredited by the South African Council of Educators. As a result, educators will receive 15 Professional Development Points (PDP) for successfully completing the course. The DBE released a circular in September 2022, compelling all school based personnel and school safety committees to complete the digital training. To date, 130 028 people completed the course.

2. Partnership Protocol between the Department of Basic Education and the South African Police Service

The Department also has an established Protocol with SAPS to address crime and violence in schools. The Protocol has enabled all schools to be linked to their local police stations, SAPS to conduct searches and seizures in schools and conduct crime awareness campaigns in schools. Regularly, schools work with SAPS and local community police forums and social workers to address violent incidents such as gangsterism, bullying, drug abuse and the carrying of dangerous weapons in schools.

Constantly, searches and seizures of illegal drugs and dangerous weapons are done in schools. However, these searches and seizers are only done if there is reasonable suspicion of violence or drug use in a specific school.

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3. District Monitoring of School Safety Programmes

The Department further conducts annual monitoring of districts on the implementation of school safety programmes such as the NSSF, the DBE and SAPS Protocol and the Prevention and Management of Bullying in Schools. In the monitoring sessions, the Department always encourages districts to conduct physical monitoring in schools, in order to determine if schools are implementing the above mentioned school safety programmes and provide the necessary support. In the previous financial year of 2022-23, the Department has thus far conducted monitoring in all 75 districts nationwide.

4. Inter-Departmental Campaign on the prevention of Violence, Bullying, Corporal Punishment, Gender-Based Violence, Learner Pregnancy, Drugs and Substance Abuse

The Department and its partner Departments: Social Development, Health, Justice and Constitutional Development, Correctional Services, the South African Police Service and the Department of Communications and Digital Technologies have also embarked on an Inter-Departmental Campaign on Violence Prevention. This Campaign raises awareness on issues such as the prevention of bullying, corporal punishment, gender-based violence, learner pregnancy and drugs and substance abuse in schools. The Campaign has been championed by the Deputy Minister of Basic Education and is supported by other Deputy Ministers from the partner Departments. The Campaign has been targeting districts with high levels of crime and violence known as hot spots. The Campaign includes build up events that take groups of learners through priority content areas related to violence prevention; including drugs and substance abuse.

To date, the Campaign has been rolled out in five provinces including Gauteng (Gauteng West District), Limpopo (Sekhukhune East District), Mpumalanga (Nkangala District) and the North West (Dr Kenneth Kaunda District), as well as in the Eastern Cape (Nelson Mandela). The Department further plans to roll out the Campaign in other provinces in the current financial year.

Moreover, provincial education departments in partnership with partner departments and various civil society organisations regularly conduct awareness campaigns on social ills in schools.

5. Codes of Conducts

The Department also requires schools to develop learner codes of conduct in consultation with the School Governing Bodies and Learner Representative Councils. The codes of conduct stipulate the rules of learner behaviour in schools and the

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disciplinary procedures to be undertaken after incidents of contravention are reported.