

## Two toilets for 1 300 Mitchells Plain primary school pupils

In "shocking" conditions at a Mitchells Plain primary school, 1 300 boys and girls have been forced to share two toilets after vandals destroyed the Alpine Primary School. Parents yesterday shut down the Beacon Valley school, demanding that things change immediately. Thirty burglary and vandalism incidents elsewhere were reported to the province's Safe School Call Centre during the holidays - an increase from 27 incidents the same time last year. In one incident, two security guards on night shift were held at gunpoint, and in another, a shoot-out between security company personnel and the perpetrators ensued.

One Alpine Primary School parent, Aqeelah Salie, who has a child in Grade 1, said yesterday the school doesn't even have a fence. "Only two toilets are working. The security employed at the school are people that they take from the street. I am very disappointed in Alpine," Salie said. She said she constantly feared for her child's safety. "I don't think they are trying hard enough. They are acting very laid-back about it. My son was there last year and the high school we wanted to go to didn't want to take him because he is from Alpine. The school has a bad reputation."

Another parent, Kauthar Hendricks, said she hoped the issue would be resolved soon. "My daughter is in Grade R and she can't keep it in long. When she needs to go, she needs to go, and it would be nice for her to be able to have a clean toilet to use."

Western Cape Education Department spokesperson Bronagh Hammond said only the girls' toilets were working. "At the end of last year, three classrooms and the toilet facilities were badly vandalised. This affected only the boys' toilet facilities. The girls' facilities are operational. The ceilings, water pipes, urinals and toilets were all vandalised. Stationery, copy paper and an air-conditioner were stolen. The damage is estimated at over R150 000." She said a contractor was appointed but did not carry out the required work.

"A second contractor was then appointed, and site handover to repair the toilets was yesterday (Tuesday). They are currently obtaining the required materials for the repairs. In the interim, the school arranged for the parent committee to monitor the toilets having a shared facility, and with male and female pupils taking turns. This is not an ideal situation, so chemical toilets have been procured. They are hopefully arriving this afternoon (Wednesday)."

Separately, the school governing body (SGB) of Zanemfundo Primary School in Philippi East, said the school was a "ticking time bomb" and could collapse on pupils at any time, as regular maintenance had not taken place since it was built 20 years ago. SGB deputy chairperson Boyisile Mafilika said there were cracks all over the walls, the roof was leaking and the toilets were in a bad condition. "The school is the only primary school in the area of Marcus Garvey, and with amaphela (sedan taxis) and new MyCiTi Bus routes, small children will be in danger when crossing the two busy roads. There are also cracks on the stairs when you are climbing up. There has not been any maintenance since the school was built in 2000," he said.

Education MEC Debbie Schäfer's spokesperson Kerry Mauchline said: "The infrastructure delivery directorate has not received notification from the school regarding maintenance challenges. (Schools have established channels for reporting maintenance issues to the department.) But the department will conduct a site inspection today (Thursday) to determine what the issues and concerns at the schools are."