

# Ravensmead kids learning the hard way

Teachers at a Cape Flats school say they've been forced to teach laaities outside under the trees because their school is falling apart. For the past week, more than 500 pupils at Pinedene Primary School in Ravensmead have attended classes on the playground.

Teachers say the restless laaities, now spend hours in the hot sun, blasted by the wind as they try to learn. Some teachers have resorted to sticking sheets of paper on the fences to use as blackboards. School Governing Body (SGB) member, Randall Botha, says last week a total of 13 classes were moved out of a problematic block as they feared it may collapse.

"The walls are cracked right through. The asbestos is coming out of the walls and the railings are loose. As you walk you can feel how unsteady the building is," he says. "The pillars are all cracked and this thing could come down at any time. The Grade 2, 3, 4 and 5 classes have been removed from this old block that is more than 50 years old. On Monday, the parents got a notification that the laaities were being moved for their own safety."

The building was cordoned off with danger tape and teachers and learners have no access to the classrooms. Instead, each morning teachers stand under a tree and the learners arrive with mats and blankets where they are taught.

"The problem is the school wrote to the WCED [Western Cape Education Department] requesting repairs and nothing has happened," says Randall.

"They brought a contractor here who claimed it was safe, but then they say in their letter that if something happens, they will not be held responsible. Does that make sense?"

"We want to know why the WCED does not bring a proper engineer to come and test this building. What happens if this thing comes crashing like that school in Johannesburg where the children died?" he asked, referring to an incident last week at Hoërskool Driehoek in Vanderbijlpark where four children were killed after a walkway collapsed at the school. The department must make a plan and erect temporary classrooms."

However, WCED spokesperson, Millicent Merton, says an engineer conducted an inspection of the school building last week and found that the structure is safe.

"Repairs will also start mid-March," she added.