

Urgent meeting to discuss school infrastructure

Basic Education Minister Angie Motshekga will be convening an urgent meeting with provincial MECs of education and their Heads of Department to discuss school infrastructure and find ways of accelerating the eradication of unsafe ablution facilities in particular.



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This follows the tragic death of a five-year-old learner Lumka Mkhethwa, also known as Viwe Jali, from Luna Primary School in Bizana, Eastern Cape, who fell into a pit latrine and passed away.

The department said in a statement that Minister Motshekga has received a report from the District Education office in the Eastern Cape regarding the tragic death of Jali.

Minister Motshekga said she is deeply saddened and regrets the tragic loss of such a precious life in such horrendous circumstances.

“It has always been the view and the position of the Minister that safe and decent facilities, which include sanitation, do not only provide a conducive environment for teaching and learning, but are fundamental to the dignity and human rights of both learners and teachers.

“In view of the fact that maintenance and construction of infrastructure is constitutionally a Provincial Government competency, the Minister is calling for an urgent meeting with Provincial Education Departments to determine the best way to support, and work with provinces to ensure President Ramaphosa’s directive is addressed,” the department said.

Audit

Last week, President Ramaphosa directed Minister Motshekga to conduct an audit of all learning facilities with unsafe structures, especially unsafe ablution facilities, within a month, and to present him with a plan to rectify the challenges, as an emergency interim measure while rolling out proper infrastructure, within three months.

The department noted that in the past when there has been a special need, government was able to create a special dispensation to help support provinces.

“We have seen provincial competencies being addressed at a national level as a temporary intervention with programmes like the Accelerated School Infrastructure Initiative (ASIDI). This may be an option that needs to be explored further to address the directive given by the President,” the department said.

The department added that it has seen lots of interest and good will from the public in terms of wanting to assist in providing solutions to the challenges faced by the sector.

“We will begin by conducting an audit of sanitation facilities at schools within a month and develop an emergency plan which will be sent to the President and National Treasury for consideration. Only then will it be possible to advise stakeholders and business on how they can get involved and assist.

“It will assist our country now and in future to look for solutions to these complex challenges, and ensure every child is able to go to school in a safe and conducive environment.”

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