



Schools Evaluation Authority

Accountability • Quality • Respect



Schools' Responses to Covid-19 Report:
Cascade Primary School



Schools Evaluation Authority

Accountability • Quality • Respect

Date of evaluation
12 October 2020

Lead evaluator
Ms BD Houghton

Chief evaluator
Ms KN Bydell

School: Cascade Primary School
Address: Cascade Street, Eastridge, Mitchells Plain, 7785
Circuit: C7
District: Metro South
Province: Western Cape
Category: Public Ordinary (No-fee)
Principal: Ms GM Adriaanse



Areas of Evaluation:

	Teaching & Learning	To evaluate the quality of teaching and learning.
	Behaviour & Safety	To evaluate the level at which the school creates a positive learning culture, good behaviour, and a healthy, safe and secure environment for everyone.
	Leadership & Management	To evaluate the effectiveness of the leadership and management of the school.
	Governance, Parents & Community	To evaluate the effectiveness of the governing body in fulfilling its key roles and responsibilities including financial duties, and the effectiveness of the school in building good relationships with its stakeholders.

Summary:



Teaching & Learning:



Behaviour & Safety:



Leadership & Management:



Governance, Parents & Community:



Overall performance



KEY:



Outstanding



Good



Requires improvement



Inadequate

Main Findings



1. Teaching and Learning

1.1 The teachers maintain a safe and positive learning environment..... (2)

Evaluative commentary

The classrooms are generally small, and learners sit in alternate seats to ensure social distancing. There are fewer than 20 learners in each classroom. All grades are divided into two groups and a daily rotational timetable is used. Grades 4 to 7 learners attend school five days out of a ten-day cycle, but the Foundation Phase learners only attend four days out of a ten-day cycle because learners who require additional support attend an extra day on Fridays. Most teachers are present and actively teaching. Although learners interviewed said that they are never without a teacher, we observed a class unattended. Teachers show respect towards learners and are inclusive.

1.2 The adaptation of classroom teaching practice in the light of Covid-19 ensures that teaching and learning are of high quality (2)

Evaluative commentary

Teachers interviewed said that the revised Annual Teaching Plans (ATP) were useful and adapted them to suit their learners' abilities. Teachers said that they had to return to the basics as most learners did not remember the work taught to them during the first term. Most teachers have adapted to the changed conditions in the classroom, but some are reluctant to use online platforms. Learners interviewed said that they were excited when teachers used video clips, downloaded information from the Internet and used additional, relevant resources. A few teachers felt that learners were not as focused as they were in previous years and a teacher linked this to a perception in the community that learners will simply be promoted to the next grade at the end of the year.

1.3 Learners are supported well (in school and at home) so that they learn effectively..... (2)

Evaluative commentary

Most teachers correct work in class by discussing and writing the answers on the whiteboards. Learners mark their own work. Although learners received work packs during the lockdown, most did not complete the work. On alternate days when learners are at home, little schoolwork is done. Most teachers felt that more work is completed during class times as smaller groups enable them to teach at a quicker pace. Some class teachers visited learners at their home to encourage them to return to school or to find out the reasons why they were not returning. This proved to be effective in a few cases as learners returned to school. A psychologist and occupational therapist visit the school every fortnight to assist learners requiring support. The Foundation Phase teachers give their learners "body breaks" so that they are able to go outside during the day for fresh air and relaxation.



2. Behaviour and Safety

2.1 The school's environment is disciplined and purposeful and its ethos is positive (2)

Evaluative commentary

Learners and staff know and understand the measures necessary to manage Covid-19 but some do not willingly comply. Although learners' hands are regularly sanitised, teachers said that the older learners had to be constantly reminded to wear their face masks correctly and not to hug their friends. Some learners act as if the virus does not exist. Although teachers are committed to quality teaching and learning, they are hampered because they have had to revise the first term's work before starting with the revised curriculum. .

2.2 The school is safe, and protects and cares for its learners and staff well

3

Evaluative commentary

The screening protocols are effective. Learners from the different phases line up at two different entrance gates where their temperatures are taken, hands sanitised, and the five health questions asked. The Foundation Phase learners' temperatures are written on their hands and a sticker placed on their forehead to indicate that they have been screened. Learners proceed to their classrooms where they stand on painted dots and lines ensuring social distancing until their class teachers arrive and allow them into their classrooms. The general assistants clean the classrooms after school and each teacher is responsible for cleaning the surface areas in their classrooms. Ablution facilities are cleaned after each break and after school. Learners are taken to an isolation room if there is a suspected or confirmed case of Covid-19 and their parents are contacted to fetch them. Visitors may not enter the premises without prior permission. Authorised visitors are screened before entering. The National School Nutrition Programme operated throughout lockdown and meals were served to learners daily and the community thrice a week. The community continues to receive food.

Concerns, problems

Frequent acts of vandalism are a major concern.

2.3 (Where applicable) The school's boarding facilities (hostels), cater well for the safety, care and welfare of learners – Not Applicable

3. Leadership and Management

3.1 The School Management Team (SMT) gives clear direction to the school

2

Evaluative commentary

The SMT had a clear plan for complying with Department of Basic Education Standard Operating Procedures and the Western Cape Education Department (WCED) Guidelines. After input from staff, there was a practice run to determine the plan's success and adjust it accordingly. An outcome of the discussion was to implement staggered breaks to avoid congestion. The Temporary Revised Education Plan (TREP) was changed three times to accommodate the needs to the school. Staff and learners found the orientation sessions effective and reassuring. The principal first shared the information on the management of Covid-19 with the SMT, governing body and non-teaching staff. Thereafter, the teachers and learners were informed as they returned. In an interview, learners said that their parents were fearful to send them to school until they knew the steps taken to ensure learners and staff would be safe. The SMT does not always monitor the effectiveness of safety protocols. Some learners have to be constantly reminded to wear their face masks and adhere to social distancing. In one class, learners were left unattended and did not follow safety procedures. The SMT monitors the implementation of the regulations well in the morning, but not throughout the day. The principal mentioned that teachers reach out to parents to ensure learners attend regularly. Learner attendance is approximately 75% due to low attendance on the previous two Fridays.

3.2 The SMT acts effectively to improve the quality of teaching and learning in the school

2

Evaluative commentary

The departmental heads are in regular contact with subject advisers. Subject related information is then shared and discussed with teachers. On the day of evaluation, the departmental heads were scheduled to meet with subject advisers via Microsoft (MS) Teams. The SMT does not initiate structured training and development opportunities for staff. Teachers empower themselves to improve in the use of online learning and teaching as well as social media. The SMT moderates tasks and assessments effectively and teachers meet in subject groups or phases. However, there is insufficient evidence that the SMT monitors the quality of teaching and learning.

3.3 The SMT ensures that good use is made of all school resources (human, financial and physical)

Evaluative commentary

The SMT ensures that staff are deployed to fulfil the needs of the school. The school employs additional teachers and non-teaching staff and have been allocated assistants from the Extended Public Works Programme. All staff are effectively used to assist with the additional duties, including screening, cleaning, and assisting learners. The deputy principal coordinates the dispensing and replenishment of safety and cleaning materials. He has regular discussions with the caretaker and updates the principal and SMT often. Although there are attempts by the SMT to encourage the use of online resources, it does not monitor how many teachers take advantage of the opportunities. Some teachers have not improved their skills sufficiently to feel comfortable in the use of online teaching resources, communication software or social media platforms. Learners mentioned that except for a few teachers, lesson presentations have not changed much.

4. Governance, Parents and Community

4.1 The governing body fulfils its key responsibilities well

Evaluative commentary

The governing body understands the implications of Covid-19, but its involvement is limited. Most initiatives are from the school and the governing body is asked to endorse decisions mostly via discussions on WhatsApp. A meeting was abandoned because parents could not attend. The Covid-19 Health and Safety Committee is not functional, and neither is the governing body represented. No policies have been reviewed.

4.2 The governing body fulfils well it's functions with regard to the school's finances within its legal mandate

Evaluative commentary

The governing body has not reviewed and reprioritised the budget. The finance officer provides information to the governing body, but since there have been no meetings, there is little evidence that formal discussions have taken place about changes to the school's finances. Even though there has been no additional income from fundraising this year, there are sufficient funds for the governing body to pay its employees' salaries. The school received R95 000 from the district office for printing costs.

4.3 The school engages effectively with all stakeholders

Evaluative commentary

The principal encourages feedback from staff and learners. During the orientation sessions, staff were asked to comment on the WCED Guidelines, and this helped the SMT to develop the TREP. Teachers meet in smaller groups to adhere to social distancing and still offer advice on safety and hygiene matters. Communication with parents is via WhatsApp and letters. Most of the correspondence provides parents with information, but they are not asked to make suggestions or give feedback. Some teachers communicate with parents on ways to assist their children at home. The principal says that she is in regular contact with the circuit manager, who has been of great assistance to her. Subject advisers meet with teachers on MS Teams and send resources and links via WhatsApp. Some subject advisers have also visited the school on a few occasions. The district curriculum coordinator responds quickly to queries. Psycho-social assistance is offered by the district psychologist and Jet Foundation Wellness Programme.

Recommendations

1. Homework must be given regularly to the learners and monitored to ensure that it is completed.
2. There must be professional development on the use of online platforms and resources.
3. A perimeter fence must be erected at the back of the school to improve safety.
4. The SMT must develop procedures to ensure that the quality of teaching and learning is monitored and that no class is left unattended.
5. The governing body must review its policies related to Covid-19 and find ways to communicate any changes with parents.
6. The budget must be reviewed and reprioritised to ensure that the school is able to honour its financial obligations and to plan effectively.