



Schools Evaluation Authority

Accountability • Quality • Respect



Schools' Responses to Covid-19 Report: Cathkin Secondary School



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Accountability • Quality • Respect

Date of evaluation
10 September 2020

Lead evaluator
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Chief evaluator
Ms KN Bydell

School: Cathkin Secondary School
Address: 34 Fifth Street, Heideveld,
7764
Circuit: C9
District: Metro Central
Province: Western Cape
Category: Public Ordinary (Fee-charging)
Principal: Mr ME Arendse (Acting Mr A Anhuizen)



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 1

Evaluative commentary

Four teacher assistants have been appointed as there are four teachers who work from home. Grades 11 and 12 learners attend school every day. Other grades are divided into two smaller groups and each group attends school, once per week, from Monday to Thursday. Only Grades 11 and 12 attend school on Fridays. Teachers report that attendance on Fridays is much lower than the day of the evaluation when only 65% of learners are present.

Concerns, problems

Teachers are not present in all classes. Effective teaching takes place in only a few classes.

1.2 The adaptation of classroom teaching practice in the light of Covid-19 ensures that teaching and learning are of high quality 1

Evaluative commentary

The revised Annual Teaching Plans (ATPs) were explained by some of the subject advisers via MS Teams. Some subject teachers took the initiative to get the information from the Department of Basic Education (DBE) website. The teachers feel that the timeframes in the ATPs are unrealistic and that they will not be able to complete all the work. Added to this pressure, is that learners do not attend school regularly. They are supposed to work at home on the days that they do not attend school, but very few do that. Consequently, teachers have to repeat work. The acting principal, acting deputy principal and most teachers are trying their best, but the fact that the permanent principal, deputy principal and two senior teachers are working from home makes it very difficult for them. The Senior Management Team (SMT) mentioned that only two of those four teachers send work regularly to school.

Concerns, problems

The Temporary Revised Education Plan (TREP) was submitted to the circuit manager who should have seen that the school is struggling. Although there are 12 teachers and four teacher assistants, the school has planned for 20 teaching venues per day. The school captures its daily attendance and the district officials have access to it, but no support has been given to the acting principal and acting deputy principal.

1.3 Learners are supported well (in school and at home) so that they learn effectively 1

Evaluative commentary

Teachers are struggling to cover all the work in the ATPs. Very little feedback is given to learners. Grade 12 learners receive better support than the other grades since they have returned to school for a longer time. However, the low attendance (61% on the day of evaluation and even lower on Fridays) makes many of them very vulnerable. The school made use of WhatsApp groups to communicate with parents and learners during the lockdown, but only about 25% of parents and learners were actively involved. Currently, even fewer are taking part. The DBE workbooks and hard copies of notes are not effectively used by learners at home. There is no evidence of any psycho-social support to learners.

Concerns, problems

The school does not know how to deal with absenteeism and the learners attending school are not always effectively taught. In some cases, there is only a teacher assistant available to invigilate classes.



2. Behaviour and Safety

2.1 The school's environment is disciplined and purposeful and its ethos is positive 1

Evaluative commentary

Generally, staff and learners present comply with safety measures. The four learners interviewed were positive,

but most learners informally interviewed during the break were not confident and enthusiastic about their schoolwork. Some stated that it was not worthwhile attending school.

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

Evaluative commentary

All learners and staff wear face masks. Everybody's hands are sanitised before they are screened, and they answer the Covid-19 questions. The classrooms and offices are cleaned every afternoon. The toilets are cleaned and sanitised every afternoon and after breaks. Learners clean their desks with the sanitiser supplied to each classroom. All stakeholders understand the procedures to respond to suspected and confirmed cases of Covid-19. All visitors must report to the screening point where they have to complete the visitors' register, answer the Covid-19 questions and sanitise their hands. All safety measures are followed when meals are prepared for the National School Nutrition Programme. Learners' hands are sanitised before they receive their food. They expressed appreciation for their meals. The school has staggered eating times.

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

Evaluative commentary

We interviewed more than 60% of the staff and not one has anything good to say about the permanent principal's management skills. The permanent principal is working from home due to comorbidities. He has not returned to school after the lockdown and the deputy principal attended school only for the first week after lockdown. The management has been left in the hands of the two departmental heads who are acting as principal and deputy principal, respectively. The acting principal and deputy principal are doing their best, but the responsibilities are overwhelming. They have limited experience in the management of the school because the SMT did not have any formal meetings for a very long time. It was stated that in the past meetings were held during breaks. The school has a TREP that is informed by the DBE Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) and the Western Cape Education Department (WCED) Guidelines. The non-teaching staff were not orientated by the permanent deputy principal when he was the acting principal and the school reopened. The current acting principal and deputy principal orientated the rest of the staff and the different grades on their first day back at the school. There are no monitoring systems at the school and the SMT does not know how to address the poor attendance of learners.

Concerns, problems

There is no functional structure in the school.

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

Evaluative commentary

The subject groups do not meet and the SMT gives no guidance to teaching staff. The use of technology was sporadic during the first term and, currently, it is not used because teachers rotate, and it is difficult to carry the equipment around. There are no structures and processes in place to monitor the quality of teaching and learning.

Concerns, problems

Although the acting principal and deputy principal work hard to manage the school, they are not able to improve the quality of teaching and learning in current circumstances.

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

Evaluative commentary

The staff is effectively deployed, and everybody helps to keep themselves and learners safe. The non-teaching staff has accepted the extra work, but they feel that they are not valued by the SMT. The four

teachers working from home are responsible for their subjects and must supply teaching and learning materials to the teaching assistants. The learners reported that they get work regularly from one of the teachers. The permanent principal is responsible for Grade 12 Life Orientation, but the acting deputy principal reported that the teacher who is responsible for the principal's class has not received work from him recently. The caretaker is also at home with comorbidities and it is not clear what he contributes to the maintenance of the school. Safety and cleaning resources are managed by the cleaning staff. Teachers complain that it is not worthwhile using online resources because learners are not using it.

Concerns, problems

The school is badly managed. The buildings and school grounds are dirty.



4. Governance, Parents and Community

4.1 The governing body fulfils its key responsibilities well 1

Evaluative commentary

The governing body has not met since March 2020. It was reported that it is planning to meet soon. The chairperson is new and eager to learn, but she does not understand or fulfil her role. The governing body was not involved in the appointment of the four teacher assistants. The SMT added a list of new school rules to the Code of Conduct for Learners.

Concerns, problems

The governing body is dysfunctional.

4.2 The governing body fulfils well its functions with regard to the school's finances within its legal mandate 1

Evaluative commentary

The acting principal, acting deputy principal and the governing body chairperson have no knowledge of the school's finances as it has not been discussed with them. The secretary reported that the school will probably only be able to pay its accounts until the end of September 2020. The school received R24 000 from the district office for the printing of learning materials.

4.3 The school engages effectively with all stakeholders 1

Evaluative commentary

The teachers reported that the acting principal and deputy principal value their opinions, but it was not the case in the past. There have been no formal staff meetings, but they have had briefing meetings occasionally on some Monday mornings, and these meetings sometimes ended after 9h00 whilst learners were left waiting for school to start. The principal has created a WhatsApp group for the staff, but he hardly communicates with them. He has, however, sent the WCED circulars and pictures of personal events. The school does not communicate effectively with parents and it has no links with community organisations or sister departments. The subject advisers communicate with their subject teachers via social media. The circuit manager checked the school's Covid-19 file and enquired about help needed for Grade 12 subjects.

Concerns, problems

No one seems to care about this school.

Recommendations

1. The conflict between SMT members must be addressed urgently.
2. Dates should be set for regular and formal SMT meetings. The circuit manager could chair the first two meetings and attend other meetings periodically.
3. The SMT needs urgent training in:
 - 3.1 its roles and responsibilities,
 - 3.2. managing the curriculum, and
 - 3.3. drawing up a timetable to cater for all grades under the current circumstances.

4. The circuit manager must monitor the SMT functionality regularly.
5. The governing body must receive urgent training to understand and fulfil its roles and responsibilities.
6. The governing body must play a more prominent role in improving learner attendance.