



Schools Evaluation Authority

Accountability • Quality • Respect



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



School: Thornton Primary School
Address: 23 Manatoka Road, Thornton,
7460
Circuit: C3
District: Metro Central
Province: Western Cape
Category: Public Ordinary (Fee-charging)
Principal: Mr H Alie



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 (4)

Evaluative commentary

Grade 7 learners attend school daily. They are divided into three classes with the largest group occupying the school hall. Grades 1-6 attend school five days in a ten-day cycle and there are fewer than 20 learners per group to ensure social distancing. In all 21 classes observed, the teaching and learning environment is safe and positive. All teachers were present, actively teaching and engaging their learners in a variety of activities. All teachers used online teaching and learning platforms to enhance lesson presentations. Learners enjoyed a YouTube presentation of a “dancing skeleton” which taught them the different parts of the body whilst following the dancing steps. The learners all have physical education lessons and an obstacle course was organised on the tennis court for learners to do different athletic activities whilst adhering to social distancing. The school has introduced cricket and tennis activities after school, whilst ensuring social distancing. All the classrooms were clean and tidy, and the notice boards were decorated with educational posters and a display of learners’ work.

1.2 The adaptation of classroom teaching practice in the light of Covid-19 ensures that teaching and learning are of high quality (3)

Evaluative commentary

The deputy principal and departmental head had neatly filed all the Annual Teaching Plans (ATP) for both the Foundation and Intersen Phases and the Temporary Revised Education Plan (TREP) is aligned to the requirements of the ATPs. The ATPs are directly linked to baseline assessments in all phases. Moderation by the subject heads is indicated on Moderation Assessment Control Sheets. All lessons were well-planned and delivered. In lesson observations, it was noted that the same grades were taught the same work in line with the ATPs. Most teachers use a range of available online teaching and learning materials and teachers have been trained to use “Google Classroom”. Teachers are innovative and have adapted classroom teaching practice to ensure quality teaching and learning.

Concerns, problems

Learners in the Foundation Phase, whose home language is not English, require adapted teaching and learning programmes.

1.3 Learners are supported well (in school and at home) so that they learn effectively (4)

Evaluative commentary

Teachers check, mark and sign learners’ workbooks, and assist learners to correct their work. Language teachers take time to ensure that the creative writing activities are thoroughly marked. Teachers said that learners did very little work when they were at home during lockdown and that all work that should have been completed in the previous grade had to be revised. The teamwork of teachers in each grade and from one grade to the next is visible and it clearly benefits learners. Teachers in the different grades met before the learners returned this year to discuss which areas still had to be taught. There is psycho-social support for learners available from the School-based Support Team (SBST) as well as from the district psychologist and social worker. Vulnerable learners are also in contact with their class teachers on a weekly basis.



2. Behaviour and Safety

2.1 The school’s environment is disciplined and purposeful and its ethos is positive (3)

Evaluative commentary

Learners, teachers and non-teaching staff willingly comply with and embrace the measures necessary to keep everyone safe while remaining focused on high-quality teaching and learning. There is mutual respect and trust between the learners and staff. Grade 7 learners interviewed said that they preferred attending school

to working from home and, although there was a lot of work, they were confident that they would be well-prepared for high school. They reported that when bullying took place last year, the Code of Conduct for Learners was followed, and learners disciplined accordingly. With the current “staggered” breaks and smaller class groups, bullying from older learners was no longer a problem. During breaks, learners sit on chairs arranged in small circles and teachers are on duty. The tuckshop was discontinued during the pandemic. It is evident that teaching and non-teaching staff are treated with respect and work together well.

2.2 The school is safe, and protects and cares for its learners and staff well (3)

Evaluative commentary

The SBST cares for the vulnerable learners. The principal has an open-door policy and meets regularly with small groups of teachers and non-teaching staff to hear their concerns and anxieties. The staff mentioned that they feel cared for and receive support. The school premises are safe and hygienic, including the ablution facilities. However, during observation, broken glass was seen on the sports field and this could be a danger to the safety of learners. Learners and staff know and understand the measures necessary to manage Covid-19. The non-teaching staff and teacher assistants are on duty to sanitise the learners on their arrival at school and record their temperatures before they proceed to their classrooms where class teachers await them. The Foundation and Intersen learners have separate entrances. All learners and staff wear their face masks correctly, sanitise their hands and adhere to social distancing protocols. If a learner arrives at school without a face mask, they are provided with one. There are two isolation rooms, one for staff and another for learners. These are clearly marked. Unauthorised visitors are not allowed access to the school premises and the gates are securely locked throughout the school day. Authorised visitors are screened before entering the premises.

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 (3)

Evaluative commentary

There is a strong sense of shared vision, mission and ethos throughout the school. When the School Management Team (SMT) was appointed in 2019, the vision and mission was workshopped with all staff. The vision is to create a learning community and the motto, UNITY, is put into action by all stakeholders. The SMT had a clear plan for complying with the Department of Basic Education Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) and the Western Cape Education Department (WCED) Guidelines, including the TREP. The teamwork amongst the staff is visible and productive as evident by the sharing of lesson plans, work and assessments. Initially the SMT returned to school and studied the WCED Guidelines before meeting with all staff. On their return, class teachers orientated learners. Information on Covid-19 is displayed throughout the school premises. Learners are encouraged to keep a journal and write down their thoughts and feelings on Covid-19. Each morning the class teacher spends time discussing aspects from their journals. The staff is encouraged to talk to the principal about their fears and anxieties one-on-one and in small group discussions. Learners and staff know the safety protocols and procedures to follow if there is a suspected or confirmed Covid-19 case. Teachers interviewed mentioned that they are concerned because a few parents are negligent in following safety protocols at home. Attendance by learners and staff is very good.

3.2 The SMT acts effectively to improve the quality of teaching and learning in the school (3)

Evaluative commentary

The SMT guides, monitors and mentors the teaching staff on the organisation of teaching, learning and assessment. It encourages teachers to use online teaching and learning platforms. Grade and subject heads are also responsible for moderating lesson plans, assessments and outcomes. There are subject improvement plans and intervention strategies, such as, how teachers can recognise common errors and correct these or if a learner requires occupational therapy. Vulnerable learners received work packs and are in contact with the school every week. The SBST offers excellent guidance by maintaining contact with learners who are still at home.

3.3 The SMT ensures that good use is made of all school resources (human, financial and physical)..... (3)

Evaluative commentary

There are six teacher assistants to help with general duties, as required by the class teachers. Interactive whiteboards are available in all Intersen classrooms. The safety and cleaning resources are organised and there is plenty available for the next six months. Online teaching and learning materials are sent regularly to assist learners at home, but most learners have returned to school.

4. Governance, Parents and Community

4.1 The governing body fulfils its key responsibilities well (3)

Evaluative commentary

The chairperson of the governing body and its members are very supportive of the principal and the school. The school is currently organising governing body elections. The governing body ratified amendments to the Health and Safety Policies.

4.2 The governing body fulfils well its functions with regard to the school's finances within its legal mandate (3)

Evaluative commentary

A budget meeting was held on 24 November 2020 and the 2021 budget was ratified. The parents agreed to the annual school fees of R11 330 per annum. The school's finances are strictly controlled and administered by the Bursar. The governing body has paid and can pay all its employees this year.

4.3 The school engages effectively with all stakeholders..... (3)

Evaluative commentary

All stakeholders can give feedback and make suggestions to the school's management on Covid-19. In interviews with the principal and chairperson of the governing body, it was emphasised that a key focus is that the school must serve its community and parents were encouraged to become more involved in school activities. The school received support from the district. The circuit manager visits or contacts the principal regularly, the subject advisers held virtual meetings with the teachers and sent teaching plans and resources. The district psychologist and social worker are in contact with the school, but there are no links with the local public health officials.

Recommendations

1. Age- and phase-appropriate learning programmes must be developed to assist learners whose home language is not English, to bridge language difficulties.
2. Attention must be given to professional development, particularly regarding the use of online teaching and learning materials.
3. The maintenance and safety of the sports field must not be neglected and must be maintained so that it is always safe.
4. Greater parental involvement in the education of their children must be encouraged.