

## **Kwa-Thema's community shuts down Lefa-Ifa Secondary School**

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On 17 October 2022, parents and community leaders closed down Lefa-Ifa Secondary School in Kwa-Thema with bricks and burning tyres at the gate preventing learners and teachers from entering the school.

Kwa-Thema community members started an initiative in June this year, to monitor schools in Kwa-Thema after it came to attention that there are learners who are selling illegal substances at schools, smoking weed in the morning and some other learners are bunking school but leaving their homes as if they are going to school. Lefa-ifa has been achieving a low pass rate in the past 2 years. The school's matric results dropped from 82,2% in 2019 to 44,7% in 2020 and 47,5% in 2021. This made parents and community leaders to pay more attention to the school. Minister of Basic Education Angie Motshekga visited the school in February as part of the school readiness program. "Stability is needed to ensure there's a proper turnaround at this school," said Motshekga.

During the monitoring, leaders and the school had an agreement that monitoring can happen from outside the school premises, which led to learners engaging with community leaders alleging that the school educators are not teaching or attending classes. "We wanted the Department of Education (DoE) to intervene and ensure that the vision and the mission of the school is being followed," said Letsholo Motle who is one of the leaders and monitor.

The shutdown led to the DoE intervening the situation on the very same day. "There are a lot of issues in this school, and the teachers are not interested in helping us control the situation," concluded Motle.

During a sit down at the school, which was attended by community leaders, South African Democratic Teachers Union, South African Police Service, Representative Council of Learners, the School Governing Body, Community Safety. Ward 74 Councillor Thulani Simelani and councillor Sizwe Nhleko of ward 78, the Ekurhuleni District director Somikazi Chabalala and other DoE representatives also attended. The director mentioned how community leaders have failed to communicate the procedures of the shutdown. "We are not going to take a Whatsapp voice note serious[ly]... schools have structures that deal with such issues..." said Chabalala.

"Our decision might have been rushed and a bit too hasty, but we wanted the department's attention and we got it. During the monitoring we have been doing our own observation[s] and we have noticed a lot of wrong things in this school. We believe learners can be controllable, it just needs dedicated teachers," said Vuyani Mthembu a member of the leadership team.

The sit down ended with the department promising that they will look into the allegations, have a meeting with all the structures of the school and stakeholders, and to get back to the leadership team with an update. Leaders of the community apologised to the school and the

department for not following correct procedures. The principal of the school was not available to comment.

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