

Velile Senior Secondary School to be built

By Sinalo Peyi

29 May 2025

Eastern Cape – Bathurst, locals have been struggling with accessing nearby schools as the area boasts only one secondary school in the community with the other being a combined school. These are Velile Secondary School and other is Shaw Park Combined School, which is nearly 9km away. Velile was built as a temporary school more than 30 years ago, but it was not maintained. Over the years, many students have complained about the state of the school buildings and infrastructure saying it affected their academic performance.

Velile has produced many graduates and is now falling apart. The walls are fragile and the roof is falling, many chairs and tables are broken. There are no sports facilities on the school premises and some classrooms have been burnt down leading to even more overcrowding in other rooms. When it is raining or windy, some classrooms cannot be used because the water and the wind come in.

The community have been aloof about the problems, leaving it to the students to campaign for change. Students at the school say the school conditions has become a campaign for politicians looking for votes as different politicians have been making promises that they will fix the school, but it does not get any better but worse. Students have been looking for help from community leaders, from political leaders, on social media, and also from Khula an organisation that fights for rights of children and women, without success.

The school principal, Mr Wanga Ntantiso, last addressed students on 23 May 2025 promising an improvement regarding the complaints regarding the state of the school. Ntantiso said that the school would be rebuilt by the third term of 2025. According to the principal, the rejuvenation of the school buildings will be scheduled for school recess in June as it would be dangerous for students to be around the premises during that time. He noted that the classroom containers would not be enough to house all the students. The rest of the premises will be used to build a new school building. Mr Ntantiso also advised the students to register in other high schools to proceed from term 3 to term 4 due to the process of building a new school.

Siphosethu Ndabeni who is a former student of Velile Secondary School, having left the school in 2015, commented that the school has been decaying even in 2015. Ndabeni said that the condition has worsened over the years until today.

“We had days when we felt like we were studying outside during rainy days, and we would be squeezed in one classroom. About 70 students sharing desks that are supposed to be used by one learner and which affected our academics,” Ndabeni said this before concluding that the school would now be renewed. It is not only a dream of the current learners but also a dream for every former student who studied there.

Elam Peyi, a grade 9 learner at the school, commented that, “At least now that the school will be rebuilt, [it would be] suitable for human use,” saying that makes her and other students happy it feels like a dream come true.

“I wish this process will actually happen and it’s not just another [false] promise that we [usually] get everytime before elections,” she concluded. The condition of the school and the responses from the municipality and the provincial Department of Education over the years since Velile Secondary was built have made students lose faith in any promise made to rebuild the school.

Philip Tamana, who served as a school committee member from 2016 to 2018, shared that he felt relieved about the new developments at Velile Secondary. He explained that during his time as the school committee treasurer, they had made several calls to the Department of Education, which resulted in empty promises for years, making them look bad. “Now that it seems the school will finally be built, it will help ensure that students receive the education they deserve and improve their academic performance,” he said.

“I also hope the school will have strong security measures in place to ensure the safety of students on the premises and prevent any criminal activity,” Tamana added. He went on to mention that there are students who bring drugs to school, and some even attend classes while high or drunk, posing a threat to both students and teachers. “This turns the school into an unsafe environment. There must be security at the gate to prevent such incidents.”

The school is the only high school serving Bathurst and nearby areas. It plays a crucial role in educating and providing a brighter future for the small and underdeveloped community. For many senior citizens, it has been a long-held dream to see today’s generation receive an education that enables them to become independent and break the cycle of unemployment, crime, and poverty.

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