

MEDIA RELEASE

PSA outraged with Limpopo Department of Education over safety concerns at Rehlahleng Special School

DATE

18 February 2025

EMBARGO

None

ENQUIRIES

communication@psa.co.za

The Public Servants Association (PSA) is outraged by the Limpopo Department of Education's persistent failure to address critical safety concerns at Rehlahleng Special School, despite repeated warnings and alarming incidents, including an alleged sexual assault.

The situation at the School reached a distressing peak earlier this year when School Governing Body (SGB) members illegally obstructed two employees from reporting for duty. These employees had acted in good faith, raising urgent safety concerns about the well-being of learners, only to face resistance from the School's Principal. Their attempts to escalate the matter to higher authorities, including the Circuit and District Offices, and through the PSA, have been met with inaction. The PSA has approached the Office of the Public Protector to investigate several complaints.

Rehlahleng Special School caters for learners with severe physical and intellectual disabilities but is in a dire state, lacking fundamental support services such as a Social Worker and a Professional Nurse. The PSA recently witnessed serious health and safety violations during a visit to the School whilst addressing grievances from the Union's members. Alarming findings include leaking roofs, causing wet and slippery floors with learners slipping and falling on wet tiles, and inadequate sleeping arrangements, with mattresses and bedding placed on the floor in recreation areas, suggesting overcrowding. The bathroom and toilet facilities are insufficient for the nearly 150 learners. The kitchen and cooking facilities are substandard, raising concerns about hygiene and nutrition.

Following the PSA's intervention, the Department of Employment and Labour conducted an inspection on 28 November 2024. The School was issued nine Compliance Notices, underscoring the gravity of risks. The Department has been given 60 days to comply, and the PSA intends to monitor progress closely, including applying for the details of these notices once are accessible.

The PSA commends the Department of Employment and Labour for the prompt and professional response, as these actions will help to ensure the safety of learners and employees. The Limpopo Department of Education's inaction, however, remains unacceptable. The PSA once again urges the Department to address these issues and hold SGB members accountable for their behaviour, which undermines the rights and safety of learners and employees.

END