# NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

**FOR WRITTEN REPLY**

**QUESTION NO. 20**

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**(INTERNAL QUESTION PAPER NO. 01)**

**Ms M D Hlengwa (IFP) to ask the Minister of Health:**

(1) In view of alarming reports during the first week of February 2022 that 46 learners from the Umbozane Primary School in KwaMaphumulo became seriously ill after apparently eating lollipops at school, what oversight mechanisms does his department have in place to ensure that the food sold at schools adhere to food safety standards;

(2) (a) are regular investigations undertaken to ensure that schools comply with such food safety standards and (b) will the findings of the investigation into the matter be published?

###### NW24E

**REPLY:**

1. Food Control is one of the 9 Municipal Health Services that has been devolved since July 2004 in terms of the Municipal Structures Act, 1998, (Act no 117 of 1998) to the 44 district municipalities and 8 metropolitan municipalities. The department continues to develop policies and provides support on municipal health services delivery in all 9 provinces, 44 districts and 8 metropolitan municipalities that are rendering food control. The department has developed National Environmental Health Norms and Standards to ensure that the provision of food control and other municipal health services is standardised throughout the country. Municipal Health Services Assessments (Audits) are continuously conducted to assess compliance with National Environmental Health Norms and Standards (NEHNS).
2. (a) The department through the authorised municipalities monitors all schools on a number of areas including food safety. The above-mentioned document, NEHNS which guides municipalities on the frequency of inspection requires that schools be inspected once a year. This is just a guide as municipalities conduct risk assessment to determine whether a school is a high risk facility which would require constant monitoring or it falls in a low risk category. Investigations are only carried out if incidents take place relating to food. The school in question was visited on the 1st of February 2022 after receiving the complaint on the 31st January 2022. The municipality conducted an investigation at the school where field visits were done, samples of the affected products were taken for laboratory analysis and a follow up investigation on the 2nd February 2022 was done and the outcome was that most of the affected victims had recovered. Further samples will be submitted for chemical analysis.

(b) The department will eventually publish the outcome of the investigation once all the areas of concern have been finalised. The department takes precautionary measures when dealing with such cases to avoid being sued if things are not correctly handled.

END.