**NATIONAL ASSEMBLY**

**WRITTEN REPLY**

**QUESTION 232**

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**INTERNAL QUESTION PAPER: 02/2017**

**232. Mr E J Marais (DA) to ask the Minister of Basic Education:**

(1) Whether, with regard to the 38 schools that have achieved less than a 40% pass rate for the past five years as listed in the National Senior Certificate School Performance Report for 2016, her department has identified such underperforming schools on an annual basis; if not, why not; if so, what are the relevant details;

(2) what steps has her department taken to assist each school in addressing its underperformance;

(3) has any action been taken against the principals of schools that underperform consistently; if not, why not; if so, what are the relevant details? NW245E

**RESPONSE:**

1. In terms of section 58B of the South African Schools Act (Act 84 of 1996), the Head of Department must, annually, identify any public school that is underperforming in relation to any matter referred to in subsection (2) (a), (b) or (c). Heads of Department have identified all underperforming schools, including the 38 schools. The list of the 38 schools that have performed below 40% is attached as Annexure A.

1. Heads of Department were provided with guidelines and a management plan for the management and support of all underperforming schools. Therefore, based on this, Heads of Department have taken the following steps to assist the identified schools to address their underperformance:
* Issuing of written notices to the principals of all underperforming schools (including independent schools as contemplated in paragraph 5.2 c), d) and g).
* As part of provincial consequence management strategies, issuing of written notices to all principals of the schools identified as serial underperforming schools requesting them to motivate and provide reasons as to why the Provincial Education Departments must not remove them from their positions as principals. For instance:
	+ In Free State, in some areas principals of weak schools were removed to smaller schools and placed under strict supervision. The province has managed to eliminate most schools that performed below 50 per cent, and the number of these schools has been reduced to one school. The province is now working on reducing the number of schools that performed below 75% since 2014.
	+ In KwaZulu-Natal, there are regular accountability sessions with teachers, heads of department, school principals, circuit managers and subject advisors on the performance of schools and subjects for which they are responsible.
* Requiring of District Directors to conduct a diagnostic analysis of the challenges that led to underperformance in the identified schools, for submission to HoDs.
* Requiring of school principals of the schools identified as underperforming to prepare and submit Academic Performance Improvement Plans to the Head of Department.
* Evaluating Academic Performance Improvement Plans from schools identified as underperforming and providing the necessary guidance and support.

To ensure that there is improvement in the performance of the schools identified as underperforming; Heads of Department must take all reasonable steps to assist schools identified in terms of subsection (1) of the South African Schools Act (Act 84 of 1996) in addressing the underperformance. For instance:

* In Gauteng, the Department is in the process of providing subject support packages which include the following: Curriculum policy; Lesson plans; Exam guidelines; SSIP material; SBA and PAT guidelines; Diagnostic Reports; analytical reports; weighted ATPs; and weighted weekly assessment items for each subject.
* In KwaZulu-Natal:
	+ Circuit managers and subject advisors are monitoring curriculum coverage in all underperforming schools; ensuring that schools have curriculum delivery targets and that they receive well-prepared lesson plans, assessment exercises and memoranda.
	+ The Just-In-Time (JIT) programme is being used to improve teachers’ knowledge of subject content and application of teaching methods. The focus of the programme is on Mathematics, Mathematical Literacy, Accounting, Physical Sciences, Life Sciences, Agricultural Sciences and Geography.
	+ The province developed an ‘SMT Toolkit on Curriculum Management’, and has printed approximately 10 000 copies for heads of department, deputy principals, school principals and circuit managers as support material.

MECs for Education shall submit reports on the 31st March 2017 on the actions taken by their Heads of Department regarding support provided to underperforming schools, to assist the Minister in carrying out her duties referred to in section 8 of the National Education Policy Act.

1. The Department of Basic Education has provided guidance to this effect and provincial education departments are expected to submit comprehensive reports to the DBE.