

MEDIA RELEASE **COVID-19: PSA calls for vaccine roll out for Eastern Cape high school learners**

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The Public Servants Association (PSA) has noted with extreme concern the developments at St John College in Mthatha after 88 learners tested positive for COVID-19.

The school was closed, as confirmed by the Deputy Principal in engagement with the PSA. The school has, however, decided to keep all infected learners at school and released learners who have not contracted the virus. These learners will be assisted by only three employees, *i.e.*, the Boarding Master, Matron and Security Officer, without the engagement of the Health Department for technical support. Usage of schools as isolation areas must be preceded by the proper training of employees and the provision of the proper and adequate personal protective equipment. It must be noted that these employees neither have the skills nor the experience to take care of COVID-19 positive patients.

The PSA strongly condemns this reckless action as there are no clear guidelines for employees, exposing them to risk of being infected. The PSA calls upon the Eastern Cape Department of Education to engage the Department of Health to assist in managing the environment to ensure the successful completion of the isolation period. Only trained personnel can manage this environment, as employees responsible for the school are not trained health officials. Placing this responsibility on them is unacceptable.

In addition, several schools are experiencing increased COVID-19 cases, including Willowvale High School with ten infected learners, and Nyanga High School in Engcobo, with more than 30 infected learners. The PSA calls on the Departments of Education and Health, to ensure the vaccination of all learners at secondary schools.

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