

MEDIA RELEASE Free State Government Departments found wanting on COVID-19

DATE 08 June 2020

EMBARGO None

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The confusion over the reopening of schools saw some schools in the Free State not complying with the Health and Safety requirements needed to be in place before the reopening of schools on 1 June.

This situation gradually changed as deliveries were made at the different schools.

The question of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) to all, infrastructural deficiencies, safety and security, lack of psychosocial facilities as well as access to technology are still uppermost issues which the department fails to deal with.

The PSA visited schools and gathered information from shop stewards around Free State to provide feedback on the readiness to reopen the schools and receive pupils on 8 June. Five Districts, namely, Lejweleputswa, Fezile Dabi, Xhariep, Motheo and Thabo Mofutsanyane schools received the PPEs and Sanitizers. Although the provision of water that is still a challenge around Thabo Mofutsanyane. The most paramount matter is the deep cleaning of schools and administrative blocks at schools. Schools in Bloemfontein were deep cleaned whilst in other districts the Department is using the cleaners and unemployed people from the surrounding communities and that is against health and safety regulations and a huge risk to employees and learners.

The PSA is very concerned and alarmed at the way the hostels have been prepared as per the hospital plan that was shared with the union. Upon investigation, the PSA found that staff at the hostel have not received the required training to deal with COVID-19. At some hostels the isolation rooms are not yet equipped with the necessary paraphernalia. The effort done by the Free State Department of Education to comply with the obligatory measures is noted and appreciated, nonetheless the outstanding issues may impact in the spreading of the virus at the schools.

It is based on this teething issues that put the lives of members and pupils at risk that the PSA is still on record that schools are not ready yet and the reopening should be put in abeyance until October 2020.

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