

Great outdoors no breeze for school



RAIN OR SHINE: Pupils from Nkwezana Primary School in Crossways near Chintsa are taught outside under a tree due to a shortage of classrooms. There are only six classrooms for the 680 Grade R to 7 pupils

Picture: SIBONGILE NGALWA

Plea for classrooms unanswered

By **ARETHA LINDEN**
Education Reporter

HUNDREDS of pupils are being taught under a tree just outside East London. Nkwezana Primary School in Crossways near Chintsa only has six classrooms to accommodate 680 pupils from Grade R to 7.

The school's Grade R class alone has 72 pupils registered this year, and they are all crammed into one classroom which is about 20m² in size. The situation is even worse in grades 4, 5, 6 and 7 where each class has more than 100 pupils.

The Dispatch team visited the farm school last week and found Grade 6 pupils attending lessons under a big tree near the entrance of the school.

While the majority of the pupils managed to squeeze into desks, some took notes from the board placed against the bark of the tree. The pupils battled to keep the pages of their books from flapping as strong winds blew.

Grade 4 pupils were also sitting on an open field outside. To make matters worse, there is no running water at the school and pupils rely on six mobile toilets to relieve themselves.

A single room serves as the principal's office, staff room and store room.

The chairman of the school governing body (SGB) Thembisile Matelise said they had been pleading with the department of education to build them extra classrooms

for many years. "We informed the department of the situation a long time ago, when Noxolo Kiviet was still the premier [2009-2014]. They promised to build us a school. We are still waiting," Matelise said.

Construction was approved a few years ago and last year the building plan was shown to them.

"The tender for the construction of the school and provision of pre-fab classes was advertised early last year. Construction was suppose to have started at the end of last year, but that never happened."

Matelise said the quality of learning and teaching was seriously compromised without classrooms. "When it's raining, we have no choice but to cram more than 100 pupils into one class," he said.

Because there was no running water, the school spend R2 500 a month to buy 15 000 litres of water.

Other challenges at the school include the shortage of furniture for foundation classes, which is made up of 260 pupils, as well as the head of department and deputy principal posts which have not been filled.

Education department spokesman Malibongwe Mtima said yesterday that there were teething problems delaying the process of awarding school-building projects in the province, including Nkwezana.

Mtima said the implementing agency, which is the department of public works, was in the final stages of providing the pre-fab classrooms and construction would start soon. — arethal@dispatch.co.za