

Abandoned school stripped to bones

The department moved pupils to other facilities

By ARETHA LINDEN
Education Reporter

ASCHOOL that was once considered to be one of the best technical high schools in East London has been stripped bare by residents.

Vulindlela Technical Centre in Mdantsane NU1 stopped operating last year when it was closed by the department of education as part of a rationalisation programme that was to close 2 077 small and unviable schools and merge them with bigger and better resourced schools.

Provincial education spokesman Loyiso Pulumani said because the school had a low pupil enrolment they had no other option but to close it.

“There were less than 125 learners so it was regarded as a small and unviable school. The learners were moved to bigger and better resourced schools nearby,” said Pulumani.

Some pupils were sent to Buchule

Technical High School less than a kilometre away and others to Alphendale High in Vergenoeg, which also offers technical subjects.

Pulumani said when the department closed a school, the structure was handed over to the department of public works to allocate to another department for a different use.

“In some instances, you find the department that received the structure would use it for a particular project and then abandon it,” said Pulumani.

However, roads and public works spokesman Mphumzi Zuzile denied that they were now responsible for the school.

“The education department did not give us any notice of schools they have closed in the past three years,” Zuzile said.

But while the two departments toss the hot potato, residents have been stripping it tile by tile and brick by brick.

Nocwaka Mbude, who lives at an informal settlement across the road from the school, said people come every day to carry things away.

“They come here with bakkies and cars and start to break down whatever they can take and load it into their cars.

“They started with the roof, and now they are taking out window frames,” said Mbude.

Another resident, Lungelo Mabindla, said he saw nothing wrong with people stripping the structure.

“It’s not like it’s being used for anything. The department of education had clearly abandoned it,” said Mabindla.

When the Daily Dispatch visited the school last week, sounds of hammering could be



RIPPED APART: Vulindlela Technical Centre in Mdantsane NU1 has been vandalised, with windows, pipes, the roof and other removable items harvested

Pictures: MICHAEL PINYANA

heard from a distance.

About 50 people were hard at work, breaking down whatever was left of the structure.

The entire roof is gone, most of the window frames are missing and some parts of the walls have been

broken down.

A group of men could be seen carrying steel window frames and some were loading them into a red bakkie parked inside the property.

The group spotted the Dispatch team taking pictures from outside

and alerted others who started murmuring and hiding their faces, clearly displeased with their pictures being taken.

Former pupil Thabisa Mfikili, who later became a temporary teacher at the school, said it was painful to see a

school that once held such high standards in the community being reduced to nothing.

“Vulindlela has produced many engineers and was regarded as one of the best in technical studies,” said Mfikili. — arethal@dispatch.co.za



FREE FOR ALL: Residents are stripping Vulindlela Technical High School after the school was closed last year