

# Delays in school projects

## REPORT FROM: P1

of education, it has also had a negative effect on discipline.

“Just when we think a contractor will get the job done, there is an issue of nonpayment and the contractor leaves.

“The last contractor stopped work in December and left in February.”

Bethelsdorp Comprehensive is the most recent of the building failures.

The project was launched in June 2017 with much fanfare – principal Leon Arendse said he thought a long-term dream had been realised.

“After 45 years of being housed in a temporary structure, it was a godsend when we were told we would finally receive our new building.

“But that wonderful dream was soon taken from us following a host of issues surrounding payments.

“It [building project] was scheduled to be completed by the second quarter of 2019.

“However, the contractor left the site with only 11% of the job being completed.

“Subsequently, the security also left and, ever since, the construction supplies are being stolen off the premises.

“It is demoralising for both pupils and staff.

“Seeing sections of the new building being hauled off is destroying the spirit of all those involved.

“What’s worse is now that the contractor has left the site, the job has to be [put out for tender again], which will cause further delays.”

The education department’s Kojana said public works and the CDC had been assigned as implementing agents as they had the necessary expertise.

He said the reason for the delay in payments related to the validation of invoices from the contractors.

“There must be validation of invoices and the work that has been done before we can pay [the implementing agent who, in turn, pays contractors].

“So now we are working with the office of the premier, the provincial Treasury and public works,” Kojana said.

“Following a special meeting [two weeks ago], we are now working through all the invoices and are in the process of paying the validated invoices.”

Kojana said that before putting the projects where the contractors had left the site out for tender again, the department would first pay the contractors what they were owed and then offer them the opportunity to complete the job.

Public works spokesperson Vuyokazi Mbanjwa said it was waiting for the money from the department of education to pay the contractors at Jubilee Park.

Mbanjwa denied construction at Bethelsdorp Comprehensive had stopped as a result of nonpayment, saying it was because of a contract transfer to a new contractor, which was at an advanced stage.

Simlindele Manqina, the spokesperson for Rufane Donkin implementing agent the CDC, referred all questions to the education department.