

BHISHO TO FIND 1,200 PUPILS NEW SCHOOLS

Parents refuse to send children back to 'deathtrap' classrooms

ARETHA LINDEN
EDUCATION REPORTER
arethal@dispatch.co.za

Parents from Schornville Primary School appear to have won the the battle for safer classrooms for their children.

On Monday the department of education promised to place all 1,200 children in better schools today.

The promise was made after heated confrontation with parents.

In a morning of drama, parents took on education department bosses, hurling insults, calling politicians "liars" and pouring out their hearts about years of being strung along by official promises and plans to build them a new school.

Monday's tug-of-war ensued on the rugby fields of Dale Primary where heads of the provincial education department, including superintendent-general Themba Kojana were confronted by about 400 agitated parents who packed the grandstand.

Kojana was accompanied by chief-director Naledi Mbude, deputy director-general Ray Tywakadi, the head of infrastructure, Tsepo Pefole, and other officials.

When the officials made their way onto the field, the crowd broke into a struggle song that echoed through the school and across town.

About 800 pupils who had filled half of one of the fields, were running around, playing tag and kicking balls.

The chair of the school governing body (SGB), Mzwandile Vaaiboom, was first to speak.



RUNNING OUT OF PATIENCE: Pupils of Schornville Primary gather on DalePrimary's playing fields, accompanied by parents who demanded better schooling conditions for their children. Picture: MICHAEL PINYANA

We know you politicians, you are liars! This suggested meeting is a tactic

"We have been waiting for years for a new school. The time to negotiate is now over. We are here today for one purpose only and that is to ensure when we leave here, we agree that our children are not going back to those unsafe, prefab classrooms at Schornville. Come tomorrow we want to sent our children to schools like this one [Dale] and Kingsridge," said Vaaiboom.

Last week, the parents from the township school in King William's Town that accommodates 1,200 pupils, removed their children from the school which they call unsafe and an "accident waiting to happen"

On Wednesday, about 300 pu-

pils led by their parents barged onto the grounds of more affluent neighbouring schools, Kingsridge and Dale Primary, where the parents demanded their children be enrolled.

The protest, which entered its fourth day on Monday, resulted in the department closing the two schools targeted by the parents and two other schools, Central Primary and De Vos Malan, which are also located in the CBD.

Addressing the Schornville parents, Kojana initially requested a meeting with the SGB leaders, but that did not go down well with the crowd, who started hurling insults.

"We know you politicians, you are liars! This suggested meeting is just one of your delaying tactics to neutralise the situation," shouted one parent from the crowd.

After going back and forth for two hours, Kojana announced that his team would be contacting all the public schools to secure spaces.

"When we leave here we will approach all public schools in this area to find spaces," said Kojana.

Kojana said the spaces would include the nine brand new prefabs that were provided to Schornville late last year.

However, parents vowed no

pupil would be allowed into the prefab classes.

"That is not going to happen; our kids are not going back to those prefabs. If we allow that they will remain there until Jesus returns," said one parent.

The Dispatch visited the school a year ago after a pupil fell through one of the classrooms floors.

Asked when plans would be finalised and when construction would commence, Kojana said he would have to meet with the department of public works, National Treasury and the national department of basic education before a date could be set.