



**EVERYTHING AT A STANDSTILL:** There has been no progress on the construction of the Grens Primary School for a year Picture: MARK ANDREWS

# Finances delay completion of new inner-city school

## Construction work on Grens Primary put on hold for the moment

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There will be no inner-city high school in East London to accommodate thousands of unplaced pupils when schools reopen in January 2020 after the Eastern Cape department of education failed to complete the building of the new R100m Grens Primary School this

year.

Grens Primary, currently based in Arcadia, was set to move into the new school building in Grens High School to make way for the inner-city high school.

The move was supposed to have happened in June, to ensure the inner-city high school started operating next year.

The Daily Dispatch understands that work came to a halt in September last year after the department failed to pay Dewing Construction for work already done on the project.

Provincial education spokesperson Malibongwe Mtima told the Dispatch that the project had experienced delays as a result of non-payment of the construction company, Dewing Construction, due to cash flow problems.

“The department did experience cash flow problems initially. However, payments have been sorted and the challenges of the professional architect are being resolved by Public Works.

“The project has resumed, with a few technicalities cur-

rently being addressed, and it is envisaged that the contractor will resume works in January 2020.”

The Dispatch visited the new building on Monday morning. Three construction workers and a security guard were seen on site.

A man, who did not want to be named, said the new building was being vandalised by thieves looking for copper to sell. He said some of the taps had recently been stolen.

Mtima said 50% of the work and expenditure had already

been done.

“The public works officials, together with the professional team, have assessed the site and are engaged in the discussions on repairs and security.

“Based on the delays experienced in the project, it is not feasible that the new school will be operational by January 2020. However, the time frame can only be established once a site and new programme has been finalised.”

In an interview with the Dispatch last month, Dewing managing director Andrew Gericke

said the company was still “in possession of the site”.

“I can confirm that we continue to hold the site, we continue to provide financial guarantees of holding the site. As it is, we provide security and have personnel on site, but there has been no progress of work since October last year.”

On Monday Gericke said work had resumed. However, he would not provide the Dispatch with more details.

Grens Primary School governing body chairperson Ronnie Saayman said the situation

would have a negative impact on the surrounding primary school pupils, who had hoped to enrol at the new school.

“As parents we are excited to move into our new school building.

“The process started about two years ago. Unfortunately the whole process and activities on site of the new Grens Primary School came to a standstill about a year ago.

“There were no activities regarding construction of the new school on site. We were supposed to move into the new

school by July 2019, but as a result of the non-progress of the construction site of the school, the whole process is now behind schedule, so we could not move in. And nearing the end of 2019, we will not be able to move in before the end of the year.”

He said: “We hope and pray that we can move into the new Grens school soon in 2020 to accommodate not only our learners but, very important, also to let the new high school learners move into the new school.”