

A teacher remains a teacher even during school holidays. In fact, a teacher must remain a teacher for life.

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Education activist

EDUCATION

Public Works considers demolishing unused schools

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THE Department of Public Works is considering demolishing 11 of the 15 vacant buildings that were used as schools that have since closed in the Western Cape.

Responding to a written question Acting MEC for Transport and Public Works Tertius Simmers said his department had 15 buildings relinquished to it by the Western Cape Education Department (WCED) and one other from the Department of Health that now forms part of its immovable assets register.

Ever so often, the WCED closes schools in the province, either due to the state of the building or the dwindling number of pupils registered at that school to either be combined with another school or have a new structure built for them.

In 2019, the Minister for Basic Education Angie Motshekga in responding to a parliamentary question outlined that over 3 000 schools in the country would be closed or merged with others

due to dwindling pupil populations.

In the Western Cape, around 25 primary schools were said to have fewer than 135 pupils resulting in eight being considered for closure and the remaining 17 earmarked for mergers.

Simmer said since 2009, 13 former school buildings have been relinquished to the department and that all 15 buildings now in its control are not being used for any purpose.

“One (school) is currently being refurbished for use by the Department of Education, one has been allocated to the Department of Education (the property previously relinquished by the Department of Health, with the remaining two being considered for future use in terms of the Western Cape government’s service delivery objectives,” he said.

Asked about the locations of these buildings, the department’s spokesperson, Jandre Bakker, said they would not disclose this information as they spend millions annually to provide security to ensure they are not invaded.

In Uitsig, the building that used to

house the former Uitsig High School was vandalised within weeks of the school closing its door.

Community Policing Forum (CPF) chairperson Zelda Trantraal said: “The community completely broke it down piece by piece and took whatever they could and now that space is empty.”

“The vandalism of that building actually saw the neighbouring school Tygersig Primary become a target for vandalism as well once nothing could be taken from the empty building. Tygersig is struggling with constant break-ins primarily because of the activities that took place at Uitsig. Currently, Uitsig has no high school as those learners go into Ravensmead,” she said.

“Florida Primary School was torn down by the department after standing for years empty and was demolished after that boy was murdered there.”

In 2013, the decapitated body of 15-year-old Lee Heinrich Adams was found lying in the corner of one of the derelict classrooms of what used to be Florida Primary School.

In 2005, the WCED sought to



UITSIG High School which was closed down in September, 2019, had its building vandalised shortly after the closure.

interdict a group of people who had occupied the building for housing.

And now, 15 organisations including churches, community centres and crèches also face eviction after the public works department approached the Western Cape High Court which

seeks to remove them from a former school building commonly known as the old Lotus River School.

The matter is due to be heard on July 29 after it was postponed in April to afford the respondents the opportunity to file responding papers.