



**Publication:** Witness, The - Main  
**Title:** Woodlands Primary gets R45 million facelift  
**Publish date:** 06 Oct 2023  
**Page:** 1

**Reach:** 6180  
**AVE:** R 54519.80  
**Author:** Clive Ndou and Chanel George

# Woodlands Primary gets R45 million facelift

## School to be transformed into a world-class education institute

**CLIVE NDOU and  
CHANEL GEORGE**

Pietermaritzburg's Woodlands Primary school, whose pupils have been forced to learn under hazardous conditions for years, will soon be transformed into a multi-million-rand, world-class education institution.

Parents have long been concerned that their children and the teachers could fall ill due to the asbestos and other hazardous materials used to construct the classrooms in the 1970s.

Their pleas for help fell on deaf years.

However, for the school pupils and teachers, the wait for proper classrooms will soon be over as the KwaZulu-Natal Education Department has set aside R42 million for the reconstruction of the school.

KZN Public Works MEC Siphon "KK" Nkosi, whose department is overseeing the reconstruction of the school into a world class facility boasting a media center and a multi-purpose sports field, said the refurbished school would be "one of the best in the world".

"It would be like any other school which you can find in a developed country. Once completed, the school will bring back the dignity of our children and teachers," he said.



Nkosi, who visited the school yesterday to assess the construction work currently taking place, apologised to the Woodlands community for delays in the initiation of the project.

"We would like to thank the community for its patience. However, you should take comfort in knowing that this government takes the issue of education seriously. Yes, at times as government we are slow in responding but that does not mean that we won't respond. As the government, we are serious when we say we are on a mission to transform

the lives of our people," he said.

Shawn Adkins, who is a member of the school governing body (SGB) described the reconstruction of the school as the end of a "long struggle".

"As the Woodlands community we did everything to draw the Education Department's attention to the plight of the children and their teachers. We literally did everything, from lock outs to other forms of protests.

"What pained us the most as the community was that our children and teachers continued to be

exposed to the dangers of asbestos despite the fact that the use of asbestos in the construction of classrooms had been outlawed," he said.

Adkins, who was the chairperson of the SGB when the Woodlands community waged the struggle for a better school, said the community is grateful that government has "finally listened".

"The government didn't only come to the party; it also exceeded the community's expectations. It's the first time that a project of this magnitude is taking place in Woodlands," he said.

MEC for Human Settlements and Public works Siphon KK Nkosi on a site visit to the Woodlands Primary School. **PHOTO: CLIVE NDOU**

Construction of the new school is expected to be completed in a year's time.

Woodlands Primary school principal, Neil Tommy, raised concerns that learning and teaching could be disrupted should the contractor miss deadlines of the various phases of the projects, but said the school management was "so far happy in the manner in which things were unfolding".

Nkosi, who since his appointment as human settlements and public works minister in May has been crisscrossing the province to inspect the department's projects, said he was happy with the progress being made by the contractor working on the Woodlands Primary School project. He warned contractors working on the department's projects that they would be removed should they not adhere to set deadlines.

"As a department our messages to any contractor is that we are not married to you. If you don't perform, we will remove you and bring in someone who is willing to work," he said.