

Major school infrastructure programme underway in the Western Cape

Western Cape Minister of Education David Maynier has announced that the WCED is undertaking an ambitious school infrastructure delivery programme, which aims to deliver 842 additional classrooms with at least 26,000 places for learners in the province.



Image source: Getty Images

This number vastly exceeds the delivery of classrooms in previous years, and has been made possible due to an R830m increase in the infrastructure budget in 2022/23, and greater flexibility in implementing our infrastructure programme.

Unprecedented school build

This unprecedented school build includes:

- Three brick-and-mortar new and replacement schools = 46 additional classrooms (Moorreesburg High School; Chatsworth Primary School; and Perivale Primary School)
- Five new mobile schools = 50 additional classrooms (Klapmuts – high school; Klapmuts – primary school; Lwandle – high school; Tafelsig – high school; and Mitchell's Plain – high school)
- New classroom builds = 645 additional classrooms
- Seven Rapid School Build projects = 101 additional classrooms (Delft; Atlantis; Rivergate; Lwandle; Wallacedene; Hout Bay; Century City)

"The Rapid School Build programme is an exciting new initiative that brings together various stakeholders with the aim of developing and building seven schools within six months to accommodate up to 3,200 learners," said Maynier. "We are grateful for the assistance of partners like the City of Cape Town in overcoming some of challenges that we have previously faced in building schools.

"We have already completed 164 classrooms planned for next year, and a further 510 are scheduled for completion by January 2023, with the final 168 by March 2023."

However, he pointed out that there are significant risks:

"Social unrest, extortion demands and strikes which lead to delays in building completion: The WCED has ensured that all the necessary employment criteria, municipal requirements, and procurement processes will be followed, but all too often we see unnecessary and damaging protest action from individuals or groups seeking job opportunities and construction contracts or driving personal agendas. This can lead to delays in project completion dates which ultimately has an impact on the learner.

"The availability and delivery of building materials: We are reliant on all materials required for each classroom build to be available for delivery. Any transport delays, or shortages of certain materials could impact each build.

"We must all work together to prioritise the delivery of school infrastructure for our children, so that we have plenty of space ready for new learners arriving for the 2023 school year."

Increase in teaching posts

Earlier this year, the WCED announced the appointment of up to 1,143 additional teachers, which Maynier said is "one of the largest increases in teaching posts we've had in years. This means that a sufficient number of teaching posts will be allocated to schools in preparation for the completion of additional classrooms, so they will be ready to go when learners arrive."

Admissions 2023

The WCED received applications for 117,270 learners for Grades 1 and 8 for the 2023 school year, of which 22,113 were received late.

"As of 3 November 2022, we have placed 100,302, or 89.1%, of the Grade 1 and Grade 8 learners for the 2023 school year, and are in the process of placing 12,786, or 10.9%, of the Grade 1 and Grade 8 learners for the 2023 school year.

"However, this does not take into account the extremely late applications that we expect to receive from the end of this year onwards. Last year, we received over 7,900 extremely late applications for the 2022 school year, with most of those arriving after January 2022.

"For this reason, we are aiming to build many more schools and classrooms than previously, with double the number of new places compared to the number of learners we are still finalising placement for," said Maynier.

Appeal to parents

Maynier urged those parents who had not yet applied for your child for 2023, to do so at their district office immediately. "Do not wait until January next year, as this will make it much harder for us to place you child timeously," he said.

"We would like to thank those parents who have already applied for their patience as we finalise placement of their children, and appeal to them to ensure that they have supplied accurate and current contact details to us. We are unfortunately still struggling to reach some parents when we have a place to offer for their child.

"We understand that you will be anxious to have a place confirmed, and our officials are working around the clock to do so. Your children are, and will remain, the number one priority for our department," Maynier concluded.

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