

Kariega parents fight to save "beacon of hope" farm school

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The education department wants to close Amanzi Primary School because it only has 114 learners.



Parents are putting up a fight to save Amanzi Primary School, located on a farm in Kariega. The Eastern Cape Department of Education wants to close the school because it only has 114 enrolled grade R to 7 learners and it is deemed "small and unviable". But parents say numbers are increasing at the school.

According to the department's [rationalisation programme](#), primary schools must have a minimum of 135 learners and secondary schools 200. A school closure however should not mean that learners have to travel for more than 45 minutes one way to a primary school and 75 minutes for a secondary school, "given the distance to be travelled and the condition of the roads", the guidelines state.

In a letter to the school, education circuit manager Sebenzile Hoko said the department would meet parents to start "the process of closure and merging your school".

But last week, at a meeting with district officials, parents flatly refused to accept the school's closure.

"This is the only primary school on this farm and it is a beacon of hope," said parent Ntozakhe Tshazibane.

He said it was inspiring that two staff members had been students at the school 27 years ago.

"In 2016, it had only 25 learners. But now, they're 114. That's growth. You can't stifle this growth," he said.

Parents fear that requiring learners to travel to town would lead to higher dropout rates and that their children are afraid to travel to urban areas.

School principal Buyiswa Qundele said this year the school had taken in 39 learners when [Sindawonye Primary](#), about 19km away, was closed by the department.

"We are now surprised and shocked by their new move," she said.

She said the 114 figure excluded seven more learners who do not have identity documents. "I am trying my best to have the Department of Home Affairs assist," she said.

Eastern Cape education spokesperson Malibongwe Mtima said Amanzi was not the only school facing closure in Nelson Mandela Bay. "This is a national policy that must be adhered to," he said.

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