

Annual Report 2024/25



Schools
Evaluation
Authority

Accountability • Quality • Respect

“When accountability knocks, who will answer?”

(Abelmann & Elmore, 1999)



Western Cape
Government

FOR YOU

Education



Schools
Evaluation
Authority

Accountability • Quality • Respect

Annual Report 2024/25

Schools Evaluation Authority

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List of Abbreviations/Acronyms

APIP	Academic Performance Improvement Plan	NQ	National Quintile
ATPs	Annual Teaching Plans	NNSSF	National Norms and Standards for School Funding
BOT	Back on Track	NSC	National Senior Certificate
CA	Curriculum Advisor	NSNP	National School Nutrition Programme
COCL	Code of Conduct for Learners	PD	Professional Development
CPD	Continuous Professional Development	PLC	Professional Learning Community
CTLI	Cape Teaching and Leadership Institute	QMS	Quality Management Systems
DCAS	Department of Cultural Affairs and Sport	RAFI	Rapid Fire Monitoring and Evaluation visit
DCES	Deputy Chief Education Specialist	RCL	Representative Council of Learners
FET	Further Education and Training	SA	Subject Advisers
FP	Foundation Phase	SBA	School-Based Assessment
ICT	Information and Communication Technology	SEA	Schools Evaluation Authority
INSET	In-service Training	SENFET	Senior and FET Phase
INTERSEN	Intermediate and Senior Phase	SGB	School Governing Body
IP	Intermediate Phase	SIM	School Improvement Monitoring
KA	Key Area	SIP	School Improvement Plan
LOLT	Language of Learning and Teaching	SMT	School Management Team
MOD	Mass participation; Opportunity and access; Development and growth centres.	SSE	School Self-Evaluation
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organizations	WCED	Western Cape Education Department

Foreword by the Provincial Minister of Education



The Schools Evaluation Authority's vision of improving schools through strengthening school accountability complements our commitment to providing a quality education for every child, in every classroom, in every school in the Western Cape.

Every decision taken in relation to education must be informed by the need to improve learning outcomes, and to provide greater access to quality education across the province.

Monitoring and evaluation of our schools plays a vital role in guiding such decision-making, and we would like to thank the Schools Evaluation Authority staff for the work they have done over the term under review.

David Maynier
Provincial Minister of Education
Western Cape Government

Commentary from the Chief Evaluator



The annual report provides a comprehensive summary of the Schools Evaluation Authority's (SEA) activities from April 2024 – March 2025. The SEA is an autonomous body – independent of the Western Cape Education Department (WCED) – responsible for objectively evaluating schools based on standardised criteria, and publicly reporting its findings to promote transparency, accountability and improvement.

The past year has shown that, while some schools are successful, others perform poorly. To an extent this is inevitable, but the gap in achievement between schools serving similar communities continues to be too wide. This can be seen at Quintiles 1, 2 and 3 schools where, in some cases the education provisioning is good, with pockets of outstanding practice, while at others it is inadequate.

Certain no-fee and low fee schools continue to be outliers, providing outstanding education quality. These schools prove that quality education is not only possible but is also thriving. Resilience builds success as every challenge becomes a stepping stone to growth and innovation. It is at these schools where educators make a real difference as their impact multiplies within classrooms and communities.

The *quality of teaching* must be improved if literacy and numeracy targets are to be achieved. This is especially true for the Intermediate Phase (Grade 4, 5 and 6) and Senior Phase (Grade 7, 8 and 9). The province has many committed, highly effective principals, and teachers. It needs more. *Leadership of learning* must be improved if the province is to raise educational standards. Not enough principals monitor the quality of teaching in their schools. *It is upon these two imperatives that the policy agenda should focus to ensure that teachers – and, by extension, school leaders - are empowered to grow practically and continuously.*

Evidence of the current performance of the Western Cape's public schooling education system, based on the school evaluations conducted, suggests that it is a system with many good and outstanding schools, on the one hand, and schools which require improvement, or are inadequate, on the other hand. Evaluations have found that, worryingly, there is still under-achievement in approximately five in ten primary and secondary schools, across all eight education districts in the province.

The province is not yet at the level of achieving consistently good levels of performance which would match the ambition of the vision of the WCED, i.e., "*Quality education for every child in every classroom in every school in the province*". Achieving this vision requires a sustained focus on improving educational outcomes for every child, particularly for those whose daily lives are characterised by high levels of deprivation (social, emotional, economic). There is still much to be done in many schools.

If schools are to transform lives through learning, they will have to look inwards (knowing themselves inside-out through effective self - evaluation), look outwards (learning from what happens elsewhere in similar contexts, to challenge their thinking), and look forward to the future and what it may hold for learners – and plan how to get there.

I am acutely aware that teachers working in schools in socio-economically disadvantaged and unsafe areas face enormous challenges. Schools often use the mantra “Maslow before Blooms” when referring to context. If learners’ basic needs are not met (as per Maslow) then Blooms will not matter – because the learner is not in a state to learn. Maslow is foundational (learners need to feel safe, supported and motivated) and Bloom’s builds on that foundation. Once a learner’s needs are met (Maslow) then Blooms becomes more useful for structuring and deepening learning.

The determinants of learning (e.g., going to school hungry, going to school in an unsafe neighbourhood, gangsterism, bullying) have a significant impact on children and young people’s success in school and beyond school. The advantaged, however, do not have a monopoly on intelligence and poverty can never be an excuse for school failure. It is children who are socio-economically deprived and who face an almost constant threat of gangsterism and crime, and hunger, who need schools the most. The SEA has conducted evaluations at many schools in high density, socio-economically deprived areas which are beacons of hope to their children – where address is never used as an excuse. In many schools, high standards, and high expectations, prevail.

As a result, continuing to transform lives by improving education in the Western Cape is a mammoth task. Bringing about equity and improving school quality is a key imperative of the educational landscape. Schools must be exciting and purposeful settings, offering outstanding learning opportunities for all. The work of the SEA continues to be motivated by the belief that every child has the right to quality education, regardless of socio-economic status. Low quality education cannot be a perpetual poverty-trap.

It is against this backdrop that the SEA’s vision is to improve schools in the Western Cape through strengthening school accountability. At the heart of the SEA’s evaluation of schools are three key questions: 🎯 How are we doing? 🎯 How do we know? 🎯 What are we going to do now? Good schools focus these questions on learning because learning is at the heart of good schools. Learning is a school’s core business.

In a seminal research article written in 1999, Abelmann & Elmore asked the key question:

“When accountability knocks, will anyone answer?”

The SEA is a force for improvement as it aims to transform lives for every learner, in every classroom, at every school in the Western Cape. The SEA acknowledges that each school is different, and that different schools need different kinds of intervention and levels of accountability.

Although the SEA is functionally linked to the WCED, it is independent of it. As a result, the SEA supports better education metrics, evaluation, and quality assurance systems and helps policymakers and practitioners use our reports, and data, for decision-making and accountability at all levels.

The South African model of education delivery is based on a Head-Office/District Office/School modality, where a reciprocity of accountability should prevail; however, the school remains the basic unit for the delivery of quality education and as a result, must be the primary place where leaders and teachers are held to account. The SEA acknowledges that reciprocity of accountability in education in the province is vital for school improvement. When SEA evaluations recommend improvement, however incremental, there exists a responsibility, from the education ecosystem, to provide additional capacity to produce the improvement required. Both an ‘outside-in’ and an ‘inside-out’ approach to school improvement is needed.

The SEA evaluates public (ordinary and special) and subsidised independent schools in the province. The SEA is in a unique position to see what is happening in classrooms, and at schools, and must use the evidence gathered to identify trends and highlight issues that must be addressed. In essence, SEA evaluations are schools in a mirror. It also stands to reason that evaluations can ventilate good practice from which other schools can learn.

The SEA is a values-based, transparent, and accountable authority where children and learners come first and where standards are rated (and findings reported to the public) without fear or favour. In addition, the SEA's policies, judgements, and insights will be evidence-led. SEA evaluators act with integrity and impartiality. The SEA is accessible to, and engaged with, our different audiences in different contexts so that we can better understand their needs and always act in the best interests of our learners.

The SEA's role remains to improve lives by raising standards. It is born of a vision of improving schools through strengthening school accountability. Our children deserve a world-class education. It is incumbent on all schools to be the hope that delivers this to our children.



David J. Millar
Chief Evaluator
Schools Evaluation Authority
Western Cape Government

Executive Summary

The SEA's vision is to improve schools in the Western Cape through strengthening school accountability. Its mission is to raise standards and learner outcomes by providing independent, credible, and public evaluations of the quality of schools in the Western Cape.

This report includes:

- An overview of the schools evaluated.
- A summary of findings based on the analysis of data and the interpretation thereof.
- A summary of recommendations.

Establishment

The SEA is a statutory body which exercises its powers, under the Western Cape Provincial School Education Amendment Act, 2018 (Act 4 of 2018) ("the Act"), read with the Regulations on the Western Cape Schools Evaluation Authority, Provincial Notice 47 dated 11 April 2019 ("the Regulations"), independently of the Western Cape Education Department (WCED). Its independence provides assurance both to parents and to schools.

School evaluations

Between April 2024 and March 2025, the SEA carried out 89 two-day school evaluations, 1 one-day evaluation and three Rapid Fire (RAFI) Monitoring and Evaluation visits. A total of ninety-three (93) schools were visited.

The school evaluations used a comprehensive framework, and included the following categories of schools:

- Special schools = 2.
 - One school is a mainstream school that writes the National Senior Certificate examinations.
 - One school is a school of skills offering the 4-year vocational stream.
- Subsidised independent schools = 2.
- Public ordinary high schools = 36
 - Two schools are Mathematics, Science and Technology focus schools.
 - Four schools are technical high schools.
 - One school, a combined school, is an agricultural focus school.
- Public ordinary primary and pre-primary schools = 50
 - One school is a pre-primary school.
- RAFI schools = 3 (2 high schools; 1 primary school)

There were 61 fee-charging schools evaluated, and 29 no-fee schools evaluated. Schools at which RAFIs were conducted are fee-charging schools.

	Inadequate	Requires Improvement	Good	Outstanding	
Number of schools	8	35	24	22	89
High schools	8	11	10	6	35
Primary schools	0	24	12	13	49
Special schools	0	0	1	1	2
Early Childhood Development Centres	0	0	0	1	1
Subsidised independent schools	0	0	1	1	2

*One high school was non-rated.

Findings and recommendations

Schools are complex ecosystems and school evaluations remind us of the enormous challenge, complexity, and reality of working in schools. The annual report not only highlights the details of evaluations conducted but also makes recommendations for improvement. Evaluations found schools that are outstanding in every respect and some without direction - where a paralysis of functionality predominates.

For the reporting period 1 April 2024 – 31 March 2025 SEA evaluations were conducted at Western Cape public ordinary schools (primary and high), two special schools, a pre-primary school, and two subsidised independent schools.

It is hoped that the findings and recommendations will resonate with policy makers and practitioners.

Once a report has been published there is a moral purpose for change. The SEA invites learners, teachers, principals, parents, governors, education districts and Head office in the Western Cape to join.

Introduction

The report provides insight into the activities and findings of the SEA as well as detail on the approach to school evaluations.

Section 1: The Strategic Overview

Section 2: The Mandate

Section 3: The Year in Review

Section 4: Key Findings & Recommendations

Section 5: The Financial Management Summary

Section 1: The Strategic Overview

This section explains the SEA's strategy and approach to evaluations, founded on the core values of 'Accountability', 'Quality' and 'Respect'. However, context on why schools must improve through accountability is provided.

	Schools	Enrolment - All Grades
Ordinary Public	1 468	1 208 621
SNE Public	73	21 366
Total	1 541	1 229 987

Between April 2024 and March 2025, there were 1541 public schools in the Western Cape (public ordinary and special schools) with an enrolment of 1 229 987 learners and 36 417 educators (Source: WCED). The provincial education budget for 2024/2025 was R29,55 billion. Taking 200 school days per year (on average) into account, this equates to approximately R147 750 000 being spent per day on education (R 80 958 904 if taken over 365 days) and, if one breaks it down further, with a school day averaging 7 – 9 hours per day (with co- and extra-curricular activities taken into account), the provincial government (education) spends approximately between R 16 416 666 and R21 107 142 per hour on education provisioning in the province. The stakes are high.

The National Norms and Standards for School Funding (NNSSF) per learner allocation in the Western Cape in 2024/25 is as follows:

National Quintile and fee status	Grade 1 – 12 per learner allocation 2024
NQ1 – NQ5 No fee	R1 702
NQ4 Fee charging	R838
NQ5 Fee charging	R289

One of the responsibilities of the SEA is to measure the 'output' of the 'input'. The SEA is mandated to conduct school evaluations in all schools in accordance with the Western Cape Provincial School Education Amendment Act, 2018 (Act 4 of 2018) and the Regulations on the Western Cape Schools Evaluation Authority 2019, published under Provincial Notice 47 dated 11 April 2019.

The SEA has **three values** which guide the work that it does:

- **Accountability:** The SEA is accountable for its work and accepts responsibility for its actions. SEA evaluators accept responsibility for honest and ethical conduct in carrying out their mandate. The SEA is a statutory body with regulatory functions that reports to the provincial Minister of Education. The SEA also publishes an Annual Report of how effectively it is delivering its mandate – and strategy. Our approach to evaluations is constantly open to scrutiny.
- **Quality:** Schools have distinctive characteristics and attributes. The SEA measures these against a set of standards and indicators. The SEA will always be honest about the difference between what is authentically outstanding, or good, and what requires improvement, or is inadequate. SEA evaluations are always evidence-led (our policies, frameworks, standards, indicators, and insights are grounded in evidence).

- **Respect:** The SEA will carry out its mandate with due regard to the rights of everyone it encounters during an evaluation. The SEA values every role player in the education ecosystem and will intentionally respect them all.

The SEA's role involves making credible and professional judgements to rate the quality of Western Cape schools. It is a tremendous responsibility, as the findings have consequences for all those who work in schools and for the life opportunities of our province's learners.

The work of the SEA must lead to improved standards in the quality of teaching and learning and in learner achievement. However, the SEA is not a school improvement agency. Improvement must be the role of the school and the wider education ecosystem which supports the school e.g., education district office.

Our evaluations are evidence-led and are carried out in accordance with frameworks developed by education sector specialists, both in South Africa and abroad. Our focused frameworks, and tools, are available on our website and include various documents which will give schools transparent insight into school evaluation processes.

In embracing our responsibilities as an evaluation authority, the SEA will not make unnecessary demands on schools. The SEA is acutely aware of the unintended consequences that notice of an evaluation may bring. The SEA seeks to evaluate fairly, without any burden of compliance on the schools it evaluates. As a result, SEA evaluations are focused primarily on quality. This approach is one which is right for the local context, addressing the overwhelming need for improvement in school standards and learner outcomes in the province.

SEA evaluations are intentional in their focus. The SEA has a specific mandate; in carrying out this mandate, the SEA's resources are deployed to prioritize the evaluation of the culture of teaching and learning, leadership and management and learner achievement. It is the very nature of this mandate which requires the SEA to turn the mirror on classroom practices. This is the SEA's most pressing priority.

The SEA recognizes the inequality in the education system. We recognize context. We recognize that some schools serve affluent communities and others serve indigent communities. However, the SEA will never accept the excuse that context is an excuse for poor performance. The SEA expects all schools to deliver quality teaching, with a supportive, hands-on principal and SMT.

SEA evaluations will allow for trend analysis too. SEA evaluations cannot be seen as isolated from the 'whole' when the whole exceeds the sum of its parts. The SEA is in an ideal position to evaluate schools, identify trends and highlight issues that need to be addressed – and to also highlight examples of 'best practice' to share with other schools.

The SEA has a legislated mandated responsibility for external evaluations at schools in the Western Cape while schools are explicitly required to:

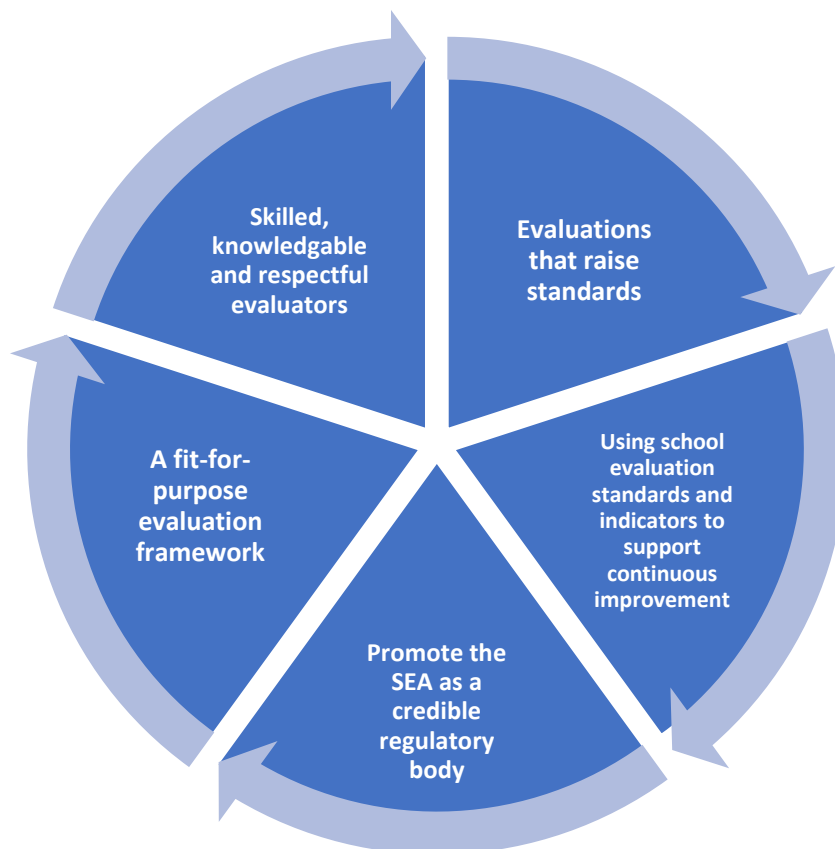
- Undertake a School Self-Evaluation (SSE), which is a formative process that enables schools to continuously review their performance and identify strengths and successes as well as potential areas for development.
- Develop a School Improvement Plan (SIP) which is an ongoing programme of self-review of improvement, especially with respect to the evaluation of information on learner achievement (Academic Performance Improvement Plan APIP).

Self-evaluation is neither a bureaucratic nor mechanistic process. It is a reflective professional process through which schools get to know themselves well and identify the best way forward for their learners. Self-evaluation is forward looking. It is about change and improvement, whether gradual or transformational, and is based on professional reflection, challenge, and support. It involves taking considered decisions about actions which result in clear benefits for young people.

Schools set in place their own evaluation processes and, as part of an annual reporting cycle, provide regular accounts of learner achievement in relation to goals and targets, along with planned improvement actions. The intention is that all schools and the school community should be engaged in an ongoing, cyclical process of internal evaluation and inquiry that is directed at improving educational outcomes for all their learners.

Integrating internal and external evaluation for improvement reiterates the value to schools of harmonizing their internal evaluation processes with the SEA's external evaluations. It supports schools to use their internal evaluation findings to engage with others in their school community and beyond. It is important for schools to realize that organizational conditions and capability influence engagement with the external evaluation.

To fulfil its mandate the SEA has identified FIVE strategic priorities:



Evaluations that raise standards

SEA evaluations will improve school quality in the Western Cape.

Our evaluation frameworks, which are grounded in evidence, assist schools, and evaluators, to focus on the right things. The entire evaluation process, centered around professional dialogue, direct observations, and quantitative data, helps schools to understand how they can improve. Ratings inform schools, parents and/or caregivers, governors, the WCED and provincial government about standards being achieved. Reports where schools were rated 'Outstanding' or 'Good' are used to highlight best practice, which, in turn, help other school leaders and the education support-system to target their school improvement efforts.

Skilled, knowledgeable, and respectful evaluators

SEA evaluators have the highest levels of training and have excellent knowledge of the Western Cape's educational landscape at school level, especially the three knowledge systems of education, namely curriculum, instruction and assessment. SEA evaluators are brand ambassadors for the SEA as they go about the significant task of school evaluations, basing their findings, and recommendations, on real evidence. Evaluators write reports that stand up to the highest levels of scrutiny – and ones where schools will have an opportunity to engage before being published.

The SEA continually upskills its evaluators to be relevant and knowledgeable of changing trends in education in the province, as well as programmes that are delivered in the classrooms of the Western Cape.

Onboarding of evaluators, especially those new to the SEA, must be of a very high quality so that evaluators can be confident in decisions that they make.

If the SEA mandate is to be a success, it is essential that its evaluators are focused, self-regulated, engaged, and motivated. Evaluators must know their roles and responsibilities well and act with integrity and objectivity in all that they do. SEA evaluators are to be aware of their own unconscious biases.

The evaluation cycle, an ambitious programme of evaluation delivery, will require a growing team of evaluators. Over the coming years, the evaluation team will be expanded so that more schools can be evaluated according to a sample model.

The SEA recognizes the value of a diverse workforce and will actively pursue the employment of evaluators from diverse backgrounds.

Using school evaluation standards and indicators to support continuous improvement

The school evaluation standards and indicators identify practices that contribute to quality education. These practices should be viewed holistically, not used in isolation or as a checklist. Schools are encouraged to use them as a trustworthy reference when trying to make sense of data and to answer the question "How good are our practices?" Use them too when investigating the relationship between different – and, sometimes, apparently unconnected – aspects of your school's performance.

The quality standards and indicators are a guide in a process and not a set of recipes for success. They must sit alongside professional expertise and other sources of guidance, for example on the curriculum, on learning, on the craft of teaching and on the leadership of change, to contribute to a common search for quality and the factors involved in achieving it in any class or school.

Performance in schools is increasingly judged based on effective learning outcomes. Information is critical to knowing whether the school system in the Western Cape is delivering good performance and to providing feedback for improvement.

The SEA will share insights into the education our children receive through our evaluations and research (analysis). Our insights will inform practitioners, policymakers and decision-makers and lead to improvement across the entire system.

We will build understanding of the quality of subject/phase teaching our children receive by writing reports based on evidence from a variety of sources during an evaluation. We may even write subject reports which indicate the quality of teaching at subject level.

As a result, teaching practice, and learning outcomes, will improve because District support (post-evaluation support) teams use our recommendations to collaborate with the schools towards implementing school improvement.

The SEA's evaluation standards and indicators are key to building a stronger provincial education system.

A fit-for-purpose evaluation framework

The SEA places great emphasis on the quality of teaching and learning.

The SEA will ensure that all schools are held to high standards and are held accountable for their performance. The SEA is a force for improvement and will direct its resources intentionally to those areas that have the greatest impact on the provision of quality education.

The evaluation framework which has been developed, and implemented, focuses on five key areas:

Key Area 1: Learner achievement

Key Area 2: Teaching and learning

Key Area 3: Behaviour and safety

Key Area 4: Leadership and management

Key Area 5: Governance, parents and community

The evaluators will gather and review evidence to determine the school's alignment with the standards and indicators for each area of evaluation.

- Data collected will be qualitative and quantitative data.
- Classroom observations will be the norm.
- Qualitative data (*in situ*): interviews, focus groups, informal discussions, observations.
- Quantitative data: numerical data e.g., systemic tests, NSC results, SBA tests/assessments, checklists, surveys.
- The evaluation team will not request excessive amounts of documents; however, it may request any document that allows it to make a reliable and authentic judgement.
- It will not be possible for evaluators to scrutinize all documents on site in two days, such is the nature of the evaluation.

The evaluation process is essential for school development and ongoing sustainability. The evaluation framework emphasizes the process of engagement and outcomes and seeks to describe, through reporting, the realities of schooling in the province so that our province's schools become places of high-quality teaching and learning.

Promote the SEA as a credible, accessible, and engaged regulatory body

Ethical conduct is a crucial component of any organization's success – and key to building trust.

The SEA values its ethical principles above all else. Our ethical principles consider values, standards and regulations that dictate how our evaluators conduct themselves at work and how evaluations are undertaken at schools. The SEA intends to develop trust through its emphasis on its credibility, accessibility, and engagement.

It is crucial to build a better understanding of the SEA. We will engage constructively with all role players so that they have a full understanding of how we operate. We will be open and accessible to different audiences in varying contexts, understanding their needs and always acting in the best interests of our children and learners.

As a result, schools and communities-at-large will appreciate that the SEA works in the best interests of children and learners. The SEA recognizes that schools, and school communities, must be satisfied with the service that the SEA provides.

Section 2: The Mandate

This section provides additional detail on the SEA's evaluation framework, the process of school evaluations and the rationale for the publication of school reports that include findings and graded ratings on the overall quality as well as the quality of the following key aspects of school performance:

1. **Key Area 1: Learner Achievement** – How well do the learners achieve and gain the knowledge, skills, and capabilities that they need? This includes the annual provincial systemic standardised testing in primary (Grades 3 and 6) and high schools (Grade 9), and the National Senior Certificate (Grade 12) examinations in high school, literacy (reading, speaking, listening, and writing), numeracy (handling numbers, calculating and solving numerical problems), co-curricular, extra-curricular and cultural activities.
2. **Key Area 2: Teaching & Learning** – How good is the quality of the teaching that the school provides? This includes the quality of the classroom teaching environment (including the teacher demonstrating respect and inclusivity towards the learners), the quality of classroom teaching practice (especially how engaging the teaching is and how well it promotes learning), and the quality of support for learners (including the quality of set exercises and marking, and feedback, by teachers).
3. **Key Area 3: Behaviour & Safety** – How safe is the school, and how good is the behaviour of the learners? Safeguarding procedures are scrutinised. Safety includes both the physical safety and security of the school environment as well as psycho-social safety.
4. **Key Area 4: Leadership & Management** – How effective is the leadership within the school, especially the principal and SMT? This includes the degree to which the principal and SMT gives clear direction to the school and are actively driving improvement, with specific focus on the leadership's actions to improve the quality of teaching and learning and to ensure good use of the school's resources (financial, physical, human).

5. **Key Area 5: Governance, Parents & Community** – How effective is the School Governing Body (SGB), and how good is the school at engaging with its stakeholders? This includes the extent to which the SGB understands the school, supports the school's priorities for improvement, and fulfils its legal responsibilities, especially financial. It also focuses on the school's engagement with its learners and parents, as well as with district officials and other external organisations.

5 KEY AREAS (13 Standards, 7 sub-standards and 75-line items) The building blocks of long-term success
<p style="text-align: center;">LEARNER ACHIEVEMENT (1 Standard, 7 sub-standards & 16-line items):</p> <p>Learner achievement across each phase. Literacy & Numeracy & ability to do the THREE 'R's: READING, (W)RITING, (A)RITHMETIC Achievement in extra and co-curricular activities.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">TEACHING AND LEARNING (3 Standards & 17-line items):</p> <p>How positive is the learning environment? What is the quality of classroom teaching practice? Workbooks, assessment, and interventions support learning.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">BEHAVIOUR AND SAFETY (3 Standards & 17-line items):</p> <p>Is the school environment disciplined and purposeful with positive ethos? Is the school safe and does it protect and care for its learners?</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT (3 Standards & 13-line items):</p> <p>The School Management Team (SMT) gives clear direction to the school. The SMT improves the quality of teaching and learning in the school. The SMT makes good use of all school resources (HR; Finances; Infrastructure.)</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">GOVERNANCE, PARENTS AND COMMUNITY (3 Standards & 12-line items):</p> <p>The governing body: its key responsibilities within its legal mandate. The school's engagement with its stakeholders.</p>

The combination of these different aspects of quality results in a graded rating on the overall performance of the school. It is important to note that schools may request non-rated baseline evaluations relating to any key area e.g. the quality of teaching and learning.

An essential element of the SEA's design is that the findings of school evaluations are accessible to the public to improve accountability and transparency in the Western Cape. After schools are visited and evaluations are concluded, reports are published. The same ratings and key information are available to parents, the public, the provincial Head of Department, and the provincial Minister of Education. In addition to the published report, when the SEA conducts evaluations, it provides additional detail to the school for its internal use to support improvement.

The SEA wants to see schools as they really are, as if there was no evaluation taking place and the school was going about its normal, everyday business. For this reason, schools are given two days' written notice prior to an evaluation.

A robust evidence base is central to the SEA's work and to its evaluation of quality. In conducting its evaluations, the SEA uses three main kinds of triangulated evidence: quantitative data, direct observations, and interviews (people's views). Professional discretion is applied too. The most important data used comes from standardised, externally marked learner assessments such as the Systemic Tests and National Senior Certificate Examinations. This data provides an objective measure of how much learners have learned – a fundamental purpose of every school. A framework (known as the Key Area 1 Matrix) has been developed to ensure a fair rating. Evaluators also collect and use data on the attendance of teachers and learners in the school.

Direct observation of the school informs many different findings, ratings, and recommendations. It is particularly important in the evaluator's findings on the quality of teaching. It is equally important to gather evidence of learning i.e., what the learners learn. The SEA's evaluations place great emphasis on direct observation of classroom teaching, and evaluators spend more time gathering this kind of evidence than on any other activity. Evaluators also observe the behaviour of the learners around the school, the interactions between teachers and learners, and many aspects of the school environment.

Evaluators interview learners, teachers, and parents. The SEA also requires school principals to distribute electronic questionnaires (google surveys) for completion. Interviews with learners are particularly important, and evaluators take seriously what they say about their experience of their school, such as how safe they feel and the degree to which they are respected. Whilst interviews with school staff are important, evaluators will always check what is said against other sources of evidence (triangulation).

The SEA will then make *priority* recommendations to schools based on its findings. These inevitably focus on the most important areas for improvement. The SEA is also keen to celebrate success and draw attention to good practice. However, it also believes that even schools rated 'Good' or 'Outstanding' will have areas for improvement. One of the characteristics of the best school leaders is that they are always striving to improve their schools, even if they already perform well.

Where evaluators see evidence of urgent problems in a school, these concerns may be directly and immediately escalated to the Chief Evaluator for the attention of the provincial Minister of Education and Superintendent-General. Such problems would normally concern issues of learner or staff safety or potentially serious breaches of regulations or legislation. Delays in the appointment of a principal are also escalated.

The Act makes provisions for the provincial Minister of Education to request the Chief Evaluator to examine specific issues or to evaluate a specific concern, and to provide advice accordingly.

To avoid any conflicts of interest, the SEA does not issue directives to schools or to the WCED, and it does not provide training or services to schools. It does not provide support to the school in the period between evaluations. Rather, it must make priority recommendations to schools, and to the relevant education district, then conduct a fresh evaluation later, if necessary.

As the purpose of the SEA is to increase school accountability and improvement, its responsibility is to provide a reliable and valid assessment of the quality at schools in the Western Cape. It does not manage or oversee the changes that drive improvement.

Section 3: The Year in Review

The SEA conducted 90 school evaluations from April 2024 – March 2025.

The SEA has continued to establish itself as an independent statutory body. The SEA has grown its staff complement to twenty (20): one (1) Chief Evaluator, six (6) Lead Evaluators, eleven (11) evaluators. The SEA's administrative support is seconded from the WCED and consists of one (1) Personal Assistant to the Chief Evaluator and one (1) Administrative Clerk. The SEA uses an open, competitive recruitment process, where vacancies are advertised on its website, online by the Western Cape Government and in a provincial newspaper.

A series of 'Guidelines for Schools' were developed and uploaded to the SEA's website. The guidelines will assist schools to prepare for a SEA evaluation when they receive the mandatory two-day notification of a SEA evaluation.

Section 4: Key Findings and Recommendations

4.1 An overview of the schools evaluated (April 2024 – March 2025)

The SEA conducted 89 rated evaluations and 1 non-rated evaluation across all education districts, using the comprehensive SEA framework, from April 2024 to March 2025. Twenty-Two (22) schools were rated 'Outstanding', twenty-four (24) were rated 'Good', thirty-five (35) were rated 'Requires improvement' and eight (8) were rated 'Inadequate'.

The following is a summary of the overall ratings:

	Inadequate	Requires Improvement	Good	Outstanding	
Number of schools	8	35	24	22	89
High schools	8	11	10	6	35
Primary schools	0	24	12	13	49
Special schools	0	0	1	1	2
Early Childhood Development Centres	0	0	0	1	1
Subsidised independent schools	0	0	1	1	2

*One high school was non-rated.

The table below is a summary of the schools evaluated, per key area and final rating, alphabetically from 'Outstanding' to 'Inadequate'.

Ratings for 90 school evaluations (April 2024 - March 2025)

School	Fee level	District	Quintile	Learner Achievement	Teaching & Learning	Behaviour & Safety	Leadership & Management	Governance, Parents & Community	Overall Performance
Barkly House Pre-Primary	Fee-charging	Metro Central	NQ5	4	4	4	4	4	4
Bellville Preparatory	Fee-charging	Metro North	NQ4	4	3	4	4	4	4
Bergvliet Primary	Fee-charging	Metro South	NQ5	4	4	4	4	4	4
Bredasdorp Primary	Fee-charging	Overberg	NQ5	4	4	4	4	4	4
Camps Bay Primary	Fee-charging	Metro Central	NQ5	4	4	4	4	4	4
Courtraai Primary	Fee-charging	Cape Winelands	NQ5	4	4	4	4	4	4
Fanie Theron Primary	Fee-charging	Metro East	NQ5	3	4	4	4	4	4
Jan van Riebeeck High	Fee-charging	Metro Central	NQ5	4	4	4	4	4	4
Kenmere Primary	Fee-charging	Metro Central	NQ5	3	4	4	4	4	4
Loreto Primary	Fee-charging	Metro East	NQ5	4	4	4	4	4	4
Milnerton High	Fee-charging	Metro North	NQ5	4	3	4	4	4	4
Oudtshoorn High	Fee-charging	Eden & Central Karoo	NQ5	3	4	4	4	4	4
Pinelands High	Fee-charging	Metro Central	NQ5	4	4	4	4	4	4
Pinelands North Primary	Fee-charging	Metro Central	NQ5	4	4	4	4	4	4
Rustenburg Girls' Junior	Fee-charging	Metro Central	NQ5	4	4	4	4	4	4
Spine Road High	Fee-charging	Metro South	NQ5	4	4	4	4	4	4
Sun Valley Primary	Fee-charging	Metro South	NQ5	4	4	4	4	4	4
Swellendam Primary	Fee-charging	Overberg	NQ5	4	3	4	4	4	4
Tafelberg School (Special)	Fee-charging	Metro North	N/A	4	3	4	4	4	4
Timour Hall Primary	Fee-charging	Metro South	NQ5	4	4	4	4	4	4
Wynberg Girls' High	Fee-charging	Metro South	NQ5	4	4	4	4	4	4
Zwaanswyk Academy	Fee-charging	Metro South	NQ5	4	3	4	4	4	4
Albertinia High (Combined)	No-fee	Eden & Central Karoo	NQ3	3	3	3	3	2	3
Augsburg Landbouginnasium	Fee-charging	West Coast	NQ5	3	3	4	3	4	3

School	Fee level	District	Quintile	Learner Achievement	Teaching & Learning	Behaviour & Safety	Leadership & Management	Governance, Parents & Community	Overall Performance
Bergvliet High	Fee-charging	Metro South	NQ5	4	3	4	3	4	3
Blouberggrant High	Fee-charging	Metro North	NQ5	2	3	4	3	4	3
Bredasdorp High	Fee-charging	Overberg	NQ5	3	3	4	3	3	3
Centre of Science and Technology High	No-fee	Metro East	NQ3	4	3	4	3	3	3
Darling College	Fee-charging	West Coast	N/A	4	3	4	3	3	3
Dirkie Uys Primary	Fee-charging	West Coast	NQ5	4	3	4	3	4	3
Drakenstein Primary	Fee-charging	Cape Winelands	NQ5	3	3	4	3	3	3
Idasvallei Primary	Fee-charging	Cape Winelands	NQ4	3	3	4	3	3	3
John Graham Primary	Fee-charging	Metro South	NQ5	4	3	4	3	4	3
Koos Sadie Primary	Fee-charging	Metro North	NQ5	2	3	4	3	4	3
Livingstone High	Fee-charging	Metro Central	NQ5	3	3	3	3	3	3
Llandudho Primary	Fee-charging	Metro Central	NQ5	4	3	4	3	4	3
Muhammadiyah Moslem Primary	Fee-charging	Metro South	NQ5	4	4	3	4	2	3
Piketberg High	Fee-charging	West Coast	NQ5	3	3	4	3	4	3
Protea Heights Academy	Fee-charging	Metro East	NQ5	3	3	4	3	3	3
Ravensmead High	Fee-charging	Metro North	NQ4	2	3	3	3	3	3
Saffier Primary	Fee-charging	Metro North	NQ4	2	3	4	3	4	3
Sid G. Rule Primary	Fee-charging	Metro South	NQ5	3	3	4	3	3	3
St. Agnes Primary	Fee-charging	Metro Central	NQ5	2	3	4	3	2	3
Steenberg's Cove Primary	No-fee	West Coast	NQ2	2	3	3	3	3	3
Swarfand Primary	Fee-charging	West Coast	NQ5	3	3	4	3	4	3
Weskus Special	N/A	West Coast	N/A	3	3	4	3	3	3
Amstelhof Primary	No-fee	Cape Winelands	NQ2	2	2	2	2	2	2
Bellville Technical High	Fee-charging	Metro East	NQ5	2	2	2	Not rated	2	2
B.F. Oosthuizen Primary	No-fee	Overberg	NQ3	1	2	2	2	2	2
Bishop Lavis High	Fee-charging	Metro North	NQ4	1	2	2	2	2	2

School	Fee level	District	Quintile	Learner Achievement	Teaching & Learning	Behaviour & Safety	Leadership & Management	Governance, Parents & Community	Overall Performance
Cape Academy of Maths, Science & Technology	Fee-charging	Metro South	NQ5	3	3	2	2	2	2
Chapel Street Primary	Fee-charging	Metro Central	NQ5	2	2	3	2	2	2
Crestway High	Fee-charging	Metro South	NQ4	1	2	2	3	3	2
Dagbreek Primary	No-fee	Cape Winelands	NQ3	2	2	2	2	3	2
Dalubuhle Primary	No-fee	Cape Winelands	NQ1	2	2	2	2	2	2
Delft Technical High	No-fee	Metro North	NQ4	2	2	2	1	1	2
De Villiers Primary	No-fee	Cape Winelands	NQ2	1	2	2	2	1	2
Diazville Primary	No-fee	West Coast	NQ4	1	2	3	2	4	2
Ebenhaeser Primary	No-fee	West Coast	NQ1	1	2	3	2	2	2
Emil Weder High	No-fee	Overberg	NQ3	2	2	2	2	2	2
Gordon High	Fee-charging	Metro East	NQ5	1	2	2	2	3	2
Hazendal Primary	Fee-charging	Metro Central	NQ5	1	2	2	2	2	2
Hopefield Primary	Fee-charging	West Coast	NQ4	1	2	3	2	2	2
Hopolang Primary	No-fee	Metro East	NQ3	1	2	2	2	2	2
Ikhusi Primary	No-fee	Metro East	NQ2	2	2	3	2	1	2
Kalkfontein Primary	No-fee	Metro East	NQ4	1	2	3	2	3	2
Langeberg High	No-fee	Cape Winelands	NQ3	1	2	2	2	2	2
Laurie Hugo Primary	No-fee	West Coast	NQ4	1	2	2	2	2	2
L.R. Schmidt Moravian Primary	No-fee	Overberg	NQ3	1	2	3	2	3	2
Nduji Primary	No-fee	Cape Winelands	NQ1	2	2	3	2	2	2
Oude Molen Technical High	Fee-charging	Metro Central	NQ5	3	2	3	2	2	2
Saldanha Primary	Fee-charging	West Coast	NQ5	2	2	3	2	3	2
Silikamva High	No-fee	Metro Central	NQ3	2	2	3	3	3	2
Silverleaf Primary	No-fee	Metro North	NQ3	1	2	3	2	2	2
Siversands Primary	Fee-charging	Metro East	NQ4	1	2	3	2	3	2
Strand Moslem Primary	Fee-charging	Metro East	NQ4	2	2	3	2	2	2

School	Fee level	District	Quintile	Learner Achievement	Teaching & Learning	Behaviour & Safety	Leadership & Management	Governance, Parents & Community	Overall Performance
Suurbraak Primary	No-fee	Overberg	NQ2	1	2	3	2	3	2
Uxolo High	No-fee	Metro East	NQ3	1	2	1	2	2	2
Vorentoe Primary	No-fee	Metro North	NQ4	2	2	3	2	2	2
VRT Pitt Primary	No-fee	Overberg	NQ3	1	2	4	2	3	2
Woodlands Primary	No-fee	Metro Central	NQ4	1	2	3	3	2	2
Delft High	No-fee	Metro North	NQ3	1	1	2	1	2	1
Fairmount High	Fee-charging	Metro South	NQ5	1	2	1	1	1	1
Fezekile High	No-fee	Eden & Central Karoo	NQ1	1	2	1	1	2	1
Grassy Park High	Fee-charging	Metro South	NQ5	1	2	1	1	2	1
Iingcinga Zethu High	No-fee	Cape Winelands	NQ1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Modderdam High	Fee-charging	Metro Central	NQ4	1	2	1	1	1	1
Ocean View High	Fee-charging	Metro South	NQ4	1	1	1	1	1	1
Vista High	Fee-charging	Metro Central	NQ5	1	2	1	1	1	1
Non-Rated Evaluation									
Glendale High ¹	Fee-charging	Metro South	NQ4					Not rated	

¹ **Note:** The principal took up office 6 weeks prior to the evaluation. As a result, the evaluation was a baseline evaluation only. The SEA will return in 2026 for a rated evaluation.

Rapid Fire (RAFI) Monitoring Visits			
School	Fee level	District	Quintile
Grassy Park High	Fee-charging	Metro South	NQ5
Oude Molen Technical High	Fee-charging	Metro Central	NQ5
Chapel Street Primary	Fee-charging	Metro Central	NQ5

Note: The purpose of a RAFI is to evaluate whether a school has taken action/s, either as a school or with the support of the education district office, to implement the SEA's **priority recommendations**, where applicable.

The table below is a summary of the ratings, per district.

	Inadequate	Requires Improvement	Good	Outstanding	
Number of schools	8	35	24	22	89
Metro Central	2	5	3	7	17
Metro East	0	8	2	2	12
Metro North	1	4	4	3	12
Metro South	3	2	4	6	16
Cape Winelands	1	6	2	1	10
Eden & Central Karoo	1	0	1	1	3
Overberg	0	5	1	2	8
West Coast	0	5	7	0	12

*One high school was non-rated.

4.2 Key Performance Indicators of high performing schools (schools rated 'Good' and 'Outstanding')

The following key performance indicators are based on one year of undertaking 90 school evaluations across the province between 1 April 2024 and 31 March 2025. Evaluation teams immersed themselves in the life of each school, observing teachers and learners in classes, walking the corridors, and grounds, interviewing different role players and reviewing questionnaires. The following key performance indicators are found at most, if not all, schools rated 'Good' or 'Outstanding'.

I. A clear and sustained mission and vision

'Good' and 'Outstanding' schools have a clear and sustained vision and mission.

- o These are not only documented and appear in many places on walls throughout the schools visited, but they are also lived.
- o The vision is easy to understand, is inspiring and is easily communicated to all stakeholders.
- o The mission and vision are woven into daily teacher practices, curriculum and academic focus.
- o The mission and vision are the driving points of all decisions (evidenced by the education programme, staff development and the budget).

II. A focus on the quality of the educational programme

Focusing on the quality of the three knowledge systems of education i.e., curriculum, instruction and assessment, 'Good' and 'Outstanding' schools set school-wide goals for learning, and outcomes, which are adopted and measured regularly. Teaching, instruction and assessment are of a high quality.

These schools clearly identify education plans for success, which are collaboratively owned:

- The curriculum i.e., what is taught.
- Instructional design and methodology i.e., how it is taught. There is frequent monitoring and accountability for teachers' instructional practices.
- Assessment i.e., how do we know learners have learnt what was taught. This includes the use of assessment for learning (AfL) strategies.

The School Improvement Plan (SIP), in addition to the Academic Performance Improvement Plan (APIP) and School Self-Evaluation (SSE) are essential tools for driving positive change. 'Good' and 'Outstanding' schools consider the SIP and SSE to be important for the following reasons:

- Clear direction and focus
 - SIP and APIP provide a roadmap for improving learning outcomes by setting specific goals and strategies.
 - SSE helps schools assess their current performance, identify strengths and weaknesses, and prioritize areas needing attention.
- Accountability
 - The SIP, SSE and APIP promote transparency and accountability for principals, School Management Teams (SMTs), teachers and staff.
 - The principal and SMT ensure that resources are used effectively and that all stakeholders work towards shared objectives.
- Data-driven decisions
 - The SSE involves analysing quantitative and qualitative data (attendance, surveys, systemic test scores, internal test scores).
 - This leads to more informed decision-making and targeted interventions.
- Continuous improvement
 - The SIP, APIP and SSE are tools which establish a culture of reflection and ongoing development.
 - These tools encourage schools to adapt and evolve based on evidence and feedback rather than sticking with outdated practices ("we have always done it this way").
- Stakeholder engagement
 - The SIP, APIP and SSE involve input from teachers, learners, parents as well as the School Governing Body.
 - This fosters a sense of ownership and collaboration, making change more sustainable.
- Improved outcomes for learners
 - Ultimately, the goal is to enhance teaching quality, learning environments and learner achievement.
 - SIPs that are well implemented lead to significant improvements in both academic and socio-emotional development.

III. A focus on the quality of learners' work through a data driven culture

'Good' and 'Outstanding' schools have highly active instructional leadership teams (the principal is not necessarily the instructional leader; it is often delegated to a senior member of staff). These teams facilitate teacher-leader data analysis meetings after formal assessment tasks and/or each quarter and maintain focus on the process throughout the academic year.

These schools have ongoing professional development (PD) where teachers are effectively introduced to data-driven instruction. As a result, teachers understand how assessment defines rigour and can adapt instruction through the process of analysing results (adapt to learners' learning needs).

There is an implementation calendar (planning) with teaching starting on the first day of the academic year. Time-on-task is a priority. The detailed calendar includes time for assessment, analysis, planning meetings and re-teaching (flexible enough to accommodate changes/mandates).

A unique feature of these schools is their ability to build by borrowing i.e., the principal and SMT (and peers) identify and implement best practices from high-achieving teachers, visit their peers' classrooms and share resources and instructional strategies.

IV. Sustained high quality administrative, teaching and support staff

'Good' and 'Outstanding' schools focus on the development of their staff.

- Staff development
 - Job descriptions, with clear expectations for key result areas, for all positions.
 - Strategic professional development that is aligned with the school's instructional planning and leadership development.
 - Continuous and purposeful feedback (monthly) for all staff.
 - Clear opportunities and processes for career advancement.
- Teacher recruitment and hiring processes
 - Clear 'ideal team player' or 'values-based employee' tenets and attributes identified by the school.
 - Partnership with teacher certification (internships), development or placement programme.
 - Robust hiring process developed and implemented.
 - Orientation / induction programme aligned to school's culture, plans and values, especially for novice teachers. Collaboration, communication and relationships are PD topics.
- Internal processes for expansion of professional development opportunities for current employees.
- Internal and external school climate feedback processes.

V. Healthy school culture conducive for learning

'Good' and 'Outstanding' schools foster a school culture conducive to learning where the environment, values, relationships and expectations all support learner growth and academic success. Here is what defines such a culture.

- Healthy, positive relationships
 - Strong, respectful relationships between learners, teachers and staff which foster trust and collaboration.
 - A sense of belonging helps learners feel safe, valued and motivated to learn.
- High expectations
 - High standards for the behaviour of adults and learners are defined and communicated.
 - Clear, high standards for achievement are set.
 - Learners are encouraged to challenge themselves and believe in their potential (growth mindset).
 - Teachers' behaviour conveys that all learners can achieve mastery in the classroom or during extra-curricular and co-curricular activity.
- Safe and supportive environment
 - A physically and emotionally safe school reduces distractions and stress.
 - Learners feel comfortable asking questions without fear of embarrassment or bullying.
- Collaborative and inclusive atmosphere
 - Everyone works together sharing common goals and supporting one another.
 - Inclusion and diversity are respected and celebrated.
- Focus on teaching and learning
 - Academic success is a priority, and teaching is purposeful and engaging.
 - Time and resources are protected for instruction, and learning is seen as a priority by all.
- Continuous improvement
 - Teachers model a growth mindset and embrace professional development.
 - The school culture encourages reflection, innovation, and ongoing learning for everyone.
- Learner voice and leadership
 - Learners are given opportunities to participate in decision-making and take on leadership roles.
 - This boosts confidence and investment in their education, and future participation in a constitutional democracy.
- Character and social development programmes
 - School-wide positive reinforcement strategies and reward programmes (recognition of effort in sport, culture, service, leadership).
 - Counselling opportunities for learners.
 - A staff wellness programme.
 - Parental support and partnerships.
 - Visible celebrations of learners' work around the school.
 - Engaging and relevant learner learning programmes.

VI. Parent and stakeholder partnerships

Partnerships with parents and stakeholders are vital for a successful school environment. At 'Good' and 'Outstanding' schools these partnerships support learner achievement, improve school culture, and strengthen community ties.

- Enhanced learning
 - When parents and stakeholders are actively involved, learners tend to perform better academically and have improved attendance and behaviour.
 - Support at home reinforces what is taught in school, creating a consistent learning culture.
- Shared responsibility
 - Education becomes a shared responsibility among teachers, parents and the wider community.
 - Everyone works together toward common goals, which improves accountability and support for the school.
 - Including parents in school planning and decision-making leads to more relevant, inclusive policies.
- Improved communication
 - Strong partnerships encourage open and regular communication between home and school.
 - This helps identify and solve problems early, and keeps families informed and engaged.
- Greater community support
 - Local businesses, NGOs, and government agencies provide resources, expertise and opportunities.
 - This includes funding, mentoring, extracurricular programmes or internships.
- Stronger school reputation
 - Schools collaborate well with families and the community build a positive reputation and attract greater support.
 - Parents are advocates for the school and school community pride increases.
- Support for holistic development
 - Partnerships not only support academic needs but also social, emotional, and physical well-being.
 - Programmes like parenting workshops, health services and career guidance benefit learners in multiple ways.

VII. Fiscal vitality

'Good' and 'Outstanding' schools effectively manage financial resources to ensure the school can sustain and improve its educational services. It is a key element of long-term success and quality education.

- Efficient resource allocation
 - These schools have strong fiscal vitality. They budget wisely and direct funds to areas with greatest impact, i.e., teaching, learning and teaching support material (LTSM), and support services for learners.
 - Fiscal vitality ensures that all spending aligns with the vision and mission as the budget is the vision in financial terms.
- Sustainability
 - Fiscal vitality helps a school remain financially stable over time even in the face of budget cuts, or economic challenges.
 - These schools support planning for the future, including staffing, infrastructure and technology upgrades.

- Accountability, transparency and oversight
 - A fiscally healthy school maintains and safely stores records and audits and open communication about spending.
 - There are stringent budget oversight processes, with strong internal controls to mitigate risk and ensure no audit findings.
 - This builds trust with parents, staff and stakeholders and encourages continued support and investment.
- Attracting and retaining staff
 - Sound finances allow schools to offer competitive salaries (school-appointed SGB staff) and professional development opportunities, helping to recruit and retain quality teachers.
- Access to opportunities
 - With healthy finances, schools provide extra-curricular activities and enrichment programmes.
 - This creates a richer educational experience for learners.
- Risk mitigation (emergency preparedness)
 - Schools with strong fiscal practices are better prepared for unexpected expenses e.g., facility repairs, staff cuts.

VIII. Clean, safe, secure and adequate facilities

Safe, clean, secure and adequate school facilities are fundamental to creating a learning environment where learners and staff can thrive. 'Good' and 'Outstanding' school leaders hold their General Foreman, general assistants and ground-staff accountable for the quality of their work.

- Supports learners' learning
 - The school premises are well-maintained and adequately equipped. This promotes concentration, motivation and better academic outcomes.
- Ensures health and safety
 - There are processes and systems for safety and cleanliness.
 - There are emergency plans and risk management protocols.
 - Proper ventilation, lighting, sanitation and emergency systems contribute to a healthier school setting.
- Promotes positive behaviour
 - When learners are in a secure and organised space, they are more likely to respect the environment and follow the school's code of conduct.
 - It builds a culture of pride and responsibility among learners and staff.
- Encourages attendance and retention
 - Learners are more likely to attend and stay in school when facilities are welcoming, functional and safe.
 - This includes accessible classrooms, proper seating, clean ablution facilities and recreational areas.
- Enhances teacher effectiveness
 - Teachers work more effectively in a space that is well-equipped, safe and comfortable.
 - It also helps to retain quality teachers who value their work environment.
- Prepares learners for the 21st century
 - Adequate facilities with modern equipment and technology help prepare learners with the skills for a digital world.
 - Specialised rooms like laboratories, consumer studies centres, libraries and ICT suites enhance learning opportunities.

IX. Effective operations management (capacity and compliance)

At 'Good' and 'Outstanding' schools, effective operations management, especially regarding capacity and compliance, ensures that the school functions smoothly, meets legal standards and supports teaching and learning.

- Optimal use of resources (capacity management)
 - Ensures that all classroom space, staff and materials are used efficiently to meet learners' needs.
 - Prevents overcrowding or under-utilisation of facilities by balancing enrolment with available resources.
 - Supports strategic planning for future growth, helping the school remain flexible and sustainable.
- Legal and policy compliance
 - Schools adhere to local, provincial and national regulations, including safety codes, staffing ratios, governance policy, curriculum requirements and financial reporting.
 - Effective operations management ensures ongoing compliance with educational policies, labour laws, and health and safety standards.
- Improved service delivery
 - School calendar and master schedules align with the school's mission, vision, purpose and values.
 - Training programmes and staff manuals for all standard operating systems.
 - Well-managed operations support timely delivery of transport, maintenance, supplies (e.g., LTSM and stationery), meals (National School Nutrition Programme), directly impacting learner well-being and staff productivity.
- Data-driven decision making
 - Operational data (e.g., staffing, enrolment, facility usage) helps the principal and SMT make informed decisions about resource allocation and strategic planning.
- Enhancing educational quality
 - By ensuring smooth day-to-day functioning, effective operations management frees up school leaders and teachers to focus on instruction and learner support.
 - These schools are well managed and create an environment where learning can flourish.

X. Effective governance (SGBs)

Effective governance at schools rated 'Good' and 'Outstanding' is the foundation of strong leadership, clear decision-making and accountability. It ensures that schools operate ethically, transparently and in the best interest of learners.

- Clear vision and strategic direction
 - Good governance, in collaboration with the principal, sets a clear mission, vision and long-term goals for the school.
 - SGBs work with school leadership to develop strategic plans that align with educational priorities.
- Accountability and oversight
 - SGBs monitor performance, ensuring that staff are held accountable for learner outcomes.
 - SGBs monitor academic results, financial reports, and policy implementation.
- Transparent and ethical leadership
 - Effective governance promotes ethical conduct, fairness, and transparency in all decisions.
 - It fosters a culture of trust and integrity among staff, learners, parents and the wider community.

- Stakeholder representation
 - Governance structures that meet regularly, with systems and procedures for developing board meeting agenda and pack, include representatives from the parent community, staff (teaching and non-teaching), learners (Representative Council of Learners) and co-opted members of the community ensures that diverse voices are heard.
 - There is inclusive decision-making as all members of the board have equal status as governors.
- Sound financial management
 - SGBs oversee budgeting and financial planning to ensure fiscal responsibility and sustainability.
 - SGBs ensure resources are used effectively to support the school's mission.
- Support for school leadership
 - Focus on building a strong relationship with the principal.
 - SGB provides guidance and support to the principal and SMT.
 - The SGB empowers the principal and SMT to make informed decisions while maintaining appropriate checks and balances.
- Continuous improvement
 - Governance fosters a culture of self-evaluation, policy review and ongoing improvement.
 - SGBs encourage innovation and responsiveness to challenges.
- Roles and responsibilities
 - SGB members have clearly defined roles and responsibilities.
 - There are high expectations of members of the board to add value to the decision-making needs of the school.
 - The SGB is aware of the SIP and SSE and makes a valuable contribution to drafting these documents.

4.3 Findings with respect to key areas

4.3.1 Key area 1: Learner achievement

The Western Cape Education Department reliably conducts annual external systemic tests in Mathematics and Languages for Grades 3, 6 and 9 – the only province to do so nationally – at all public ordinary schools.

Trends indicate that results in Grades 3, 6 and 9 continued incremental recovery in both Mathematics and Language, after Covid-19 declines. However, ongoing challenges remain around inequality in results.

Grade 12 performance indicates an improvement in overall pass rates at most schools. However, although bachelor pass rates (an indicator of university readiness) are improving, at many schools the bachelor pass rate continues to be low.

Progress initiatives, through the Back on Track (BOT) initiative, are especially strong in Grades 4 and 7 with learners attending BOT classes on Saturdays in Mathematics and Languages. This pivot is credited for accelerating recovery in foundational skills.

All test data (Grades 3, 6, 9 and 12) is used to tailor interventions per school, avoiding one-size-fits-all fixes and targeting areas most in need. The use of the data varies widely across schools, districts and quintiles. At some schools, especially those rated 'Inadequate' and 'Requires improvement' schools do not use the data provided for academic intervention. There is little evidence to suggest that these schools use data to close gaps and support learners most in need. It is at these schools where the APIP is a compliance exercise only.

MOD Centres, which are managed by the Department of Cultural Affairs and Sport (DCAS) as part of a broader After Schools Programme, are free after-school hubs based in mainly disadvantaged primary and high schools, offer structured sport, recreation, dance, arts and music programmes for learners. They operate typically from 14:00 to 18:00 Monday to Friday. These centres are used for talent identification and as a developmental pathway and are, overall, effective at the schools evaluated. It is not yet clear whether these MOD centres uplift academic performance or attendance at schools where MOD is offered. However, the MOD centres were reported to provide safe after-school spaces and support psycho-social wellbeing of learners who participate in MOD.

At schools rated 'Good' and 'Outstanding' there is an active extra- and co-curricular programme in place. Participation rates at these schools are high as all learners are expected to participate in at least one activity each term (sport/culture).

Learner recognition is a feature of most schools evaluated. Schools encourage holistic development and are good at celebrating academic, cultural and sporting successes, giving learners public acknowledgement for their hard work and effort.

4.3.2 Key area 2: Quality of teaching and learning

The overall findings and common trends are as follows, especially at schools rated 'Inadequate' or 'Requires improvement':

- There is insufficient active teaching and an over-reliance on the use of textbooks, where textbooks are issued.
- Where there is a culture of low expectations of learners, absentees are not required to catch up with work missed, there is poor quality of marking, irregular and inaccurate marking, insufficient written tasks with far too many tasks requiring one-word answers and limited opportunities to develop and improve on creative writing skills.
- Constructive written feedback is mostly absent when teachers write comments in learners' books (if they comment or mark books at all).
- Code switching is prevalent between Grade 3 and Grade 4 when the Language of Learning and Teaching (LOLT) is English (predominantly in isiXhosa HL schools).
- It is concerning that teachers use the Annual Teaching Plans (ATPs) as their 'preparation'. Preparation files are mostly absent, except at 'Good' and 'Outstanding' schools. Stretch-and-challenge practices are few and far between, leading to a lack of differentiation.
- Most teachers lecture without varying pedagogical mode.
- Questioning techniques are not used to stretch and challenge learners.
- School principals and SMTs do not, in general, monitor the quality or effectiveness of teaching, or learning. Leadership of learning is lacking because neither leaders, nor peers, conduct classroom visits (except to comply with the Quality Management Systems i.e., QMS, process). There are, however, cases where schools have outstanding Peer Observation Model classroom visitation systems in place.

Accountability is, overall, lacking in terms of adhering to notional time (allocated per subject), preparation for lessons, being at the cutting edge of curriculum delivery and assessment practices. Professional development requires improvement, especially w.r.t. classroom management, teaching methodology (to avoid chalk-and-talk), assessment practices and blended learning (technology).

An outcome of the 90 evaluations conducted was to make the 'Matrix for Quality Teaching' available online for schools.

4.3.3 Key Area 3: Behaviour and safety

This key area was rated the highest overall. Generally, learner conduct was found to be good in schools evaluated between April 2024 and March 2025 (there were exceptions). Overall, safety is prioritised at most schools. However, the inconsistent application of the Code of Conduct for Learners (COCL) (or no consequences, despite a COCL) was identified as an alarming trend at some schools.

The findings are as follows:

- Teachers care for their charges, overall.
- There is very good pastoral care from school staff and external organisations, good relationships with the surrounding communities to safeguard the premises, and regular cleaning and maintenance of the facilities and premises.
- There is a limited range of after-school programmes at many schools rated 'Inadequate' or 'Requires improvement'.
- The administration, management, and quality of the National School Nutrition Programme (NSNP) is, overall, good or outstanding. In some cases, vegetables from school gardens supplement meals and regular donations were received from external organisations. The NSNP can be seen as a shining light in the lives of schools where the NSNP is implemented.
- At a school with vulnerable learners, and one that was rated a '2' it was pleasing to see that the teachers only released the foundation phase learners into the care of their official parent/guardian or care giver after school. All learners were kept inside the school's perimeter and had to wait until they were collected. This is outstanding practice as it reflects a caring approach towards every learner.

4.3.4 Key area 4: Leadership and management

A key finding from the evaluations shows that progress towards access to *quality* basic education for many learners is slow. At some schools, learners are unprepared for learning, are undisciplined, teaching quality is poor, and management and leadership are weak. There is a correlation between ratings for leadership and management (key area 4), the quality of teaching and learning (key area 2) and learner achievement (key area 1). Where results are poor, leadership and management are, in many cases, weak. Good or outstanding results are achieved at schools with strong, directive principals who foster a vision of excellence, know the curriculum and embrace a "no excuses" culture. Accountability and personal responsibility are professional elements of good schools.

Although teachers are at the heart of the learning process, effective school leadership is critical to addressing education quality – and better education outcomes. This is because an effective school leader, and the school's management and leadership team (SMT/SLT) play a key role in supporting teachers to ensure the effective use of resources. Improved school leadership is one of the key elements necessary to leverage the broader education ecosystem for better learning.

The Western Cape school system is increasingly oriented towards improving the learning outcomes of learners. This necessitates school leaders' roles to be focused on delivering these outcomes – which is sometimes not the case. Some principals are hampered in their ability to lead towards these outcomes because, among other factors, they lack the necessary skills, or, in some cases, interest, to attend in-service professional development training (INSET). Some principals lack experience of management and, in some cases, are promoted into principalship without having the necessary experience of management and leadership. As a result, they are not adequately prepared for the role of school leader, with all its complexities. Appointing principals who are unprepared for the role does great damage to the human and cultural capital needed to create better schools and places the system at risk. If the system is at risk, learners' life chances are at risk.

The SEA's evaluations produced compelling evidence that schools which were rated 'Inadequate' have low-level leadership skills. Where school leadership is ineffective or absent, it is very difficult for good teachers to flourish or for learners to reach their potential. Where leadership is effective, and rated 'Good' or 'Outstanding', schools flourish and meet their challenges. Effective leaders have a vision and can convey this vision to different groups involved with the school including learners, staff, and parents. Being a principal in the best of situations can be both stressful and lonely. It takes a particularly confident, experienced, and resilient person to cope with all the roles that come with being a school principal.

Positive learning can only take place in a positive culture. 'Culture' is derived from the Latin word '*cultura*' meaning 'grow' or 'cultivation'. A healthy school culture impacts positively on teachers, teaching, learners, and learning. School culture is a school's 'reality' ("How we do business around here") defined by what the leadership and staff care about, what they spend their time doing (time-on-task), what and how they celebrate and what they talk about (achievement). Culture comes from a shared moral purpose and a shared vision, rooted in trust.

Schools rated 'Good' and 'Outstanding' can be classified as 'Moving' on the Stoll and Fink (1996) 'Typology of School Cultures' model whereas schools rated 'Requires improvement' and 'Inadequate' are either 'struggling' or 'sinking' respectively. 'Moving' school cultures boost learners' progress and development, know where they are going (have the will and skill) and work together to achieve the best for their learners. These schools have a vision, set their priorities, continually raise standards – and leaders are visible.

There are ten cultural norms vital to school improvement – and to the success of teachers, learners, and schools:

- Shared goals (and collaboration)
- Responsibility for success
- Collegiality
- Continuous improvement
- Lifelong learning
- Risk-taking
- Support
- Mutual respect
- Openness
- Celebration and humour

Struggling school cultures (rated 'Requires improvement') will ultimately succeed if they have the will to do so, if not the skill, and are supported by the education district office. The SEA acknowledges the vital role played by some circuit managers in school improvement efforts. If struggling schools want to improve, they need to focus on priority improvements – they are not as effective as they can be, and they know it. These schools are one rating away from being classified as 'Good' schools.

Schools characterised by a 'sinking' school culture lack the will – or the know how - to improve and require action and significant support. These are schools with zero accountability to either the WCED, the education district office, the parents or the learners. They can be classified as 'failing' schools. There is no consequence management applied to these schools.

There was irrefutable evidence that many schools operate in very challenging environments, where many families and communities are affected by widespread gangsterism and violence. The SEA recognises that there is a link between socio-economic deprivation and learner outcomes. Background does create a barrier to educational achievement. Some schools in these environments struggle to keep learners safe, and where there was a culture of ill-discipline, poor behaviour was tolerated or ignored to avoid conflict. It is in these schools where the soft bigotry of low expectations prevails. School leaders and teachers often make excuses for under-performance and blame context, parents, and often learners (staff are unable to change). There is a lack of accountability (or personal responsibility) in these schools.

By contrast, there were schools that were safe, orderly, and thriving despite very similar external environments. The difference was that the school's leadership had actively established a culture of high expectations, established a common understanding of what is expected and enforced it in a fair and consistent manner.

Good school leaders recognize that they are first and foremost leaders of teaching, and not school administrators. They know what is happening in their schools and classrooms, conduct 'School Walks' (with a purpose) and create both a culture and climate within the school that prioritise the quality of teaching. It is not only principals who are leaders of teaching. Many phase heads, subject heads, and innovative individual teachers work very effectively with their colleagues to improve the quality of teaching in the school. It is in these schools where instructional leadership, and distributed leadership, is prevalent.

4.3.5 Key area 5: Governance, parents, and community

The findings are as follows:

- There is a need for governing bodies to be capacitated and supported especially in critical areas such as financial management and the recruitment and selection process. SGB training cannot be considered a 'once-off' occurrence.
- Many parents struggle to pay school fees (and some schools will not apply for no-fee status).
- The quintile system remains flawed.
- Parental involvement remains inadequate at most schools, even those rated 'Good' and 'Outstanding'.
- Representative Council of Learners in high schools are sometimes in name only – they do not have full participation rights on SGBs and are often excused from meetings once they have given their input.
- There are insufficient opportunities for learners to develop leadership skills in primary schools.
- SGB training and capacitation is seen as a 'once off' by education district offices – in the months after SGB elections have taken place.
- Where there was conclusive evidence of conflict between the SMT and the governing body, there was insufficient knowledge and understanding of specific roles and responsibilities of SGB members.
- The generous contribution and support from NGOs, faith-based and other organisations have had an invaluable impact on vulnerable learners.
- Relationships between the principal, SMT and school staff and the SGB are, overall, cordial.
- Governance structures are eager to get involved but are often not supported or developed.

4.4 Priority Recommendations

The following priority recommendations (some of which are prefaced by findings) are meant to answer a central and key question: **"How good can we be as a school?"** To build a better and more resilient education system in the Western Cape, the following priority recommendations are made:

- (i) *Continuous school improvement* (through the SSE and SIP) should be an aspirational vision for all schools. The significant relationship between effective self-evaluation and school improvement is an 'inwards, outwards, forwards' approach so that schools continually focus on three key questions: 🔄 How are we doing? 🔄 How do we know? 🔄 What are we going to do now to improve? Effective, ongoing self-evaluation provides a unique, and valuable, picture of what is having the most and least impact on learners.

It is recommended that these processes be strengthened at school level to prevent the SSE and SIP being a compliance exercise. Some schools do not make sound judgements about the impact on learners, or learning, of a self-evaluation because there is little 'buy-in' (staff are generally excluded from the drafting of the SSE and SIP) or involvement other than the principal, some SMT members and the circuit manager (who signs-off the SIP).

In some schools, the drafting of the SIP is done by the principal as a once-off exercise *only* – and only for compliance purposes (there is a due date by which SIPs must be signed-off by the education district's circuit managers, usually early in February each year). Thereafter SIPs are not reviewed – as the School Improvement Monitoring Tool (SIM) becomes the dominant 'school improvement' template (with 'Yes'/'No' compliance responses required), signed off at the end of each term by circuit managers.

It is recommended that the principal should submit the school improvement plan to the education district only if the proposed school improvement plan has the approval of the majority of the staff members and SGB *who voted on the plan* – as the staff are agents of school improvement, especially in learning outcomes - and the circuit manager is involved in drafting the priority areas for improvement in the SIP (district support). The SIP monitoring and evaluation must show how the District Director, circuit manager and relevant components (e.g. Curriculum Services) will work with the school and monitor improvement. Feedback on SIP progress must be tabled at quarterly SGB meetings.

There should be an understanding that with school improvement being a continuous improvement process, the plan will be modified as needed throughout the year to ensure improved outcomes. The WCED must guard against the SIM superseding the SIP as the over-riding school improvement tracking instrument when it is not.

- (ii) School principals must ensure a *culture of ongoing self-evaluation* by evaluating evidence from across the whole school to plan change and further improve. It is recommended that school principals have the responsibility, and be held accountable, for ensuring the school has a clearly communicated strategic plan for self-evaluation which is ongoing, and evidence based. However, all staff are responsible for ensuring active self-evaluation. Self-evaluation cannot be seen as an 'add-on' but should focus on the key work of any school i.e., teaching and learning.
- (iii) Learner achievement and school improvement: schools must be able to demonstrate impact in relation to *improved outcomes for learners*. To do this, school principals, as instructional leaders, in collaboration with SMTs, subject heads/leaders and teachers, must *continuously track and monitor learners' successes and achievements* and use self-evaluation to identify where the school is doing well and could do better. It was found that weaknesses in these outcomes were the result of weak leadership and management as well as weaknesses in the quality of teaching – and learning. Action paralysis is a feature of schools where learner outcomes deteriorate (or are rated 'Inadequate') and often, the principal does not know what to do to arrest the academic slide and / or poor outcomes.

A workable and effective teacher development programme that integrates content knowledge, pedagogy and assessment (the three knowledge systems of education) should be available to all teachers in the province as part of ongoing professional development.

- (iv) A *framework or toolkit* to assist principals, and schools, to improve must be developed. The toolkit must contain *priority quality indicators* that help schools to analyse their impact on the work of their learners and learning outcomes. These quality indicators must be categorised e.g., leadership and management (how good is our leadership and approach to improvement?), learning provision (what schools provide for its learners to support their learning and progress such as the teaching, resources, use of curriculum, support – how good is the quality of education we provide?) and successes/achievements (how good are we at ensuring the best possible outcomes for our learners?). These will allow schools to determine their capacity for improvement. This may necessitate a review of current SIP processes, which, on evidence have little impact on school improvement.
- (v) A lack of leadership of learning continues to plague many schools. Re-orient school leaders towards *instructional leadership*. This requires guiding teachers, and learning, through clear educational goals, curriculum planning, supporting teachers, and providing feedback to teachers, and creating an enabling environment for learning, especially for marginalised children. Principals tend to focus on administrative tasks and rarely lead activities to enhance learning especially at schools rated 'Inadequate' and 'Requires improvement'. There is a general absence of a clear academic press from the principal's office. School leaders, including the SMT, must be trained/upskilled in instructional leadership. In addition, decentralised instructional leadership capacity must be strengthened by providing coaching and support (to develop instructional leadership skills). Delegation as an act of leadership must have a built-in monitoring and evaluation feedback loop.
- (vi) *Build a supportive school leadership system*, with the objective of improving teaching and, in turn, learning outcomes. The Cape Teaching and Leadership Institute's (CTLI) Leadership Academy's certified courses must put in place a Continuous Professional Development (CPD) support system for school leaders, especially for those who complete its offerings. Professional Learning Community (PLC) must complement these courses. It is further recommended that the CTLI engage with the SEA's reports so that it can be better informed about the developmental needs of school-based staff, especially principals and SMTs, in particular, and school improvement, in general.
- (vii) *Benevolent pathology* is pervasive, especially at schools that are rated 'Inadequate' and 'Requires improvement'. A *change mindset programme* must be implemented at schools rated 'Inadequate' or 'Requires improvement' to address a culture of low expectations i.e., not expecting disadvantaged children to meet the same standard of achievement set for children from more privileged backgrounds. Many school leaders and teachers at schools rated 'Inadequate' embrace a view that children from certain addresses and low-income backgrounds have life experiences that hamper the possibility that they can achieve well in school. Address is often seen as an academic obstacle.
- (viii) Inside classrooms, teachers rarely move fluidly between *pedagogical modes*: most are 'chalk-and-talk' with learners passively listening. This was also seen at 'enhanced' schools (ICT). Teachers must shift between modes flexibly to make learning more accessible, and exciting. Teachers should combine direct instruction with inquiry-based approaches that promote deeper comprehension and transference of knowledge.

- (ix) *Restorative discipline* is based on a restorative justice view that offences represent conflict between people (learners and teachers or learners and learners) that is best addressed by working to restore relationships and making things right, not by blaming and punishing with a focus on retribution.

It is recommended that where restorative discipline is a feature of a school's COCL, that whole-school and classroom agreements or norms are advocated as part of an ongoing process to make restorative discipline a cultural norm.

There must be accountability (and punitive disciplinary action) otherwise discipline, and learning, are compromised. Schools rated 'Outstanding' define the behavioural expectations and do not hesitate to hold learners accountable for transgressing the code of conduct e.g., detention, suspension. Poor discipline cannot go unchecked when restorative discipline is a school's preferred way of dealing with conflict.

- (x) There are benefits to *peer observation in teaching* as teachers learn from each other. During the April 2024 – March 2025 evaluation cycle, there were many examples of outstanding teaching at schools rated a '1' (Inadequate) and a '2' (Requires improvement). However, because the leadership of teaching and learning is mostly absent, school principals at these schools do not know who these teachers are; as a result, they are not used to coach or mentor other teachers, especially novice teachers.

Teachers cannot merely mimic the methods of outstanding teachers without grasping the deep pedagogical principles of teaching. But peer observation, when done effectively, *exposes teachers to a wide variety of teaching techniques*, fostering a diverse pool of strategies to draw from, essential in accommodating diverse learning needs. Watching fellow educators in action *encourages self-reflection* (assess their own teaching practice, identify areas for improvement and adapt methods based on new learnings). *Self-awareness* is vital for professional growth. Peer observation promotes a culture of collaboration and trust within schools. Teachers become more open to sharing challenges, and successes, fostering an environment where everyone benefits from collective wisdom. When done constructively, peer observation can provide *invaluable feedback* on classroom management, lesson planning, learner engagement, questioning techniques – all of which can lead to continuous improvement, especially learner outcomes.

- (xi) *Appointment of Deputy Principals and Principals*: a clear and agreed understanding of what the provincial education system expects of those who aspire to, or are entrusted with, leading its schools must be established. Evidence gathered during evaluations indicates that promotion posts, when filled, are sometimes not filled by the right fit-for-purpose candidates. Too many schools have promotion posts which remain unfilled or take years to fill. This creates a leadership vacuum which compromises school functionality.

In addition, once appointed, induction and mentoring of new principals (and deputy principals) lacks the necessary intensity or is wholly absent (except for visits by the circuit manager) and, as a result, principals are left floundering.

The CTLI (its Leadership Academy) must develop courses, in line with the 'South African Standard for Principalship', to prepare principals better to lead their schools. Courses must have a practical component where PLCs are established – and leadership learning is monitored and evaluated for impact e.g., curriculum management.

Transformational goals for education, in general, and school improvement in particular, will not be realised unless appointment processes are reviewed. There must be a greater sense of urgency to get the right principals appointed.

- (xii) *School-Based assessment (SBA) must be reviewed*: although there are exceptions, in general, teachers are not able to construct assessment items of good quality or a high enough standard – and moderation of SBA tasks is either absent or wholly inadequate. Learners perform well in SBA but poorly in the WCEDs systemic tests. It is especially at Grade 12 level that pass rates, quality pass rates i.e. bachelor pass rates and learners' access to tertiary studies are compromised. It is important to both strengthen, and review, systems relating to curriculum implementation and assessment practice at the province's schools.
- (xiii) *Time management*: according to the National Policy pertaining to the Programme and Promotion Requirements of the National Curriculum Statement Grades R – 12, all phases and subjects are allocated notional time i.e., Grade R, 1 and 2 = 23 hours per week; Grade 3 = 25 hours per week; Grades 4 - 12 = 27, 5 hours per week (1650 minutes) of formal contact time i.e., tuition.

However, time on task is a challenge for many schools. Routine is compromised and, at many schools, late coming results in an alarming loss of contact time. It is recommended that all education districts evaluate whether national policy is being followed by undertaking a random sample of notional time across circuits. A school's timetable must be drafted with this policy directive in mind. It is recommended that all schools submit their timetables, indicating notional time (total) per subject, to their relevant circuit managers, for consideration and approval. It is further recommended that a random sample of schools be chosen to monitor and evaluate whether learners are given the full complement of minutes per subject, per week. The quality of teaching and learning on a Friday is a concern. It is not uncommon for schools to finish at 12 pm or 12:30 pm. This compromises notional time.

At schools where the NSNP operates, too many instructional hours are lost to feed children. At some schools, mealtimes interfere with notional time. It is recommended that circuit managers (and NSNP officials in education districts) monitor the times schools allocated to the feeding scheme to ensure that time-on-task is prioritised.

- (xiv) *The District Model of curriculum support should be reviewed, especially with respect to gateway subjects: across the system, in general, the Foundation Phase (FP) outperforms all other phases. If ratings for Key Area 1: Learner Achievement and Key Area 2: Teaching & Learning were separated into phases, the FP would mostly be rated as 'Good' or 'Outstanding'. This may be due to the nature, and frequency, of deep support and development the phase receives from the education district offices' Foundation Phase curriculum component, as well as the specialisation required to teach in this phase. FP is also one of the WCEDs strategic priorities and intervention is targeted here. FP Advisers (led by the FP DCESSs) are outstanding in the way they lead, direct, manage, supervise and strengthen the quality of teaching and learning offered to learners by being physically present in the classrooms of FP teachers.*

Each district (for FP) has one (1) Curriculum Advisor (CA) for every circuit as well as a Foundation Phase Head at DCESS level (post level 5). These advisers are specialists with far fewer schools to support than advisers in other phases (one circuit only). Teachers in this phase are specialists. This is the only phase where CAs support teachers in one circuit only.

In the Intermediate, Senior (INTERSEN) and Further Education and Training (FET) phases, there are subject advisers (SA) for most, if not all, subjects. As a result, as primary schools represent up to 75% - 80% of a district, subject advisers can be responsible for up to 150+ schools e.g. a Natural Sciences subject advisor in the INTERSEN phase. Support and development are less intensive as one SA must support schools across all circuits in a district.

In the FET Phase, although the number of high schools are fewer per district, and circuit, SAs must support schools across all circuits.

IP and SENFET subject advisers must spend more time in classrooms. There is evidence that, in some districts, IP and SENFET advisers monitor teachers' files only *without seeing teachers in practice*. This is nothing more than a compliance exercise. How do subject advisers, whose fundamental role (job description) is to strengthen the quality of teaching and learning offered to learners, fulfil their key strategic role when they do not observe teachers in practice? Emailing resources is insufficient and cannot be viewed as support to teachers.

- (xv) *The Quality Management System (QMS) is a performance management system for school-based educators, designed to evaluate the performance levels of individuals to achieve higher levels of school performance. It is of great concern that there is little correlation between the QMS scores of teachers, and leaders, at some schools rated 'Inadequate' and 'Requires improvement' and the quality of teaching and learning, learner achievement and leadership/management. QMS, in most cases, is undertaken to achieve pay progression – not to improve professional practice, or to improve learner outcomes.*

Section 5: The Financial Management Summary

In terms of regulation 11(1) of the Regulations, funding to the SEA is covered within the annual provincial education budget. The table below provides a summary of expenditure over the reporting period.

	SCHOOLS EVALUATION AUTHORITY																	
	1		2,00		3,00		4,00		5,00		6,00		7,00		8,00		9,00	
	2024/25		2023/24		2024/25		2023/24		2024/25		2023/24		2024/25		2023/24		2024/25	
Sub programme 1.3. EDUCATION MANAGEMENT	Adjusted Appropriation	Shifting of Funds	Virement	Final Appropriation	Actual Expenditure	Variance	Expenditure as % of final appropriation	Final Appropriation	Actual Expenditure	Variance	Expenditure as % of final appropriation	Final Appropriation	Actual Expenditure	Variance	Expenditure as % of final appropriation	Final Appropriation	Actual Expenditure	
	R'000	R'000	R'000	R'000	R'000	R'000	%	R'000	R'000	R'000	%	R'000	R'000	R'000	%	R'000	R'000	
Total	14 975	(552)	-	14 423	14 423	-	100%	14 423	14 423	-	100%	6 814	6 814	-	100%	6 814	6 814	
Economic classification																		
Current payments	14 351	(396)	-	13 955	13 955	-	100,0%	13 955	13 955	-	100,0%	6 814	6 814	-	100,0%	6 814	6 814	
Compensation of employees	2 225	625	-	2 850	2 850	-	100,0%	2 850	2 850	-	100,0%	2 308	2 308	-	100,0%	2 308	2 308	
Salaries and wages	1 170	1 312	-	2 482	2 482	-	100,0%	2 482	2 482	-	100,0%	2 029	2 029	-	100,0%	2 029	2 029	
Social contributions	1 055	(687)	-	368	368	-	100,0%	368	368	-	100,0%	279	279	-	100,0%	279	279	
Goods and services	12 126	(1 021)	-	11 105	11 105	-	100,0%	11 105	11 105	-	100,0%	4 506	4 506	-	100,0%	4 506	4 506	
Advertising	14	(1)	-	13	13	-	100,0%	13	13	-	100,0%	7	7	-	100,0%	7	7	
Minor assets	53	(9)	-	44	44	-	100,0%	44	44	-	100,0%	2	2	-	100,0%	2	2	
Catering: Departmental activities	10	(8)	-	2	2	-	100,0%	2	2	-	100,0%	1	1	-	100,0%	1	1	
Communication (G&S)	38	(27)	-	11	11	-	100,0%	11	11	-	100,0%	8	8	-	100,0%	8	8	
Computer services	45	(9)	-	36	36	-	100,0%	36	36	-	100,0%	3	3	-	100,0%	3	3	
Agency and support / outsourced services	11 031	(603)	-	10 428	10 428	-	100,0%	10 428	10 428	-	100,0%	4 374	4 374	-	100,0%	4 374	4 374	
Entertainment	-	-	-	-	-	-	0,0%	-	-	-	0,0%	2	2	-	0,0%	2	2	
Fleet services (including government motor transport)	219	(8)	-	211	211	-	100,0%	211	211	-	100,0%	-	-	-	100,0%	-	-	
Inventory: Materials and supplies	44	(35)	-	9	9	-	100,0%	9	9	-	100,0%	-	-	-	100,0%	-	-	
Consumable supplies	20	17	-	37	37	-	100,0%	37	37	-	100,0%	10	10	-	100,0%	10	10	
Consumable: Stationery, printing and office supplies	112	(76)	-	36	36	-	100,0%	36	36	-	100,0%	35	35	-	100,0%	35	35	
Operating leases	41	(7)	-	34	34	-	100,0%	34	34	-	100,0%	1	1	-	100,0%	1	1	
Travel and subsistence	354	(130)	-	224	224	-	100,0%	224	224	-	100,0%	63	63	-	100,0%	63	63	
Training and development	110	(106)	-	4	4	-	100,0%	4	4	-	100,0%	-	-	-	100,0%	-	-	
Operating payments	35	(19)	-	16	16	-	100,0%	16	16	-	100,0%	-	-	-	100,0%	-	-	
Transfers and subsidies	-	-	-	-	-	-	0,0%	-	-	-	0,0%	-	-	-	0,0%	-	-	
Departmental agencies and accounts	-	-	-	-	-	-	0,0%	-	-	-	0,0%	-	-	-	0,0%	-	-	
Social security funds	-	-	-	-	-	-	0,0%	-	-	-	0,0%	-	-	-	0,0%	-	-	
Departmental agencies	-	-	-	-	-	-	0,0%	-	-	-	0,0%	-	-	-	0,0%	-	-	
Payments for capital assets	624	(156)	-	468	468	-	100,0%	468	468	-	100,0%	-	-	-	100,0%	-	-	
Machinery and equipment	624	(156)	-	468	468	-	100,0%	468	468	-	100,0%	-	-	-	100,0%	-	-	
Transport equipment	-	-	-	-	-	-	0,0%	-	-	-	0,0%	-	-	-	0,0%	-	-	
Other machinery and equipment	624	(156)	-	468	468	-	100,0%	468	468	-	100,0%	-	-	-	100,0%	-	-	
Software and other intangible assets	-	-	-	-	-	-	0,0%	-	-	-	0,0%	-	-	-	0,0%	-	-	
Total	14 975	(552)	-	14 423	14 423	-	100,0%	14 423	14 423	-	100,0%	6 814	6 814	-	100,0%	6 814	6 814	

Conclusion

Despite obstacles at many schools in the province – whether funding shortfalls, enrolment pressures, insufficient or ageing infrastructure – *hope is real and hard-won*. The WCED has reached a critical point in its drive to raise educational standards. Significant progress has been made in the Foundation Phase, especially in recent years. Targeted support, as a provincial priority, lifts learning outcomes.

Much, nevertheless, needs to be done if the WCEDs vision of quality education for every child is to be realised. There must be continued focus on raising standards in the basic skills of literacy and numeracy. These are the foundations upon which a culture of lifelong learning must be built and sustained.

It is possible for school leaders and teachers to create a self-fulfilling prophecy. Low expectations create a negative atmosphere, which leads to poor performance. High expectations, on the other hand, create a positive and encouraging environment in which high performance can be achieved. SEA evaluations conducted between April 2024 and March 2025 revealed the existence of both the 'Pygmalion Effect' (high expectations = high achievement) as well as the 'Golem Effect' (low expectations = low achievement).

Evaluations of schools showed most of them to have heart. Caring schools have high expectations of learners. Schools must distinguish between 'care' and 'caring'. Caring schools expect all of their learners to do well, and do what it takes to help every learner achieve. To do less is uncaring.

Professional development for teachers and school leaders is a key lever in school improvement. Teaching is, by its nature, a collaborative and developmental profession. Ensuring that staff can develop is essential for continuous school improvement. Involving staff in conversations about their own performance and professional growth is crucial for creating a sense of purpose and demonstrating their value to the school.

Change is not easy, and schools rated 'Inadequate' and 'Requires improvement' must possess a certain readiness for change to be implemented. Improvement approaches will depend on stable environmental conditions, a positive attitude towards change and a propensity towards collective problem solving. Building the capacity for change is complex and must be more organic as a process as opposed to being mechanistic. This makes change unpredictable.

"Where are we now?", "How do we know?", "Where do we want to be?", "How do we get there?" and **"How good can we be?"** must become each school's school improvement mantra. Success for all learners is possible. As publicly funded institutions, schools should be held accountable for the contribution they make to young people's educational progress and achievement.

Focusing accountability only on schools, though, shows a lack of understanding of how the education system functions. It is fictitious to believe that the responsibility for the quality of education the province's learners receive rests primarily within the boundaries of each individual school. There must be a wider accountability regime, especially when the core purpose of SEA evaluations is focused on learning. A new landscape, one which defines especially district accountability, should prevail. Districts discharge critical functions. Systems should be designed that hold districts accountable for the things districts should be doing and over which they have unique control, such as financial management and support, curriculum and instructional leadership, specialised education services, professional learning, and other factors that indirectly support learning.

There is much work to be done in a schooling system which has the responsibility to improve the life chances of its children. When people – teachers, principals, SGBs and communities – show up and believe, education quality grows.

Education in the province must continue to celebrate its wins (however big or small) i.e., improved examination and systemic test scores, prioritization of mental wellbeing for its educators and investment in teacher development – the bedrock of sustainable, quality learning. Challenges must be turned into milestones as education builds brighter futures one classroom at a time.



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