



WESTERN CAPE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

VANDALISM OF SCHOOL BUILDINGS

1. INTRODUCTION

Vandalism occurs frequently in educational institutions throughout South Africa. Millions of rands are spent annually on repairing vandalised buildings and this money could be used to decrease infra-structural backlogs and for the maintenance of educational buildings.

2. PURPOSE

The purpose of this guideline document is

- to inform principals, teachers, learners, governing body members and the community about the wanton destruction of State property.
- to promote “ownership” of educational buildings by school communities.
- to clarify the procedures to be followed once vandalism has occurred at a school
- to share ideas on how to minimise vandalism at educational institutions.

3. DEFINITION

Vandalism, in the context of educational buildings in the Western Cape, can be defined as *the wilful, senseless and illegal destruction of State property*. This includes theft, breaking and entering, and wanton damage to property owned or leased by the State.

4. PROCEDURES TO BE FOLLOWED IN CASES OF VANDALISM TO EDUCATION BUILDINGS

Any illegal damage to school property should be dealt with as follows:

4.1 Damage by unknown persons

- 4.1.1** Report the damage to the local branch of the South African Police Services immediately and obtain a case report number.
- 4.1.2** Assist the police in their investigation by giving them with all the possible information - also by naming possible suspects.
- 4.1.3** Contact the Loss Control Officer at the nearest EMDC office as soon as possible and report the damage or losses.
- 4.1.4** Complete all necessary claim forms received from the Loss Control Officer and return them to him or her.
- 4.1.5** Have the damage to the building or immovable property repaired as soon as possible, either with school funds or via the Western Cape Education Department (WCED) Directorate: Physical Resources Planning [see Circular 0175/2000].
- 4.1.6** If the perpetrators are caught and found guilty by a court of law, the State retains the right to institute a civil claim against such perpetrators for restoration of damages.

4.2 Damage by known persons

(If, for example, a car or truck crashes into and damages a perimeter fence of an educational building or a person is caught in the act of damaging State property.)

- 4.2.1 NB:** If learners are involved – first notify the parent(s) or guardian(s), OR take them to the home of the parent(s) or guardian(s), OR, if the parent(s) or guardian(s) is/are not available, request the local welfare worker to act on their behalf. Where it is established that learners have been involved, the School Governing Body (SGB) may consider dealing with the matter in accordance with the school's Code of Conduct for Learners.
- 4.2.2** Write down the details of the person who caused the damage, i.e. name, ID number, residential and work address, telephone numbers and vehicle registration for further reference.
- 4.2.3** Where the person who caused the damage or parent or guardian is prepared to, without being influenced unduly, sign a completed admission of guilt form at a police station or a similar statement, it must be done in the presence of a witness.
- 4.2.4** Where possible, seek to obtain a written agreement, either to repair the damage or to pay for the repairs.

5. LEGAL OBLIGATIONS

5.1 Department of Transport and Public Works

It is the responsibility of the Chief Directorate: Property Management to provide line function departments, including the WCED, with adequate accommodation. The Chief Directorate: Property Management is custodian of State property, including the land occupied by schools of the WCED.

It is the responsibility of the Chief Directorate: Works (Education) to repair damaged buildings.

5.2 Western Cape Education Department

This department occupies and uses approximately 1600 school buildings and 700 other buildings - most of which are owned or leased by the State.

In terms of Section 13[3] of the South African Schools' Act, 1996 (Act 84/1996) (hereinafter referred to as the Schools' Act), only the MEC for Education may restrict a school's right of occupation and use of State-owned immovable property. The WCED therefore has the responsibility to guide and manage the use of property allocated to education.

5.3 School Governing Bodies

In terms of Section 20(1)(g) of the Schools Act, **the Governing Body of a school must "administer and control the school's property i.e. the buildings and grounds occupied by the school, including hostels, if applicable".**

5.4 The principal or head

The principal or head of an educational institution is the accounting officer and is responsible for all funds generated and spent by the school.

In terms of Section 16[3] the professional management of a public school "must be undertaken by the Principal. **This management also includes ... the management of the school facility, i.e. buildings and grounds".**

5.5 Community "ownership"

School buildings, although owned by the State, are community facilities and should be used by the local citizens. "Ownership" of a school by the community is of paramount importance if vandalism is to be eradicated.

5.6 **The community**

The community must be encouraged to be the eyes and ears of school governing bodies by reporting suspicious-looking individuals who have been seen around school buildings. The school governing body may consider ways of rewarding persons who, through their actions, have prevented damage to its school buildings.

5.7 **South African Police Services**

Principals should invite the SAPS to visit schools regularly in order to make the presence of law enforcement officers more visible. Regular night patrols are also advisable.

Authorities must do everything in their power to ensure that persons who are guilty of vandalism are suitably punished.

5.8 **Safe Schools Call Centre**

Communities play a significant role in combating vandalism at schools and other educational institutions, and in creating safe school environments.

Communities are encouraged to report incidents of vandalism to the **Safe Schools Call Centre** by faxing the details to (021) 674 2342 or dialling the toll-free number **0800 45 46 47** or one of the following telephone numbers:

(021) 671 6614

(021) 671 6621

(021) 671 6637

6. **INSURANCE COVER**

Treasury Regulations clearly state that the State does not insure its buildings as short-term insurance is not a cost-effective option for the State.

However, schools are encouraged to insure some of their movable property, e.g. computers, stoves, sewing machines and copiers and immovable facilities, e.g. the administration block and school hall, (i.e. the high-risk sections of the building).

7. **HINTS ON MINIMISING VANDALISM**

7.1 **School Governing Bodies (SGBs)**

SGBs are encouraged to do the following to maintain their facilities:

- Offer their cleaners and foremen training and support so that they develop the necessary skills and knowledge to be able to maintain the school buildings adequately.
- Repair minor damage from their Norms and Standards funds, e.g. replace window stays and catches, exterior doors, broken window panes, door handles and damaged toilets. (See Circular 0175/2000 for guidance.)
- Keep the school's boundary fence in a sound state of repair.
- Purchase effective security systems, e.g. an alarm system with a rapid response.
- Affix grille gates, burglar bars, razor wire, etc. to high risk areas of the school building.
- Use cost-effective security lighting.
- Report vagrants on school property to the SAPS.
- Keep adequate records of all maintenance projects, whether caused by vandals or normal wear and tear.
- Follow correct protocol i.e. reporting cases of vandalism to the SAPS and thereafter to the EMDC.
- Insist on the submission of reports on these issues by the SGB Sub-committee on Physical Resources at meetings of the SGBs.

7.2 The State

The State [the WCED and the Department of Transport and Public Works Chief Directorates: Property Management and Works (Education)] will make the following contributions.

- User agreements will be signed between the WCED (Directorate: Physical Resources Planning) and individual school governing bodies.

- The Department of Transport and Public Works (hereinafter referred to as “Works”) will compile a maintenance manual for education buildings. Checklists will form part of school building inspection.
- The WCED will compile circulars from time to time setting out the procedures to be followed by schools regarding a variety of building-related matters.
- The WCED and Works (Building Inspectors) will monitor schools’ maintenance programmes periodically to ensure that minor damages are repaired promptly. (Works Inspectors and Physical Resources Planners will visit schools and inspect the condition of buildings. The school’s maintenance plan and the amount of money spent on buildings and grounds will also be monitored.)
- Schools located in red zones (areas designated high-risk by the WCED and the SAPS) will receive preferential treatment regarding security systems, which will, as far as possible, be funded by the SAFE SCHOOLS PROJECT.
- The WCED will provide all schools with Norms and Standards funding, of which R22.00 (this amount is likely to be increased annually) per learner, or a minimum of R1 200.00 for smaller schools, must be spent annually on the maintenance of the buildings.
- The WCED (Directorate: Physical Resources Planning) has an emergency maintenance budget which is used to assist schools if the vandalism caused to school buildings affects the learners’ health and safety. For example, badly vandalised toilets would affect the learners’ health if no toilets were functioning, and loose roof sheets and exposed electrical wires would constitute safety hazards.

Principals are welcome to contact the Directorate: Physical Resources Planning for assistance in such emergencies. The procedures to be followed are contained in Circular 175/2000 of 25 August 2000.