

Years of protests pay off as Eastern Cape village gets new high school

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The R56m Vukile Tshwete Senior Secondary has officially opened in Keiskammahoek after eight years of struggle.



Newly built Vukile Tshwete Senior Secondary has opened in Tshoxa village, Keiskammahoek, in the Eastern Cape. Photo: Johnnie Isaac

Protests and marches have finally paid off for the community of Tshoxa village in Keiskammahoek, Eastern Cape. The newly built R56m Vukile Tshwete Senior Secondary School was officially opened on Friday last week by education MEC Fundile Gade.

Learners had at first forcefully occupied some classrooms while it was still under construction in June 2022.

“It was urgent that learners move to this new infrastructure,” said Itumeleng Mothlabane, the provincial head for Equal Education, which supported the occupation.

The old wooden building was falling apart; most classes had no windows; the ceilings were collapsing. Surrounded by bush, the area was unsafe for learners and the school suffered repeatedly from burglaries.

GroundUp wrote about conditions at the school in April 2016 under the headline, [Our school of snakes and criminals](#).

In May 2016, *GroundUp* [reported](#) how learners at Vukile Tshwete and Qonce High, assisted by Equal Education, had filed papers in the Bisho High Court to force Minister Angie Motshekga to act on the regulations for infrastructure norms in schools.

Learners and parents had staged numerous protests since 2016, demanding a new school. They also [picketed](#) the Coega Development Agency, the implementing agent, which they blamed for delays.

Chair of the school governing body Andile Maki said the school was founded through the sacrifices of elderly people who contributed their social grants. Maki said they are “finally seeing what they were struggling for.”

He said they still require at least six additional prefab classrooms. The school has about 760 learners and 17 teachers. It achieved a 79% matric pass last year. It has girls rugby and soccer teams.

School principal Sibulelo Ngcawuzele said, “We have come a long way”.

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