

Learners and teachers march for safer schools in Nelson Mandela Bay

SAPS promises more police visibility around schools.

By Joseph Chirume ^{23 Apr 2024}



Learners, parents and teachers marched through the streets of Nelson Mandela Bay metro to the Motherwell Police station on Friday, demanding more police visibility and an end to crime at schools. Photo: Joseph Chirume

Learners, parents and teachers marched through the streets of Nelson Mandela Bay metro to the Motherwell Police station on Friday, 19 April, demanding that the spaces in and around schools be made safer.

They say the recent spike in crime in the community has caused disruptions to school activities, with many staff and learners no longer feeling safe at school.

According to provincial police crime statistics there were 42 cases of murder and 44 cases of carjackings in Motherwell between October 2023 and December 2023, and the number of break-ins reported to the Motherwell Police Station was the fourth highest in the province.

Since November, 131 schools in the Nelson Mandela Bay region have been robbed, mostly at gunpoint. Earlier in April *GroundUp* reported that the Eastern Cape Department of Education had allocated an additional R59m to [bump up security](#) schools in the province.

Young learners from Nxanelwimfundo Intermediate School in Motherwell walked on Friday from street to street through the township chanting “Less crime, less violence” and “Protect our schools”.

Principal Nomonde Dlamini, who led the march, said her school has about 920 learners from grade R to 7 with about 26 educators.

“Motherwell is a hotspot for crime, especially our schools. We decided to raise awareness in the community using the kids’

because the kids are affected whenever there's a robbery at school," she said.

School Governing Body (SGB) chairman Bonakele Lungu said Nxanelwimfundo had fallen victim to several burglaries recently, and learners had been robbed outside the school's gate.

"All over Nelson Mandela Bay Metro criminals come into schools and rob teachers. They take cellphones, laptops and even their vehicles. Our worry is the protection of the kids because they become victims when they witness these crimes."

Researcher at Equal Education, Stacey Jacobs, said: "There are responsibilities and duties which the national and provin governments should take to ensure the norms and standards of the school infrastructure are maintained. Security infrastructure requirements of a school include fencing be at least 1.8m high, burglars on all windows and a security guard system or an alarm system."

Officer Emile Grange from Motherwell SAPS received the group's memorandum on behalf of the police. He promised that there would be more police visibility around schools. "We are committed to our schools. We urge schools to keep the gate closed all the time and open only when kids are going home," he told marchers.

Asked for comment, Eastern Cape Department of Education spokesperson Vuyiseka Mboxela said the MEC for Education Fundile Gade, had responded to issues of security at schools when he visited Gqeberha earlier in April.

Published originally on [GroundUp](#).

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