



MEDIA STATEMENT

**To: All Media
Att: News Editors
For immediate release**

23 August 2023

MEC CHILOANE CONCERNED BY SUICIDAL BEHAVIOUR AT TSAKANE SECONDARY SCHOOL

Gauteng Education MEC Matome Chiloane is concerned by the recent occurrence of suicides and suicidal attempts that have been prevalent at Tsakane Secondary School.

The Gauteng Department of Education (GDE) is regrettably aware of an incident where two girl learners in Grade 8 and 12 from Tsakane Secondary School allegedly consumed poison at their respective homes and unfortunately passed away on Monday, 7 August and Tuesday, 8 August 2023 respectively.

According to information at our disposal, another Grade 8 boy learner brought poison to the school on Tuesday, 8 August 2023 and consumed it in full view of other learners following the two previously reported deaths. However, this learner was immediately rushed to a local medical facility and is currently recovering.

On a much sadder note, we were made aware of two other girl learners and a boy learner who also allegedly consumed poison, but are fortunately recovering at a medical facility.

Accordingly, we can also confirm that on Friday, 18 August 2023, a male general worker from the same school allegedly committed suicide by consuming poison at home.

We are also aware of a video that has gone viral on social media showing two other girl learners being assisted to stand, with false reports that they also consumed poison, which is not true. The video footage was captured on Monday, 21 August 2023, during a community prayer at the school, in which some learners were emotionally moved by the passing of their fellow learners. Therefore, it must be clarified that there is no learner who consumed poison at school and died on school premises.

Our officials visited the school on Tuesday, 22 August 2023 with law enforcement agencies and social workers. Necessary psycho-social support was provided to learners and classes continued without any disruptions. The Employee Wellness Team will be deployed to support staff at the school. Indeed, these incidents are concerning. As such, a parents meeting will be facilitated on Sunday, 27 August 2023, to address this concerning behaviour at the school.

"We are gravely concerned by the recurring suicidal behaviour at Tsakane Secondary School. Learners are encouraged to reach out to our officials and interact with professionals for necessary assistance by calling Childline on 116. We wish to convey our condolences to families of the bereaved learners and one general worker, wishing that the entire school community finds peace during this time," said MEC Chiloane.

For more information, contact the Gauteng Department of Education's Spokesperson, Steve Mabona on 072 574 3860 or Spokesperson for Gauteng Education MEC Matome Chiloane, Xolani Mkhwemte on 084 513 9285

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