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### **Corruption Watch probe exposes fraud by principal and ex-governing body chair at Soweto school**

A tip-off from concerned teachers has prompted a Corruption Watch (CW) investigation into Thubelihle Intermediate School in Soweto, revealing gross fraud and financial misconduct. The probe forms part of CW's effort to expose corruption in schools after the organisation noted high volumes of complaints implicating teachers, principals, and school governing body members in the last year.

"Unfortunately, what is happening at Thubelihle is not a rare occurrence," said David Lewis, executive director of Corruption Watch. By April 2013 the organisation had received over 108 complaints relating to corruption in schools. "The impact of such incidents is massive and unpleasantly so to learners who bear the consequences," Lewis added.

In the Thubelihle school case, a CW-commissioned forensic report revealed that school principal Mrs Nonzwakazi Usiba and former school governing body chair Mr Isaac Ngwenya frequently made out and cashed school cheques between 2009 and 2011. The two were the only custodians of the school's finances and joint signatories of the school's cheque account.

The forensic investigation further revealed that:

- The principal, Usiba, cashed in 41 school cheques amounting to R134 487.56 that were made out to herself. A few of the cheques indicated they were for "feeding of learners", but there were no corresponding invoices.
- Ten cheques amounting to R41 059.30 were made out to former school governing body chair Ngwenya. Again, there were no supporting invoices.
- A number of fake invoices were made out by the school to unknown individuals. For example, the school paid R18 500.31 to an individual based on a fake invoice, purportedly from Heinemann Publishers. But the publishers had no knowledge of the school or their order for Zulu and Xhosa textbooks. The forensic report found that a Heinemann Publishers letterhead was scanned and manipulated to reflect a supposed invoice.
- A payment of R6 000 was made to the Star Grill and Buffet at Silverstar Casino in Krugersdorp, against a cheque requisition for "deposit for learner farewell".

"We devoted significant resources to investigating these allegations. While we would not be able to repeat this in respect of all allegations of schools corruption made to us, what is clear is that vigilant teachers, learners and parents could themselves ensure that school resources are spent for advancing education rather than for the private gratification of a few people," added Lewis.

For more information visit [www.corruptionwatch.org.za](http://www.corruptionwatch.org.za) or contact David Lewis at 082 576 3748 or Bongzi Mlangeni at 076 862 9086.