

Principal may face court over fee misuse

BRENDAN ROANE

brendan.roane@inl.co.za

A CRIMINAL case has been opened by Corruption Watch against an allegedly corrupt Soweto principal after it claimed the Department of Education failed to act.

The case involves the suspected misuse of R200 000 in school funds by the principal of the Thubelihle Intermediate School in Soweto, Nonzwakazi Usiba.

Corruption Watch – a non-profit organisation – opened a criminal case against Usiba last Thursday as it said the Gauteng Department of Education was slow to take action in this case.

“Corruption Watch is not aware of the status of any disciplinary action and the department has declined to comment substantively,” the group said in its latest report concerning the school.

Department spokesman Gershwin Chuenyane failed to respond to The Star’s queries.

The criminal case has now been moved to the Commercial Crimes Unit in Joburg for further investigation, police spokeswoman Captain Fezile Malesa said.

Questions over misuse of the school’s funds followed a forensic audit by Corruption Watch based on three years of financial records starting in 2009.

These included 41 cheques totalling R134 487 that were allegedly cashed by Usiba herself – some of which were detailed as “feeding for learners” – but Corruption Watch said there were no corresponding invoices and that it had handed the forensic audit over to the police.

“It’s a particularly telling form of corruption because it’s very easy to see who the victims are,” said David Lewis, the director of Corruption Watch.

The other allegations Corruption Watch uncovered included a R6 000 cheque made out to Star Grill and Buffet at Silverstar Casino which was detailed as a “deposit for learner farewell”.

Another cheque of R18 500 was made out to someone supposedly from a book publisher, but Corruption Watch said when they contacted the publishers, they had no knowledge of the individual or this payment. Another 10 cheques were made out to a former head of the school governing body for R41 059, for which Corruption Watch again said it could not find invoices.

Efforts to reach Usiba for comment were unsuccessful at the time of publication.

The alleged corruption at Thubelihle was just one of the many cases Corruption Watch was investigating across the country as it has been inundated with tip-offs which total more than 200 since January.

Corruption Watch has called on the public to report any corruption by going to the website www.corruptionwatch.org.za or e-mailing info@corruptionwatch.org.za

