

# Makhanda Matriculants reach dizzy heights

## MATRIC 2020



### ANALYSIS

Ashley Westaway

Makhanda schools have bounced back from the disappointing results of 2019 in style and in the process recorded a collective pass rate of 80% for the first time in the city's history. Whereas both the national and provincial pass rates declined significantly, the city bucked this trend to post an improvement of just over 4 percentage points. To be specific, the national pass rate declined from 81% in 2019 to 76% in 2020 (5 percentage points) and the Eastern Cape from 77% to 68% (9 percentage points), but Makhanda improved from 76% to 80%. This is a remarkable achievement in many respects. For example:

- The 2020 results restore Makhanda as the leading educational city in the province; They lift the city a full 12 percentage points clear of the provincial pass rate; and
- They take the city well over the national rate (after having slipped below this benchmark in 2019).
- Moreover, it should be recalled that the odds were stacked heavily against the 2020 cohort.

There were two particularly important factors in this regard. First, 2020 was the first year that 'progressed' learners wrote the full set of examinations and were thus factored into the pass rate calculations. If one looks at the national situation in this regard, there were approximately 70 000 progressed learners who sat all the examinations in November last year. This number lifted the total number of candidates from approximately 500 000 (the 2019 quantum) up to 570 000 in 2020. Minister Motshekga indicated that it was this grouping that was primarily responsible for the decline in the national pass rate. (If this grouping is removed from the calculations, the pass rate is over 81%, as it was in 2019.)

In Makhanda, despite the inclusion of progressed learners, the city cohort size was unchanged, at 540 candidates. One would however, have expected the progressed learners to pull the city pass rate down.

Second, 2020 saw protracted school closures as a result of lockdown. This meant that the matriculants were denied considerable teaching time as well as



**Ntsika Principal Madeleine Schoeman and school clerk Nceba Bikitsha examine the school's matric results on Tuesday 23 February. The school had an 85% pass rate with 46 Bachelor passes.**  
Photo: Sue MacLennan

the opportunity to write the mid-year examinations. To an extent, these losses were mitigated by school efforts to provide resources and other forms of support to the learners during lockdown. But the confusion, uncertainty and fear that were so prevalent from late March until early August undoubtedly had a negative effect on the well-being and learning programmes of the Class of 2020. Despite all this, the Makhanda matriculants of last year produced a record pass rate of 80%.

In order to understand how this accomplishment was possible, it is necessary to peruse the results of the individual schools.

There are nine public high schools in Makhanda. Graeme College, P.J. Olivier and Victoria Girls (VG) are schools where fees are charged, as opposed to the other six that do not charge fees.

The fee-paying schools all produced strong pass rates in 2020, with VG headlining with a perfect 100%. The no-fee sector similarly produced good results, with one rather glaring exception. Ntsika should be commended for its 85% pass rate, whilst Khuliso Daniels improved dramatically, from 50% in 2019 up to 78% in 2020. Similarly, Nathaniel Nyaluza significantly improved its pass rate, albeit with a small cohort of learners. Unfortunately, the historically poor performance of TEM Mrwetyana continued unabated in 2020; all that it could muster was a 34% pass rate. The point here however is that eight of the nine local schools contributed to the city's overall record high pass rate. It was a genuinely collective effort.

When analysing matric results, it is necessary to move beyond a narrow focus on quantity (pass rates and numbers) to also consider quality. The latter is most commonly and reliably assessed by honing in on the percentage and number of Bachelor passes, previously referred to as 'university exemptions'.

One of the highlights of Makhanda's much lauded 2018 results was the record number of 238 Bachelor passes. This meant that 42,7% of candidates who sat the examinations two years ago obtained Bachelor passes.

Last year, I bemoaned the dramatic drop in Bachelor passes, down to 187 and pointed out that this translated into a poor success rate of 34,6%. It is therefore most pleasing to report that the Bachelor pass statistics rebounded gloriously in 2020. 230 candidates, or 42,6% of the total cohort, obtained Bachelor last year. In other words, the class of 2020 managed to reach the stellar heights of the class of 2018 in this regard.

The no-fee sector contributed significantly to this achievement, by contributing 98 of the 230 Bachelors, which translates into 43% of the total. Ntsika's share of this contribution was a massive 46! When one considers that it was not long ago that this school generally produced single digit Bachelor numbers, one realises just how far it has come under the inspirational leadership of Madeleine Schoeman.

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It is also necessary to note that Khutliso Daniels improved its bachelor numbers tenfold, from 1 to 10. Radio Mcuba can take a bow for his dogged determination over recent years to put his school on the upward trajectory that has now been achieved.

Finally, the consistency of the fee-paying schools in producing significant numbers of Bachelor candidates should be acknowledged and applauded. It is particularly pleasing that Graeme College put its setbacks of 2019 aside and produced a much-improved performance in 2020.

In conclusion, it is worth noting that we do not know what 2021 holds in store. It is quite possible that schools could face further protracted unscheduled closures in the not-too-distant future.

What the Class of 2020 demonstrates is that it is the matriculants themselves who hold the key to good performance, more than their parents, principals and teachers. I hope that the Class of 2021 can demonstrate the same tenacity, resolve and determination as the marvellous Class of 2020. Congratulations to one and all of you!

• *Ashley Westaway is the Manager: Gadra Education*

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**A common vision, discipline and consistency, along with support from the Gadra/ Rhodes University 9/10ths programme have been key to a year by year incremental improvement on matric results at Khutliso Daniels Secondary says Principal Radio Mcuba. Photo: Sue Maclennan**

## School-by-school Bachelor performance:

	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
<b>Graeme College</b>	43	40	46	25	41
<b>Khutliso Daniels</b>	3	0	5	1	10
<b>Mary Waters</b>	13	16	19	23	23
<b>Nathaniel Nyaluza</b>	6	8	8	6	3
<b>Nombulelo</b>	7	14	34	28	23
<b>Ntsika</b>	22	22	36	28	46
<b>PJ Olivier</b>	13	17	16	13	14
<b>TEM Mrwetyana</b>	0	2	0	0	3
<b>Victoria Girls</b>	64	78	74	63	67
<b>Total</b>	171	197	238	187	230

## School-by-school breakdown of results:

	2016		2017		2018		2019		2020	
	Wrote	Passed	Wrote	Passed	Wrote	Passed	Wrote	Passed	Wrote	Passed
<b>Graeme College</b>	62	62 (100%)	59	58 (98%)	64	62 (97%)	49	46 (94%)	60	58 (97%)
<b>Khutliso Daniels</b>	20	10 (50%)	32	8 (25%)	31	18 (58%)	22	11 (50%)	36	28 (78%)
<b>Mary Waters</b>	120	85 (71%)	106	70 (66%)	62	51 (82%)	116	84 (72%)	61	47 (77%)
<b>Nathaniel Nyaluza</b>	67	32 (48%)	53	24 (45%)	56	14 (25%)	57	20 (35%)	40	25 (63%)
<b>Nombulelo</b>	79	45 (57%)	50	41 (82%)	127	101 (80%)	100	79 (79%)	89	62 (70%)
<b>Ntsika</b>	70	61 (87%)	75	64 (85%)	93	79 (85%)	87	67 (77%)	104	88 (85%)
<b>PJ Olivier</b>	38	31 (82%)	26	24 (92%)	30	25 (83%)	20	20 (100%)	29	28 (97%)
<b>TEM Mrwetyana</b>	55	14 (26%)	21	9 (43%)	14	5 (36%)	13	9 (69%)	38	13 (34%)
<b>Victoria Girls</b>	69	69 (100%)	82	82 (100%)	81	81 (100%)	76	74 (97%)	83	83 (100%)
<b>City Total</b>	<b>580</b>	<b>409</b>	<b>504</b>	<b>380</b>	<b>558</b>	<b>436</b>	<b>540</b>	<b>410</b>	<b>540</b>	<b>432</b>
<b>City % Pass Rate</b>	<b>70.5%</b>		<b>75.3%</b>		<b>78.1%</b>		<b>75.9%</b>		<b>80%</b>	