



State Comptroller of Israel | Local Government
Audit Report | 2023

Planning, Building, and Infrastructure

**Maintenance and
Safety of Educational
Institutions –
Secondary Schools**



Maintenance and Safety of Educational Institutions – Secondary Schools

Background

Under the Compulsory Education Law 1949, a local authority is the local education authority regarding its jurisdiction and is responsible for having schools within its area. Hence, the authority is responsible for the ongoing maintenance of the schools and their safety conditions. Maintenance work in educational institutions is divided into two main types. Routine maintenance is carried out throughout the school year, and large-scale maintenance work or renovations are carried out during the summer vacation as part of the preparation of the educational institutions for the start of the school year in September of every year (summer renovations). The Ministry of Education issued special circulars detailing safety procedures and safety guidelines for schools, including the measures the local education authority must take to prevent safety hazards and protect children's safety.



Key Figures

about NIS 860,000

the total budget allocation for maintenance not transferred to the schools by three of the six examined local authorities in 2019–June 2022 (from 12% to 33%), out of the total allocations of the above three authorities, about NIS 4.4 million

2

of the examined local authorities (**Tamra** and **Ma'ale Iron**) have no municipal call center for public inquiries, including from the principals of educational institutions about maintenance and safety

about NIS 193,000

the Ministry of Education's total financial aid for summer renovations in 2022 in 20 inspected schools in the six examined local authorities

about NIS 3 million

the total direct expenditure of the six examined local authorities in 2022 for summer renovations in the 20 inspected schools

65% (13 out of 20)

the inspected schools' rate found to have maintenance deficiencies such as leaking roofs and damped walls

65% (13 out of 20)

the inspected schools' rate found to have recurring safety deficiencies in doors, cabinets, or drinking facilities in 2019–2022

5

of the examined local authorities did not enter the findings of the safety inspections into a dedicated computerized system to monitor their rectification

7

laboratories in five of the 20 inspected schools were closed down due to safety deficiencies for one to two years



Audit Actions

From May to November 2022, the State Comptroller's Office audited the local authorities' handling of the maintenance and safety of secondary schools (middle and high schools). The audit was conducted in the six local authorities of **Gilboa, Tamra, Ma'ale Iron, Netanya, Kiryat Ata, and Shoham** (the examined local authorities), which were selected while addressing various characteristics and data: The Ministry of Interior administrative districts where the authorities are located; Their municipal status; Their socio-economic cluster; The sector to which their residents belong; And the number of residents within their jurisdiction.

Completion examinations were carried out at the Ministry of Education in the Senior Division for Security, Emergency, and Environmental Safety and in the districts to which the examined local authorities are associated – Haifa, North, Center, and Tel Aviv.

Furthermore, the audit team toured 20 secondary schools in the examined local authorities (the inspected schools), met their principals, and conducted a visual inspection of the level of maintenance and compliance with the safety conditions.

Key Findings



Officials Involved in the Maintenance and Safety of Educational Institutions – in one of the two schools inspected in the jurisdiction of the **Shoham** local authority, a safety committee was not appointed as required.

Periodic Allocations to the Schools for Maintenance – the **Gilboa** regional council, the **Ma'ale Iron** local authority and the **Tamra** municipality did not transfer all their allocations to the inspected schools in 2019 – June 2022: The **Gilboa** regional council did not transfer NIS 55,000 to School A, about 12% of all the budget allocated; The **Ma'ale Iron** local authority did not transfer to the five inspected schools NIS 279,000, about 33% of all the budget allocated; And the **Tamra** municipality did not transfer to the four inspected schools NIS 525,504, about 17% of all the budget allocated.

Periodic Allocations to the Schools for Maintenance – the **Ma'ale Iron** and **Netanya** local authorities allocated a uniform monthly budget of NIS 5,000 and NIS 4,200, respectively, to all secondary schools, regardless of their physical condition, the year of their establishment, and the number of students studying therein, or the actual needs.



 **Summer Renovations** – the Ministry of Education total transfers for summer renovations in 2022 in the 20 inspected schools were about NIS 193,000, which was low compared to the actual needs of those institutions. The direct expenditure of the **Tamra** municipality and the **Ma'ale Iron** local authority, in a low social-economic cluster (3 and 2, respectively), for the summer renovations that year in the inspected schools, apart from the amounts that the Ministry of Education transferred to them, was only NIS 4,800 in **Tamra** and NIS 20,000 in **Ma'ale Iron**, respectively. On the other hand, the direct expenditure for the summer renovations of the **Netanya** and **Kiryat Ata** municipalities and of the **Shoham** local authority in a high socio-economic cluster (6, 6, and 9, respectively), and of the **Gilboa** regional council, in a medium socio-economic cluster (5), was high, about NIS 1,676,000, NIS 370,000, NIS 793,000 and NIS 109,000, respectively.

 **Secondary Schools' Maintenance Procedure** – the **Gilboa** regional council, the **Tamra** municipality, and the **Ma'ale Iron** local authority had no written procedures for the maintenance of educational institutions, defining, among other things, the division of responsibility for carrying out maintenance work between the local authority and the educational institution, and the work interfaces with the various relevant units in the local authority.

 **The Municipal Call Center's Handling Educational Institutions Inquiries** – in two of the examined local authorities, **Tamra** and **Ma'ale Iron**, there is no municipal call center for handling public inquiries, including inquiries from the principals of the educational institutions regarding their maintenance.

 **On-Going Maintenance in the Educational Institutions** – the main deficiencies in the inspected schools were within the four examined authorities: **Tamra**, **Ma'ale Iron**, **Netanya**, and **Kiryat Ata**. The critical deficiencies included leaks and dampness, neglected toilets, and malfunctioning air conditioners. Individual deficiencies, such as electrical and lighting faults, lack of shaded areas, old desks and chairs and lack of learning spaces, were also raised. Below are photos for illustrative purposes:



On the Right are Signs of a Fire in a Classroom at School F in Ma'ale Iron, and on the Left are Moisture Deficiencies at School N in Netanya



The audit team took the photos on June 14, 2022, and August 16, 2022.

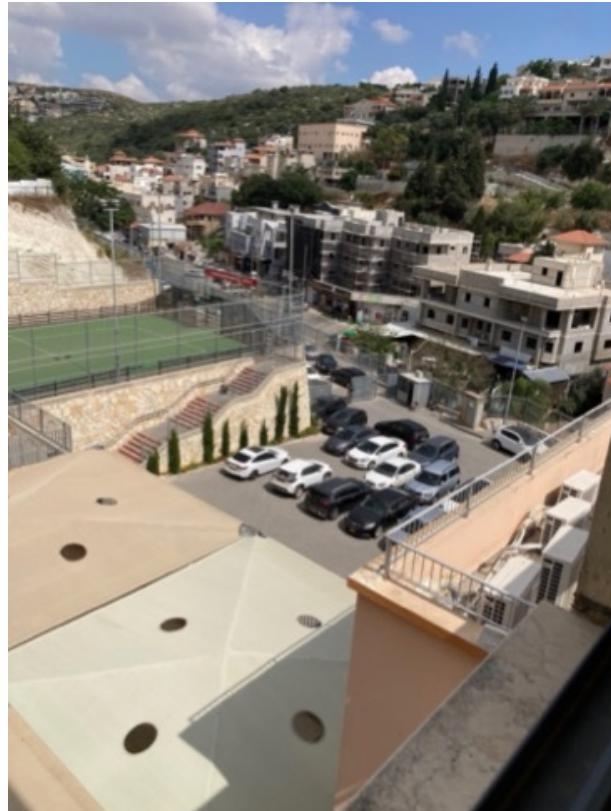
👎 Safety Management in the Schools – recurring deficiencies that appeared in the annual safety inspections were found in most of the inspected schools: in 13 out of the 20 schools, doors that are not protected as required (**Tamra, Ma'ale Iron, Netanya, Kiryat Ata, Shoham**) and cabinets or drinking facilities that are not affixed to the wall (**Tamra, Ma'ale Iron, Netanya, Kiryat Ata**) were found. Furthermore, there were recurring deficiencies in 20% to 30% of the schools, which included electrical outlets or electrical cabinet hazards (**Tamra, Ma'ale Iron**), low windows without opening limiters (**Tamra, Ma'ale Iron, Netanya, Kiryat Ata**) and lighting fixtures without coverage (**Tamra, Ma'ale Iron, Kiryat Ata**), which indicates that the authorities did not follow up and did not rectify the deficiencies immediately, as stipulated in the control list.

👎 Periodic Inspection Approvals – three of the local authorities – the **Tamra** and **Kiryat Ata** municipalities and the **Ma'ale Iron** local authority – did not ensure the conducting of all the periodic inspections required for the receipt of the approvals from the professional bodies, such as the approval of an engineer or structural engineer, an electrician and an agronomist, and with the frequency required for the buildings and facilities in the educational institutions within their jurisdiction.



- 👎 **Access Roads to Schools** – in two of the examined local authorities, **Tamra** and **Ma'ale Iron**, schools were found with unsafe access roads, as they are adjacent to a slope from which stones may fall and endanger those passing by.
- 👎 **Parking on the School Premises** – at School H in **Ma'ale Iron**, part of the schoolyard is used as a parking lot for teachers and visitors, thus creating a safety hazard that has been going on for years. This is the area between the entrance gate to the school and the entrance to the building itself, and it is used as a passage for students. Below is a photo for illustrative purposes.

Parking in the School Yard H in Ma'ale Iron



The audit team took the photo on June 14, 2022.



 **Safety in Laboratories** – in the safety inspections conducted by the local authorities and safety consultants on behalf of the Ministry of Education in 2019–2022 in five of the examined authorities (**Tamra**, **Ma'ale Iron**, **Netanya**, **Kiryat Ata**, and **Shoham**), safety deficiencies in the laboratories were found. In two of the examined local authorities (**Tamra** and **Ma'ale Iron**), seven of the laboratories in the inspected schools were closed for one to two years due to safety deficiencies. Below is a photo for illustrative purposes:

The Laboratory at School L in Netanya – the Water Heater Near the Electrical Panel



The audit team took the photo on August 17, 2022.



Periodic Budget Allocations for Schools Maintenance – the **Netanya** and **Kiryat Ata** municipalities and the **Shoham** local authority regularly transfer the allocated budget to the secondary schools in their area.

A Dedicated App for Safety Management in Educational Institutions – the **Shoham** local authority has, since December 2020, a dedicated app for safety management in educational institutions, through which it manages the handling of safety deficiencies and supervises and controls them.



Key Recommendations

- 💡 It is recommended that the **Gilboa** regional council, the **Ma'ale Iron** local authority, and the **Tamra** municipality regularly transfer their total budget allocations to the schools within their jurisdiction. It is also recommended that the **Ma'ale Iron** and **Netanya** local authorities examine the allocations to the schools considering their needs and set relevant criteria for their budgeting according to the schools' physical condition, the year they were established, the number of students therein, and their actual needs.
- 💡 It is recommended that the Ministry of Education form strategic work on the needs of the summer renovations and examine the format of allocations for the schools while prioritizing authorities in a low socio-economic cluster, considering the supplementary budgets that authorities, in particular in high socio-economic cluster, allocate from their sources for this purpose.
- 💡 It is recommended that the **Ma'ale Iron**, **Tamra**, **Kiryat Ata**, and **Netanya** local authorities ensure proper and ongoing maintenance of all educational institutions within their jurisdiction and rectify the maintenance deficiencies found therein while prioritizing deficiencies that could damage the structure.
- 💡 Five of the examined local authorities – **Tamra**, **Ma'ale Iron**, **Netanya**, **Kiryat Ata**, and **Shoham** – should rectify Priority 1 Deficiencies, which are safety hazards that require immediate addressing. Furthermore, they should follow up on rectifying the safety deficiencies to prevent safety hazards and protect the safety of the students and those staying in the educational institutions. It is recommended that the Ministry of Education instruct the local authorities to control common safety deficiencies closely, thus implementing its instructions regarding the priority of treating the various deficiencies.
- 💡 The **Tamra** municipality and the **Ma'ale Iron** local authority should immediately treat all safety deficiencies in the high school laboratories within their jurisdiction to open and use them safely and securely. The **Netanya** and **Kiryat Ata** municipalities and the **Shoham** local authority should immediately treat all the safety deficiencies found in the laboratories to remove the safety hazards that could endanger lives and prepare the laboratories for safe use.
- 💡 It is recommended that the Ministry of Education refine its guidelines on the use of laboratories for all local authorities and their educational institutions, and the authorities should ensure that all laboratories are in order, according to the rules.



Recurring Safety Deficiencies not Rectified (Priority 1) in the Inspected Schools, 2019–2022

The local authority	The school	Doors	Cabinets/ drinking water facilities	Electricity	Windows	Yards, paths, and sports fields	Gate	Railing	Lighting fixture
Gilboa	School A	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V
Tamra	School B	X	X	X	V	V	X	V	V
	School C	X	X	X	V	V	V	X	V
	School D	X	X	X	X	V	V	V	X
	School E	X	X	X	X	V	V	X	V
Ma'ale Iron	School F	X	X	X	V	X	V	V	V
	School G	X	V	V	X	V	V	V	X
	School H	X	X	V	X	V	V	V	V
	School I	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V
	School J	X	X	X	V	X	V	V	V
Netanya	School K	X	X	V	X	V	V	X	V
	School L	V	X	V	V	V	V	V	V
	School M	X	X	V	V	V	X	V	V
	School N	V	X	V	V	V	V	V	V
	School O	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V
Kiryat Ata	School P	X	X	V	X	V	V	V	X
	School Q	V	X	V	V	V	V	V	X
	School R	X	V	V	V	V	V	V	V
Shoham	School S	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V



The local authority	The school	Doors	Cabinets/ drinking water facilities	Electricity	Windows	Yards, paths, and sports fields	Gate	Railing	Lighting fixture
	School T	X	V	V	V	V	V	V	V
Total Safety Deficiencies recurring in subsequent years		13	13	6	6	2	2	3	4

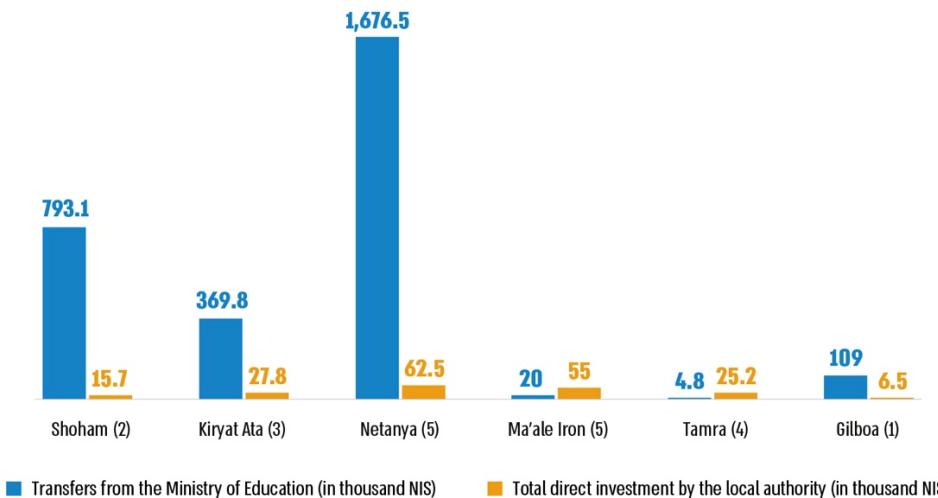
Legend:

X – The deficiency was raised in two consecutive annual safety inspections.

V – No recurring deficiency in two consecutive annual safety inspections.

According to the data of the annual safety inspections between 2019–2022 in the schools inspected, processed by the State Comptroller's Office.

Summer Renovations – Direct Expenditures of the Examined Local Authorities * and Transfers from the Ministry of Education, 2022 (in thousand NIS)



According to the data of the local authorities, processed by the State Comptroller's Office.

* In parentheses – the number of schools inspected in each local authority.



Summary

Education is considered a fundamental right in the State of Israel and worldwide. Therefore, there is great importance in establishing an education system and supporting it as part of the service to citizens. International studies show a positive link between the maintenance and care of the schools, the quality of the teaching and the achievements of the students therein, and therefore, a recommendation was made to invest funds in improving the condition of the school buildings. According to the Ministry of Education guidelines in the Director's circulars, the local authorities should ensure adequate physical conditions for learning and playing in the educational institutions within their jurisdiction. Therefore, investing in optimal maintenance of the educational institutions, locating and dealing with safety hazards within them, are conditions that the local authorities should maintain to protect the safety of all those passing through the gates of the institutions and ensure an adequate learning environment, thus striving to improve student achievements.

In the examined local authorities, various deficiencies pertaining to school maintenance were raised, including leaks and dampness, neglected toilets and malfunctioning air conditioners, electrical and lighting faults, a lack of shaded areas, old desks and chairs, and a lack of learning spaces. Safety deficiencies were also found in the inspected schools, including recurring safety deficiencies in the annual inspections, failure to ensure that the required periodic inspections are conducted in full and with the frequency needed for buildings and facilities, and ongoing deficiencies related to electricity, in the schools' access roads, and safety deficiencies in the laboratories.

The State Comptroller's Office recommends that the examined local authorities improve and increase their educational institutions' maintenance and handling of safety hazards to ensure an optimal and safe learning environment for their students. The local authorities should set working procedures defining the interrelationships and the division of responsibilities between the relevant parties; control and supervise the handling of maintenance and safety inquiries by the schools; Conduct all periodic safety inspections and ensure the receipt of all professional safety approvals according to the Ministry of Education's guidelines. The examined local authorities should address the ongoing hazards and safety deficiencies found in the electrical systems of the schools within their jurisdiction, access roads, and laboratories and remove them as soon as possible.

