



Russell High School pupils (from left) Thembeke Ngobe (17), Nosipho Duma (18), Bethany Fortune (16), Savannah van Heerden (18) and Phila Majola (16) with their headmistress, Arthie Rampershad, celebrate their school turning 140 years old today. **PHOTO: IAN CARBUTT**

Russell High celebrates 140 years with news of renovation

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RUSSELL High School is celebrating its 140th birthday today as the oldest government all-girls high school in KwaZulu-Natal.

The Russell High School building is — apart from the City Hall and the Legislature building — the only building built during the colonial years in the city that continues to be used for the purpose for which it was established. Speaking to *The Witness* yesterday, Fiona Bulman of the school's

Old Girls Association said there would be a special assembly at the school today to celebrate their 140-year milestone as well as getting the ball rolling in fixing the school after an eight-year struggle to get the school renovated.

Last year *The Witness* published an article about the school desperately seeking an intervention at their school, which has heritage status but is so dilapidated it posed a "grave danger" for everyone in the school building. Parts of the school had to

be cordoned off for safety purposes as the roof in those areas could collapse at any time. The damage to the school's building, which is protected under Amafa Heritage KZN, includes leaking roofs, rotting beams and other infrastructure.

Yesterday, Bulman said they had finally received a letter from the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education acknowledging its responsibility to provide an environment that is safe for teaching and learning.

The Department of Education has

instructed the Department of Public Works to urgently implement the necessary remedial actions and champion the restoration project at the school.

"We are absolutely delighted. The former principal, Jean Rose, had raised the alarm eight years ago and had even taken the matter to the lawyers because she had fears that someone would eventually get injured.

"There is also a tint of sadness that it had taken the tragic incident in Gauteng where children lost their lives when a [walkway] at their

school collapsed to get the government to act on this. The aspect of urgency in which the government had responded," she said.

The school's head mistress, Arthie Rampershad, said the school's anniversary was exciting considering the challenges they've had with the school's roof. "We feel blessed that we will finally be getting the renovations going at the school. It will help build a solid foundation for the years to come, especially for the young ladies at the school," said Rampershad.