

# What to expect from the 2022 school year

While the impact Covid-19 has had on our education system still lingers, the schools and institutes that survived the initial blow of the pandemic have proven to be more resilient and innovative than ever before.



Image: Supplied

But what about the many that will never open their doors again and what about the critical flaws in our educational systems that it highlighted? What will this mean for 2022? The South African government plans on tackling some of the biggest issues exacerbated by the pandemic by focusing on two fronts.

## ECD centres to fall under Department of Basic Education

As of April 2022, South Africa's Early Childhood Development (ECD) sector will fall under the Department of Basic Education and will no longer be run by the Department of Social Development. According to the [Mail & Guardian](#), the main reason for this step is to improve the development of children and the quality of early childhood education. Early childhood development has shown to be an essential yet often overlooked or neglected aspect of a child's schooling journey.

Yet, this move does not come without controversy as only 40,000 of the 180,000 early childhood development teachers will be vaccinated. According to the vaccine roll-out plan as set up by the Department of Basic Education only Grade R to 3 teachers will be vaccinated. Teachers who work with younger children (up to four years) are not part of the roll-out.

"This implies a circle of vulnerability," says Mmatsetshuweu Ruby Motaung, the director of training and resources in early education for the [National Early Childhood Alliance](#), "as the teachers and children are the most vulnerable, and there is a dire need to keep centres open."

## Stricter rules and laws to curb school drop-outs

The current Basic Education Act in South Africa compels parents to send their children to school (under threat of a fine or imprisonment not exceeding six months). Yet, despite this, only 50% of children enrolled in the school system complete their schooling. Therefore, the Department of Basic Education is busy drafting new legislation that, according to Basic

Education Deputy Minister Reginah Mhaule, will introduce additional measures to hold principals, parents, and governing bodies accountable for non-attendance. The bill especially holds parents accountable and is specifically focused on learners between Grades 1-9.

According to [Business Tech](#), a 2017 version of the Basic Education Laws Amendment Bill proposed a longer penalty for the parent of a learner, or any other person, who prevents a learner from compulsory school attendance. The penalty would be increased from six months to as much as six years.

It also states that, “The bill also proposes to make it an offence for any person to wilfully interrupt or disrupt any school activity or to wilfully hinder or obstruct any school in the performance of the school’s activities.”

Although the intentions of holding teachers, schools, and the community more accountable for attendance of learners, these measures may prove more hindrance than help. Factors such as household poverty, migration and health-related challenges, early development learning, as well as larger socioeconomic factors, contribute to the dropout number and can’t be solved by simply implementing stricter rules.

The opposite might prove true: parents struggling financially, who are found guilty and sentenced, will be worse off than before, meaning that their children will also suffer as a consequence. The more effective solution would be to provide support and relief for families that struggle with problems and thereby mitigate the need to implement stricter rules.

Despite all of the challenges, the reality is that education is an important aspect of a child’s life. Be it in the early stages or later stages like Grade 9. Stricter rules will not solve our problems. We as a South African community need to realise the importance and offer support to those NPOs that demonstrate sustainability, provide quality education, and exercise high standards of ethical and financial governance.

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