

Here is the school calendar for 2026 – including one ‘special’ holiday



The Department of Basic Education has published the 2026 school calendar, which kicks off on 14 January 2026 for all learners.

In 2024, the department made a significant change to school start dates, setting it so that schools in both coastal and inland regions would start at the same time. This will continue in 2026.

Teachers and administrators will begin the year slightly earlier, starting on 12 January, in preparation for learners' return. The school term dates are as follows.

- **Term 1:** 14 January to 27 March
- **Term 2:** 8 April to 26 June
- **Term 3:** 21 July to 23 September
- **Term 4:** 6 October to 9 December

The 2026 school year comprises 200 school days across the four terms, with 28 days set aside for school holidays and five public holidays.

Notably, the department has declared one additional ‘special’ school holiday, granting an extra day off. This is on 15 June 2026.

In South Africa, the Department of Basic Education and relevant stakeholders can grant special school holidays whenever they deem appropriate.

These stakeholders include representatives from the Department of Transport, religious groups, NGOs, the private sector, and the department itself.

When compiling the 2026 calendar, the Department of Basic Education and relevant stakeholders agreed to allow students and teachers a special school holiday.

This is because Youth Day is observed on Tuesday, 16 June, meaning the special holiday gives schools the Monday before then off.

Commenting on why inland and coastal schools are now starting on the same day, the National Department of Basic Education noted that changes in public holidays and other calendar determinants mean that the department must adjust to ensure no delays in the term.

“All possible steps must be taken to avoid a late start of the school year – that is, in the fourth week of January – as this pushes back all the terms,” it said.

“Each year, the Department reviews the impact of the policy and considers the number of days that will be available in the coming years based on the national calendar.

“The focus is on ensuring that there is no loss in terms of the number of days allocated for schooling,” he added.

The full-year calendar can be found below.

January 2026						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
				01	02	03
04	05	06	07	08	09	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31

February 2026						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
01	02	03	04	05	06	07
08	09	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28

March 2026						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
01	02	03	04	05	06	07
08	09	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31				

April 2026						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
			01	02	03	04
05	06	07	08	09	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30		

May 2026						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
					01	02
03	04	05	06	07	08	09
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31						

June 2026						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
	01	02	03	04	05	06
07	08	09	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30				

July 2026						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
			01	02	03	04
05	06	07	08	09	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	

August 2026						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
						01
02	03	04	05	06	07	08
09	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30	31					

September 2026						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
		01	02	03	04	05
06	07	08	09	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30			

October 2026						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
				01	02	03
04	05	06	07	08	09	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31

November 2026						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
01	02	03	04	05	06	07
08	09	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30					

December 2026						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
		01	02	03	04	05
06	07	08	09	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31		

Public and School Holidays 2026	
01 January	New Year's Day
21 March	Human Rights Day
03 April	Good Friday
06 April	Family Day
27 April	Freedom Day
01 May	Workers' Day
15 June	Special School Holiday
16 June	Youth Day
09 August	National Women's Day
10 August	Public Holiday
24 September	Heritage Day
16 December	Day of Reconciliation
25 December	Christmas Day
26 December	Day of Goodwill

 Weekends

 School days

 Special school holidays

 Days for administration

 Public holidays

 School holidays

SUMMARY OF 2026 CALENDAR FOR PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Term	Duration	No. of weeks	No. of days	No. of public holidays	Actual no. of school days
1	(12) 14 January – 27 March	11	53 (55)	0	53 (55)
2	08 April – 26 June	12	58	3+1	54
3	21 July – 23 September	10	47	1	46
4	06 October – 09 (11) December	10	47 (49)	0	47(49)
Total		43	205 (209)	4+1	200 (204)

Private schools

For private schools, the Independent Schools Association of Southern Africa's (ISASA) school calendar guidelines show that students will start term on the same day in 2026. However, private schools will also have slightly fewer school days than their public counterparts.

According to the ISASA school calendar guidelines, all independent schools will start on 14 January 2026 and conclude on 4 December. This is one day earlier than in 2025, when schools started on 15 January.

Some private schools—such as those in Kwa-Zulu Natal—follow a four-term system similar to that of public schools.

These schools will have 183 school days in 2026, one fewer than the 184 pencilled in for 2025.

Interestingly, the majority of private schools that will follow the three-term system will have 180 school days, which is even fewer days than the four-term private schools.

It should be noted that **there are no universal term dates or calendars that apply to all independent schools in South Africa.**

Many independent schools follow the public school calendar, while others follow an association calendar. Some independent schools follow their own specific calendars.

The calendar committee of the ISASA Central Region (Gauteng, Free State, North West and Northern Cape) publishes a Central Region Calendar as a guideline for member schools in the region.

ISASA member schools in the Central Region are not required to follow this calendar, although most do.

4 TERM CALENDAR**Term 1 (53 days)**

Start	Wednesday 14 January
Close	Friday 27 March

Term 2 (47 days)

Start	Tuesday 14 April
Close	Friday 26 June

Public and School Holidays	Monday 27 April (Freedom Day)
	28 – 30 April (Mid-Term)
	Friday 1 May (Workers' Day)
	Monday 15 June (School Holiday)
	Tuesday 16 June (Youth Day)

Term 3 (46 days)

Start	Tuesday 21 July
Close	Wednesday 23 September

Public Holidays	Sunday 9 August (Women's Day)
	Monday 10 August (<i>Women's Day observed</i>)

Term 4 (37 days)

Start	Tuesday 13 October
Close	Wednesday 2 December

Total 183 days plus 10 Saturdays**3 TERM CALENDAR****Term 1 (59 days)**

Start	Wednesday 14 January	
Close	Friday 10 April	

Half Term	CLOSE	Thursday 19 February (12h00)
	RETURN	Tuesday 24 February

Public Holidays	Saturday 21 March (Human Rights Day)	
	Friday 3 April – Monday 6 April (Easter)	

Term 2 (62 days)

Start	Wednesday 6 May	
Close	Friday 7 August	

Half Term	CLOSE	Friday 26 June
	RETURN	Monday 6 July

Public Holidays	<i>(Monday 15 June)</i>	
	Tuesday 16 June (Youth Day)	

Term 3 (59 days)

Start	Wednesday 9 September	
Close	Friday 4 December	

Half Term	CLOSE	Thursday 22 October (12h00)
	RETURN	Tuesday 27 October

Public Holidays	Thursday 24 September (Heritage Day)	
	<i>(Friday 25 September)</i>	

Total 180 days plus 10 Saturdays