



May a parent decide not to send a child back to school for fear of COVID-19 infection?



If the learner is older than 16 (normally Grade 9) the learner is no longer required to attend school and could therefore be removed from school.

All other learners (between the ages of 7 and 16) are obliged to attend school and must therefore attend "school". [Click here](#) to read the Learner attendance policy of the Department of Basic Education.

If a parent decides to take the learner out of school for the rest of the year, there are various options that must be considered:

- According to the SASA attendance provisions, a parent who does not want to comply with the school duty requirements must obtain permission from the provincial education department to do so.
- Provided there is departmental permission, consideration may be given to registering the learner for home schooling with a curriculum provider who will certify the learner for the grade at the end of the year.
- Non-registration with a curriculum provider means that the child will have no proof of the year's learning and that no formal certificate (report) will be issued for the year. The parent must understand that any public school will have the right to determine the standard of home schooling, whether or not a certificate has been issued.

Should the parent consider enrolling the learner at a public school for 2021, at the same school or another school, the following considerations should be kept in mind:

- The learner is a new application like any other applicant and must be dealt with in terms of the school's admission policy.
- Is there space in the grade at the school where the learner wants to enrol?
- The school can do a "placement assessment" to decide if the learner does have the necessary knowledge / skills to be placed in the same grade. Emphasis will be on the appropriate grade and not admission to school.
- The child will not necessarily be promoted to the next grade with his or her age group, unless there is a formal certification to show that the content has been mastered for 2020.
- The school may, therefore, place the child in the same grade in which he / she was enrolled in 2020.

What rights does the school have?

- a. The school cannot stop the parent from removing the child from the school but the normal administrative process applies (paper trail). The school needs to have a conversation with the parents and provide enough information to parents to ensure that they make a more informed decision.
- b. The school does not have to support the child at home unless the provincial education department's registration conditions provide for this. Here, certain cases can be dealt with within the school's policy, e.g., a learner from the school who has an underlying illness remains enrolled at the school and then receives support. If the child is no longer a learner then there is no duty on the part of the school. Thus, for example, no tasks will be sent home, no tests will be done at home or after hours, no alternative dates and / or arrangements will be made for the learner concerned and no additional online tuition will be provided for this individual learner.
- c. The school may consider making staff available to the learner under conditions determined by the school.

