



SOUTH AFRICAN SCHOOLS

CHAIRPERSON: Sabata Kumalo

Tel : ++27 (0)11 355 0213

Cell: ++27 (0)82 977 0352

E-Mail: Sabata.Kumalo@gauteng.gov.za

sabatakumalo@gmail.com

GENERAL SECRETARY: Yvonne Schalk

Tel : ++27 (0)11 389 6182

Cell: ++27 (0)76 766 7662

E-Mail: Yvonne.Schalk@gauteng.gov.za

Web Site: <http://www.schoolathletics.info>

Registration: 213-538 NPO

PUBLIC STATEMENT

South African Schools Athletics (SASA)

National High/LSEN Schools Athletics Championship – 2026

South African Schools Athletics (SASA) wishes to provide clarity on the recent developments regarding the 2026 National High/LSEN Schools Athletics Championship.

SASA operates under a structured five-year strategic plan (2025–2030), formally adopted at the 2024 Annual General Meeting (AGM). In accordance with this plan, the North West Province was awarded the hosting rights for the 2026 National High/LSEN Schools Athletics Championship.

The Royal Bafokeng Stadium, a certified and accredited facility, was identified by the host province as the official venue. Several site inspections were conducted in preparation for the championship. During these inspections, it was noted that the installation of the stadium sound system remained incomplete, posing a potential operational risk.

Local Organising Committee (LOC) meetings were convened regularly to monitor progress and ensure readiness across all operational areas.

On 20 March 2026, while SASA was in Cape Town hosting the Primary Schools Championship, SASA was informed by Mr Given Mabena, Director from the Department of Basic Education (DBE), that he had received communication from Ms Mamoruti Monama, Director from the Department of Sport, Arts and Culture (DSAC), indicating that the stadium would not be available to host the championship.

In response, an emergency multi-stakeholder meeting was convened to assess the situation and explore possible solutions. The meeting was chaired

Chairperson: Sabata Kumalo **Deputy Chairperson:** Mapula Hlongwane **General Secretary:** Yvonne Schalk

Minute Secretary: Hope Peteke **Treasurer:** Victor Modimokoane **Vice Chairperson T & F H/S:**

Vice chairperson T & F P/S: Dawid Pieterse **Vice chairperson Cross Country:** Jantjie Theletsane **Vice Chairperson LSEN**

Development Officer-Coaches: Derick Mdhluli Development **Officer- Technical:** Sibongile Nxumalo

by Ms Monama in her capacity as Chairperson of the Project Management Team (PMT) for the championship.

During this meeting, the incomplete sound system was identified as a key risk factor. However, with the support of the appointed events management company, it was indicated that the matter could be mitigated. The meeting was adjourned, with a follow-up meeting scheduled for 24 March 2026.

At the 24 March meeting, SASA presented a comprehensive update on its readiness, with all nine provinces confirming their preparedness and compliance with logistical requirements. Various LOC commissions reported positively on key areas, including accommodation, transport, and catering. The events management company further presented a solution to address the sound system challenges.

A subsequent virtual meeting was held on 1 April 2026, where SASA and all nine provinces once again confirmed their readiness. However, limited updates were received from certain LOC commissions. During this meeting, the issue of public liability insurance was raised as a concern. The events management company confirmed that the necessary public liability cover was in place and committed to resolving outstanding matters within three days, pending engagements with stadium management and officials from the MEC's office.

At the conclusion of the meeting, the Chairperson of the Project Management Team informed stakeholders that new information had been received from the Office of the Premier, confirming that the stadium was not available for the championship.

The meeting subsequently considered the following proposals:

- **Cancellation of the championship** – Not supported by members of the LOC
- **Postponement to a later date** – Not supported by members of the LOC
- **Securing an alternative venue (Pilditch Stadium) on the same dates** – Supported by members of the LOC

SASA subsequently undertook to secure Pilditch Stadium in line with the meeting resolution. We confirm that the venue was successfully secured and formally reported to the PMT Chairperson.

Confirmed Championship Details

- **Dates:** 8–11 April 2026
- **Venue:** Pilditch Stadium, Pretoria (World Athletics certified)

Readiness to Host

Formal confirmation has been received from stadium management for the use of Pilditch Stadium.

All required equipment and technical services have been secured, including:

- Electronic timing system with operators
- Results team
- Approved measuring and Assizing equipment
- Wind gauges

The Gauteng Schools Athletics structure has been duly consulted, and a Local Organising Committee has been established. Volunteers have also been recruited to support technical operations and logistics.

Athlete-Centred Imperative

Our primary objective remains to prioritise the athletes by ensuring they are afforded the opportunity to compete, achieve personal bests (PBs), and qualify for national and international opportunities.

This championship is critical for athletes seeking bursaries from schools and tertiary institutions, both locally and internationally. It also presents opportunities for recognition and potential partnerships with international sports brands such as Adidas, Nike, and Puma. Any disruption to the championship may significantly impact these opportunities.

SASA remains committed to safeguarding the interests of athletes, schools, and all stakeholders.

SASA appreciates the cooperation, patience, and continued support of all provinces, parents, and stakeholders during this difficult period.

Consultation and Stakeholder Position

Following a communication issued by the Director-General of DSAC, Dr C. Khumalo, consultative engagements were initiated. SASA notes that this

communication was issued without adequate consultation with the two primary stakeholders, DBE and SASA.

Two consultative meetings were subsequently held with all provinces and stakeholders across both the Education and Sport sectors. These engagements addressed:

- The rationale for the venue change
- The DSAC communication regarding postponement
- The negative impact of postponement on school athletics
- Provincial readiness
- Support from unions and School Governing Bodies (SGBs)

All stakeholders acknowledged the additional travel distance and provided their consent to proceed. Many parents had already incurred travel and accommodation costs, reinforcing the need to continue as planned.

It was further noted that Limpopo and Western Cape had already incurred expenses in Rustenburg. Proceeding with the championship would avoid further wasteful expenditure and financial strain on provinces and parents.

Urgent Constraints and Correspondence

Without financial support from DSAC and its provincial structures, with DBE and its provinces unable to finance team participation at Pilditch Stadium.

The stakeholder meeting resolved as follows:

1. DBE must urgently consult with Director-General and provide guidance.
2. SASA must formally write to both DBE and DSAC to highlight the urgency, of withdrawing the postponement letter given that teams were scheduled to depart on 7 April 2026.

SASA has since submitted formal correspondence to DSAC as per meeting directive. The responses received indicated that the matter had been escalated through the Chief Director to Senior Management, and that the Director, Ms Monama, was awaiting feedback. This includes the request for withdrawal of the letter postponing the championship.

It is with deep regret that SASA acknowledges this as a profoundly disappointing moment for school athletics in South Africa. While every effort was made to protect and prioritise the interests of our athletes, the current outcome reflects a missed opportunity to uphold that responsibility

Position of SASA

In light of the above, SASA respectfully sought the support and approval of both DBE and financial DSAC support to proceed with the championship in Pretoria and not postpone the event.

Despite these efforts, no final confirmation has been received.

SASA therefore regrets to inform stakeholders that, due to the absence of a formal directive and financial support, some provinces have begun communicating that teams will not travel. As a result, SASA can't confirm that the championship will proceed as planned at Pilditch Stadium.in Pretoria.

Issued by:

South African Schools Athletics (SASA)

Date: 5 April 2026