

# Special schools closed in KZN after education department fails to pay subsidies

76 schools closed by parents and the South African National Association for Special School Education (Sanase).

By Tsoanelo Sefoloko 17 Oct 2025



Parents protest outside Khulangolwazi Special School in Durban. Photo: Tsoanelo Sefoloko / GroundUp

Parents and the South African National Association for Special School Education (Sanase) have decided to close 76 special schools in KwaZulu-Natal after the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education failed to pay subsidies on time.

MEC Sipho Hlomuka said the department regretted the delay and promised the schools would have the funds by Thursday next week.

Sanase said the late payment affected the daily running of the schools. Schools could not afford to pay water and electricity bills, or fuel and repairs to school buses.

In March 2023, parents from 74 special schools in Durban kept their children back from school for two months in protest, complaining that the provincial department was neglecting special schools. In April, learners marched to the Premier's office with parents and teachers. Learners [returned to class](#) when the department promised to provide new buses and more funds for support staff.



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Parent Nonjabulo Msimanga says she is worried that her child will have to miss classes because the schools are closed, though she understands that the school had to be closed because of a lack of funds.

“We are calling on government to fast track the payment of the special school funds. It is so sad that our children have been left to suffer like that,” said Msimanga.

Deputy chairperson of Sanase Khehla Khumalo said special schools had complained to the head of department, the office of the Premier and the office of the MEC for Education for two years about not receiving the subsidy in time, about a shortage of staff and about a shortage of buses for transport.

“Some learners are forced to go to school one week per month because we have shortages of buses and even those that are operating are not in good condition,” said Khumalo, who added that they’ve been trying to resolve the problem with the education MEC since 2023.



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Hlomuka said the department acknowledged the vital role that special schools play in providing quality education and essential support to learners with special needs.

“We extend our sincere apologies for the inconveniences and distress caused by the payment. The delay was due to unforeseen technical glitches that affected the processing timeline.

“The payment has been rescheduled to Monday 20 October and schools are expected to receive their subsidies by Thursday 23 October,” said Hlomuka.

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