



**Submission to the Department of Basic
Education**

on the

**PROPOSED AMENDED NATIONAL POLICY
FOR DETERMINING SCHOOL CALENDARS
FOR PUBLIC SCHOOLS IN SOUTH AFRICA**

1. Introduction

The Catholic Institute of Education (CIE) and the Catholic Parliamentary Liaison Office (CPLO) welcome the opportunity to comment on the Proposed Amended National Policy for Determining School Calendars for Public Schools in South Africa in terms of Government Notice 1176 of 2013.

The Catholic Institute of Education represents the Catholic network of 345 schools, of which 245 are Public Schools on Private Property. The CPLO is the official vehicle for contact and dialogue between the Catholic Church in South Africa on the one hand, and Parliament and government on the other. It provides an avenue for the Church – as part of civil society – to contribute to debates on issues of public policy.

We support, in general, the broad aims of the proposed amendments, and commend the Department of Basic Education for its continued efforts in refining education policies. We do, however, have some concerns with aspects of the proposed amendments and offer some suggestions that may aid in addressing our concerns.

2. School days per year

Clause 5.1.1 provides for approximately 200 days per year for the completion of the education programme. The current policy provides for 199 days. It is our contention that the proposed 200 days of instruction time will be insufficient for delivering quality education to address South Africa's continued academic under-performance. Most schools are currently finding it challenging to complete the CAPS curriculum in the allotted 199 days; therefore, an increase of a single day will have no useful impact.

We suggest that the length of term holidays be reviewed with the possibility of extending the number of school days.

3. School holidays

As we have pointed out, the number of proposed school days is insufficient and accordingly we suggest the following to ensure that the available school days are maximised.

3.1 School terms

We suggest that the first day of a school term must be on a Tuesday and the last day on a Friday.

3.2 April Holidays

Clause 5.2.4.5 proposes that if a week has only two consecutive school days due to public holidays, those days should be declared school holidays. Alternatively, we

would suggest a mid-term holiday over this period and shortening the June holidays to make up the lost teaching time. While we acknowledge the spirit of the proposal in Clause 5.2.4.5, i.e. it is a counter-measure for the disruptiveness of public holidays in April, we believe that the proposal is counter-productive.

We suggest that instead of losing valuable instruction time, as proposed, schools use these days for cultural, sporting or enrichment activities.

Secondly, we suggest that idea of community ‘aftercare centres’ be explored to relieve the huge pressure placed on parents to source care for learners at home.

3.2 Christmas holidays

The fourth term of the school year is usually a challenge for most schools because of the additional administrative tasks and planning for the next academic year. Thus, we suggest that teaching staff leave a week after this term ends and return a week before the first term of the New Year commences. This will ensure that no teaching time is wasted when the learners return in the new academic year.

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