CHESS SA AND SASCA MEDIA STATEMENT

2026 NATIONAL SCHOOLS CHESS CHAMPIONSHIPS: CONFIRMED PROGRAMME AND 2027 INTERNATIONAL SELECTION UPDATE

Date: 30 October 2026
Issued by: Chess SA and SASCA
For immediate release

1. PURPOSE OF THE STATEMENT

Chess South Africa (Chess SA) and the South African Schools Chess Association (SASCA) wish to inform all media houses, parents, educators, coaches, provincial chess structures and participating athletes of the following:

1. The playing schedule for the 2026 National Schools Chess Championships in Gauteng (11–13 December 2026), including arrangements for players who are also competing at the 2026 Mzansi Youth Chess Championship in Bloemfontein.

2. How the 2026 national age categories will link to the 2027 international selection pathway.

3. That the selection process for 13-year-old players is still being finalised and will be communicated separately.

2. 2026 NATIONAL SCHOOLS CHESS CHAMPIONSHIPS: PLAYING SCHEDULE

The 2026 National Schools Chess Championships will take place in Gauteng according to the following schedule:

11 December 2026: Arrival and registration

12 December 2026: Rounds 1–4

13 December 2026: Rounds 5–7; Blitz for players not travelling to the Mzansi Youth Chess Championship (subject to the final tournament programme)

Players selected for the Mzansi Youth Chess Championship will depart Gauteng for Bloemfontein after completing their National Schools rounds on 13 December 2026. Parents, schools, coaches and provincial coordinators are requested to make the necessary travel and logistical arrangements.

President: Andre Lewaks – Vice President 1: Lindokuhle Ngubane – Vice President 2: Shaun Levitan – Treasurer: Liezl Bothma – Secretary: Chené Jeffries – Provincial Rep: Janine Fourie – Provincial Rep: Jeanette Mabitsela Provincial Rep: (Vacant) – Head Coach: Reuben Salimu – PRO: Gerold Neels – SASCA President: Fungile Ngqenga

The organisers will communicate any additional operational details or adjustments to the programme through the appropriate official channels.

3. 2026 MZANSI YOUTH CHESS CHAMPIONSHIP

On 19 October 2026, Chess SA advised that the National Schools Chess Championships and the Mzansi Youth Chess Championship overlapped. Under the confirmed National Schools programme, players selected for both events will complete their final National Schools round on 13 December 2026 before travelling to Bloemfontein.

The 2026 Mzansi Youth Chess Championship takes place at the University of the Free State, Bloemfontein, from 13 to 19 December 2026:

13 December 2026: Accreditation by provincial representatives (13h00–20h00)
14 December 2026: Opening ceremony; Team Event Rounds 1–3
15 December 2026: Team Event Rounds 4–6
16 December 2026: Team Event Round 7; Team awards; Blitz (9 rounds)
17 December 2026: Individual Event Rounds 1–2
18 December 2026: Individual Event Rounds 3–4
19 December 2026: Individual Event Rounds 5–6; Closing ceremony

Accreditation must be completed by each province's provincial representative. Players who have not been accredited will not be included in the draw. Players must take part in the Team Event to be eligible for the Individual Event. Full details are set out in Mzansi Youth Chess Championship Circular 1.

4. APPROVED AGE-CATEGORY ALIGNMENT FOR THE 2027 SELECTION PATHWAY

For selection to the 2027 international events, players will move up one age category from their 2026 National Championship category:

2026 National Championship Category	Approved Approach for the 2027 Pathway
13-year-olds	Qualifying players will move to the Under-15 (U15) category.
15-year-olds	Qualifying players will move to the Under-17 (U17) category.
17-year-olds	Players will not progress through this pathway under the approved arrangement.
19-year-olds	Players will not progress through this pathway under the approved arrangement.

This reflects the change in age categories between 2026 and 2027. It is not a judgement on the ability or potential of any player.

5. SELECTION OF 13-YEAR-OLD PLAYERS

Chess SA is finalising the selection process and criteria for 13-year-old players. The approved criteria and selection process will be communicated through official Chess SA channels.

Until then, no other selection method or criteria should be assumed.

6. MESSAGE TO PARENTS, SCHOOLS AND ATHLETES

Parents and athletes should confirm participation and travel arrangements with their school, coach or provincial coordinator. Chess SA and SASCA recognise the importance of clear, consistent communication throughout the national championship and international selection process. Both organisations remain committed to ensuring that players, parents, schools and provincial structures receive accurate and timely information regarding competition arrangements and selection decisions.

7. MEDIA ENQUIRIES

For further information or media enquiries, please contact the authorised representatives of Chess SA and SASCA through their official communication channels.

Issued jointly by:

CHESS SOUTH AFRICA (CHESS SA)
SOUTH AFRICAN SCHOOLS CHESS ASSOCIATION (SASCA)

Celebrating Excellence, Growing Champions, Inspiring a Nation Through Chess.