



Ministry of Education

Male'

Rep. of Maldives

SCHOOLING IN THE NEW NORMAL

9th June 2020

1. INTRODUCTION

As schools prepare to gradually start with the ease of lockdown, schools must be prepared for the reopening. To ensure a safe and healthy environment for students and staff schools must develop SOPs and mechanisms aligning with the guidelines issued by the relevant authorities. Schools will be subjected to certain restrictions which may hinder the normal procedures, hence schools will have to follow a 'new normal' schooling procedure.

The school management must be fully prepared for reopening and make necessary arrangements. Principal together with the management team should develop SOPs and share with MOE. A special team (Taskforce) amongst the staff must be assigned to attend to urgent cases.

The purpose of this document is to provide clear guidelines for safe operations in school.

Based on these guidelines it is expected for schools to make their own guidelines and share them with all the stakeholders of the school.

1.1. BASIC PRINCIPLES

- a) Anyone who is having cough, cold, throat pain, difficulty in breathing, throat pain with or without fever or any other symptoms of COVID19 should stay home.
- b) Although attendance is laxed, schools should ensure that ALL children learn - especially those children in difficult circumstances and are at risk of dropping out or staying away from school.
- c) Students with other health issues/risks should be given the option of studying at home.
- d) Staff with high risk or other health conditions should be given the option of working from home.

2. BEFORE STUDENTS REPORT TO SCHOOL

- 2.1 Information about students or staff who have been exposed to COVID 19 patients or direct contacts, or have been quarantined earlier must be collected and documented by the school.
- 2.2 If any student or staff is found to be at risk of having Covid 19 (this has to be determined by the health authorities), arrangements must be made to follow the health advice from the health authorities. In cases where the student or staff cannot attend school, appropriate leave must be given to them (follow CSC leave advice for Covid19) and new attendance procedures for students.
- 2.3 Schools must identify students who have long term illnesses and encourage parents to seek advice from a doctor before sending them to school.
- 2.4 Make arrangements with parents before school reopens to provide masks for students. Disposable masks or cloth masks can be used.
- 2.5 Ensure that the school environment set-up is done for the appropriate physical distancing measures.

- 2.6 Communicate with the staff and teachers on the measures taken for the ‘new normal’, where relevant, set up a mechanism where parent concerns can be addressed at a class/school level.
- 2.7 Ensure that safety equipment and necessary supplies such as soap, cleaning detergents etc. are available in school. (Refer to Table 1)

Table 1 - Safety equipment

Category	Items				
	Thermometer	Mask	Gloves	Face Shield	PPE
Teachers		✓	✓ (SEN)		
Health Assistant		✓	✓	✓	
Support Staff		✓	✓		✓
Office Staff		✓	✓		
School	✓				

3. WELCOMING AND SCREENING STUDENTS

- 3.1 Staff must attend school 15 minutes before student arrival.
- 3.2 Adequate staff should be on duty to monitor flow of the students.
- 3.3 Temperature of all staff and students should be taken upon arrival. This is to be decided by the school.
- 3.4 Any student or staff found to have a temperature of 37.0 °C or above with any signs or symptoms of cold, cough etc, has to be isolated and school must contact the health authorities for advice.
- 3.5 Please note that students and staff should be encouraged not to attend school if they suspect they are sick.
- 3.6 Procedure of handling above mentioned cases of high fever should be included in the SOP made by the school in accordance to the guidance notes provided by the Ministry of Education.
- 3.7 Carry out hand washing rituals as per the school guidelines.

- 3.8 Schools must provide soap and water to wash their hands.
- 3.9 Students and staff should be requested to bring their own hand towel or tissue to wipe their hands.
- 3.10 Ensure direct access to the classroom (after washing hands) without stopping in the playground or any common area.
- 3.11 Favor entry by several accesses to divide the volume of the flow if possible and necessary.
- 3.12 Students who need special assistance must be identified and assisted by a designated staff on arrival and dispersal.

4. USING MASKS & PROTECTIVE CLOTHING

- 4.1 Teach and reinforce use of face masks. Face masks may be challenging for students (especially younger students) to wear in all-day settings such as school. Face masks should be worn by staff and students (particularly older students) as feasible, and are most essential in times when physical distancing is difficult. Individuals should be frequently reminded not to touch the face covering and to wash their hands frequently. Information should be provided to staff, students, and students' families on proper use and removal of face masks.
 - Note: face masks should not be placed on:
 - Children younger than 2 years old
 - Anyone who has trouble breathing or is unconscious
 - Anyone who is incapacitated or otherwise unable to remove the cloth face covering without assistance
- 4.2 Face masks are meant to protect other people in case the wearer is unknowingly infected but does not have symptoms. Face masks are not surgical masks, respirators, or other medical personal protective equipment.
- 4.3 The HPA guidelines on masks should be followed by students and staff.

- 4.4 All staff and students must wear masks at all times inside school premises. There may be a few exceptional cases such as students suffering from asthma and SEN students etc.
- 4.5 Students must wear a clean mask every day.
- 4.6 Any tissues or used masks must be disposed of safely.
- 4.7 Each student should have an extra mask with them in case they need to change the mask in school.
- 4.8 The extra mask should be neatly packed and kept inside the bag.
- 4.9 As some SEN students might need special assistance in maintaining their masks on their faces, gloves must be provided to the teachers who attend to them.
- 4.10 The cleaning and disinfecting of school premises should be in accordance with the guidelines provided on 'Cleaning and Disinfecting Schools'.

5. PHYSICAL DISTANCING

- 5.1 Plan input and output flow of students with breaks in the flow where possible. If the premises do not allow enough distancing apply feasible measures by organizing staggered times for students to arrive and disperse.
- 5.2 Schools must be ready to maintain a physical distancing mechanism within the school premises by all possible means such as signs, markings on the ground, tape, rope, barrier etc. before students arrive and disperse.
- 5.3 Make arrangements for staff and students to use all available gates, staircases, entrances to reduce physical contact and crowding.
- 5.4 School must mark the drop off area of the students where parents can drop them off and leave as soon as possible.
- 5.5 Teachers and non-teaching staff should be kept at different locations to monitor student movement from gate to classroom.

- 5.6 Seating arrangements for teachers, other staff or students must be made in accordance with the physical distancing rules: that is at least three feet apart.
- 5.7 Conduct coordination meetings, parents meetings and other related meetings online, and arrange face to face meetings in unavoidable circumstances with physical distancing.
- 5.8 Activities of frequent contact such as borrowing or lending books, using laboratory facilities, etc. Physical education to be carried out as per MoE guidelines.
- 5.9 Physical distancing must be maintained at all times including classroom teaching time.
- 5.10 Teachers must be vigilant to minimize physical contact of each other in the classroom.
- 5.11 Health assistants must wear appropriate gear when necessary, and physical contact with students must be minimized as much as possible.
- 5.12 Ensure physical distancing measures are followed near the classrooms and toilets.
- 5.13 Maintain physical distance at all times in the Health Room, or any other service area within the school and give special importance to avoid physical contact with each other as much as possible.
- 5.14 Make seating arrangements for teachers, students and other staff as per physical distancing rules, preferably 3 feet apart.
- 5.15 Pay extra attention to increase vigilance to the respect of physical distancing of all arriving staff, parents, guardians and children.

6. STUDENT ABSENTEEISM

- 6.1 Schools should follow the normal procedures for recording and marking attendance for face to face mode (22-E/CIR/2016/50) and through MEMIS for distance mode.

- 6.2 Schools must ensure vigilant monitoring of students who fall sick and ensure they return fully recovered.
- 6.3 Schools must ensure that absent students receive work daily even if they are at home. Arrangements must be made with the help of parents and teachers.
- 6.4 Assessments must be completed for all students as per assessment policy.

7. SAFE SCHOOL OPERATIONS

7.1 TEACHING & LEARNING

- 7.1.1 Readjust the school calendar in accordance to the revised academic calendar.
- 7.1.2 Plan instructional time in alignment with the condensed curriculum including pre-planning of timetables, period allocations, scheme of work, lesson plans etc.
- 7.1.3 Make timetables by giving consideration to reduce crowding in corridors and playground or common spaces at any given time.
- 7.1.4 Ensure that learning opportunities are being provided at home for high risk students.
- 7.1.5 Redistribute the students to the classes and sessions as per the new normal policy.
- 7.1.6 Classroom seating must be planned in a way that 3 feet distance is maintained in between tables.
- 7.1.7 Session duration must be in alignment with MOE guidelines.
- 7.1.8 Avoid contact as much as possible during bookmarking.
- 7.1.9 Additional and specialized care, if needed, has to be provided to children with SEN before coming to school and during school re-opening.
- 7.1.10 E-learning activities should be conducted as per MOE guidelines.
- 7.1.11 Encourage teachers to provide outdoor opportunities to the students weekly as per HPA guidelines.
- 7.1.12 Do not conduct mass gatherings and co-curricular activities till further notice. Class assembly should be conducted weekly for each session, inside the classroom with physical distancing rules in place.

- 7.1.13 Establish mechanisms to monitor wellbeing of students and staff with the help of relevant authorities. Focus on and address mental health issues, and provide psychosocial support to those in need.
- 7.1.14 Enroll students who migrate for any reason and complete formalities through MEMIS.
- 7.1.15 Provide counselling via the school counsellor/island hospital or any other professional available to help students and staff with anxiety.

7.2 PARENTS

- 7.2.1 Parents must be reminded to ensure that COVID19 related symptoms are not evident in students. Additional and specialized care, if needed, has to be provided to children with SEN before coming to school and during school re-opening. These include cold, sore throat, fever or runny nose or any other such symptoms.
- 7.2.2 If students have any of the above symptoms, parents must not send the student to school on that day and inform the school.
- 7.2.3 Precautions must be taken to ensure the student is being taken home by the authorized parent by ensuring that parent cards are used.
- 7.2.4 Be informed of the latest information related to COVID-19.
- 7.2.5 Advise and remind parents to provide students with face masks either clothes or disposable as per ministry guidelines before schools reopen, and enforce students and staff to always wear face masks in the school premises.
- 7.2.6 For the safety of all, ask parents to provide drinking water when students attend school.

7.3 SCHOOL ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURES

- 7.3.1 Inform staff to attend school when HPA declares it is safe.
- 7.3.2 Organize staff duties with a minimum number of staff to attend at any given

time.

- 7.3.3 Ensure that all school staff, including security guards, and those who visit school such as delivery people, parents wear masks while in school premises.
- 7.3.4 Conduct briefing sessions for staff on how to attend to the new normal before school reopens.
- 7.3.5 Provide opportunities for high risk staff such as pregnant women, people with long term illnesses etc. to work from home as per Civil Service Circular 2020/17.
- 7.3.6 A room for isolation must be kept ready in case an individual is identified to have symptoms.
- 7.3.7 Staff who check temperature of the students and other staff;
 - a) if someone is noted to have fever or other symptoms they are to be taken to a separate room and inform the relevant authorities.
 - b) He/she should discard gloves, mask and proceed to take shower or change clothes.
 - c) Ensure psychosocial support is given to the isolated individual.
 - d) Isolation room must be disinfected as per guidelines after every use.
- 7.3.8 Identify staff shortage and attend to it as per the current practice.
- 7.3.9 Provide protective gloves to the teachers of SEN students as they may need special assistance.
- 7.3.10 Give guidance and training to all employees on health and safety protocols.
- 7.3.11 Ensure that parents and students are informed and well oriented about the new normal SOPs.
- 7.3.12 Ensure windows of classrooms are always kept open for maximum ventilation.
- 7.3.13 Special arrangements should be made to assist students who require special needs such as a wheelchair.
- 7.3.14 Identify students from vulnerable families and provide assistance from school.
- 7.3.15 Identify students who need support (report), be vigilant of the dropouts and students objecting to return back to school .
- 7.3.16 Make use of digital notice boards, TVs etc. to create awareness regarding new normal amongst parents and students.
- 7.3.17 Keep signage regarding preventive measures on Covid19 visible around the

toilets and common areas.

- 7.3.18 Uniform expectations could be relaxed i.e. sports uniform could be worn if preferred.
- 7.3.19 Discourage on renting school for mass gatherings, in case where school had to be rented (school must seek permission from MOE), the leasing party must disinfect the school.
- 7.3.20 Brief and instruct the security guards about how to deal with people who visit the school (for example, delivery people, parents, and so on...) and provide them with SOPs to follow strictly whilst in the school premises.

7.4 HYGIENE & CLEANING

- 7.4.1 Disinfect the school for reopening and maintain regular disinfection.
- 7.4.2 Make sanitizer available as much as possible at office entrances and reception as well as each floor.
- 7.4.3 Ensure that proper hand washing arrangements are organized, provide facilities and supplies needed to hand wash and clean school.
- 7.4.4 Ensure that the tables, floors, railings, counter tops, surfaces, hand wash stations and other frequently touched spaces are disinfected 2-4 times a day. Disinfection of the above spaces should also be carried out before the beginning of each session.
- 7.4.5 Encourage all students to practice hygiene and sanitization practices and instruct the students to bring their own tissue or a small hand towel.
- 7.4.6 Do not provide food, drinks, water or canteen services till further notice.
- 7.4.7 Provide clear instructions on waste management and disposal to those who do the task.
- 7.4.8 Maintain cleanliness of toilets, laboratory, library, Health room, AV Room, frequently touched surfaces, etc.
- 7.4.9 Hand hygiene should be practiced after using communal objects such as library books, computers etc.

7.5 STEPS TO BE FOLLOWED IF A STUDENT OR STAFF DEVELOP SYMPTOMS

- 7.5.1 If a student is found to have symptoms during a class session, he or she should be taken to the isolation room and relevant authorities must be informed and their instructions need to be carried out. During this time, no one is to enter or leave this classroom.
- 7.5.2 If the school gets information of a direct contact who has attended the school;
- a) Verify with the relevant authorities.
 - b) Ask them/guardians to stay home and inform the task force immediately and advise to remain at home for further instruction.
 - c) Inform Ministry of Education.
 - d) In the meantime, school should follow directives of Ministry of Education and concerned authorities.
 - e) Follow up the cases, keep records of them, make updates.
 - f) Allow them to attend school when it is safe.

8. IMPORTANT NOTES

Washing Hands	<p>Step 1: Wet hands with safe running water</p> <p>Step 2: Apply enough soap to cover wet hands,</p> <p>Step 3: Scrub all surfaces of the hands – including backs of hands, between fingers and under nails – for at least 20 seconds.</p> <p>Step 4: Rinse thoroughly with running water</p> <p>Step 5: Dry hands with a clean, dry cloth, single-use towel or hand dryer as available</p>
Wearing Mask	<p>It is important to follow proper steps when using a face covering or mask. Follow these steps when using a face covering or mask:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Wash your hands before putting on a face covering or mask. 2. Fully cover your mouth, nose and beard. Make sure there are no gaps between the face covering or mask and your skin. 3. Avoid touching the face covering or mask while using it. 4. If your face covering or mask gets damp, replace with a clean one and wash if reusable. If it's disposable, throw it away and replace with a new one. 5. Remove the mask from behind, trying to not touch the front. Wash washable face coverings right away. Throw away disposable masks into a closed bag or trash can. 6. Wash your hands with hot water and soap for 20 to 30 seconds.
Catch it, bin it, kill it' approach <i>(promote good respiratory and hand hygiene)</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. CATCH IT - Always carry tissues and use them to cover your nose and mouth when you cough or sneeze. 2. BIN IT - Dispose of used tissues as soon as possible. 3. KILL IT – Clean your hands with soap and water as soon as you can and make sure you wash them frequently. If you have no washing facilities, make use of sanitizer. <p>Adopted from https://www.oxfordshireccg.nhs.uk/news/catch-it-bin-it-and-kill-it/60896</p>

REFERENCES

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