

Ministry of Education

COVID-19: Guidance for Educational Institutions

10th September, 2021



Ministry of Education

Cayman Islands Government



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The health and safety of children/students and staff continues to be the top priority of the Ministry of Education. It is critical that safety measures are in place to ensure that children/students and staff can access high quality education. These guidelines are intended to support educational institutions to:

- Be informed about preventative measures and how they support a safe school environment;
- Understand their roles and responsibilities in maintaining and promoting safe and healthy educational institutions;
- Help with the prevention and control of COVID-19 in educational institutions;
- Establish measures/guidance for transition from in-person to remote learning should that become necessary;
- Provide guidance on Child Protection during remote learning.

Educational institutions include:

- Schools (public or private)
- Early childhood care and education (ECCE) centres
- Other institutions that provide full-time or part-time education for children up to the age of 17 (e.g. alternative education placements, tutoring centres, post-compulsory educational organisations, colleges/universities).

COVID-19 Primary Symptoms

- Fever
- Cough
- Shortness of breath
- Breathing difficulties

Public Health Contact Info

- 1-800-534-8600
- 947-3077
- 925-6327

Refer to www.hsa.ky for additional information



Scenario Protocols for Educational Institutions

THE HEALTH AND SAFETY OF CHILDREN/STUDENTS AND STAFF REMAINS OUR TOP PRIORITY	
Scenario 1: NO CONFIRMED CASES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces daily • Utilise self-protection measures such as hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette (masks and social distancing are optional). Masks are mandatory on the school buses/vans • Stay home and contact Public Health if you display COVID-19 symptoms or have been in contact with anyone displaying symptoms (Be mindful that persons with COVID-19 may not display any symptoms) • Self-isolate if advised by Public Health
Scenario 2: CONFIRMED CASE IN COMMUNITY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Educational Institution to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Continue with safety/cleaning protocols in Scenario 1 ○ implement the '<i>COVID-19: Guidance for Educational Institutions – Health and Safety Precautionary Measures – p.5</i>' issued by the Ministry of Education ○ complete '<i>Remote Learning Readiness Assessment/Guidance – p.12</i>' issued by the Ministry of Education as a precautionary measure • Commence discussions with children/students on the utilisation of self-protection measures
Scenario 3: SUSPECTED CASE IN AN EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Notify Public Health and the Ministry/Department of Education of suspected case of student <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Public schools to notify the Director of the Department of Education Services by phone and email ○ Separate the student from the main student body in a secure and comfortable environment until released to the parent/carers ○ Notify parent/guardian to collect student immediately ○ Student should be supervised at all times in line with child protection guidelines ○ Be mindful to reduce stigma of isolating a student (the student may be nervous/scared) ○ ECCE Centres to notify the Ministry of Education through ecce@gov.ky (244-6605) ○ Private Schools and post-secondary institutions to notify the Ministry of Education through assistedschools@gov.ky (244-3151) • Suspected case involving a staff member - contact Public Health and the Ministry/Department of Education. Self-isolate at home as a precautionary measure • Educational Institution to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ implement the '<i>COVID-19: Guidance for Educational Institutions – Health and Safety Mandatory Guidance – p.8</i>' issued by the Ministry of Education ○ complete '<i>Remote Learning Readiness Assessment/Guidance – p.12</i>' issued by the Ministry of Education as a precautionary measure
Scenario 4: EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTION CLOSES	<p>Public Health to notify the Ministry of Education and educational institution of the need to close. Educational institution to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • notify parents and staff of closure • activate completed '<i>Remote Learning Readiness Assessment/Guidance- p.12</i>' • await all clear from Public Health to resume normal operations
SCENARIOS 1-3: EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS REMAIN OPEN UNLESS OTHERWISE ADVISED BY PUBLIC HEALTH OR THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION	



Health and Safety: Precautionary Measures

Introduction

The purpose of this guidance is to assist educational institutions with implementing health and safety measures in the event of community spread of the COVID-19 virus. All educational institutions should implement effective measures to maintain safe learning environments.

In the case of a variance between these guidelines and guidance provided by Public Health Cayman Islands, educational institutions should follow the Public Health guidelines.

COVID-19 Vaccine

- The COVID-19 vaccine is currently available to ALL persons 12 years and older. In the event that this changes, schools will be duly notified. The schedule for vaccination clinics can be found at <https://www.hsa.ky/public-health/coronavirus>.

Medical Health

- The COVID-19 virus most commonly causes:
 - ✓ coughing
 - ✓ fever
 - ✓ tiredness
 - ✓ breathing difficulties
 - ✓ loss of smell & taste

These symptoms are usually mild and begin gradually but commonly occur within 1-10 days after a person has been exposed. Some people become infected but do not develop any symptoms and do not feel ill.

- Anyone who feels unwell should not attend an educational institution. This includes all staff, parents/carers and children/students and if they are presenting with any of the symptoms mentioned above, contact Public Health at the following numbers:
 - 1-800-534-8600
 - 947-3077
 - 925-6327
- Parents/carers of children/students with complex medical needs (including but not limited to underlying respiratory and cardiovascular conditions) should seek advice from the child's medical/health practitioner to support informed risk assessment and decision-making about whether on-site education is suitable. Parents/carers of students of compulsory school age (ages 5 – 17) who are out of school for an extended period, for medical reasons, should electronically submit the relevant documentation from the Health Care Provider to their educational institutions. **For child protection purposes, it is important that all students are accounted for.**



Mental Health

- Educational institutions play a key role in supporting mental health and well-being through mental health prevention and promotion. At the classroom level, this includes acknowledging the importance of supporting students to build resiliency, coping skills and knowledge that contributes to their overall well-being.
- Staff and children/students may be experiencing anxiety, higher levels of stress or general concern regarding the potential of community spread of the COVID-19 virus. Access to counsellors for staff and children/students should be provided as one method of support.
- There are a number of counselling providers available locally (e.g. Employee Assistance Programme). Institutions should provide contact information to staff and parents/carers who may want/need to utilise these services.

Mental Health Support



Mental Health Helpline
1-800-534-6463 (MIND)

Cayman Counselling Centre
1 (345)-949-8789

Attendance

- Educational institutions must maintain updated registers of absence and ensure parents/carers are contacted if there are unreported absences. The truancy officers at the Department of Education Services must be contacted (Ph: 945-1199) if there are concerns regarding attendance at school for students ages 5 to 17.

Cleaning and Disinfecting

- Cleaning should be enhanced at educational institutions. Routine cleaning must take place throughout the day to ensure that risks of transmission are reduced for high-touch surfaces/spaces.
- Regular maintenance of ventilation and air-conditioning systems should be carried out.

Social Distancing and Space Arrangement

- Social distancing is recommended
- Remind children/students and staff about respecting each other's personal space.

Transportation

- All students, age five and above, must wear masks when on the school bus/van.
- **Children/students who are unable to put on or remove a mask without the assistance of another person should not be made to wear a mask.**
- Students must be seated to allow for social distancing on the school bus/van where possible.
- Bus drivers and wardens are required to wear face masks.
- Bus drivers, wardens and students must sanitise their hands upon boarding the school bus/van.



Hand Hygiene

- Practice diligent hand hygiene by washing hands with plain soap and water for at least 20 seconds.
- Hand-washing should occur before/after breaks, eating, using the washroom, using play equipment and using frequently touched shared equipment.
- Where soap and water are not readily available, hand sanitiser should be provided in every occupied room. Staff and children/students unable to use hand sanitiser must wash their hands more regularly.
- Hand-washing supplies must be well stocked, including soap, paper towels and, where appropriate, alcohol-based hand sanitiser with a minimum of 70% alcohol.

Respiratory Etiquette

Children/students and staff must:

- Cough and sneeze into their elbow, sleeve, or tissue.
- Dispose of used tissues in appropriate bins and immediately perform hand hygiene.

Routine Care

- Standard precautions should be taken when providing routine care and/or assistance (e.g. the use of gloves for nappy changing, toileting, feeding students with significant needs).
- Staff must always wash hands with soap and water or use a hand sanitiser before and after performing routine care.
- When conducting routine care, advice on whether adults should wear masks, PPE, etc., will be guided by the Public Health Department.
- **Hand hygiene, respiratory etiquette and environmental cleaning are important for reducing risk.**

Visitor Access/Community Use of Facilities

- A system for recording persons who enter the premises throughout the day must be established. Information such as name, time of entry and exit, the reason for visit/who they are visiting and contact details must be collected. The need to collect this information must be clearly communicated to all stakeholders. This is to ensure that accurate information is retained in the event contact tracing will be necessary.

Drinking Water

- Children/students must bring their own water bottle for use (and refilling). Children/students must not drink directly from drinking fountains. Drinking fountains should be switched off and/or rendered inaccessible.

Talking About COVID-19

- Information about COVID-19 should be shared in an age-appropriate manner with children/students who ask for information.
- Staff should not “overshare” or force children/students to discuss the topic.



Health and Safety: Mandatory Guidance

In addition to the precautionary health and safety measures, educational institutions may be required to enhance health and safety protocols. **Activation of the mandatory guidance will be given by the Ministry of Education or Public Health.**

Medical Health

- Children/students who present with COVID-19 while at an educational institution, must be isolated from the general population but must never be left unsupervised. Use of additional PPE should be used while waiting for the child/student to be picked up from school. Be mindful to reduce stigma of isolating a student (the student may be nervous/scared).

Cleaning and Disinfecting

- Cleaning must be enhanced at educational institutions. Routine cleaning must take place throughout the day to ensure that risks of transmission are reduced for high-touch surfaces/spaces.
- Deep cleaning must be increased in high traffic areas, e.g. canteens.
- All toys, equipment and resources used by children/students must be cleaned each day.
- Ensure regular maintenance of ventilation and air-conditioning systems.

Social Distancing and Space Arrangement

- Social distancing is a requirement. Educational institutions must implement the following measures:
 - Remind children/students and staff about respecting each other's personal space.
 - Use available space to spread children/students and staff out, both in learning environments and for gatherings and events, at least 3 feet where possible.
 - Rearrange classroom furniture to provide maximum space between tables.
 - Rearrange seating to maximise the distance between students.
 - Schedule snack/lunch in canteens on rotation to reduce the number of children/students and staff in close proximity. Where necessary snack/lunch should be served in the classroom.
 - Stagger class transition times to provide a greater amount of space for movement for children/students and staff.
 - Manage the flow of people in common areas, including hallways, bathrooms and around lockers, to minimise crowding and allow for ease of people passing through.
 - Use floor markings and posters to address traffic flow throughout the school. This may include one-way hallways and designated entrance and exit doors. It is important to adhere to the fire code and have an appropriate number of exits.



AWAIT ACTIVATION FROM MoE

Masks/Face Shields

- **The Ministry of Education is following Public Health guidance on wearing masks and face shields for students and staff while on the school compound.**
- **Children/students who are unable to put on or remove a mask without the assistance of another person should not be made to wear a mask.**
- Students and staff should wear masks, if they are able to.

Hand Hygiene

- Practice diligent hand hygiene by washing hands with plain soap and water for at least 20 seconds.
- Where soap and water are not readily available, hand sanitiser must be provided in every occupied room. Staff and children/students unable to use hand sanitiser must wash their hands more regularly.
- Hand-washing supplies must be well stocked, including soap, paper towels and, where appropriate, alcohol-based hand sanitiser with a minimum of 70% alcohol.

When Students Must Utilise Hand Hygiene:

- ✓ When boarding the school bus.
- ✓ When they arrive at school.
- ✓ Before and after any breaks (e.g., play-time, lunch).
- ✓ Before and after eating and drinking
- ✓ Before and after using an indoor learning space used by multiple classes with shared equipment.
- ✓ After using the bathroom.
- ✓ After contact with body fluids (i.e., runny noses, spit, vomit, blood).
- ✓ After sneezing or coughing into hands.
- ✓ Whenever hands are visibly dirty.

When Staff Must Utilise Hand Hygiene:

- ✓ When they arrive at school.
- ✓ Before and after any breaks (e.g. play-time, lunch).
- ✓ Before and after eating and drinking.
- ✓ Before and after handling food or assisting students with eating.
- ✓ Before and after giving medication to a student or self.
- ✓ After using the bathroom.
- ✓ After contact with body fluids (i.e., runny noses, spit, vomit, blood).
- ✓ After cleaning tasks.
- ✓ After removing gloves.
- ✓ After handling garbage.
- ✓ Whenever hands are visibly dirty.

Playground Equipment

- Children/students must be directed to wash their hands before and after using playground equipment. Younger children will need to be supervised or may require assistance with hand washing.
- Playtime must be scheduled on rotation to reduce the number of children/students and staff in close proximity. Educational institutions may want to consider rotating playground equipment between groups on a daily/weekly basis, as age-appropriate.



AWAIT ACTIVATION FROM MoE

Transportation

- All students, age five and above, must wear masks when on the school bus/van.
- **Children/students who are unable to put on or remove a mask without the assistance of another person should not be made to wear a mask.**
- Students must be seated to allow for social distancing on the school bus/van where possible.
- Bus drivers, wardens and students must sanitise their hands upon boarding the school bus/van.
- Additional cleaning protocols must be implemented for all buses used to transport children/students.
- Bus drivers and wardens are required to wear face masks.
- Curb side drop-off and pick-up of children/students must be implemented to reduce the number of parents/carers in educational institutions.

Visitor Access/Community Use of Facilities

- A system for recording persons who enter the premises throughout the day must be established. Information such as name, time of entry and exit, the reason for visit/who they are visiting and contact details must be collected. The need to collect this information must be clearly communicated to all stakeholders. This is to ensure that accurate information is retained in the event contact tracing will be necessary.
- Reduce the number of persons on campus who are not staff (e.g. maintenance personnel). All maintenance and non-essential services must be completed when no children/students are at the facility/campus. If emergency maintenance services are necessary, all service providers who enter the centres/schools must adhere to hand hygiene protocols, mask wearing and social distancing.
- Reduce public use of the facilities that children/students, especially those under age 12, will have to utilise/share. Where this cannot be avoided, cleaning protocols must be in place before children/students utilise shared equipment/space.
- No field trips should be scheduled.

Drinking Water and Food Hygiene

- Children/students must bring their own water bottle for use (and refilling). Children/students must not drink directly from drinking fountains. Drinking fountains should be switched off and/or rendered inaccessible.
- The educational institution must manage arrangements for water bottle refills. Educational institutions are reminded to flush all refill stations that are available for staff and children/students for water bottle refills for up to five minutes following extended periods of non-use.
- Sharing of food must be avoided.
- Staff and children/students must keep as much distance as possible between each other when eating.
- The highest standards of hygiene must be practised in rooms. This includes:
 - Washing drink and food containers with hot water and detergent.
 - Regularly wiping down and spraying surfaces with disinfectant.



AWAIT ACTIVATION FROM MoE

Temperature Checks

Where possible, educational institutions should carry out temperature checks of students and contact parents/carers if children/students have a fever of 37.5C (99.5f) or higher.

Work Placements

Schools should ensure that students on work-placements or internships follow the precautionary and/or mandated health and safety guidance.

School Closures

- Educational institutions must be prepared to implement remote learning measures in the event they are required to close.



Remote Learning Readiness Assessment/Guidance

The purpose of this guidance is to assist educational institutions with preparations should there be a need to shift from in-person learning to remote learning for some or all children/students. The following list is captured as a word document template in Appendix 1.

Child Protection

- Meet with staff to review child protection measures and ensure staff are aware of mandatory reporting measures and procedures

Children/Students with Additional Needs

- Learning and support for children/students with additional needs will vary based on the individual
- Individual educational plans should be developed, based on children's/students' specific needs in a remote learning scenario
- Options for therapy and other specialist services should be included

Learning Readiness

- Survey staff to determine what digital equity gaps exist
- Survey students and families to determine what digital equity gaps exist
- Identify steps to address digital equity gaps, such as distributing devices and setting-up mobile wireless hotspots or preparing to shift to paper-based learning (with regular distribution schedules considered)
- Identify learning platforms, online libraries and other digital tools, that will be used or video streaming platforms that all classes will use. These may be identified along year groups or grades. Schools should determine what platforms will be used to post assignments, provide updates, store contact information and learning expectations in a user friendly, organised and engaging way
- Have students practice logging into the learning platforms and navigating online resources
- Draft guidance to parents on the use of online platforms and tools that the schools will utilise should there be a need to shift to remote learning. Guidance should include how parents/carers can monitor their children's use of those programmes

Teaching and Learning

- Meet with staff to set the expectations and methods for the curriculum to be delivered
- Determine the expectations for assessment/progress monitoring
- Identify tools/methods to assess, collect and track student data and methods to record and monitor student data to inform adjustments for student-centred instruction
- Determine a simple instructional model that could be used by all teachers for remote learning.

Model could be:

- Mini-lesson: A video lecture on or introduction of the material
- Collaboration: A collaborative protocol for students, such as using Zoom breakout rooms
- Work + Check: A short work time (5-10 mins) followed by a check for understanding
- Flexible work time: Students can either continue their work independently, off Zoom, or stay on with the teacher if they need more support
- Exit slip: Students complete a quick problem to gauge their mastery of the material



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- Determine common expectations for teachers as it relates to their distance learning instructional practices, such as length of the school day, length of lessons, breaks to be provided, etc.
- Identify methods to provide regular, timely and consistent updates of learning objectives and outcomes to parents/carers
- Set expectations for the use of virtual learning walks to determine the successes and struggles teachers are having with the common instructional model
- Set expectations for regular online professional development to be scheduled with teachers to share advice and best practices around teaching and learning

Administration

- Confirm contact information for staff
- Confirm parent/families email addresses, phone numbers and physical addresses
- Determine what the school day will “look like, sound like, feel like” for students/families should there be a need to shift to remote learning. This should include, schedule for classes, expectations for office hours, process, etc.
- Determine process for recording and monitoring attendance
- Determine dates for regular staff meetings (weekly or bi-weekly with pre-set times)
- Determine dates for professional development sessions (e.g. monthly with pre-set times)
- Determine virtual office hours and expectations for the school – when will staff be available for contact from parents/students (e.g. 8:30 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.)
- Develop a sample remote learning schedule and expectations for staff, students, and families
- Determine what communication channels will be utilised to share key information with stakeholders (school website, social media, learning platforms)
- Determine the use of tools (website, learning platform, zoom, etc.) to collect and post video and assignment links for students

Communication

Communicate the following to parents/carers should educational institutions need to close:

- Virtual office hours
- Process for recording and monitoring attendance
- Remote learning schedules and expectations
- Tools for remote learning and for on-going communication
- Process for monitoring remote learning and reporting on student progress and achievement
- Weekly newsletters should be issued to ensure families have pertinent information on a regular basis
- Schools should publish weekly “Student Spotlight” pieces to celebrate student accomplishments and achievements

Daily Checks

- Staff attendance should be monitored daily to check in with staff and to ensure that remote learning classes are not interrupted. Plans should be in place to cover absences
- Attendance of students should be monitored daily. Child protection is critical, especially when children/students are at home and may not be able to express a need for help
- Carry out mental health checks with staff and children/students



Safeguarding Children in Remote Learning

When children aren't seeing trusted adults at school every day, it is even more important that staff are able to identify any child protection concerns and take appropriate action. If a child is experiencing abuse or neglect at home, they will most likely be more comfortable to open up over time and not through one isolated conversation.

If you have formed reasonable suspicion that a child has been or is being abused or neglected, this must be referred following the procedures for your educational institution.

What to look out for

- Sudden declines in performance, or swing in typical academic behaviour
- Changes in behaviour patterns
- The child's appearance - Does the child appear as if he/she is being cared for?
- What students may share about new "friends", new "jobs" or "new" plans when the remote learning period ends
- What a student may be revealing through their work

Note: It is important to keep in mind that students may show signs of stress that are completely due to the situation/circumstances as they are adapting to a new normal.

Supporting students and engaging in conversations

- Build in time to check-in on your students' overall health and well-being
- Acknowledge apprehension or expressions of worry/concern
- Try to avoid yes or no questions, ask questions such as:
 - What's your favourite part about being at home? What is your least favourite part?
 - What does a day look like at home for you right now?
- Host discussion boards and post questions and/or assignments that may reveal how home life and social distancing is going
- Be mindful of who may be listening in the background
- Have conversations with students about how to safely talk about their concerns, i.e.
 - Use of safe words/phrases
 - Communicating by writing things down on paper and holding it up and showing it to you if they can't say it out loud
- Where possible, create a safe mechanism for students to reach out for support



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Engage in conversation with students, parents or carers

- Ask them if they have anything that you can assist with
- Take note of any discrepancies between what a student and a parent/cares may be reporting
- Listen to how the parent/cares describes interaction with their child
- Pay attention to the background in the home
- Express appreciation and gratitude

Documentation

- Keep a log of the dates and times you speak to students and parents/cares and document any behaviour or comments that raise a red flag
- When interacting with students, track their baseline behaviours and emotions and compare them to what the student typically exhibits in the classroom at school
 - This will help you to notice any escalation in risk factors/concerns

Referring

- When patterns or concerning indicators are noticed, make the appropriate referral
- Follow protocols for welfare checks when you are unable to connect with your students

Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub

Ph: 945-0545

Email: MASH@gov.ky

There was a significant reduction in the number of child safeguarding referrals to the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub in 2020 when the Cayman Islands underwent sheltering in place orders. This does not mean that the number of child safeguarding incidents reduced. When children are not attending school, there is greater opportunity for them to be abused because there are less mandated reporters in contact with them. This is why it is crucial for educators to establish good relationships and communication with children and parents to be able to assess if they need supportive services or whether there is a risk that requires immediate intervention.