



The Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

Guidelines for the Reopening of Schools

School Supervision and Management Division

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1.0 Introduction

The COVID-19 (Novel Coronavirus) has created a ‘New Normal’ to which schools must conform. As schools across the globe gradually reopen, the practices to conform to the ‘New Normal’ are varied based on the dynamics that exist in various countries. In the Trinidad and Tobago context, the UNESCO Framework for Reopening Schools April 2020, as well as the Ministry of Health is Reopening Guidelines for Businesses, Facilities and Institutions (May 2020) were used to develop these guidelines.

The Trinidad and Tobago approach remains student centered and seeks to ensure that learners continue to have equitable access to quality education. As such, a multi-pronged intervention is required, including the involvement of Divisions and Units of the Ministry of Education as well as other Ministries and major stakeholders.

The School Supervision and Management Division has created this document as a guide to be used by the internal stakeholders of the Ministry of Education in the creation of a safe and secure environment for teaching and learning.

2.0 Entry Protocol

In addition to the school's regular entry protocol the following should be put in place:

- Signage indicating the following: “All visitors must wear masks. No mask, no entry”.
- All visitors must wear masks at all times whilst on the compound.
- Visitors must observe the visible floor markers for physical distancing placed at the school entrance and must comply with instructions to form orderly lines and to maintain appropriate physical distancing upon entry.
- Physical distancing must be observed on the compound, especially at the sanitization stations, cafeteria, washrooms, main office, etc.
- Safety Officers or other appointed persons shall use non-contact infrared thermometer, once available, at the school's entry point. Students or visitors with a higher than average temperature should be directed to a cool area nearby and their temperature rechecked after 5 minutes. The environmental temperature must be taken into consideration, therefore temperature checks must be done more than once before a student or visitor is deemed to be a person of concern.
- Visitors with flu-like symptoms will not be allowed entry on to the compound.
- Staff and students with flu-like symptoms must remain at home and provide written medical clearance before attending school.
- Visitors with a high temperature reading should not be allowed entry and will be requested to make contact with school administration via telephone or email instead of face-to-face.
- A screening notebook should be put in place to be used if the staff or student has 2 consecutive high readings. Headings in this book should be in accordance with the following suggestion:
American Medical Association: Pre-visit screening script template. Retrieved from <https://www.ama-assn.org/system/files/2020-06/physican-guide-reopening-practices-covid-19.pdf>
- Students who report to school with flu like symptoms should be placed in a quarantine room and the parent and health facilities (depending on severity) must be called. Parents will be asked to take the student home and return with written medical clearance.
- Student pick-up and drop-off must be managed to reduce the presence of persons/drivers on the school compound.

- Visitors and service providers who access the school's compound, must abide by the school's policy and guidelines provided by the Ministry of Health (MOH) (see Appendix 1).
- Sanitation measures for entering the compound must be enforced to ensure success in the fight against COVID-19. Hand washing stations should be strategically placed close to the entrance of the school compound, where the security guard / Safety Officers can ensure that all students and visitors sanitise their hands upon entry.

3.0 Guidelines for Assembly

Based on the current recommendations of physical distancing by the Ministry of Health, whole school assemblies are not recommended. The following alternatives can be considered:

- Schools with large halls/ court yards may be able to facilitate assemblies with required physical distancing for upper and lower secondary forms/primary classes on alternative days. Alternatively, one form/class level can assemble per day, while other levels participate in classroom assembly.
- Schools with smaller spaces can conduct assemblies over the PA system with students in classrooms supervised by the secondary form teacher/primary class teacher and prefects. Morning assemblies should not exceed 15 minutes and must allow for a motivational message, COVID-19 reminders and updates, preparation for learning and roll call.

4.0 Role of Management

Clinical supervision should not be confined to the physical classroom but be expanded to include online teaching/learning. The classroom observation component of the Clinical supervision process should include a Head/Vice-Principal/Senior Teacher logging into an online class being conducted. Schemes of work and lessons must now cater for blended learning.

All persons involved in clinical supervision need to become acquainted with the methods and strategies involved with online learning in order to give the necessary support and guidance. The Teacher Education Performance and Professional Development Division of the Ministry of Education continues to organize training sessions. Heads and Administrators are encouraged to apply or do upskilling through other avenues.

Deans/School Based Management Team (SBMT) / School Based Intervention Team (SBIT) and members of the Student Support Services Division (SSSD) are expected to work closely together to manage and address new issues and challenges that students may present with, having been at home for an extended period. Sessions must be organized to assist parents in coping with the changed school environment.

The Management Team must review systems, policies and procedures in light of a changing teaching/learning environment (such as the Crisis Management plan, Maintenance plan, Prefect system, communication plan.). The School Development Plan, inclusive of the Discipline Plan, must take into consideration the constraints/restrictions arising as a result of the COVID –19 pandemic. Decisions must be data driven and research based.

5.0 Orientation and Support

COVID - 19 has impacted on the social, emotional and economic well-being of families and undoubtedly on the psychosocial status of our students. The student-centered approach of the Ministry of Education suggests that the following be considered:

- The SSSD, in collaboration with Administration, must inform staff on methods of engaging with students after an extended period of absence from the physical classroom (reduced attention span, interaction, etc.).
- Administrators must ensure that provision is made for SSSD personnel to interact with each class within the first two weeks of the school term. The emphasis will be on equipping students with the skills needed to orient to the new school environment. The SSSD, in collaboration with School Administrators, can partner with suitable NGO's and the Ministry of Health to administer sessions in the orientation programme.
- Home Room periods must be time-tabled as a part of the orientation programme. Form/Class teachers will engage students in active discussions, lend support and give guidelines on adapting to the school environment. Form/Class teachers will be alert to

any student who displays symptoms of any behaviour of concern and make necessary referrals to the SSSD.

- Deans (Secondary) are to be rostered to interact with students of the respective year groups on a class by class basis to reinforce student expectations in keeping with the guidelines.
- Heads of Department (Secondary)/ School Administrators (Primary) are to ensure all subject teachers (Secondary) and teachers (Primary) develop and administer standardized assessments within the first two weeks of the term. The results of the assessments should be analyzed and factored into planning for the delivery of the curriculum. Prior to the administering of the test, time should be spent on review of topics. Guidelines developed by the Curriculum, Planning and Development Division should be referred to.
- Administrators should liaise with the Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) or suitable NGO's to attend to the psychosocial needs of the staff prior to the introduction of students on the compound.

6.0 Class Sizes and Timetabling

Based on current recommendations from the Ministry of Health, in preparation for the 2020 CXC and CAPE examinations, classrooms have been re-organised to facilitate 6ft physical distancing. Guidelines from the Ministry of Health will determine the physical distancing requirements at the time of the reopening of school. If the guidelines do not allow for the entire school population to be present at any given time, a cycle system will be implemented.

An example of a cycle using a 50% student capacity, is as follows:

- The school creates two groups for each class, group A and group B. Group A and group B will attend school on alternate days. A school that has a current 5 day timetable (be it a Monday to Friday or a 5 day cycle system) will then have a 10 day cycle. For schools with a 6 day cycle, a 12 day cycle will have to be done. At the end of a cycle each group will have had 5 or 6 days of a normal school week/cycle.

- The cycle model allows for the implementation of the existing timetable. For instance if a class has a Monday to Friday timetable, it is simply called Day 1 to Day 5. Group A starts Day 1 whilst group B accesses prearranged set and structured online material at home. The next day will be Day 1 for Group B whilst Group A accesses the online material at home. The following day will be Day 2 for Group A, etc. The teacher's timetable will now be based on a 10 day cycle and the percentage workload per cycle will be the same as the 5 day cycle.
- Should the physical distance requirements at any time be such that the capacity is further limited, an increased number of groups can be formed. For instance the class can be split into 3 groups, Group A, Group B and Group C and the timetable will now cycle in 15 days (for a Monday to Friday timetable) instead of 10 days.
- In creating groups for the purposes of rotation, each day of the timetable should be repeated to coincide with the number of groups (as detailed in the example above). This would dictate the total number of days students are required to stay at home within a cycle.

Blended learning should be implemented so that on the days that students are home, the regular time-table can be followed. Schools with online capability can arrange for the students at home to remotely join the physical class. For schools where this is not possible, teachers can organise for students to log on to pre-recorded lessons, videos, assignments, worksheets and other online resources on relevant topics. Parents must be educated on this new system of learning.

A staggering of break and lunch times should be implemented. An example is for the lower classes to be given break/lunch 5 minutes prior to the upper classes to reduce the number of students at the cafeteria/washroom at the same time.

The timetable must be developed prior to the start of the term. In order to maximize teaching/learning time, a system of formative assessments should be used to replace summative assessments (end of term examinations).

7.0 Promotion of students

Arrangements are to be made for the promotion of students to Infant Year II to Standard 5 at the primary level; and Forms II to V and Upper VI at the secondary level. With respect to the current students of Form III, the following should apply:

- The process of subject selection should be completed in July 2020.
- The Guidance Unit of the SSSD has created an online programme to aid in subject choices. This programme has been made available to students from the beginning of July 2020. Face to face sessions with Guidance Officers can be scheduled for students with no access to online services.
- Subject selection may be facilitated via hard copy or online processes.
- Where hard copy forms are to be used, parents are to be notified of the dates and times for collection and return of these forms.
- Where an online process is to be utilized parents must be notified of the link to access the forms.
- A reasonable deadline for subject selection submission must be set to allow for the process of placement to take place. Students can then be promoted into Form IV in September 2020 as per respective subject clusters.

8.0 Closing the Gap

The Ministry of Education aimed at 100% participation in online learning, however, a survey on ‘Teaching and Learning Using the Online Platform’, conducted during the period March 16 to April 03 2020, revealed that both students and teachers were challenged by connectivity issues and/or access to ICT devices. When schools reopen in September 2020, in order to provide equity within the teaching and learning process and to ensure that no child is left behind, teachers can utilize any of the following options:

1. Where student participation was less than 50% for topics taught online the respective subject teacher should re-teach the relevant topics to the entire class. This will serve as reinforcement to the students who originally participated.
2. Rooms with computers and internet access, e.g. computer labs and libraries, should be made available to identified students to access online activities at scheduled times during the school day or after school.

3. One day per cycle should be scheduled to students who had no access to online learning.
All other students will remain at home for online learning.

9.0 Implementation of the Blended Learning Approach

The following are required to ensure a seamless transition into a blended learning approach:

1. Information and Communication: There should be an effective system of communication between Head Office, school administrators, staff and parents.
 - The schools' online database/ records should be further developed to include:
 - All information contained in the Students' Cumulative Record Cards
 - Current parents' address, email address (if available), other contact information and ID card number
 - National School Dietary Services Limited (NSDSL) listing
 - Students accessing the Ministry of Education sponsored PTSC transport service
 - Students receiving social welfare
 - Any other information as may be deemed necessary.

All information should be verified on a termly basis.

2. Training: To ensure a seamless transition into a blended learning approach, continuous training of teachers in ICT and online teaching and assessment is needed. In addition to training provided by the Teacher Education Performance and Professional Development Division, Administrators/HODs can organize sessions based on identified needs.
3. The Ministry of Education is currently working on the following:
 - Accessibility to devices by all students and staff
 - Internet accessibility
 - Educating parents on their role in supporting their children to effectively manage the blended system of learning.
 - Continued intervention from the SSSD with specific emphasis on blended learning.

10.0 Additional Activities

10.1 *Physical Infrastructure:*

Principals are asked to ensure that:

- a. Critical infrastructural works are submitted in a timely manner via the online School Infrastructural Management System (SIMS) and the receipt/ ticket is submitted to the respective district office for transmission to the office of the Director of School Supervision
- b. Visits by officers of the Education Facilities Planning and Procurement Division (EFPPD) for school compound assessment are facilitated.
- c. Markers for physical distancing are strategically placed in. offices, cafeterias, entrance to washrooms, hall, etc. (see checklist for administrators)
- d. Rooms are to be identified as quarantine/screening rooms as per guidelines issued by the MOH.

10.2 *Water Storage:*

Principals are asked to ensure that:

- a. Water tanks are cleaned and filled as scheduled
- b. The water pump is serviced as scheduled and functional
- c. 50% storage capacity is maintained at all times
- d. A system to minimise wastage of water is implemented e.g. timely repair of leaks; ensuring that taps are not left on

10.3 *Communication:*

Principals are asked to ensure that signage indicating the following are clearly visible at the entrance and other key areas of the school:

- a. Persons with flu like symptoms will not be allowed entry to the compound
 - b. The respiratory etiquette to be followed when coughing and sneezing
- Signage should be placed outside of each room (including library, washrooms, etc) indicating its maximum capacity after applying physical distancing guidelines.

Principals are asked to ensure that:

- a. Posters depicting preventative and protective measures are displayed throughout the compound, inclusive of office area, staff rooms and classrooms
- b. Out of bound areas are clearly marked
- c. Form teachers, Deans, Heads of Department have access to updated information for parents and students
- d. Staff sanitizes resources before and after use, e.g. phones, pens, pencils
- e. Staff, students, and parents/guardians are aware of the following:
 - a. system of timetabling and days when students are not required to be at school
 - b. times for scheduled break and lunch
 - c. policy for personal hygiene
- f. Parents and guardians are aware of the drop off and pick up policies of the school and regular reminders are communicated on the method of operation in the “New Normal”.

10.4 Classrooms and Staffrooms:

- a. Administrators must notify their respective District Office/Line School Supervisor of the following:
 - o Total number of students in each classroom under normal circumstances
 - o Total number of students that can now be accommodated in each classroom using the physical distancing measurement/ recommendation provided by the Ministry of Health at the time of reopening.
- b. Furniture must be arranged so that student and staffroom seating satisfy the physical distancing requirement as stated by the Ministry of Health.
- c. Rooms must be well ventilated. Where the building is not designed to allow for the flow of natural air, the air conditioning units must be in good working order.

10.5 Washroom Facilities:

- a. An adequate supply of running water and liquid soap must be readily available at all times.
- b. Paper towels or hand dryers should be made available in washrooms.

- c. Washrooms must be cleaned frequently during the break and lunch periods.
- d. Door handles and taps must be frequently sanitised with the recommended alkaline solution or alcohol.

10.6 Cleaning and Sanitising:

- a. Administrators must be familiar with the contractual agreement of maintenance workers.
- b. The school should implement a cleaning and disinfecting schedule to ensure that:
 - high-traffic areas and high-contact surfaces are frequently sanitised with the recommended disinfecting liquids
 - All classrooms and specialty rooms must be cleaned regularly and recorded on the work schedule.
 - All surfaces must be wiped using the Ministry of Health's recommended mixture of bleach and water/ sanitising solution on a daily basis before entry and after all have exited the room. Sanitising wipes can be used.
 - Furniture in use must be sanitised before being occupied by another person.
- c. Bins should have swing type lids and garbage must be securely disposed of.
- d. General cleaning and disinfecting of the premises should occur at least once a day
- e. The compound must be free of debris and moss.
- f. The drains must be cleaned and the grass cut.
- g. The sinks and antibacterial soaps should be installed at the entrance of the compound and at strategic areas throughout the compound.
- h. Where possible, the school can place hand sanitizing dispensers at identified parts of the school.

10.7 Personal Responsibility:

Parents/guardians and staff shall work together to prevent the spread of COVID- 19, by reinforcing the following with the students:

a. ***Sharing***

Students should be discouraged from sharing food and drink, books, stationery and other personal items.

b. ***Personal Hygiene***

- All students should be encouraged to walk with a personal supply of sanitiser and/or hand soap.
- The policy on the wearing of masks by staff and students whilst on the school compound will be guided by the Ministry of Health.
- Students should be encouraged to practice proper personal hygiene by presenting themselves in a clean manner.
- Students must wash their hands with soap and water after using the washrooms.
- Students must engage in frequent hand washing.

c. ***Students/Staff with Flu-like Symptoms***

- Students/staff experiencing flu-like symptoms **MUST** stay at home.
- Once an individual was ill with flu-like symptoms within the last two weeks a certificate of medical clearance must be presented

d. ***Respiratory Etiquette***

- Cough or sneeze into the sleeves/elbows or in a tissue which must be discarded in a covered bin immediately. Hands to be sanitised immediately after disposing of tissue.
- Masks must be kept on when sneezing or coughing.
- Rags are not allowed.

e. ***Parental Responsibility***

- Parents are to be encouraged to attend all parent sessions and PTA meetings to keep updated on school policy.
- Parents must provide current contact information and email addresses.
- Parents must respond to calls from the school or requests to collect their children /charges in a timely manner.
- Parents must acquire and submit a certificate of medical clearance as needed.

- Parents are to ensure that their child always has a clean mask in his/her possession and has a personal supply of sanitizer if possible.
- Parents must inform children of health protocols and guidelines from the Ministry of Health

11.0 Procedure to follow if there is a Member of Staff or Student suspected of having COVID-19

- Advise that he/she contact the Ministry of Health at 877-WELL or 800-WELL (9355).
- Advise that he/she must remain at home under quarantine conditions (if case is eventually confirmed) for a duration as guided by the Ministry of Health/ Ministry of Education.
- Advise that he/ she must produce a letter of medical clearance before returning to school.

11.1 Procedure to follow if a Member of Staff or Student tests positive for COVID-19

The Principal/ Vice Principal must:

Step 1. Alert the School Supervisor III *immediately*

AND

Step 2.

- Alert the Ministry of Health via the Chief Medical Officer of Health
- Dismiss school immediately (as per Ministry of Education protocol- notify staff, fax/email Early Dismissal Notice to District Office, letters to parents, police informed, log entry made) and closure
- Arrange for sanitization and Public Health clearance before reopening. Parents will be updated via media.

Checklist for school administrators and school based intervention/crisis management team

Facilities:

- Adequate and clean toilets for girls and boys
- Soap available for handwashing at all taps
- Schedule for monitoring and replenishing of soap and hand sanitiser
- Staff room arranged to facilitate social distancing
- Classroom arranged to facilitate social distancing
- Sufficient ventilation in classrooms
- Availability of cleaning and sanitizing supplies for disinfecting surfaces and for disinfection of small items
- Availability of suitable area for quarantine / sick bay
- Roster for sanitizing door knobs and frequently used surfaces

Communication and Basic Operations:

- All staff aware of their role in monitoring student interactions
- All staff aware of their revised roles as per school committees and designations
- Systems in place to ensure adherence to visitors policy (visitors wash hands before being escorted to the office; no entry on compound without mask, etc.)
- Parents aware of the visitor's policy and requirements for students
- Form / class teachers informed of the hand washing policy, cough and sneeze etiquette and in turn inform and remind students
- Social distance floor markers in the cafeteria, administration office, outside washrooms and handwashing stations/ sinks
- Schedule for staggered lunch/break time developed and shared with staff
- Schedule developed for cleaning classrooms and sanitization of furniture
- Age appropriate signage promoting washing of hands and personal hygiene on compound
- Policy for sick students on compound shared with stakeholders
- Updated contacts for all students
- Revised list for NSDSL and PTSC based on school rotation
- Schedule for monitoring of water stores developed and followed

Checklist for parents/ caregivers and community members

- Monitor your children's health and keep them home from school if they are ill
- Ensure they are equipped with a clean mask, tissues, hand soap and sanitizers to be used especially during their commute
- Reinforce the importance of social distancing to children especially during their commute
- Teach and model good hygiene practices for your children
 - Wash your hands with soap and water frequently. If soap and water are not readily available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol.
 - Always wash hands with soap and water, if hands are visibly dirty
 - Ensure that safe drinking water is available and toilets or latrines are clean and available at home
 - Ensure waste is safely collected, stored and disposed of
 - Cough and sneeze into a tissue or your elbow and avoid touching your face, eyes, mouth and nose
- Encourage your children to ask questions when unsure
- Monitor their reactions to stress, be patient and understanding
- Co-ordinate with the school to receive information and ask how you can support school safety efforts (through parent-teacher committees, etc.)
- Provide school with contact information
- Respond in a timely manner when contacted by your child's school
- Make arrangements for supervision of children to facilitate rotation/ shift
- Ensure that children attend online sessions as scheduled
- Attend all parent sessions organized by the school
- Notify the school if anyone in your household has tested positive for coronavirus

Checklist for students

- Ask questions, educate yourself and get information from reliable sources
- Wash your hands frequently, always with soap and water for at least 20 seconds
- Practice social distancing while away from home
- Always have a supply of mask, tissue, hand soap and sanitiser when leaving home
- Remember to not touch your face
- Do not share books, stationery, cups, eating utensils, food or drinks with others
- Be a leader in keeping yourself, your school, family and community healthy
- Model good practices such as sneezing or coughing into your elbow and washing your hands, especially for younger family members
- Do not stigmatize your peers or tease anyone about being sick
- Tell your parents, another family member, or a caregiver if you feel sick.