

**GUIDELINES FOR SAFE OPERATING OF SCHOOLS
DURING COVID-19**

WESTCOAST INTERNATIONAL SECONDARY SCHOOL



In accordance with:

- **Ministry of Health and Wellness, Mauritius**
- **Ministry of Education and Human Resources, Mauritius**
- **Private Secondary Education Authority, Mauritius**

Date reviewed: July 2021

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SECTION 1: USE OF THE DOCUMENT

This guidance will help WISS staff, and their parents understand how to help prevent the transmission of COVID-19 within the school community and facilities. It also aims to help react quickly when a case has been identified. The guidance includes considerations to help administrators plan for the continuity of teaching and learning if there is community spread of COVID-19.

Schools, working together with local health departments, have an important role in slowing the spread of diseases and protecting vulnerable students and staff, to help ensure students have safe and healthy learning environments.

Use of the document

The use of this document is complemented by any new / amended communiqué, protocol, guidelines, code of practice or procedure that will be issued and circulated by:

- World Health Organisation (WHO) Recommendations
- International Labour Organisation (ILO) Guidance
- The Ministry of Health & Wellness (MOH & W), Mauritius
- The Ministry of Education and Human Resources, Mauritius
- Back to work after COVID 19, guidelines issued by Positive Management Ltd

Definition of COVID-19

COVID-19 is a respiratory disease caused by a virus. COVID-19 is one of seven known coronaviruses. On March 11, 2020, the World Health Organization declared the current coronavirus outbreak as a pandemic. This designation occurs when a new virus emerges for which there is little or no immunity in the human population, begins to cause serious illness, and then spreads easily person-to-person worldwide. There have only been four influenza pandemics since 1900.

Incubation period

An incubation period is the time between when you contract a virus and when your symptoms start.

Currently, according to the [Centres for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\) Trusted Source](#), the incubation period for the novel coronavirus is somewhere between 2 to 14 days after exposure.

The average incubation period seems to be around 5 days. However, this estimate may change as we learn more about the virus.

For many people, COVID-19 symptoms start as mild symptoms and gradually get worse over a few days.

Symptoms of COVID-19

The COVID-19's symptoms typically include;

- Fever
- Cough
- Shortness of breath
- Sore throat
- Headache

Illness can range from mild to severe, and in some cases, can be fatal. Symptoms may appear in as few as two days or as long as 14 days after exposure.

Transmission

The disease can spread from **person to person** through small droplets from the nose or mouth which are spread when a person with COVID-19 coughs or exhales. These droplets land on objects and surfaces around the person. Other people then catch COVID-19 **by touching these objects or surfaces, then touching their eyes, nose or mouth.**

Person-to-person spread

The virus is thought to spread mainly from person-to-person.

- **Between people** who are in close contact with one another (within about 1.8 meters).
- Through **respiratory droplets** produced when an infected person coughs or sneezes.

These droplets can land in the **mouths or noses** of people who are nearby or possibly be inhaled into the lungs.

Contact surfaces

By touching a surface or object that has the virus on it and then by touching your own mouth, nose or eyes.

The virus is spread mainly by people who are already **showing symptoms**, such as fever, cough or difficulty breathing.

However, in some cases some people may not develop the symptoms but can eventually spread the virus to other **people who are not infected.**

Can someone spread the virus without being sick?

Infected people spread the virus to other people.

- People are thought to be most contagious when they are most symptomatic (the sickest).
- The spread is also possible before people show symptoms.

Survival of coronaviruses on surfaces

It is not certain how long COVID-19 survives on surfaces, but it seems to behave like other coronaviruses. Preliminary information on COVID-19 suggests that the virus may persist on surfaces for a few hours or up to several days depending on different conditions, such as:

- temperature
- type of surface
- humidity of the environment

SECTION 2: PREPAREDNESS FOR PREVENTION & CONTROL

Limiting transmission of COVID-19 in our setting requires a range of infection prevention and control measures which can be considered as a hierarchy of controls. Administrative controls are implemented to help prevent the introduction of infection; and to control and limit the transmission of infection in the School. The Administration Team is under a legal obligation - under Occupation Safety and Health Act 2005 - to adequately control the risk of exposure to hazardous substances where exposure cannot be prevented.

Coronavirus Coordination Team

A weekly meeting will be conducted between the staff to discuss national and global updates on Coronavirus.

List of Emergency Contact Persons

A list of emergency contacts will be provided at the reception area.

Vaccination

- As per Government Notice No 119 of 2021, for the purpose of preventing a spread of COVID-19 within Mauritius during the quarantine period, no person shall have access to a specified institution (including a crèche, a day-care centre, a kindergarten, a special education needs institution, a pre-primary school, a primary school, a secondary school, a tertiary institution, a vocational training centre and another other educational or training institutions, whether Government-owned or private-owned) unless he produces :

1. his COVID-19 vaccination card certifying that he has been vaccinated with a COVID-19 vaccine; or
2. In case he has not been vaccinated with a COVID-19 vaccine, an RT-PCR test result certifying a negative result dating back to no more than 7 days from the date of the RT-PCR test was undertaken.

- There are possible exemptions for those who cannot take vaccination due to medical conditions. They will need to have a medical certificate signed by two government officers. It was indicated that the Ministry of Health has ensured that 2 doctors will be present in each hospital to examine and certify any personnel from the education sector who cannot be vaccinated for medical reasons.

- **No visitors will be allowed to enter the school premises without his COVID-19 vaccination certificate or medical certificate.**

Deliveries in school premises

- Planning deliveries in a staggered manner, if possible, to avoid having too many external people present at the school at the same time.
- Limiting the number of staff designated to handle deliveries. Staff receiving deliveries are required to wear masks at all times.
- Strict hand hygiene prior to and while receiving goods.
- Identifying of a place where mail or parcels can be deposited without contact.

Isolation Room

- The Isolation Room is a separate room inside the infirmary which will be accessible during school hours until 16h.

- Any person will be sent to Isolation Room pending of arrival of medical team (The Ministry of Health & Wellness, Mauritius)

RED ZONE

If WISS is found in a red zone, learners and staff will NOT attend school. However, schools will continue on Zoom.

Coronavirus Response Kit

A **Coronavirus Response Kit** will be available in the **isolation room** and it will have to be checked regularly by the Nurse.

In case a suspected case was in the isolation room, the Coronavirus Response Kit should be disinfected by the cleaners and refilled by the Nurse.

The following to be included in the kit:

- Alcohol-based hand rub gel dispensers
- Disposable gloves and masks
- Disposable gown
- Goggles • Bin bags: For disposing of used PPE.

Demarcated areas

- A demarcated area will be made at the entrance for a temperature check of all staff, students and visitors.
- A demarcated area will be made for washing and disinfecting cleaning materials after use.
- Another demarcated area will be used for storing bin bags containing used disposable material.
- All bins are closed with a lid and will be lined with bin bags.
- All bin bags will be closed properly.

Reporting of signs and symptoms

- *If any Staff member feels sick or is suffering from a combination of typical Coronavirus symptoms after School hours, they must: -*
- Stay at home and contact the hotlines after 16h of the Ministry of Health and Wellness, Mauritius

8925 - Dr A.G. Jeetoo Hospital - Port Louis

8926 - SSRN Hospital - Pamplemousses

8927 - Flacq Hospital - Flacq

8928 -Victoria Hospital - Candos

8929 -J. Nehru Hospital - Rose Belle

- Inform the Administration Team
- **Isolate** and follow the instructions of the medical officer
 - *What to do if a member of staff / child or a visitor with suspected COVID-19 has recently been at the School*
- The Nurse/Administration Team will contact the hotlines of the Ministry of Health and Wellness to report the suspected case.
- **The Principal of the School** will be contacted by the **officers of the Ministry of Health and Wellness**, to discuss the case, **to do the contact tracing** by identifying people who have been in contact with them and to advise on any actions or precautions that should be taken.
- A risk assessment of each situation will be undertaken by officers of the Ministry of Health and Wellness, MOH&W with the lead of the Safety and Health Consultant. They will provide advice on how to manage staff, children and visitors, based on their assessment of the risk.
- The **officers of the Ministry of Health and Wellness**, will also be in contact with the **affected person** directly to advice on **isolation at home** and do the **contact tracing** by identifying other contacts to whom they will give appropriate advice.
- If a staff is confirmed to have COVID-19, the Principal will inform fellow staffs of their possible exposure to COVID-19 in the workplace but maintain confidentiality
- Staffs exposed to a staff with confirmed COVID-19 should be given instructions on what to do based on the officers of Ministry of Health and Wellness, guidance.
- Cleaning and proper sanitization of the area by the cleaning team from the guidance of the officers of the Ministry of Health and Wellness.

Handling an outbreak within schools.

If there are 2 or more cases from your school/setting who tested positive for COVID-19 in a 14-day period, it means that there are inherent risks within the school setting:

1. Review your COVID-19 risk assessment including what measures you have in place in the school/setting, numbers of children attending, consistency of staff working with groups of learners, and infection and control measures.
2. Reinforce good practice and ensure that signs and symptoms of COVID-19 are understood and acted on appropriately i.e. precautionary measures, vaccination and PCR testing.

3. Any cluster in the school setting will prompt action from the Ministry of Health and Wellness. They will be able to advise you on further actions required to mitigate ongoing risks.

- One of the actions may be testing of all staff to identify asymptomatic individuals.
- Another action may be the decontamination of the school setting.

Refer to the Covid-19 action card for schools for a summary of key actions to control covid-19 in schools.

Section 3: POST COVID-19 Response Guideline

Responsibilities of WISS

WISS has the responsibility as far as is reasonably practicable to ensure the safety, health and welfare of its employees, the students and visitors.

All teaching and non-teaching staff have been vaccinated or are having a PCR test every week.

WISS will ensure that the hygiene and sanitization level and security are well maintained in all areas.

Prior to Opening and back to school - Cleaning and Disinfecting

- A deep clean of all surfaces of all areas: windows, walls, floors, tables, chairs, carpets and touch points have been practised before the opening.
- Cleaning of school compound, yard and water tank.
- Cleaning and disinfection of school canteen and classrooms.
- Ensuring availability of clean water supply and liquid soap in toilets
- Availability of adequate supply of cleaning products and equipment.

Daily cleaning and disinfection after opening

- During the day, all toilets will be cleaned and disinfected regularly.
- Regular refilling of liquid hand soap.
- All frequent contact surfaces will be cleaned and disinfected continuously.
- Each Class will be cleaned regularly.

Hand Sanitizers

Hand Sanitizers dispensers with an alcohol-based sanitizer are available in strategic places around the school. It should be used by the employees, the children and visitors.

Signage

The signage shall be affixed in conspicuous places preferably in English or using pictures for ease of understanding.

Proper Signage are displayed all around the premises to promote the following guidance:

- 1) Wear masks at all times
- 2) Respect the social distance
- 3) Wash your hands regularly
- 4) Don't drink from the tap, use a bottle ONLY
- 5) Allow temperature check at entry point
- 6) Sanitize your hands at each entry point
- 7) Avoid contact with touchable surface
- 8) Keep the area cleaned and tidy

Psychosocial support

-Strategies to address the social and emotional learning needs of students who show signs of distress, anxiety or inability to cope during the return to school done by the school counselor and the school psychologist.

-Schools are required to eradicate all forms of stigma or discrimination as a result of Covid-19.

Basic Precautions

The **Basic Precautions** to be enforced and abide by all employees, children, visitors, and contractors are: -

Physical (social) distancing

- Keep **Social Distancing** from others as much as possible
- Avoiding common **greetings, such as handshakes**
- **Morning assemblies would not be held**, communications and sensitization will be done at classroom level.
- **Canteens** would operate but under strict sanitary conditions- food handlers certificate; proper and safe food storage and packing practices.
- **PE classes** will be conducted exclusively outdoors, however group sports will not be allowed, and all activities will be in compliance with social distancing.

Personal Hygiene

Proper personal hygiene can help reduce the risk of infection or spreading infection to others:

- Wearing of **Masks/Visors compulsory** for the students, employees and the visitors
- **Wash hands** and **sanitize hands** at least every 30 minutes and before entering the school
- **Cough** or **sneeze into a tissue** or the **bend of your arm**, not your hand

- **Dispose of any tissues** you have used as soon as possible in a lined waste closed bin and wash your hands afterwards
- **Avoid touching** your eyes, nose, or mouth with unwashed hands

Responsibilities of Parents/guardian

Parents and/or guardian have the responsibility as far as is reasonably practicable, to:

- **Monitor your child's health and keep them home from school if they are ill** (fever, cough, difficulty breathing, vomiting, diarrhoea, rash...) and seek medical advice promptly.
- Teach and model good hygiene practices
 - Wash hands with soap and safe 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 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, nose
- Encourage your children to ask questions and express their feelings with you and their teachers. Remember that your child may have different reactions to stress; be patient and understanding.
- Prevent stigma by using facts and reminding students to be considerate of one another
- Coordinate with the school to receive information and ask how you can support school safety efforts (through parent-teacher committees, etc.)

Mask at school

Parents must make sure that their child comes to school with a mask or visor/shield.

Transport

Buses and vans are not provided by the school. Each parent is solely responsible to contact the transport and make sure they follow a protocol.

Responsibilities of the Cleaning Team - Cleaning and Sanitization

- All the cleaners wear their **normal Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)** with masks and gloves at all times.
- Safety and Health Consultant will conduct regular checks.

Regular cleaning and disinfecting of high-touch places:

- Tables • cabinet handles • handrails • light switches • doorknobs • Toilets and faucet handles • countertops • Telephone • sports equipment

If there is a suspected case and a person feels she suffers from COVID-19 symptoms, the area where the person has been should be cleaned and sanitized by:

- using disposable cloths and the detergents and sanitizers.
- Disposable cleaning equipment

Induction on COVID 19 preventive measures

Sanitary measures of Covid-19 will be communicated in terms of poster and graphic at each workstation for all employees on the first day of resuming work.

Awareness posters will be used to train employees on how to wear masks, change and dispose of the masks.

Disposable gloves

Disposable gloves will be handed only to those who handle money or a person who is sick.

Disposable gloves should be disposed of as required when damaged or soiled.

Healthy Hand Hygiene Behaviour

- All students and staff will engage in hand hygiene at the following times:
 - Arrival to the facility and after breaks
 - Before and after preparing food or drinks
 - Before and after eating or handling food
 - After using the toilet
 - After coming in contact with bodily fluid
 - After playing outdoors
 - After handling garbage
- Staff will supervise students when they use hand sanitizer to prevent ingestion.
- Posters will be placed describing hand washing steps near sinks.

Food Preparation and Meal Service

- Sinks used for food preparation will not be used for any other purposes.

Break time/ Lunch time

- Staggered lunch break has been organised to avoid crowd gathering.

Parent Drop-Off and Pick-Up

Demarcated signage will be made to guide the students when arriving at school. Hand hygiene stations will be set up at the entrance of the reception, students can clean their hands with a hand sanitizer before they enter. Three staff will take the temperature of the students at the entrance.

The staff will make a visual inspection of the students for signs of illness, which could include flushed cheeks, rapid breathing or difficulty breathing (without recent physical activity), fatigue, or extreme fussiness, and confirm that the child is not experiencing coughing or shortness of breath.

If possible, older people such as grandparents or those with serious underlying medical conditions should not pick up children, because they are more at risk for severe illness from COVID-19.

Screen Children upon Arrival

Persons who have a fever of 38.00°C or above or other signs of illness will not be admitted to the facility. **We encourage parents to be on the alert for signs of illness in their children and to please keep them home when they are sick.** A Screening of the children will be done upon arrival.

In case someone is sick in the School

- **It is very important that parents keep children home when they are sick.**
- If a child is sick at school, he or she should immediately be sent to the isolation room.
- The parents should be informed as soon as possible.
- A staff member should stay with the child till the arrival of the parents. It is important to keep sick children and staff separate from other children and staff until they can be sent home. The staff will have to wear disposable gloves, disposable masks and goggles.
- If the student is experiencing symptoms other than fever and respiratory difficulties, the parents will have to seek medical advice promptly.
- ***If it is a suspected case of Covid-19, the flowchart for operating procedures in case of a suspected Covid-19 case in school*** given by the Ministry of Health and Wellness, Mauritius will be used. (Located in infirmary - quarantine area)

Pregnant women

Because COVID-19 is a new disease, we are still learning how it affects pregnant women. At this time, there is no evidence to suggest that pregnant women are at a greater risk for more serious outcomes related to COVID-19 or that their developing child could be negatively affected by COVID-19.

Pregnant women should protect themselves from becoming ill by avoiding coming for drop off or picking up their children, another requested precaution are:

- Stay home as much as possible, except for important medical appointments

- Talk to your doctor, obstetrician about the possibility of telephone or video conference/Zoom appointments
- Avoid unnecessary visitors to your home
- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds
- Use alcohol-based hand sanitizer if soap and water are not available
- Practise physical distancing by keeping a distance of at least 2 metres from others
- Avoid touching your mouth, nose and eyes
- Avoid crowded places and peak-hours
- Make limited trips to the store for essentials
- Avoid travel by public transit

Under no circumstances should learners or staff attend schools or settings if they:

- feel unwell with or, have any or the identified Covid-19 symptoms, they and their household should self-isolate immediately and seek medical advice. They may call on the hotline 8924
- have tested positive for COVID-19 or been told to self-isolate.
- live in a household with someone who has symptoms of, or has tested positive for COVID-19
- If symptomatic or unwell, learners and staff should not attend schools.
- If suspected case when a staff member or learner becomes unwell at school, they should be isolated until they can proceed to seek medical advice.

Actions to be taken when a learner or staff tests positive to Covid-19:

- In the event of a positive test, a contact tracer from MOH will contact the person tested to help identify potential contacts.
- Schools should ensure that they have processes in place, a mandatory visitors book or even meeting books, supported by establishing seating plans where appropriate, to enable contacts to be quickly and easily identified and shared with the contact tracer to ease the exercise.
- If a case should occur in the school setting, the head of school may contact the MOH hotline on 8924 for more information.
- A positive test for a learner or staff member DOES NOT NECESSARILY REQUIRE closure of that school. The process of testing and contact tracing is part of the ‘new normal’ where schools will be required to follow these guidelines carefully, without causing alarm.
- The affected classroom/ section will be closed until cleaned and decontaminated and other provisions would need to be taken to redirect the remaining staff/students from that section.
- Where learners are quarantined or in treatment centers but medically stable, it is important that schools put systems in place to keep in contact with them, offer them support services, and see if the learners are able to access education support.

Date: January 2022