



education

MPUMALANGA PROVINCE  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

**GUIDELINES (BASED ON THE STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES/ SOPs) FOR  
SCHOOLS ON THE CONTAINMENT AND MANAGEMENT OF COVID-19 IN SCHOOLS**

MAY 2020

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## ACRONYMS

COVID-19	Coronavirus disease 2019
DBE	Department of Basic Education
DOH	Department of Health
DPSA	Department of Public Services and Administration
DSD	Department of Social Development
EOC	Emergency Operations Center
NDoH	National Department of Health
NICD	National Institution of Communicable Diseases
NSNP	National School Nutrition Programme
OHSA	Occupational Health and Safety Act
PHEIC	Public Health Emergency of International Concern
SBSTs	School Based Support Teams
DBST	District Based Support Team
SGBs	School Governing Bodies
SMTs	School Management Teams
SOPs	Standard Operating Procedures
WHO	World Health Organization

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## 1. PURPOSE

To provide clear and actionable guidance for safe operations of schools through the prevention, early detection and control of COVID-19 in schools.

## 2. OBJECTIVES

The guidelines seek to:

- Help schools to put measures aimed at preventing the spread of the COVID-19 disease amongst learners, support staff, teachers and visitors.
- Help schools understand how to handle COVID-19 cases.
- Help schools to plan, monitor and evaluate their COVID-19 prevention measures.

## 3. SCOPE

The guidelines are applicable to:

- Schools,
- School Management Teams (SMTs),
- School Governing Bodies (SGBs),
- Support staff,
- Teachers,
- Learners.
- Parents
- Visitors

## 4. INTRODUCTION

On 7 January 2020, Chinese scientists confirmed a cluster of pneumonia cases identified in Wuhan, Hubei Province, China in December 2019 was associated with a novel coronavirus. The virus has been named “SARS-CoV-2” and the disease it causes “coronavirus disease 2019”, or COVID-19.

As of 2 March 2020, more COVID-19 cases and deaths have been reported from 60 countries. There has been increasing concerns that SARS-CoV-2 could cause the next global pandemic. The World Health Organization’s (WHO) International Health Regulations Emergency Committee declared the outbreak a public health emergency of international concern (PHEIC) on 30 January 2020 and South Africa activated its Emergency Operations Center (EOC) on 31 January 2020.

Warnings provided by the National Institute of Communicable Diseases (NICD) and WHO highlighted the increase of infections within the country, in particular among people without a travel history indicating local transmission. President Cyril Ramaphosa, declared a national state of disaster.

Subsequent to this declaration, the various organs of state had to quickly put drastic measures in place to avert further spread of the virus hence this guideline regarding the containment and management of COVID-19 in schools.

## **5. GUIDELINES**

### **5.1 School Based Support Teams (SBSTs)**

Following training and in addition to their roles, working in partnership with other committees, SBSTs are expected to:

- Coordinate and report to the principal and the District Based Support Teams (DBST) on all COVID -19 prevention, containment and management measures implemented by the school.
- Conduct a risk assessment to identify the risks of COVID-19 outbreak at the school and develop a mitigation plan.
- Facilitate the identification of areas in the school where the provisions against the COVID-19 are inadequate and report to the principal for a solution.
- Facilitate the revision of existing health and safety provisions in the school in order to accommodate the COVID – 19 matters.
- Facilitate the updating or development of school emergency and contingency plans that include the COVID – 19 matters.
- Facilitate counselling and support services to both learners and staff who suffered loss or are undergoing trauma due to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Develop a checklist tool for compliance with the guidelines and other applicable directives in relation to the COVID – 19 matters.

### **5.2 Partnerships**

- Schools are expected to involve government departments, stakeholders, business and community based organizations in their plans to prevent the spread of the disease.

### **5.3 Meetings, Group Activities, Curricular and Extra –Curricular Activities**

Schools are expected to:

- Suspend non-essential or non-critical meetings, in the event there is a compelling need for a meeting, the social distance and other related hygiene protocols must be observed.
- Develop and implement Academic Recovery Plans (ARPs) to mitigate the lost days and time.
- Temporarily suspend extra-mural activities, extra academic classes and group activities for learners and in the event there is a compelling need for this, authorization must be sought and the social distance must be maintained.

### **5.4 School Hygiene, Health and Safety**

Schools are expected to:

- Continually engage and capacitate both learners and staff about hand washing, environmental cleanliness, waste management and hygiene.
- Ensure that hygiene packages and Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) are provided in schools.
- Screen learners, staff and visitors daily in line with health protocols and keep records.
- Keep proper daily registers containing the details of all teachers, support staff visitors, service providers and service recipients that enter the school (indicate date, time of entry and departure, name, surname, identity number, residential address and cellular number).
- Teach learners that handwashing should be done often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds after going to the bathroom, before eating and after blowing one's nose, coughing

or sneezing. If water is not available, a hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol should be used.

- Prepare and maintain handwashing stations that have soap, water and tissue.
- Ensure that hand sanitizers are available at the entrances or identified strategic points.
- Ensure the cleaning and disinfecting of all buildings, classrooms, centers and sanitation facilities regularly.
- Clean surfaces and objects that are frequently touched by many people like railings, desks, tables, sports equipment, science kits, doors, windows, toys, teaching and learning aids etc.
- Improve their waste management plans given the emergence of the COVID-19 Virus.
- Ensure that hygiene regulations are imposed on cafeteria and vendors operating within the school.
- Ensure that all waste that has been in contact with the confirmed COVID-19 case, including used tissues, and masks if used, should be put in a separate plastic rubbish bag and tied when full and then be placed in a second bin bag and tied. It can then be put in the normal waste.
- Ensure that social distance and avoiding unnecessary touch is maintained at all times.
- Ensure that the feeding of learners is conducted in a hygienic manner.
- Ensure that in the event of a confirmed case, the clearing and disinfection of the affected work or learning space is facilitated.
- Ensure that they are not used as treatment centers for COVID-19 unless authorized by the Head of Department or a delegated authority.

### 5.5 Use of Classrooms and Centers

Schools are expected to:

- Ensure that there is adequate lighting, space and ventilation in both classrooms and centers.
- Ensure that there is adherence to the stipulated social distance in classes.
- Ensure that there is enough furniture in both classrooms and centers.
- Keep classrooms and centers clean, safe and neat at all times.
- Provide sick bay and isolation facilities for both staff and learners.
- Ensure that examination centers comply to the social distance prescription.

### 5.6. Decongestion / Deconcentration

Schools are expected to:

- Ensure that movements in groups within the school premises are discouraged and where unavoidable controlled.
- Institute crowd and queues control mechanisms.
- Ensure that events that lead to crowded conditions, sports games, assemblies, parties, gathering and socializing are avoided, suspended and discouraged.
- Create space for learners' desks and tables to observe the regulated social distance.
- Ensure that approval for alternative measures (like platooning, staggering the beginning and end of the school day, revised timetables, extended school times, use of community or business centers etc.) aimed at mitigating overcrowding in classes should be sought from the Head of Department or a delegated authority prior implementation.
- Ensure that their premises are not utilized for community gatherings, meetings, churches, festivals,

### 5.7 Scholar Transport and Travelling

- School trips and excursions should be temporarily suspended, if unavoidable, prior permission must be obtained from the Head: Education or his or her delegated authority.
- Use of scholar transport should be in line with the relevant restrictions and dictates of the Department of Transport.
- Travelling abroad by the school should be suspended.
- Staff and learners returning from travel to areas with the spread of COVID-19 must follow guidance on the NICD website([www.nicd.ac.za](http://www.nicd.ac.za)).
- Schools can also consult with local health officials or call the NICD hotline to discuss travel concerns 0800 029 999.
- Government restrictions on travelling should be complied with.

### 5.8 Communication

- Schools are expected to develop child-friendly materials (such as posters) and place them in strategic points to communicate key messages.
- Key messages should also be converted to braille and large print for easy access by visually impaired learners and staff.
- Augmentative and Alternative Communication resources (e.g. picture boards, digitized signage, digitized speech device, etc.) be utilized for learners who require high levels of support including the non-verbal to enhance cooperation by all learners and staff.
- Schools should provide information in an honest and age-appropriate manner.
- Relevant and helpful Information and emergency contact details should be displayed at notice boards in schools.
- Regular dissemination of relevant and helpful information as per need should be prioritized by the school.
- The school should ensure awareness of the basic health and safety precautions.
- The school is expected to develop strategies for sharing information with staff, learners, and their families.
- Schools should reinforce COVID-19 prevention messages from reputable sources like WHO, NICD and DoH and be aware of fake information and myths. For updates and latest information about the virus please refer to the following reputable sites:
  - National Department of Health (DoH): <https://www.health.gov.za>
  - National Institute for Communicable Diseases (NICD): <https://www.nicd.ac.za>
  - National Institute of Occupational Health (NIOH): <https://www.nioh.ac.za>
  - National Health Laboratory Services (NHLS) : <https://www.nhls.ac.za>
  - World Health organization (WHO): <https://www.who.int>
  - Coronavirus Hotline Number: 0800 02 99 99

### 5.9 Management of COVID-19 Cases: Learners

#### 5.9.1 Action to be taken when a learner appears ill or displaying symptoms associated with COVID-19

When a learner or learners appear ill or display symptoms associated with COVID-19 or display symptoms like high fever, respiratory distress, dry cough etc. at school, the following should be done:

- Isolate the learner or learners and keep (them) him / or her separate from well learners and staff until they can be assessed by a health professional.

- Remember that schools are not expected to screen learners or to identify cases of COVID-19 and most respiratory illnesses are not COVID-19, therefore call the school nurse, health official, nearest health facility or NICD toll free number or number of provincial officials provided in the DBE circular 3 of 2020.
- The health professional will advise on further action to be taken once diagnosis is confirmed.
- The Parents or Guardians of the learner should be informed immediately.
- The School should ensure smooth referral and tracking system of all cases.
- Report cases to the Circuit Office for further guidance and advice.

#### **5.9.2 Action to be taken when a learner's case of COVID-19 is confirmed**

- The school will be contacted by the relevant health official to discuss the case, identify people who have been in contact with them and advise on any actions or precautions that should be taken.
- If you have not yet been contacted, please contact the public hotline 0800 029 999 who will refer you to the relevant contact.
- An assessment of the school will be undertaken by the health official with relevant staff. Advice on the management of pupils or learners and staff will be based on this assessment.
- If there is a confirmed case, a risk assessment will be undertaken by the school with advice from the health official.
- In most cases, closure of the facility or school will be unnecessary. This decision will be facility or school specific, based on various factors such as establishment size and learners mixing.
- Report the cases to the Circuit Office for further guidance and advice.

#### **5.93 Action to be taken on a learner who may have been exposed to a suspected case of COVID-19**

- If a learner has been in contact with a suspected case in a school, no restrictions or special control measures are required while laboratory test results for COVID-19 are awaited.
- There is no need to close the school or send other learners or staff home.
- Until the outcome of test results is known there is no action that the school or staff members need to take.
- Report the cases to the Circuit Office for further guidance and advice.

#### **5.9.4 Action to be taken on a learner who may have been exposed to a confirmed case of COVID-19**

- All close contacts of a confirmed COVID-19 case are required to stay at home for 14 days while being monitored for symptoms. They may not attend school.
- Learners who are not contacts of a confirmed case should attend school.
- All case contacts who become symptomatic will be immediately screened for COVID-19 and if found to be a case, active contact tracing and self-quarantine of all contacts will be implemented by the health official.
- Report the cases to the Circuit Office for further guidance and advice.



## **5.10 Management of COVID-19 Cases: Employees**

### **5.10.1 Action to be taken when an employee tested positive for COVID-19**

- The principal should process approval for sick leave in accordance with the Determination and Directive on Leave of Absence in the Public Service or incapacity Leave and Ill-health Retirement processes if the employee has exhausted his/her normal sick leave.
- The principal should formally process approval for leave in accordance with Public Service Regulation 51 for all employees who worked closely with the affected employee to self-quarantine for a period of 14 days to ensure the infection does not spread. This must be done with the relevant authorities of and National Department of Health (NDoH) protocols. Records relating to this must be kept and submitted to the Circuit Office.
- The clearing and disinfection of the affected workspace must be facilitated. Contact must be maintained with such employees as a means of monitoring and evaluation.
- Report the cases to the Circuit Office for further guidance and advice.

### **5.10.2 Action to be taken when an employee was exposed to a confirmed case of COVID-19**

- In terms of the NDoH's guidelines all those employees who were in contact with the infected person are required to self-quarantine at home for a period of 14 days or for a duration as prescribed by the NDoH while being monitored for symptoms.
- The principal should formally process leave approval in accordance with Public Service Regulation 51 for employee to self-quarantine for a period of 14 days or as prescribed by NDoH to ensure the infection does not spread. This must be done in consultation with the relevant authorities. Such employees can be requested to work remotely.
- The principal must ensure that the affected workplace/s are cleaned and disinfected.
- Contact must be maintained with such employee as a means of monitoring and evaluation.
- Report cases to the Circuit Office for further guidance and advice.

### **5.10.3 Action to be taken when an employee was exposed to an unconfirmed case of COVID-19**

- If an employee has been in contact with a person who has not yet been confirmed as infected by COVID-19, laboratory test results should be awaited prior any action.
- Until the outcomes of test results are known the Principal cannot adopt control measures.
- Once the results are known, protocol by NDoH are effected, if applicable.
- Report the cases to the Circuit Office for further guidance and advice.

#### **5.10.4 Action to be taken when an employee appears ill and report for duty displaying symptoms associated with COVID-19.**

- If an employee displays symptoms consistent with COVID-19; being high fever, respiratory distress, dry cough etc. they must be advised to contact the hotline, consult a medical professional and follow the NDoH protocol for COVID-19.
- The employee should be temporarily isolated in a sickbay or room identified for temporary isolation while arrangements are made for them to be transported to a medical facility. Employees must be encouraged to seek medical attention if they display flu like symptoms and to not report for duty.
- Further actions should be taken once confirmation of diagnosis of a medical professional has been confirmed.
- Report the cases to the Circuit Office for further guidance and advice.

#### **5.10.5 Action to be taken when an employee or employees refuse to report for duty based on the fear or being infected by COVID-19.**

- The employment relationship is the legal link between employers and employees and stipulate that a person (employee) will perform work or a service under certain conditions in return for remuneration (employer).
- The onus is on the employee/s to demonstrate that the workplace is a risk and unsafe in relation to the virus.
- Refusal to report for duty, contrary to the instructions of the principal or supervisor means that such absence is unpaid and should be dealt with in terms of the Disciplinary Code.
- Report the cases to the Circuit Office for further guidance and advice.

#### **5.11 Closure of Schools**

- The health officials are responsible for assessing and confirming COVID-19 cases at the school.
- An individual or a group maybe dismissed or be subjected to leave or quarantined as per recommendation of the health official.
- All decisions for learners to stay home from school based on possible exposure to or infection with COVID-19 should be justified by available scientific evidence.
- A school or part of it may be closed as per recommendation by a health official, subject to approval by the Head of Department or a delegated authority.

**6. ACTION PLAN TEMPLATE****ACTION PLAN FOR SCHOOLS ON THE CONTAINMENT AND MANAGEMENT OF COVID-19 IN SCHOOLS BASED ON THE STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES (SOPs)**

<b>NO.</b>	<b>FOCUS AREA</b>	<b>RESPONSIBILITY</b>	<b>TIME FRAME</b>
1.	Dissemination of Standard Operating Procedures (SoPs) and related guidelines, circulars, directives etc.		
2.	Staff trained on the Containment and Management of COVID-19.		
3.	Conduct a risk assessment to identify the risks of a COVID – 19 threat, identify gaps and inadequacies and immediately correct these.		
4.	Revise existing health and safety provisions.		
5.	Functionality of the SBST / Health Committee regarding COVID-19 Matters.		
6.	Develop mechanisms of communication and reporting related to COVID-19 matters.		
7.	Develop mechanisms and protocols of reporting cases.		
8.	Partnership Initiatives on COVID-19 Matters.		
9.	Suspension or postponement of extra-curricular activities.		
10.	Availability of hygiene packs and PPEs (hand sanitizers, soap, gloves, masks, tissues, and temperature scanners etc.).		
11.	Availability of water and sanitation.		
12.	Compliance to the school fumigation and cleaning schedule.		
13.	Compliance to social distancing and crowd management strategies (scholar transport, nutrition, breaks, assemblies, group activities, class sizes etc.		
14.	Management of crowds in waiting areas and queues.		
15.	Monitoring of staggered break times.		
16.	Keep the number of participants in meetings within the minimum as per regulations.		
17.	Daily screening of staff, learners and visitors.		

18.	Ensure frontline staff are conversant with the protocols pertaining to COVID-19.		
19.	Identification of a waiting area for visitors and cleaning it regularly.		
20.	Ensure cleaning of hard surfaces regularly.		
21.	Provision of hand sanitizers for visitors at strategic places.		
22.	Support for learners at home.		
23.	Signing of register by visitors.		
24.	Demarcated, marked and equipped area for visitors.		
25.	Demarcated, marked and equipped facility as sick bay.		
26.	Demarcated, marked and equipped area for isolation.		
27.	Compliance to government travel restrictions by both staff and learners.		
28.	Communication of relevant, helpful, child-friendly and age appropriate COVID-19 Messages.		
29.	Management of COVID-19 staff and learner cases (symptomatic, suspected, confirmed and unconfirmed).		
30.	Revised School Timetable.		
31.	Keep proper daily registers containing the details of all teachers, support staff visitors, service providers and service recipients that enter the school (indicate date, time of entry and departure, name, surname, identity number, residential address and cellular number).		

**NB: The school may add other items deemed critical in the action plan template.**

**7. CHECKLIST TEMPLATE**

**CHECKLIST FOR OFFICES (PROVINCIAL, DISTRICT AND CIRCUIT OFFICES) AND ENTITIES**

**NAME OF PROVINCE:** \_\_\_\_\_

**NAME OF INSTITUTION (OFFICE):** \_\_\_\_\_

**OFFICE MANAGER:** \_\_\_\_\_ **ERMEGENCY NUMBER:**

\_\_\_\_\_

FOCUS AREA	COMPULSORY CRITERIA	YES	NO	COMMENT
<b>CAPACITY TO DEAL WITH HEALTH OUTCOME</b>	Temperature Test Kits are available			
	Persons/health professionals have been identified and appointed to conduct daily temperature testing of all personnel and visitors.			
	The necessary protocols and plans are in place on what action to be taken once a staff member or a visitor presents with a high temperature.			
	There is adequate water supply			
	The building was deep cleaned and sanitised prior to staff returning for duty.			
	There are anti-bacterial hand soaps, sanitisers and paper towels in strategic positions in the office			
	There are key personnel identified to conduct screening for every official and visitor entering the office			
	There is a plan to enforce the sanitisation of hands at the entrance and to insist on the wearing of face masks			
	There is a process in place for monitoring the depletion of sanitation packages and timeous re-ordering.			
	There are plans to maintain regular sanitisation of hands, door handles, elevators			

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	There is a plan to clean and disinfect offices and ablution blocks at least twice daily			
	The use of biometric access control has been discontinued and replaced by another system			
	Officials will not share equipment (computers, stapler, pens, punchers) unless they will be sanitised when moving from hand to hand			

FOCUS AREA	COMPULSORY CRITERIA	YES	NO	COMMENT
<b>STAFFING MATTERS</b>	There is a plan to keep officials showing symptoms at home and allowing their return when cleared by a medical practitioner according to the DPSA leave directive.			
	New social norms and practices such as wearing face masks, gloves, screening, coughing and sneezing into an elbow or tissue paper are introduced			
	There is a code of conduct to avoid human contact such as handshakes, hugging, pecking, kissing and social visits to colleagues' desks and offices			
	Officials with comorbidities identified by the DH (over 60 years and having pre-medical conditions such as asthma, diabetes, and hypertension) have been identified for leave or work from home.			
	There is a plan to keep the office functioning at 50% capacity by allowing officials to work from home per unit and for purposes of social distancing at work.			
	There is a plan to create and maintain data capturing systems for monitoring purposes			



	There is a plan to have officials that present with raised temperature isolated and tested			
	An isolation facility has been identified in the office building to temporarily contain staff identified with possible COVID-19 infection, whilst they await transfer to a health practitioner			
	There is a system to record and track the attendance of officials			
	There are reporting protocols available			
	There are plans to provide psychosocial services			

FOCUS AREA	COMPULSORY CRITERIA	YES	NO	COMMENT
OFFICE SPACE	The office space and seating have been rearranged to ensure that there is at least 1.5 metres between officials			
	There are directives to ensure that officials do not congregate at any given time			
	The office will minimise face to face meetings and utilise ICT for telephone or video conferencing			
	Boardrooms and meeting rooms will operate at 50% capacity where absolutely necessary			
	Canteens will only serve take-away food and ensure social distancing is maintained			
	The use of office kitchens will be minimised			
	All social meeting places will be closed			

FOCUS AREA	COMPULSORY CRITERIA	YES	NO	COMMENT
ORIENTATION OF OFFICIALS	All Regulations, Guidelines, video clips and information booklets are available and have been presented to staff			
	Officials are able to protect themselves and others			

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	There are signs posted across the office encouraging good hygiene practices			
	There are plans for the orientation of officials			

FOCUS AREA	COMPULSORY CRITERIA	YES	NO	COMMENT
COMMUNICATION	There is a plan to report regularly on office activities and challenges around COVID-19			
	There is a communication protocol to prevent the spread of fake news			
	There is a policy to protect officials from stigmatisation after testing positive for COVID-19			
	There is a communication strategy to disseminate information to officials through social media, newsletters and community radio as quickly and effectively as possible.			
	There is a plan to make essential contact details of the Department, Department of Health and the Department of Social Development available to officials			
	There is a plan to introduce an online system for submission of documents such as submissions and various forms for approval			

FOCUS AREA	COMPULSORY CRITERIA	YES	NO	COMMENT
GG AND SUBSIDISED CARS	GG cars have been sanitised			
	There are plans to ensure that all pool cars are sanitised twice daily			
	All pool cars and subsidised cars will not carry more than 3 officials at a time			

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	All occupants of pool cars and subsidised cars will wear face masks and gloves			
	All occupants of pool cars will sanitise their hands before using the vehicle and after using the vehicle			

## 8. CONCLUSION

Schools are expected to ensure adherence to these guidelines in order to prevent the spread of the disease. Circulars and other relevant directives maybe be issued from time to time to adjust, enforce and strengthen these guidelines and related expectations.

## 9. REFERNCES

- Draft standard operating procedures for the containment/management of covid-19 for childcare facilities, schools and school communities.
- Circular No. 07 of 2020, DPSA
- Circular No. 18 of 2020, DPSA