



basic education

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Department:  
Basic Education  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

**PRECONDITIONS FOR THE  
DEVIATION OF INDEPENDENT  
SCHOOLS AND EARLY  
CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT  
(ECD) CENTRES ON COVID-19**

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## **PRECONDITIONS FOR THE DEVIATION OF INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS AND EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT (ECD) CENTRES**

### **1. Preamble**

The Minister of Employment and Labour issued directives in terms of Regulation 10(8) of the National Disaster Regulations, as published in Government Gazette No 43257 dated 29 April 2020, on the COVID-19 Occupational Health and Safety Measures in Workplaces Covid-19 (C19OHS). These directives outline the obligations of employers before re-opening their operations.

Every independent school and ECD centre must ensure strict compliance with these regulations. It is advisable for independent schools and ECD centres, in addition to these regulations, to also familiarize themselves with the guidelines of the Department of Basic Education (DBE) in respect of the re-opening of public schools as set out in the following documents:

- a. The Criteria for Re-opening of Schools based on De-concentrating and Social Distancing in Schools - this contains the checklist and the compulsory criteria already referred to;
- b. The Standard Operating Procedure for Screening of Learners and School Personnel in South African Schools - this contains a number of measures to ensure that occupational health and safety requirements will be met;
- c. The 2020 School Recovery Plan for Post COVID-19 Lockdown - again part of that plan seeks to ensure the safety of learners and educators;
- d. The COVID-19 Risk-Adjusted Strategy for Basic Education;
- e. The Guidelines for Schools on Maintaining Hygiene during the COVID-19 Pandemic;

- f. The Risk and Mitigation assessment done by the Department; and
- g. A summary of the Risk and Mitigation Plan for the Phasing-in of the Re-opening of Schools.

These documents are available to independent schools and ECD centres on request.

**2. As is evident in the guidelines of the DBE for the re-opening of public schools, it is advisable that the following general conditions should be adhered to by independent schools and ECD centres:**

A COVID-ready Workplace Plan must be developed prior to the re-opening of an independent school and ECD centre. The plan must include the timetable, setting out the phased return to school of learners, workers and students to enable appropriate measures to be taken to mitigate the spread of the virus in the school. **Compliance with the social distancing of 1,5 metres as per the Regulation applies to every school. In order to ensure compliance with health, safety, and social distancing requirements, school facilities must operate at 50% or less of their capacity at any given time.**

**The principal must consider a cautious phasing process, bringing in one grade at a time. Schools with few learners but ample space are an exception in that they can bring all grades at once without contravening the required social distancing requirements. At no point should the school have the full capacity of learners to ensure compliance with recommended physical/social distancing of 1.5 metres between learners. Similarly, schools with large enough facilities to comply with health, safety, and social distancing requirements may not necessarily be affected. Such schools should operate normally provided that they ensure compliance with the health, safety, and social distancing requirements.**

- (a) Every independent school and ECD centre must require every learner, educator, staff member, parent/guardian/caregiver or visitor who enters the school premises to report whether he/she suffers from any of the following symptoms: cough, fever/ high temperature or shortness of breath. In addition, they should report any of the

following symptoms: body aches, loss of smell or taste, nausea, vomiting, diarrhoea, fatigue, weakness or tiredness.

- (b) Should a learner, educator, staff member, parent/guardian/caregiver or visitor present or advise that they have any of the symptoms outlined in (a) above, the independent school or ECD centre shall not permit the learner, educator, staff member, parent/guardian/caregiver or visitor to enter the school premises. If a person is already at school and he/she shows any of the symptoms listed in (a) above, immediately isolate the person, and require that person or in the case of a learner, advise the parent or guardian to make arrangements to be transported in a manner that does not place other persons or members of the public at risk either to be self-isolated or for a medical examination or testing.
- (c) Should a learner manifest the symptoms outlined in (a) above, the independent school and ECD centre must immediately inform that learner's parent, guardian or caregiver.
- (d) Should a learner, educator or staff member test positive for COVID-19, with guidance from the accountable health official, assess the risk of transmission, disinfect the area and any official's, educator's or learner's workstation, and take any other appropriate measure to prevent possible transmission. For those learners, educators or staff members who occupied the same area as that of a person who tests positive for COVID-19, the independent school or ECD centre must refer those learners, educators or staff members to an identified isolation area at the institution, and seek medical help.
- (e) Should a parent, guardian or caregiver who has been admitted onto the school premises be diagnosed with COVID-19, the independent schools and ECD centre must immediately inform the relevant health authorities.
- (f) If a learner, educator, staff member or worker has been diagnosed with COVID-19 and was isolated in accordance with the Department of Health Guidelines, an independent school and ECD centre may only allow that learner, educator or staff member to return to school on condition that they have undergone a medical evaluation confirming that they have tested negative for COVID-19.

**3. Conditions for employees. In this respect there are also peremptory requirements that must be implemented as set out in the Department of Employment and Labour directives.**

3.1 The school principal must undertake a thorough cleaning of the work place to ensure that it is clean and hygienic. This includes:

(a) The disinfection of all work surfaces and equipment before work begins;

(b) Cleaning of all toilets, common areas, door handles and shared electronic equipment; and

(c) The hand sanitisers must have at least 70 percent alcohol content in accordance with the recommendations of the Department of Health.

3.2 The school must disable any biometric system or make them COVID-19 proof.

3.3 Entrance and reception areas must be configured to minimize the transmission of COVID-19. Employees working in these areas should be provided with the requisite personal protective equipment (PPE).

3.4 The institution must ensure that there are hand sanitisers, soap, water and paper towels for employees.

3.5 Physical/Social distance markers should be installed in entrance and reception areas, as well as areas for where queuing is envisaged such as at the tuck shop.

3.6 The school must arrange the work space of employees, like staff room, to adhere to the one and half metres physical/social distancing guidelines to reduce the risk of the transmission of COVID-19.

3.7 The school must implement the required human resource safety protocols published particularly in terms of occupation and environmental health and safety standards.

3.8 The school principal must provide every educator and staff member, with a minimum of two face masks which they must wear at all times whilst on the school premises. The masks can also be used by educators and staff members to wear during the

commute to and from school. Wearing of face masks at the work place at all times is mandatory. Therefore, the principal must monitor measures to ensure compliance. The principal may refuse entry to the school premises where a person does not have a face mask on.

- 3.9 Hand sanitisers should be strategically placed at entrances, common areas, doorways, lifts/elevators, taps, escalators, handrails, where office equipment is shared.
- 3.10 The principal must keep all school facilities well ventilated by natural or mechanical means to reduce the viral load. Where reasonably practicable, the independent school and the ECD centre should have an effective local extraction ventilation system with high-efficiency particulate air (HEPA) filters, which is regularly cleaned and maintained, and its vents do not feed-back in through open windows. Furthermore, the filters should be cleaned and replaced in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions by a competent person.
- 3.11 The institution must take measures to screen all employees and any persons entering the workplace for any observable symptoms associated with COVID-19. As a minimum, each person entering the workplace must be screened for temperature.
- 3.12 The Principal must ensure the provision of an isolation area and clear procedures on managing those with a raised temperature (38 degrees Celsius or more) and those that may become symptomatic on site.
- 3.13 The principal should consider granting permission to vulnerable employees, like those with co-morbidities and over 60 years old, to work remotely. Employees with co-morbidities must submit relevant medical reports to the principal for consideration.
- 3.14 Meetings, as far as possible, must be conducted through electronic means. Where face to face meetings are unavoidable, such meetings should be held subject to hygiene, physical and social distancing and adequate space parameters as prescribed for containment of COVID-19.
- 3.15 All mass events at schools, including sport, choral eisteddfods or choir rehearsals, arts and other cultural festivals remain suspended until determined by the Minister or official delegated by the Minister after consultation with the Cabinet.

3.16 Every principal has an obligation to assist in enabling contact tracing in the work place. These obligations include:

- A register containing the details of all employees, visitors and service providers that enter the work place on a particular day.
- The following details should be contained in the register: date and time of entry and departure, name and surname, identity number, residential address and cellular number of all employees, service providers and visitors.

#### **4. Conditions for learners**

4.1 The distance between children should be at least 1,5 metres in each class (appropriately marked off and designated).

4.2 The school principal must provide every learner with at least two masks, which learners must wear at all times whilst at school. Parents who opt to buy masks for their children must be provided with the correct specifications approved by the Department of Health.

4.3 There should be no rotation of learners for ordinary classes (teachers should move) in the grades where this is possible so that the desks are limited to one user for the day (and are thus cleaned at the end of each day).

4.4 For classes that require rotation – such as science laboratories and computer rooms and specialist subjects – equipment, keyboards and desks will be cleaned between each rotation.

4.5 Starting and ending times as well as break times should be staggered. Schools must also consider extending teaching days and/or using platooning to maintain the acceptable physical/ social distancing requirements.

4.6 Schools could opt for any of the available timetable models suitable for their context and functionality.

4.7 As contemplated in 4.6, the timetabling models that may be considered for adopting include:

- (a) daily and weekly rotation;
- (b) bi- weekly rotation;

- (c) platooning/shift;
- (d) traditional and daily; or
- (e) hybrid of the above.

**5. Boarding facilities may open only for Grade 7 and Grade 12 under Level 3 or until deemed appropriate for the sector. The following information is aimed at providing guidelines to independent schools with boarding facilities and principals have discretion in deciding on how to phase-in learners in the boarding facilities.**

**The following preparations are required for boarding schools:**

- (a) Each boarding school is required to establish a COVID-19 committee.
- (b) Each boarding school is recommended to have at least one health professional – where possible.
- (c) Staff to be trained on basic disinfection and physical/social distancing practices. Training for every boarding employee on hand washing, hand sanitisation, cough etiquette and other necessary prevention measures is mandatory.
- (d) Cleaning staff to be equipped with basic personal protective equipment (PPEs).
- (e) All buildings to be cleaned and disinfected.
- (f) Each boarding school is required to have a designated isolation or quarantine accommodation with a separate toilet. The isolation room is a short-stay room and is there to accommodate boarders for a short period of time while they wait for their parents to fetch them.

**NB. Boarding school authorities must ensure that all guidelines are met before operating.**

(a) Phased return framework

- i. No more than 50% capacity of the boarding house during Level 3 (1 June 2020)

- ii. The principal may gradually increase the number of learners after two-weeks of opening of boarding facilities (14 June 2020) without exceeding the 50% capacity of the boarding house and 1,5 metre physical/social distancing requirement.
- iii. The return to the boarding school must be aligned to the overall return schedule for schools.
- iv. Consideration should be made for boarders with underlying relevant medical co-morbidities including to continue learning from home via the virtual learning platforms.

(b) Learners returning across national borders

- i. All learners travelling from outside of South African borders must serve the required 14 days of quarantine in an approved facility.
- ii. A medical clearance certificate attesting to the quarantine period and the absence of COVID-19 symptoms must be presented to the executive head prior to acceptance back into the boarding establishment.
- iii. Entry into South Africa is subject to a decision to be announced by the Department of Home Affairs.

(c) Preparation of facilities

- a. All boarding facilities must be cleaned and disinfected. Surfaces that are touched by many people (railings, lunch tables, taps, door and window handles, toys, teaching and learning aids etc.) must be sanitised.
- b. Schools should ensure that their water, sanitation and waste management facilities are all functioning efficiently.
- c. Schools should put specific, detailed plans in place to ensure that daily routines are implemented after learners leave the boarding establishment for school. Clean and disinfect dormitories, ablution facilities, dining and common areas especially water and sanitation facilities once a day,

particularly surfaces that are touched by many people (railings, lunch tables, sports equipment, door and window handles, toys, teaching and learning aids etc.).

- d. In order to ensure compliance with these procedures, duty checklists must be in place and boarding managers must assume full responsibility of the process to ensure effective and timeous completion.
- e. All schools should prepare and maintain handwashing stations with soap and water, and place alcohol-based hand rub (hand sanitisers) with at least 70% alcohol content in:
  - i. each dormitory,
  - ii. at entrances and exits,
  - iii. lunchrooms, staffrooms, communal boarding school rooms and toilets.

(d) General infection control

- i. Stringent physical/social distancing measures should be implemented at schools during lessons and at any time in between lessons, including breaks.
- ii. Learners' seating arrangements in all classrooms or teaching venues must be spaced at least 1.5 metres apart. In cases where the size of the classroom does not physically allow for this, larger venues should be utilised or the number of learners in the class divided into smaller groups.
- iii. Promote and demonstrate regular hand washing and positive hygiene behaviors and monitor their uptake.
- iv. Washing hands properly.
- v. Regular hand washing and sanitising routines will be explained and practiced with learners until this becomes a habitual routine.
- vi. Wash hands with clean, running water and liquid soap.
- vii. Scrub all surfaces of the hands – including backs of hands, between fingers and under nails – for at least 20 seconds.
- viii. Rinse thoroughly with running water.
- ix. Dry hands with a single-use towel or hand drier as available.

- x. Ensure soap and clean water is available at age-appropriate hand washing stations.
- xi. Place hand sanitisers in toilets, classrooms, halls, and near exits where possible.
- xii. Learners and staff must sanitise their hands whenever entering a venue.
- xiii. Ensure adequate, clean and separate toilets for girls and boys.
- xiv. Clean and disinfect school buildings, classrooms and especially water and sanitation facilities once a day, particularly surfaces that are touched by many people (railings, lunch tables, door and window handles, toys, teaching and learning aids etc.)
- xv. Use sodium hypochlorite at 0.5% (equivalent 5000ppm) for disinfecting surfaces and 70% ethyl alcohol for disinfection of small items, and ensure appropriate equipment for cleaning staff.
- xvi. Increase air flow and ventilation where climate allows (open windows, use air conditioning where available, avoid heaters, closed windows, overdressing, etc.)
- xvii. Post signs in all utilised venues encouraging good hand and respiratory hygiene practices.
- xviii. Biometric identification readers should not be used and preferably temporarily disabled.
- xix. Ensure trash is removed daily from campuses and boarding schools and disposed of safely.
- xx. All schools must have sufficient supplies of sanitisers, cleaning and disinfectant materials in place.

(e) Personal protective equipment (PPE)

Face masks:

- i. All learners and staff are to wear face masks/visors at school.
- ii. Schools will provide personal protective equipment in the form of face masks or face visors to all staff and boarders as appropriate.

(f) Temperature screening

- i. Every morning and evening, all boarding staff and boarders must be screened for symptoms of COVID-19, including a symptom check as well as temperature assessment.
- ii. Records of temperature screening must be entered and retained for future reference.
- iii. Boarding supervisors/house parents must provide a site map indicating where the screening process for respective age groups, staff, parents and suppliers will take place.
- iv. Boarding supervisors/house parents must ensure that sufficient personnel are at hand to conduct the screening process at appropriate times.
- v. Staff and boarders must have their temperature read through the use of handheld devices.
- vi. Boarders, parents, staff or suppliers exhibiting a raised temperature, of 37.5°C or above, must not be permitted access into the boarding establishment and must move to a confinement area, pending immediate return to a self-isolating facility.

(g) Room / dormitory arrangements

- i. Boarders' beds must be re-allocated ensuring that they are spaced evenly. Learners may not share or play in each other's area.
- ii. Boarders must sanitise every time they re-enter the boarding house/dormitory.
- iii. The entire boarding establishment to be cleaned and sanitised thoroughly each day.

(h) Bathrooms

- i. Three to four boarders must be allowed to brush their teeth at the same time, leaving an empty basin between each.
- ii. A vacant cubicle/shower area must be left between each boarder in the showers.

- iii. Toiletry bags must be with the learners at all times and toiletries must not be left lying on surfaces.
- iv. Boarders are not permitted to share towels, shower caps, clothes or any personal items.
- v. Liquid hand soap dispensers must be provided at the basins in the boarding house.

(i) Homework and recreation areas

- i. Sanitisers must be available on entry to the recreation/homework venues.
- ii. Homework areas will be arranged in accordance with prescribed social distancing requirements at 1.5 metre intervals.
- iii. Boarding supervisors and duty staff must ensure that prescribed physical/social distancing is practised during breaks and leisure time.
- iv. No recreational equipment such as pool cues, darts, gaming consoles, etc are to be used.
- v. Each boarder must bring a hand sanitiser bottle with a refill for his own private use - marked clearly with his name in permanent marker pen.

(j) Dining room protocol

- i. Boarding house meal times must be as normal, but the seating arrangements changed to comply with physical/social distancing requirements with boarders seated at least 1.5 metres apart.
- ii. All boarders and staff are to sanitise their hands before entry to the dining room.
- iii. The staff member on duty must administer hand sanitiser for pupils and staff.
- iv. Tape or markers must be in place to indicate the 1.5 metre physical/social distancing during the serving of meals.
- v. Cutlery, individually wrapped in a serviette, should be distributed by designated members of the kitchen staff, who will be wearing masks and gloves.
- vi. All catering staff must practice hand sanitation and be gloved and masked and hair covered at all times when serving food.

- vii. All kitchen staff shower and change into clean clothing at the beginning of a shift. No wigs must be permitted during working hours, mop caps only. Braids are permitted as long as they are completely covered by the mop cap.
- viii. The kitchen must be sanitised on an hourly basis.
- ix. The dining room must be sanitised after every meal including after boarders' meals.
- x. It is recommended that every boarder brings their own bottle or cup for juice or water, marked with their name, and be responsible for cleaning it. There should be no sharing of cups.

(k) General arrangements

- i. Daily medication must continue to be administered in the boarding supervisor's / house parent's office, but only one boarder should be permitted to enter at a time.
- ii. Laundry must be collected and delivered by grade at separate intervals to avoid congestion.

(l) In case of illness

- i. Ahead of time, informative communication must be distributed to families from the school, to ensure that boarders and their parents/ guardians are aware of the standard operating procedures pertaining to illness. Parents must not send their children to school if the children are sick or present with any of the symptoms for COVID-19.
- ii. Boarding supervisors are to ensure that all boarders' contact details for next of kin are up to date.
- iii. A list of nearby emergency rooms/hospitals/doctors must be available with the boarding supervisor/ house parent.
- iv. Should a positive case of COVID-19 be identified at a school, the boarding establishment must be closed within 24 hours and deep-cleaned and decontaminated before anyone is permitted back on campus.

v. Response to identified symptoms:

- In the event of boarders or staff presenting symptoms, they must be immediately moved into rooms specifically prepared as isolation centres. This process should be handled sensitively, without creating stigma.
- Should a boarder present with COVID-19 symptoms, the parents/guardians must be contacted immediately and advised to seek medical advice telephonically to inform the course of action in response.
- If circumstances make it impossible for parents/ guardians to make arrangements to have the boarder collected in person within 12 hours, the executive head must, subject to the consent and written confirmation of parents/ guardians, identify a suitable isolation venue within the school precinct until such time as the learner can be collected by the parents/ guardians.
- In instances when consent is not granted to the executive head by the parents/ guardians, the NICD will be contacted to confirm the location of the nearest treatment centre to accommodate the learner during isolation pending collection by the parents/guardians.
- If confirmed diagnosis after testing is for COVID-19, boarders or staff must self-quarantine at home for a minimum period of 14 days. Affected boarders and staff should produce a doctor's clearance certificate upon return to the boarding establishment.
- Schools must make the necessary arrangements with the boarder and parents/ guardians as to the manner in which schoolwork will be dealt with during the period of self-isolation, including formal and informal assessment.

(m) Lines of reporting

- i. Ahead of time, i.e. in informative communication from the school, ensure that staff, parents and learners know what to do if they or their children get sick at school.
- ii. Separate sick students and staff from those who are well – without creating stigma. The school must have an isolation room where a learner or staff member can wait on their own until such time that they are fetched or leave the school.
- iii. Should a positive case of COVID-19 be identified at a school, the school in consultation with the Department of Health, must make a determination on whether the entire school or a section of the school should be closed based on the risk assessment conducted. This decision must be made within 24 hours. The school must ensure that the premises is deep-cleaned and decontaminated before anyone is permitted re-entry.
- iv. Where a learner shows symptoms of COVID-19 the following is recommended:
  - In the case of a learner presenting with COVID-19 symptoms, the parents must be advised to seek immediate medical advice telephonically and then proceed to the medical centre to which their General Practitioner directs them.
  - If confirmed as being COVID-19 positive, they are then advised to self-quarantine at home for a minimum period of 14 days. Such a person should produce a doctor's clearance certificate upon return to school.
  - Parents should be advised to keep their children at home if they are symptomatic and seek medical advice, telephonically in the first instance. Children should produce a doctor's clearance certificate before being allowed to return to school.
  - These measures would automatically apply to the parents and siblings or other persons in that residence.

- Schools must make the necessary arrangements with the learner and parents as to the manner in which schoolwork will be dealt with during this time, including formal and informal assessment.

v. A staff member showing symptoms of the disease or has come into contact with someone who tested positive:

- Any staff member presenting with COVID-19 symptoms should be advised to seek immediate medical advice telephonically and then proceed to the medical centre to which their General Practitioner directs them.
- If confirmed as being COVID-19 positive, a staff member must be advised to quarantine as directed by the health officials.
- Such a staff member should produce a doctor's clearance certificate upon return to school.
- The identity of a staff member who has tested positive for COVID-19, in keeping with patient/medical confidentiality ethics, may not be revealed to the general community, without that person's express consent.
- The staff member must inform his/her line manager of his/her status.
- It is strongly recommended that the staff member advises his/her immediate circle of contacts.
- A form used by pathology labs must be issued to staff to write down the details of as many people as they can – with whom they have come into close and regular contact in recent time.
- the people with whom contact has been identified must be informed immediately.

(n) Communication protocols

- i. Schools must prevent stigma related to COVID-19 by using facts and reminding learners to be considerate of one another. Encourage adherence to healthy practices from the national health and education authorities.
- ii. Schools must provide regular and relevant information and material to address children's questions and concerns about the disease appropriately.
- iii. All learners or staff who are suspected or confirmed to have coronavirus, must be reported to the principal.
- iv. Reinforce, in general newsletters, that parents and guardians should alert the school and health care authorities if someone in their home has been diagnosed with COVID-19 and stay at home.
- v. **Keep parents informed about possible further academic calendar changes, particularly in relation to school holidays and examinations.**