

COVID-19 AWARENESS POLICY

2020-2021



HABITAT SCHOOL
AL JURF, AJMAN

Creation date: 25/9/2020

Next review date: April 2022

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Introduction

In order to reach the goal of reopening school as safely and as quickly as possible for in-person learning, and help school remain open, it is important to adopt and diligently implement actions to slow the spread of COVID-19 inside the school and out in the community. This means that students, families, teachers, school staff, and all community members take actions to protect themselves and others where they live, work, learn, and play by:

- Promoting behaviors that reduce COVID-19's spread
- Maintaining healthy environments
- Maintaining healthy operations
- Preparing for when someone gets sick

Guiding Principles to Keep in Mind

The more people a student or staff member interacts with, and the longer that interaction, the higher the risk of COVID-19 spread. The risk of COVID-19 spread increases in school settings as follows:

Lowest Risk: Students and teachers engage in virtual-only classes, activities, and events.

More Risk: Small, in-person classes, activities, and events. Groups of students stay together and with the same teacher throughout/across school days and groups do not mix. Students remain 6 feet apart and do not share objects (e.g., hybrid virtual and in-person class structures, or staggered/rotated scheduling to accommodate smaller class sizes).

Highest Risk: Full sized, in-person classes, activities, and events. Students are not spaced apart, share classroom materials or supplies, and mix between classes and activities.

Guiding Principles to Keep in Mind

COVID-19 is mostly spread by respiratory droplets released when people talk, cough, or sneeze. It is thought that the virus may spread to hands from a contaminated surface and then to the nose or mouth, causing infection. Therefore, personal prevention practices (such as handwashing, staying home when sick) and environmental cleaning and disinfection are important principles that are covered in this document. Fortunately, there are a number of actions school administrators can take to help lower the risk of COVID-19 exposure and spread during school sessions and activities.

Promoting Behaviors that reduce spread

School considers implementing several strategies to encourage behaviors that reduce the spread of COVID-19.

Staying Home when Appropriate

Educate staff and families about when they/their child(ren) should stay home and when they can return to school.

Actively encourage employees and students who are sick or who have recently had close contact with a person with COVID-19 to stay home and monitor their health. Encourage sick employees and students to stay at home without fear of reprisal, and ensure employees, students, and students' families are aware of these policies.

Student Affairs

Following up on attendance records and the establishment of clear procedures for monitoring absent students, to identify the reasons for their absence on the same day, in order to take isolation measures and to trace those in contact, in the event of a virus infection. Offer virtual learning and telework options, if feasible.

Continuing to provide distance learning for students with chronic health conditions (after their medical reports have been approved).

Travel Declaration

Staff and students should submit the travel declaration form and also ensure they complete the 14 days' quarantine before joining the school.

Health declaration

Students who come under the high risk category should submit the health declaration form shared by the school administration before joining.

Medical fitness certificate

Staff who come under the high risk category should submit the medical fitness certificate from any medical facility declaring they are fit to work in school settings.

Hand Hygiene and Respiratory Etiquette

- Teach and reinforce handwashing with soap and water for at least 20 seconds and increase monitoring to ensure adherence among students and staff.
- If soap and water are not readily available, hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol can be used (for staff and older children who can safely use hand sanitizer).
- Encourage staff and students to cough and sneeze using a tissue or within their elbows. Used tissues should be thrown in the trash and hands washed immediately with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.
- Students, teaching and administrative staff and support services employees are instructed not to exchange equipment, and to avoid shaking hands when greeting.

Face Masks

Face masks are meant to protect other people in case the wearer is unknowingly infected but does not have symptoms. Teach and reinforce use of face masks. Face masks should be worn by staff and students (particularly older students), and are most essential in times when physical distancing is difficult. Individuals should be frequently reminded not to touch the face mask and to wash their hands frequently. Information has been provided to staff, students, and students' families on proper use and removal of face masks. Students will have to bring extra face masks along with them to the school.

Note: Face masks should not be placed on:

- Children younger than 6 years' old
- Kindergarten teachers will wear face shields in classroom to best adapt to their teaching methodologies
- Anyone who has trouble breathing or is unconscious
- Anyone who is incapacitated or otherwise unable to remove the face masks without assistance.

Adequate Supplies

Support healthy hygiene behaviors by providing adequate supplies, including soap, hand sanitizer with at least 60 percent alcohol (for staff and older children who can safely use hand sanitizer), paper towels, tissues, disinfectant wipes, face masks (as feasible) and no-touch/foot-pedal trash cans.

Signs and Messages

Post signs in highly visible locations (e.g., school entrances, restrooms) that promote everyday protective measures and describe how to stop the spread of germs (such as by properly washing hands and properly wearing face masks).

Broadcast regular announcements on reducing the spread of COVID-19 on PA systems.

Include messages (for example, videos) about behaviors that prevent the spread of COVID-19 when communicating with staff and families (such as on school websites, in emails, and on school social media accounts).

Maintaining Healthy Environments

Habitat School will be implementing several strategies to maintain healthy environments. Habitat School will be implementing several strategies to maintain healthy environments.

Cleaning and Disinfection

Classrooms should be cleaned and sterilized on a regular basis, as recommended by the National Emergency Crisis and Disaster Management Authority. Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces (e.g., playground equipment, door handles, sink handles, drinking taps) within the school and on school buses daily or between use as much as possible. Use of shared objects (e.g., gym or physical education equipment, art supplies, toys, games) should be limited, or cleaned between use.

Transportation Services

Reduction has been made in school bus capacity to 50%, while registering lists of students' names.

Transport vehicles (e.g., buses) used by the school, drivers should practice all safety actions and protocols as indicated for other staff (e.g., hand hygiene, face mask). Adherence to bus sterilization before the first trip and after each trip, using cleaning and sterilization materials approved in conjunction with the supplier.

Ensure safe and correct use and storage of cleaning and disinfection products including storing products securely away from children.

Cleaning products should not be used near children, and staff should ensure that there is adequate ventilation when using these products to prevent children or themselves from inhaling toxic fumes.

Shared Objects

Discourage sharing of items that are difficult to clean or disinfect. Keep each child's belongings separated from others' and in individually labeled containers, cubbies, or areas.

Ensure adequate supplies to minimize sharing of high touch materials to the extent possible (e.g., assigning each student their own art supplies, equipment) or limit use of supplies and equipment by one group of children at a time and clean and disinfect between use.

Avoid sharing electronic devices, toys, books, and other games or learning aids.

Ventilation

Ensure ventilation systems operate properly and increase circulation of outdoor air as much as possible, for example by opening windows and doors. Do not open windows and doors if doing so poses a safety or health risk (e.g., risk of falling, triggering asthma symptoms) to children using the facility.

Water Systems

To minimize the risk of diseases associated with water, take steps to ensure that all water systems are safe to use after a prolonged facility shutdown. Drinking water systems should be cleaned and sanitized, but encourage staff and students to bring their own water to minimize use and touching of water taps.

Modified Layouts

Space seating/desks should be placed 6 feet apart. Turn desks to face in the same direction (rather than facing each other), or have students sit on only one side of tables, spaced apart.

Create distance between children on school buses (g., seat children one child per row, skip rows).

Physical Barriers and Guides

Install physical barriers, such as sneeze guards and partitions, particularly in areas where it is difficult for individuals to remain 6 feet apart (e.g., reception desks).

Physical guides, such as tape on floors or sidewalks and signs on walls have been provided to ensure that staff and children remain 6 feet apart in lines and at other times (e.g. guides for creating “one way routes” in hallways).

Communal Spaces

Close communal use shared spaces such as auditoriums and playgrounds with shared playground equipment; otherwise, stagger use and clean and disinfect between use.

Add physical barriers, such as plastic flexible screens, between bathroom sinks especially when they cannot be 6 feet apart.

Food Service

Canteens will be suspended until further notice and have children bring their own nutritious meals as feasible ensuring the safety of children with food. Avoid sharing food and utensils to ensure the safety of children.

Maintaining Healthy Operations

Habitat School considers to implement several strategies to maintain healthy operations.

Protections for Staff and Children at Higher Risk for Severe Illness from COVID-19

Offer options for staff at higher risk for severe illness (including older adults and people of all ages with certain underlying medical conditions) that limit their exposure risk (e.g., telework, modified job responsibilities that limit exposure risk). Offer options for students at higher risk of severe illness that limit their exposure risk (e.g., virtual learning opportunities).

Regulatory Awareness

Be aware of Ministry policies related to group gatherings to determine if events can be held.

Gatherings, Visitors, and Field Trips

Pursue virtual group events, gatherings, or meetings. Limit any nonessential visitors, volunteers, and activities involving external groups or organizations.

Hold virtual activities and events in lieu of field trips, student assemblies, special performances, and school-wide parent meetings.

In line with the Ministry guidelines the arts and sports sessions will be converted to virtual education.

Identifying Small Groups and Keeping Them Together (Cohorting)

Ensure that student and staff groupings are as static as possible by having the same group of children stay with the same staff (all day for young children, and as much as possible for older children). Limit mixing between groups.

Designated COVID-19 Point of Contact

School has assigned a task force team to be responsible for responding to COVID-19 concerns. All school staff and families should know whom to contact and how to contact them.

Communication Systems

Put systems in place for:

Consistent with applicable law and privacy policies, having staff and families self-report to the school if they or their student have symptoms of COVID-19, a positive test for COVID-19, or were exposed to someone with COVID-19 within the last 14 days in accordance with health information sharing regulations for COVID-19 (e.g. see “Notify Health Officials and Close Contacts” in the Preparing for When Someone Gets Sick section below).

Notifying staff, families, and the public of school closures and any restrictions in place to limit COVID-19 exposure (e.g., limited hours of operation).

Parents should ensure that they inform the educational establishment management if the children suffer from any chronic disease or immune deficiency.

Parents and staff should use the ‘Al Hosn Application’ to ensure traceability in case of infection.

Leave (Time Off)

Implement flexible sick leave policies and practices that enable staff to stay home when they are sick, have been exposed, or caring for someone who is sick.

Leave policies should be flexible and should allow sick employees to stay home and away from co-workers. Leave policies should also account for employees who need to stay home with their children if there are school or childcare closures, or to care for sick family members.

Back-Up Staffing Plan

Monitor absenteeism of students and employees, cross-train staff, and create a roster of trained back-up staff.

Staff Training

Training of educational staff and security and safety officers in educational establishments, to supervise sterilization operations. Conduct training virtually or ensure that social distancing is maintained during training.

Recognize Signs and Symptoms

Before entering the premises of the school, temperature of students, staff and workers will be monitored ensuring it is below 37.5° C. In the event of suspected infection, the necessary preventive measures should be taken.

Health checks should be conducted safely and respectfully, and in accordance with ministry guidelines.

Sharing Facilities

Encourage any organizations that share or use the school facilities to also follow these considerations.

Preparing for When Someone Gets Sick

School shall consider implementing several strategies to prepare for when someone gets sick.

Advise Staff and Families of Sick Students of Home Isolation Criteria

Sick staff members or students should not return until they have met criteria to discontinue home isolation as per MOE guidelines.

Isolate and Transport Those Who Are Sick

Make sure that staff, students and parents know that they should not come to school, and that they should notify school officials (e.g., the designated COVID-19 school task force) if they become sick with COVID-19 symptoms, test positive for COVID-19, or have been exposed to someone with COVID-19 symptoms or a confirmed or suspected case.

Immediately separate staff and students with COVID-19 symptoms (such as fever, cough, or shortness of breath) at school. Individuals who are sick should go home or to a healthcare facility depending on how severe their symptoms are.

School has designated an isolation room (separate from the nursing room) with adequate ventilation, and a bathroom for patients with suspected or confirmed Covid-19 symptoms or tests positive but does not have symptoms. School nurses and other healthcare providers should use Standard and Transmission-Based Precautions when caring for sick people.

Procedures have been established for safely transporting anyone who is sick to their home or to a healthcare facility. If calling an ambulance or bringing someone to the hospital, try to call first to alert them that the person may have COVID-19.

Clean and Disinfect

Close off areas used by a sick person and do not use these areas until after cleaning and disinfecting. Wait at least 24 hours before cleaning and disinfecting. Ensure safe and correct use and storage of cleaning and disinfection products including storing products securely away from children.

Notify Health Officials and Close Contacts

In accordance with ministry guidelines, school administrators should notify local health officials, staff, and families immediately of any case of COVID-19 while maintaining confidentiality.

Inform those who have had close contact with a person diagnosed with COVID-19 to stay home and self-monitor for symptoms.

This policy is linked with all the other policies of the School.