



# GUIDELINES FOR SCHOOLS

Operating Safe and Health Schools during the  
COVID-19 Re-opening

FROM SCHOOL CLOSURES TO A  
RESILIENT EDUCATION SYSTEM

**Ghana Education Service**

## Message from the Director-General

We are in trying times – the COVID-19 (coronavirus) pandemic has presented challenges and opportunities for us and we are determined to thrive in the face of this perceived adversity. I want to assure all our community, our dear students, our gallant teachers and our extraordinary staff that we are prepared to support you. Our number one goal during these times is your health and safety. Our philosophy for the phased reopening of our schools is to move from closures to a resilient education system by 'Building Back Better', supporting our final year students (SHS 3 and JHS 3) and Gold Track SHS 2 students to complete, aggressively get all students back to school and improve the digital literacy for both students and teachers. As you settle into the new routine at school and prepare for your BECE or WASSCE and in the case of our SHS 2 Gold Track Students, complete your first semester, I want to encourage you to pay close attention to the guidelines provided and follow them. I am confident that this period of reopening will help our students complete and prepare for the next phase of their educational progression and possible career path for SHS/TVET students. Please remember that your health and safety begins with you so always wear your facemask, wash your hands with soap under running water and maintain your social distance!

Welcome back and stay safe!

**PROF. KWASI OPOKU-AMANKWA**  
Director-General

### Purpose

Our determination as a nation to beat this virus is guided by the science and the evidence. As we prepare to begin a phased reopening of our schools to allow our candidates to complete their academic work and sit for their exit exams, it is important that we establish broad guidelines for safely operating our schools. These guidelines are to help Regional Directors of Education, District Directors of Education and Heads of Schools safely operate within the country. It is important to note that the broad guidelines outlined in this document are a general guide and must be adopted where necessary to meet the peculiar

situation of each Region, District or School in accordance with the protocols and directives for re-opening of schools. It is to also provide clear and concrete steps for safe operations through the prevention, early detection and control of COVID-19 in schools and other educational facilities. Maintaining safe school operations during phased reopening period and beyond, if done well, can promote public health.

### Fundamental principles

Our fundamental principles to ensure that we keep students, teaching and non-teaching staff safe at school and help stop the spread of this disease are:

- The Sick Stay Home - Students, teachers and other staff who are sick or feel sick should not come to school
- Enhanced Hygiene Protocols – Schools should enforce regular hand washing with soap under running water, the use of alcohol rub/hand sanitizer and regular daily disinfection and cleaning of school surfaces
- Face Masking – Schools should enforce the wearing of face mask by all students and staff at all times.
- Social Distancing Protocols – Schools should promote social distancing to include the splitting of classes, limit on large gatherings, dining in batches, restrictions on sporting activities, etc.

### General Conditions

**Disinfection** – All educational institutions in the country, public and private are to be disinfected prior to the arrival of students. Responsible and accountable officers at the Regional, District and School level should ensure that their facilities are disinfected. Coordination between the different levels (Regional, District and School) must ensure that no school is overlooked. For the purpose of effective response to ensure schools are disinfected, the Regional Directors are to be the responsible and accountable officers within each region to ensure that every school is disinfected.

**Provision of WASH facilities** – All educational institutions, public and private, are to be

provided with a determined set of Veronica Buckets, soap and hand sanitizers which is being coordinated by the Regional Directors of Education. Heads of all educational institutions are to ensure that they liaise closely with their respective District Directors and Regional Directors of Education.

**Provision of Facemasks** – All returning students, teaching and non-teaching staff are to be provided with a set of 3 washable and reusable Facemasks which is to be worn at all times to, during and from school.

**Mapping of all schools to health facilities** – All educational institutions are to be mapped to health facilities. Heads of educational institutions are to liaise with their respective District Directors of Education who are to work hand-in-hand with the District Health Directorates to complete the mapping process where it has not been completed. Each Head of School is to ensure that they establish their direct emergency protocols with their health institutions including the assignment of a healthcare professional to each educational institution.

**Splitting of Classes** – As part of ensuring that schools observe the social distancing protocols, heads of schools must fundamentally adhere to the splitting of all existing returning classes to ensure that at the Senior High School level, no class is larger than 25 students and at the Junior High School level, no class is larger than 30 students. Heads of Schools are to use the additional empty classrooms that are available because of the other classes of students who are not to return to school during the initial phase of reopening.

**No mass gathering** – During this period and in accordance with the social distancing protocols, there should be no mass gatherings in school. This means that assembly and other large group activities should be limited to the classrooms and to the approved class sizes. Boarding schools should ensure that boarding is organized in batches to reduce overcrowding and promote social distancing. As a general rule, dining tables that take 12 students normally should reduce its seating capacity to 6 students and tables that

normally take 10 students should reduce its seating capacity to 5 students.

**No sports and sporting events** – Sporting events and activities are suspended during the initial phase of reopening. No school, district, regional or national level sports are to be organized or attended during this period.

**Schools not available for outside group** – During this phase of reopening and until further notice, schools are not available for outside groups to organize meetings or activities on school premises. For the avoidance of doubt, in-school religious activities may continue by following the same social distancing protocols.

**No visitors allowed (Boarding schools)** – During the first phase of re-opening, visitors will not be allowed on to boarding school campus as a measure to reduce and prevent exposure of students. During the period that students are in school, the existing protocols for communicating with wards will continue to exist to allow parents and guardians access.

**Monitor school attendance** – Implement an enhanced school absenteeism monitoring systems to track both student and staff attendance and compare against usual absenteeism patterns at the school. Alert local health authorities about large increases in student and staff absenteeism due to respiratory illnesses. Accurate data on attendance will help health authorities' deal with any possible or suspected spike in the disease.

### General Protocols for students returning to school

Students must observe the following protocols in school premises:

- I. Wear masks at all times
- II. Wash hands with soap under running water or rub hands with alcohol-based hand sanitizer before entering a school compound
- III. Always observe social distancing of at least 1 meter (3 feet)
- IV. Avoid handshaking or body contact
- V. Register your details including phone numbers with school authorities

## General Protocols for School Heads

School heads must ensure these protocols are observed for all activities on school premises:

- I. Thermometer guns or thermal scanners must be provided for checking the temperature of staff and students at entry points of schools.
- II. Mandatory wearing of masks by all at all times (No mask: No entry Policy).
- III. Provision of hand washing facilities with running water and soap and/or FDA approved alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- IV. Provision of adequate waste management facilities (bins, cans, bin-liners, and single-use tissues).
- V. Provision of adequate toilet facilities for students, staff, and visitors.
- VI. Ensure regular cleaning and disinfection of toilet facilities.
- VII. Ensure trash is removed daily and disposed of safely.
- VIII. Practice frequent cleaning and disinfection of surfaces, classrooms, workstations, canteens, common facilities, and all points of human contacts such as door handles, switches of fans, lights, air conditioners, remote controls, and computers. Preferably every 1-2 hours depending on the rate of utilization.
- IX. Provide adequate ventilation, i.e. open windows to allow for the maximum circulation of fresh air, if possible, to avoid confined air-conditioned offices and classrooms.
- X. Make classroom seating arrangements such that students or chairs are at least 1 meter away from each other.
- XI. Designate a holding room or area where a student who becomes sick at school premises can be isolated from others while making arrangements for evacuation.
- XII. Follow established evacuation procedures (as outlined in Annex 1) to

enable evacuation if a student becomes sick in school and has to be evacuated.

- XIII. Display approved health promotion materials on COVID-19 at vantage points to remind students to keep to social distancing protocols, wearing of the masks, regular hand washing, coughing, and sneezing etiquette.
- XIV. School canteens must adhere to the protocols and preventive measures in Annex 2.
- XV. Enforce a No handshake, No hugging, and No Spitting policy at all times.
- XVI. Form COVID teams and members should be trained in Health Promotions Prevention Measures, Infection Prevention and Control (IPC) protocols, and Evacuation Protocols.
- XVII. The COVID team should **call 112 or 311** for support to enable evacuation in an event that someone develops fever, cough, and difficulty in breathing during school hours.
- XVIII. The Ghana Health Service - Health Promotion Division, will lead an institutional health education training to empower SHEP coordinators to conduct regular training for teachers and pupils/students on personal hygiene as well as supervise adherence to safety protocols across the country.

## Boarding schools/SHS AND TVET

- Dining halls should be kept clean always
- Attendance to dining halls should be in batches to ensure social distancing
- Tables and benches at the dining halls should be disinfected after each batch
- There should always be Veronica Buckets and soap available to encourage hand washing at all times
- Pantry bowls, plates, and utensils used should be washed immediately after use and kept very clean
- Cooks and pantry men should be medically screened and certified. They should always wear face masks and clean aprons and caps
- Avoid large assemblies and always maintain social distancing in the classroom, staff common rooms, and offices or at the school compound.

- Class size for SHS should be a maximum of 25 students
- Arrangement in the dormitories should be well spaced to make room for social distancing

***In Boarding Schools, there must be regular health awareness meetings held by every House where hygiene education is promoted and intensified***

#### **Procedures for wearing a mask**

- First, wash hands with soap under running water or use alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- Place the mask over the bridge of your nose
- Fit tightly but comfortably against the side of the face
- Then place the elastic bands behind your ears or tie the ropes around your head
- Stretch the mask downwards to cover your chin
- Allow for breathing without restriction
- Avoid touching the mask while using it; if you do, clean your hands with alcohol-based hand sanitizer or wash your hands with soap under running water
- Replace the mask with a new one as soon as it is wet and wash after each use.

#### **How to Care for Cloth Mask**

- Cloth masks should be washed daily.
- Remove mask and put in a bowl of warm soapy water
- Wash it well until clean, rinse under running water and dry the mask in the open sun
- Iron mask and seal it in a plastic bag until ready for use
- If you notice any damage or change in shape, it is time to change it

#### **Washing hands properly**

**Step 1:** Wet hands with safe running water

**Step 2:** Apply enough soap to cover wet hands

**Step 3:** Scrub all surfaces of the hands – including backs of hands, between fingers and under nails – for at least 20 seconds

**Step 4:** Rinse thoroughly with running water

**Step 5:** Dry hands with a clean, dry cloth, single-use towel or hand drier as available

## SPECIFIC GUIDELINES FOR RE-OPENING OF SCHOOLS

### SENIOR HIGH SCHOOLS

1. All final year students in Senior High Schools shall report for school on 22<sup>nd</sup> June, 2020.
2. All 2<sup>nd</sup> year Gold track students shall report to school on 22<sup>nd</sup> June 2020
3. A class size shall not exceed 25 any point in time.
4. All day students in schools which run day/boarding shall report to the boarding house as boarders.
5. All affected students in purely day schools shall continue as day students.
6. Schools should spread out the various dormitories to ensure social distancing protocols.
7. Each boarding school shall earmark a dormitory (male and female in a mixed school) as potential isolation centre should there be the need to isolate any student.
8. School infirmaries should be opened at all times and a full-time nurse shall be stationed to provide first aid services.
9. Each school shall be mapped to a particular health facility to which the school shall report any emergency.
10. Each student and staff shall be supplied with three useable face mask which shall be worn at all times.
11. All school programmes that bring the whole school together, like sports, cultural activities and assemblies are frozen.
12. Visiting to the schools by non-staff and other not essentially required personnel are also frozen.
13. The schools shall be opened for academic work and revision for six (6) weeks and thereafter write their final examinations for final year students.
14. The second year Gold Track students shall finish up the second part of their first semester of 40 teaching days and return home.

- Every school shall mount veronica buckets and provide soap and hand sanitizers for ensuring regular observance of the hygienic protocols and these shall be enforced among both staff and students.

- All staff and students shall be supplied with usable face masks which shall be worn at all times.
- All school programme which bring students together like sports, cultural activities and assemblies are frozen.

## JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOLS

- Final year Junior High School students shall return to school on 29<sup>th</sup> June, 2020.
- They shall be in school for a period of eleven (11) weeks and thereafter write their final examinations.
- Each class shall not have more than 30 students at any point in time.
- The necessary social distancing protocols shall be observed and enforced in all schools.
- Classes shall be from 9am to 1pm each day and there shall be no breaks for which students will be allowed to roam about on the compound.
- There shall be breaks in between lessons but these shall be observed in the classrooms.
- Students are permitted and allowed to visit and use washrooms but these should be regulated to ensure hygiene and prevent breach of the safety and social distancing protocols.
- Parents are encouraged to provide snacks to their wards which we recommend should be more of fruits and other valuable immune boosting food items.
- Selling of food on the school compound shall be frozen for the time being.
- Visiting to the schools by non-staff and not essentially required persons shall be restricted.
- Schools shall reserve classrooms as isolation centres to be used should it become necessary to isolate any student.
- Each school shall be mapped to a health facility to which all emergencies shall be reported.

## COVID-19 DOs & DON'Ts FOR STUDENTS

DO	DON'Ts
Always wear a face mask to cover your nose and mouth	Don't wear your face mask on your chin
Wash your cloth face mask daily	Avoid touching the front part of mask while using it
Wash your hands with soap under running water regularly	Don't wear a dirty face mask
Use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer frequently.	Don't share your face mask with anybody
Cover your mouth with a tissue or bent elbow any time you cough or sneeze	Avoid touching your nose, mouth or eye with unwashed hands
Observe personal hygiene	Don't litter the compound with used tissue
Dispose of used tissue into a bin	Don't shake hands or hug anyone
Keep a distance of at least 1 meter(3 feet) from a friend at all times	Don't share personal items with anybody
Stay on campus	Don't spit around
Inform house/hall master or mistress when unwell	Don't leave campus if not very necessary
Eat nutritious food with fruits and vegetables	Don't self-medicate when unwell
Register your name daily in the attendance register	Don't give names to people infected with COVID-19; show concern and love
Sleep well and avoid stress	Don't go to crowded places