

# Advice and guidelines to the educational sector for the re-opening of primary and secondary schools in Malta

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## Preamble

These guidelines are applicable for primary and secondary schools for the scholastic year 2020/21, thereby referred to as 'School/s' in this document. Each School should adapt these guidelines according to the specific setup of the School itself and in line with other guidelines as issued from time to time by the Public Health authorities.

**These guidelines are meant to mitigate, as much as possible, against the transmission of COVID-19. Although the risk of infection is reduced, it can never be completely eliminated. Parents/guardians and students need to understand that a risk of transmission will still exist even if these guidelines are rigorously followed and implemented.**

## Executive Summary

1. The smaller the cohort size for in-person learning the lower the risk to students, staff and their families. Schools are enjoined to keep the **size of each bubble or cohort as small as is feasible.**
2. Maximum efforts should be made to maintain an adequate physical distance of **1.5 metres** between students.
3. Mixing of students should be minimized as much as possible.
4. Children over 3 years of age should be advised to wear masks and/or visors in the common areas and on school transport but this is not necessary within their own classrooms or when they are in the presence of the members of the same bubble/cluster. At senior/secondary school level (for students born in 2009 or earlier), it is recommended that students wear masks and/or visors at all times, including in their class, besides in common areas and on transport. Exceptions to the wearing of mask or visors is when students are exercising. Refer to Public Health guidance on the use of masks and visors<sup>1</sup>.
5. Staff members are required to wear a face mask and/or visor at all times when in the presence of others (both other staff/ students).
6. Considerations must be made for all staff members in staff rooms to keep an adequate physical distance of two metres from other staff members. It must be ensured that in staff rooms, adequate care is taken to avoid mixing of staff members and where desks are used for corrections, persons always maintain the requisite social distance. If a system of 'hot desking' is in operation, each person should be responsible to clean the surfaces and shared electronics with suitable agents before and after use. Meetings should be held virtually wherever possible.
7. Secondary school children generally move around classes depending on their subjects of choice. Very accurate records would need to be kept of the movements of students

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<sup>1</sup> [https://deputyprimeminister.gov.mt/en/health-promotion/covid-19/Documents/mitigation-conditions-and-guidances/Standards\\_Use\\_of\\_Face\\_Masks\\_And\\_Visors.pdf](https://deputyprimeminister.gov.mt/en/health-promotion/covid-19/Documents/mitigation-conditions-and-guidances/Standards_Use_of_Face_Masks_And_Visors.pdf)

at all times in order to facilitate contact tracing by the Public Health authorities should there be a COVID-19 positive case. This information would be used when carrying out the risk assessment by the Health Authorities.

8. Similarly carrying out lessons outdoors dilutes the presence of the viral particles in the air thus contact tracing would consider this as a mitigating factor against spread when considering close contacts who should be placed in quarantine.
9. Recommend shorter duration of lessons to reduce accumulating exposure between students.
10. Enforce the policy of staying home if unwell for both students and staff members.
11. In such a situation of sustained community spread of coronavirus, one must view the guidance for educational institutions as being bi-directional, on occasion partial/full school closures may need to be instituted with learning continuing by virtual means until it is possible to resume in-person learning again.

## General Information on COVID-19

Coronaviruses are viruses which cause respiratory symptoms ranging from the common cold to more serious illnesses such as Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS) and Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS). They are a family of viruses which are present both in humans and in animals. They are spread from one person to another through:

1. Coughing and sneezing (via droplets)
2. Hands which have become contaminated with the virus after touching contaminated surfaces or
3. Through direct contact with a person infected with the coronavirus (such as caring for a sick person)

For further information on how the virus is transmitted, the symptoms of the illness and what to do if sick or have symptoms, refer to:

<https://deputyprimeminister.gov.mt/en/health-promotion/covid-19/Pages/symptoms.aspx>

<https://deputyprimeminister.gov.mt/en/health-promotion/covid-19/Pages/resources.aspx>

## Opening schools

It is imperative that schools reopen for the next scholastic year. Children should return to their education during the coronavirus outbreak, as students are more likely to be harmed if they don't attend school than by becoming infected with COVID-19. This document aims to provide guidance and advice to educators for the opening of schools in the next scholastic year. Whilst the primary aim is that of having students physically present in school, it should also be acknowledged that the opening of schools will bring different households together who would not normally mix. Re-opening of in-person learning is a balance of the educational needs of the students and taking the necessary precautions to minimise the risk of transmission of COVID-19 to the school community and beyond.

This guidance has been developed in the context of the current available evidence and contextualised to the current epidemiological situation. This remains subject to review once evidence and contexts change.

The mixing of households which will result from schools re-opening must be viewed in the wider context of the public health mitigation measures which are currently adopted in the wider community setting.

These guidelines apply to all primary and secondary schools in Malta and Gozo.



## Epidemiological Considerations

In considering the reopening of schools, the following epidemiological factors need to be considered:

### The prevailing local epidemiological situation

The level of community transmission at any point in time will provide an indication of the risk of spread of COVID-19 positive cases within a school community. This is evaluated in several ways. The Reproduction Factor ( $R_t$ ) gives an indication of the degree of person to person spread i.e. community spread of the virus. Other epidemiological factors such as the proportion of PCR testing per capita and the positivity rate are also taken into consideration. A 7 to 14 day incidence rate is also calculated as well as the % of epi-linked clusters amongst the positive cases. The greater the transmission rate, the greater the probability of encountering a positive case within a school environment since the community and schools are closely interlinked as the level of risk in one reflects the level of risk in the other.

### The mitigation factors which can be introduced within the schools

There is a possibility that in view of infrastructural differences, the degree and level of effective mitigation can be different between one school and another. Mitigation measures can be scaled up and down according to the level of community spread and also in the eventuality of an outbreak within a particular school.

### Current evidence

Current evidence surrounding the mode of transmission and spread of SARS-CoV2 available to date and hence those Non-Pharmaceutical Interventions (NPI) that are effective in limiting viral transmission.

### The role of children in the spread of COVID-19

Similar to rates in the EU/EEA, in Malta, 4.5% of COVID-19 positive cases to date were children less than 16 years. Children often have mild or asymptomatic illness meaning that an infection can go undetected or undiagnosed since they are less likely to be tested. When

infected, children are much less likely to be hospitalized or have fatal outcomes compared to adults. Although the evidence available on children is scanty, from the evidence currently available, it is thought that the prime mode of transmission to children is from the household or from adult to child and not horizontal transmission between children in situations where appropriate measures were implemented. However, transmission amongst adolescents follows that of young adults and not of younger children.

In countries where the epidemiological factors permitted safe re-opening of schools, the limited evidence available so far suggests that this did not significantly influence the spread in the community.

On the other hand, there are also well-known reports from Israel where schools reopened without appropriate measures in place, resulting in a resurgence of COVID-19 in the Israeli population. Consequently, Israel adopted strict measures within schools to control spread.

**Thus, a consideration of the national context and current level of community spread is paramount.**

## Principles for risk mitigation

The following general principles need to be considered as mitigating factors against the spread of COVID-19.

### Physical distancing

This is considered the main measure which mitigates against viral transmission.

Maintaining adequate spacing between persons is one of the main mitigating measures. Methods for implementing this measure include adequate distance between desks, students and staff as per recommended social distances, placing the least number of students possible in each classroom to create more space in a classroom, staggering class times, breaks and lunch times, and spending more time outdoors.

Maximum efforts should be made to maintain an adequate physical distance of **1.5 metres** between students in all directions whilst sitting in their chair.

Staff and teachers/instructors must keep **2 metres** between themselves (between staff) and between staff and students.

Activities where one would have an increased exchange of inhaled and exhaled air and the possibility of more respiratory droplets (forming and being dispersed in the air or dropping to contact surface such as during loud speech, singing, choir practice and sports) need to be avoided altogether or should take place with increased mitigation, increased distancing between students and exclusively outdoors.

### Cohorting / Social bubbles

Keeping the same group of children and educators together for the duration of the school activity including lessons, mealtimes and activity breaks constitutes cohorting.

Risk is cumulative in proportion to the number of students in the 'social bubble'. A higher number of interactions is considered to have an increased risk of contagion. Students at a decreased physical distance also pose an increased risk. The length of time in a closed indoor setting is considered to pose a higher risk compared to an outdoor activity.

Keeping students from different cohorts from mixing is critical since otherwise the concept of social ‘bubbles’ would be defeated and the risk of contagion increases proportionately to the size of the cohorts which have mixed. For this measure to be effective, the composition of the ‘bubbles’ or ‘clusters’ need to remain as constant as possible throughout the day. It is recommended that there is a designated system where the staff member is assigned to the same classroom/cluster of students over a period of time. Wherever possible and feasible, students and staff must remain within the same classroom/cluster/group, which composition should remain constant. It is recommended that the designated clusters/groups shall stay only in the room/s intended for the education of the students.

#### Use of Masks and visors

Masks and/or visors in closed community public spaces have been introduced as a mandatory measure. Evidence to date shows that wearing a mask is an effective means of preventing spread to others in conjunction with the maintaining an adequate physical distance from others. The use of masks and/or visors in schools has been implemented in various ways with some countries requiring masks even in primary school children (e.g. >6 years, in Luxembourg); in others where masks are required in the common areas within the school; and still others just require staff to wear masks (e.g. France).

Children over 3 years of age should be advised to wear masks and/or visors in the common areas and on school transport but this is not necessary within their own classrooms or when they are in the presence of the members of the same bubble/cluster.

At senior/secondary school level (for students born in 2009 or earlier), it is recommended that students wear masks and/or visors at all times, including in their class, besides in common areas and on transport.

Staff members are required to wear a face mask and/or visor at all times when in the presence of others (both other staff/ students).

Exceptions to the wearing of mask or visors is during physical activity and in specific medical and/or behavioral conditions in line with the Public Health guidance on the use of masks and visors<sup>2</sup>.

### Alternative timetabling

Timetables may need to be adjusted/changed to have smaller class bubbles or cohorts and to reduce the level of contact between the students. Staggered start times/ end times and use of different entrances around the school may decrease the crowding of children on arrival and departure from school. The idea of maintaining small clusters or bubbles of students that do not mix is a key consideration to reduce the risk of transmission. All logistical solutions need to be considered in order to achieve this aim

Examples of possibilities for distancing between groups for consideration:

- Staggered start/end times of school day
- Alternative timetabling for lessons
- Staggering lunch breaks and start/end of each lesson and start/end of school times
- Separate times for entry/exit into school and buildings, with different entrances/exits for different classes
- Establishing timetables where students stay in the same class the whole day while teachers move between classrooms
- System where teachers deliver lessons to half the class whilst the other half is in another classroom, via on-line means
- Online lessons

<sup>2</sup> [https://deputyprimeminister.gov.mt/en/health-promotion/covid-19/Documents/mitigation-conditions-and-guidances/Standards\\_Use\\_of\\_Face\\_Masks\\_And\\_Visors.pdf](https://deputyprimeminister.gov.mt/en/health-promotion/covid-19/Documents/mitigation-conditions-and-guidances/Standards_Use_of_Face_Masks_And_Visors.pdf)

### Guidance to educators and parents with sick children

As is normally the case, children tend to get sick often whilst at school. This would be more pronounced once winter sets in and influenza season starts. Whilst it is the prerogative of each attending doctor to review the status of a sick child, Public Health will be working with GPs and paediatricians to outline a framework to guide doctors, educators and parents on how to deal with sick children, including a testing protocol for children with respiratory illnesses including COVID-19. Once this is finalised, it would be communicated.

School management may wish to consider shielding students who have been certified by their caring medical specialist as having a serious underlying medical condition which would make them more susceptible to severe illness if infected by COVID-19. Alternative teaching arrangements may need to be considered on a case by case basis in line with the individual's circumstances.

## Pedagogical options under consideration

In general, there are three possible scenarios under consideration for the re-opening of schools for the 2020/2021 scholastic year.

1. All children return school for traditional classroom-based education
2. Hybrid/blended model where a mix of face to face learning and virtual lessons takes place
3. 100 % virtual learning with no face to face teaching

The choice of scenario depends on many factors including the epidemiological situation that the country is going through, the rate of community transmission and the (limited) available evidence regarding transmission chains in children and the experiences from overseas regarding how the re-opening of schools effected the extent of community transmission.

What is certain is that all schools need to be prepared to adopt all three of these approaches at some point or other throughout the next scholastic year. The on-line or hybrid option will always be a standard default or fall back for all schools and years. The reasons for this are:

- Children or Staff placed in mandatory/temporary quarantine - this includes COVID-19 positive persons or others who may have been considered a close contact of a positive case. If a positive case is detected in a school, many students and staff would need to go into quarantine. Their schooling needs to continue from home.
- Once autumn and winter sets in, many children and staff would be advised to remain home if sick. The absenteeism rate would certainly increase, and so provisions need to be made to cater for staff and students who are home sick.
- In circumstances where staff or students may need to be shielded due to a serious underlying medical condition.
- As an alternative to school-based learning in circumstances where the physical presence of students at school and in the class room may need to be reduced.

In considering the above options, the following needs to be kept in mind:

- The smaller the social ‘bubble’ or cluster the lower the risk to the individual.
- An element of at least a partial virtual learning component is necessary since the school still needs to provide learning to those who cannot attend school.
- Certain lessons such as physical education, singing<sup>3</sup>, music and drama may present additional risks and each school needs to assess these risks and mitigate in ways where students would be able to continue to attend such lessons, such as using outdoors, or minimizing student contact. This also applies to after school activities.
- The legislation related to school absenteeism could be revised and adapted to enable those who can learn from home to do so.
- Active consideration must be given to those children with special education needs who were already disadvantaged in a non-COVID scenario and whose achievements may have already been seriously compromised with school closure in the last 4 months of the 2019/2020 scholastic year.
- Measures must take into consideration the potential limitations that may exist for children coming from lower socioeconomic strata.

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<sup>3</sup> [https://deputyprimeminister.gov.mt/en/health-promotion/covid-19/Documents/mitigation-conditions-and-guidances/Standards-for-Choirs\\_27Aug20.pdf](https://deputyprimeminister.gov.mt/en/health-promotion/covid-19/Documents/mitigation-conditions-and-guidances/Standards-for-Choirs_27Aug20.pdf)



## Measures for staff

- A Training and Information Pack should be produced by the schools for all staff working in schools.
- Staff members are required to wear a face mask and/or visor at all times when in the presence of others (both other staff/ students).
- Staff are to maintain a distance of at least 2m between themselves and with students.

Considerations must be made for all staff members in staff rooms to keep an adequate physical distance of two metres from other staff members. It must be ensured that in staff rooms, adequate care is taken to avoid mixing of staff members and where desks are used for corrections, persons always maintain the requisite social distance. If a system of 'hot desking' is in operation, each person should be responsible to clean the surfaces and shared electronics with suitable agents before and after use. Meetings should be held virtually wherever possible.

- School management may wish to consider shielding staff who have been certified by their caring medical specialist as having a serious underlying medical condition which would make them more susceptible to severe illness if infected by COVID-19. Alternative working arrangements may need to be considered on a case by case basis in line with the individual's circumstances and working arrangements.

## General hygiene recommendations

- Personal sanitising products for students are to be supplied by parents/guardians and are to be brought to school daily.
- Avoid unnecessary touching, hugging or shaking hands between members of the staff and students
- Avoid, as much as possible and depending on the case, unnecessary physical contact with children
- Hand hygiene: wash hands with soap and water regularly and carefully for at least 20 seconds, (posters of correct handwashing with visuals should be attached in kitchens and bathrooms), where water and soap is not immediately available use hand sanitizer. Washing of hands and use of sanitisers at the School shall be rigorously monitored and performed at regular intervals
- If possible, do not touch the face, especially the mucous membranes, with your hands, i.e. do not touch the mouth, eyes and nose
- If possible, do not touch publicly accessible objects such as door handles or elevator buttons with your full hand or fingers,
- It is recommended that, if possible, staff attend the staff room at staggered times. They are to remove their mask only to eat/ drink. It is important that the cumulative time a staff member spends in the staff room is less than one hour, whilst always maintaining an adequate physical distance from others.
- Sneezing/coughing should be in disposable tissues, which are then disposed of immediately in a closed and lined bin. If a tissue is not available sneeze/cough into flexed elbow. Keep the greatest possible distance when coughing or sneezing; it is best to turn away.
- Frequent hand washing with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, and sneezing or coughing in sleeves, by staff, are strongly recommended in order to guide students under their care to get used to these practices even by modelling good practices.

## Operational considerations

- There are to be no large gatherings or assemblies
- Where possible and appropriate, the students and desks should all face in the same direction and none should be facing each other.
- During the lessons it is very important that there is no unnecessary contact between students, or between students and staff members.
- Daily attendance of students should be taken for each classroom/group and capacity monitoring should be done through regular daily checks.
- Parents/guardians of students with underlying health conditions should discuss attendance at the School with their doctor and also with the Management of the School, in order to assess the level of risk for the child to attend the School. The decision to attend rests with the parents/guardians of the student.
- Parents of students have to take their own temperature and that of their children in the morning before attending School. If there are signs of illness before attending the School, the students should not be taken to the School. Annex 1 provides a daily checklist to assist parents/guardians in assessing their children's health status before going to school.
- Staff who feel unwell or are sick are not to go to work.
- Staff and students are to have their temperature taken outside the premises during drop-off. If a staff member or student has a temperature of more than 37.2°C or appears sick, the staff member and student is not to be admitted to the School.
- Hand hygiene stations should be set up at the entrance of the School, so that staff and students can clean their hands before they enter. If a sink with soap and water is not available, provide hand sanitizer with at least 70% alcohol at reception and in each classroom.
- Keep hand sanitizer out of the young children's reach and supervise appropriate use.

- It is advisable that where a physical distance of 2 metres cannot be maintained in common areas (not classrooms), such as in reception areas or in the toilets at the sink stations, perspex screens should be installed. If these are installed, this should be at a 2 metre height from the ground
- Ideally the common areas should be organized for there to be a one-way flow of staff and students.
- Arrival and drop off times should be staggered and planned to limit direct contact with parents as much as possible.
- Unauthorized personnel should not enter the School. Only students, authorised personnel and Management are allowed. No parents or guardians are to be allowed in the School at any time.
- Non-essential belongings of the students shall also be discouraged, apart from communication devices, toys or educational material.
- All food items are to be carried and presented in disposable containers wherever possible, and if not, then containers are to be cleaned and wiped down before by the student.
- In case of water dispensers, these are to be used only by staff and only use personalised bottles or cups. Students are to bring their own labelled water bottle.
- Use of water fountains is forbidden. They should be either removed or disconnected.
- If common functional rooms are going to be used by different groups of students at different times in the day, the room must be cleaned and disinfected, including furniture, between each new group using the room and facilities for specific activities.
- Wherever possible, the use of outdoors is encouraged. Staggered play times can prevent too many students using the outdoor area at the same time. Games should be carried out only within the same cluster/group of students.
- No outings from the confines of the School are to be held by Schools.

- No special events such as festivals, holiday events, special performances, Open Days and visits by guests that do not form part of the service provision should be held.
- Shared food such as birthday cakes should be avoided as much as possible or provided within a separate package to each child.
- Communication from the parents/guardians with School's staff and management for day to day necessities can only be done through online services.
- Collaborators and contractors who provide agreed services to the School are to abide by these same guidelines when providing a service to the school.

## Sports Activities

### Guiding Principle

All sports/games activities carried out during school are to be guided by the guidelines regulating sports activities<sup>4</sup>. The use of gymnasiums are also permissible and guidelines should be followed<sup>5</sup>.

### Grouping

It is recommended that students engage in games and/or activities within the same group in their cluster/class.

On occasions where children from the same cluster have to be paired up for the game, measures have to be taken to ensure adequate physical distancing.

### Equipment

Since children will be using the same resources, such as balls, batons, hoops etc. during running games such as passing the batons to each other, and when practising shooting such as when passing balls to each other, the resources used should be minimal to facilitate the sanitisation of the equipment between each group. Equipment which cannot be cleaned/disinfected should not be used.

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<sup>4</sup> [https://deputyprimeminister.gov.mt/en/health-promotion/covid-19/Documents/mitigation-conditions-and-guidances/Obligatory\\_Conditions\\_And\\_Guidelines\\_For\\_The\\_Return\\_To\\_Sport\\_In\\_Malta.pdf](https://deputyprimeminister.gov.mt/en/health-promotion/covid-19/Documents/mitigation-conditions-and-guidances/Obligatory_Conditions_And_Guidelines_For_The_Return_To_Sport_In_Malta.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> [https://deputyprimeminister.gov.mt/en/health-promotion/covid-19/Documents/mitigation-conditions-and-guidances/Obligatory\\_Conditions\\_And\\_Guidelines\\_For\\_Gymnasiums\\_And\\_Fitness\\_Centres.pdf](https://deputyprimeminister.gov.mt/en/health-promotion/covid-19/Documents/mitigation-conditions-and-guidances/Obligatory_Conditions_And_Guidelines_For_Gymnasiums_And_Fitness_Centres.pdf)

## Students with disabilities

### Changing of nappies

When changing the nappy of a student with disabilities, the staff member must start by washing/ sanitising his/her hands together with those of the student. Disposable gloves must also be worn during this time. Follow safe, diaper changing procedures and these should be illustrated using a procedures poster in all diaper changing areas.

Steps should include:

- Preparation (includes putting on gloves, mask OR visor)
- Cleaning of the student
- Removal and discarding of trash (soiled diaper and wipes)
- Replacing of a clean diaper
- Washing of student's hands
- Cleaning up and disinfection of the changing station
- Washing of hands

After changing nappies, the playworker/carer must wash his/her hands again (even if gloves were used) and the nappy changing area should be disinfected with a fragrance-free bleach as a sanitizing or disinfecting solution. If other products are used for sanitizing or disinfecting, they should also be fragrance-free. If the surface is dirty, it should be cleaned with detergent or soap and water prior to disinfection.

### Feeding, or Holding a Student with Disabilities

- Staff should wash their hands, neck, and anywhere touched by a student's secretions.
- Staff should change the student's clothes if these are soiled. They should replace their own overshirt or clothing, if there are secretions on it, and wash their hands again.
- Parents are to send a change or two of clothes every day.
- Contaminated clothes should be placed in a plastic bag.

## Environmental control measures

### Ventilation

Proper indoor ventilation is essential. In order to ensure adequate circulation of air, and to reduce the level of pathogens in the air, windows and/or doors should be kept open throughout the day to allow for cross ventilation.

### Air-conditioning

If air-conditioning is to be used, this should be used in accordance with the guidelines issued by Public Health authorities<sup>6</sup>. Filters should always be cleaned well and maintained properly.

### Water Systems

All precautions must be taken to ensure that water systems are safe to prevent the risk of infections derived from water such as Legionnaire's disease. If the water supply is direct from mains, flushing of the water system by opening all taps for a few minutes should suffice. If the supply of water is through a roof tank, the roof tank should be emptied and cleaned and when the tank is re-filled the entire water system is flushed through for a few minutes. It is important that the water heater temperature is raised to 60°C. In this case, there is no need to take samples and get approval from the Environmental Health Directorate. If the School forms part of a larger complex or building and the water supply is through the complex or building main water system, please follow the procedure indicated in Annex 3. Schools may consult with the Directorate of Environmental Health for further information and advice<sup>7</sup>.

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<sup>6</sup> [https://deputyprimeminister.gov.mt/en/health-promotion/covid-19/Documents/mitigation-conditions-and-guidances/Guidance\\_Air-conditioning-and-ventilation-systems\\_23Jun20.pdf](https://deputyprimeminister.gov.mt/en/health-promotion/covid-19/Documents/mitigation-conditions-and-guidances/Guidance_Air-conditioning-and-ventilation-systems_23Jun20.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> [mhi@gov.mt](mailto:mhi@gov.mt) ; Tel: 21337333



## Cleaning of premises

- In general, the infectivity of coronaviruses on inanimate surfaces (such as wood, metal, fabrics and plastic) decreases depending on the material and environmental conditions such as temperature, humidity and UV radiation. The cleaning of surfaces remains an important measure to ensure hygienic conditions.
- Premises and resources will be cleaned daily using approved products. A combination of cleaning with soap and water and disinfection will be most effective in removing the COVID-19 virus. Both cleaning and disinfection is most effective, using a combination of household detergents and disinfectants. A detergent is designed to break up oil and grease with the use of water. Anything labelled as a detergent will work. Cleaning should start with the cleanest surface first, progressively moving towards the dirtiest surface. Change water regularly. When surfaces are cleaned, they should be left as dry as possible to reduce the risk of slips and falls, as well as spreading of viruses and bacteria through droplets. Disinfecting means using chemicals to kill germs on surfaces. It is important to clean before disinfecting because dirt and grime can reduce the ability of disinfectants to kill germs. Disinfectants containing  $\geq 70\%$  alcohol, ammonium compounds, chlorine bleach or oxygen bleach are suitable for use on hard surfaces (surfaces where liquids pool, and do not soak in). The packaging or manufacturer's instructions will outline the correct way to use disinfectant. Disinfectants require time to be effective at killing viruses. If no time is specified, the disinfectant should be left for ten minutes before removing.
- Premises need to be cleaned thoroughly between one group/cluster of students and another
- Toilets must be cleaned regularly, at least three times a day. Toilet seats, fittings, washbasins and floors must be cleaned. In case of contamination with faeces, blood or vomit, disinfectant wipes should be used after removal of the contamination with a disposable cloth soaked in disinfectant. Protective gloves and mouth and nose protection must be worn by members of staff.

- A log detailing the time when the toilet facility has been cleaned and by whom should be filled in for each toilet facility.
- The use of disposable towelling is encouraged.
- Common resources used by students must be cleaned appropriately at regular intervals and at the beginning and at the end of the day.
- Students in the same classroom and/or bubble should be encouraged to wipe down their desks and equipment before and after use.
- Special considerations using the correct agents or use of protective covers in computer labs. Similarly, libraries should consider quarantining books for a couple of days before making them accessible to other children. Exemplary hand hygiene needs to be ensured.
- Floor cleaning should be carried out more regularly and frequently throughout the day, and as necessary and as required in the case of spillages. It is recommended that where possible soft flooring should be wiped down by detergents and washed properly at the end of each day.
- The following areas should be cleaned particularly thoroughly and, if possible, several times a day in heavily frequented areas:
  - Door handles and any other handles on drawers, windows, etc.
  - Stairs and handrails,
  - Light switches,
  - Tables, phones,
  - and all other grip areas.
- All areas to be cleaned will be checked by assigned personnel and will be documented and signed by means of a check list.

## Transport

The following recommendations should be considered for school transport:

1. Increase the frequency of transport services
2. Keep journeys as short as possible
3. Retaining the same cohort/cluster of students on every journey. This is essential to allow for proper contact tracing
4. Keeping accurate records of all students on each trip
5. Keep vehicles well ventilated, keeping windows open and no air recirculation
6. Maintain safe physical distancing between students to decrease the number of occupants in the vehicle
7. All students and staff are to wear masks and/or visors at all times.
8. Availability of sanitizers in the vehicle
9. Proper cleaning of the vehicle between journeys
10. Parents of students to take temperature of their children in the morning before attending School. If there are signs of illness, the students should not go to school.

## Liaison

A COVID-19 Contact Person should be designated in each School. The Ministry for Education, the Independent Schools Association and the Church Schools will collect a list of these persons and their contact details for their respective schools for onward transmission to the Public Health authorities.

The role of this COVID-19 Contact Person would be to:

- Familiarise oneself with this guidance document and ensure this is implemented within the School;
- Organise the training of staff in COVID related mitigation measures
- Act as a contact point for staff, students and parents who may have queries with respect to the COVID mitigation measures implemented within the School;
- Ensure that when children are unwell, they are appropriately isolated as per mitigation plan and arrangements are made for collection by parent/guardian;
- In conjunction with the Education and Public Health authorities, collaborate on the development of an 'Early Warning System' which aims to look at trends in sick leave amongst staff and absenteeism amongst students to be able to predict or detect potential clusters of cases
- Serve as the designated person for liaison with Public Health authorities

## Other Guidance Documents

Other documents issued by Public Health Authorities which may be applicable to some activities which could take place during these classes.

- ✓ Guidance document for Indoor & Outdoor Swimming Pools-

[https://deputyprimeminister.gov.mt/en/health-promotion/covid-19/Documents/mitigation-conditions-and-guidances/Registered\\_Indoor\\_Swimming\\_Pools\\_And\\_Indoor\\_Entertainment\\_Areas\\_Checklist.pdf](https://deputyprimeminister.gov.mt/en/health-promotion/covid-19/Documents/mitigation-conditions-and-guidances/Registered_Indoor_Swimming_Pools_And_Indoor_Entertainment_Areas_Checklist.pdf)

[https://deputyprimeminister.gov.mt/en/health-promotion/covid-19/Documents/mitigation-conditions-and-guidances/Obligatory\\_Conditions\\_And\\_Guidelines\\_For\\_Outdoor\\_Restaurants\\_Pools\\_Hotels\\_Accommodation.pdf](https://deputyprimeminister.gov.mt/en/health-promotion/covid-19/Documents/mitigation-conditions-and-guidances/Obligatory_Conditions_And_Guidelines_For_Outdoor_Restaurants_Pools_Hotels_Accommodation.pdf)

- ✓ Guidelines for return to Sport as part of the COVID-19 transition in Malta-

[https://deputyprimeminister.gov.mt/en/health-promotion/covid-19/Documents/mitigation-conditions-and-guidances/Obligatory\\_Conditions\\_And\\_Guidelines\\_For\\_The\\_Return\\_To\\_Sport\\_In\\_Malta.pdf](https://deputyprimeminister.gov.mt/en/health-promotion/covid-19/Documents/mitigation-conditions-and-guidances/Obligatory_Conditions_And_Guidelines_For_The_Return_To_Sport_In_Malta.pdf)

- ✓ Guidance for Use of Masks

[https://deputyprimeminister.gov.mt/en/health-promotion/covid-19/Documents/mitigation-conditions-and-guidances/Standards\\_Use\\_of\\_Face\\_Masks\\_And\\_Visors.pdf](https://deputyprimeminister.gov.mt/en/health-promotion/covid-19/Documents/mitigation-conditions-and-guidances/Standards_Use_of_Face_Masks_And_Visors.pdf)

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<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/08/04/world/middleeast/coronavirus-israel-schools-reopen.html>.
- World Health Organisation. (10th May 2020). *Considerations for school-related public health measures in the context of COVID-19*.

## Annex 1 – Daily checklist for parents/guardians

It is expected that parents carry out this assessment of symptoms and signs on their child every day. If your child display any of these symptoms/ signs below he may be possibly have an infectious illness and should not be sent to school since this illness may be transmissible.

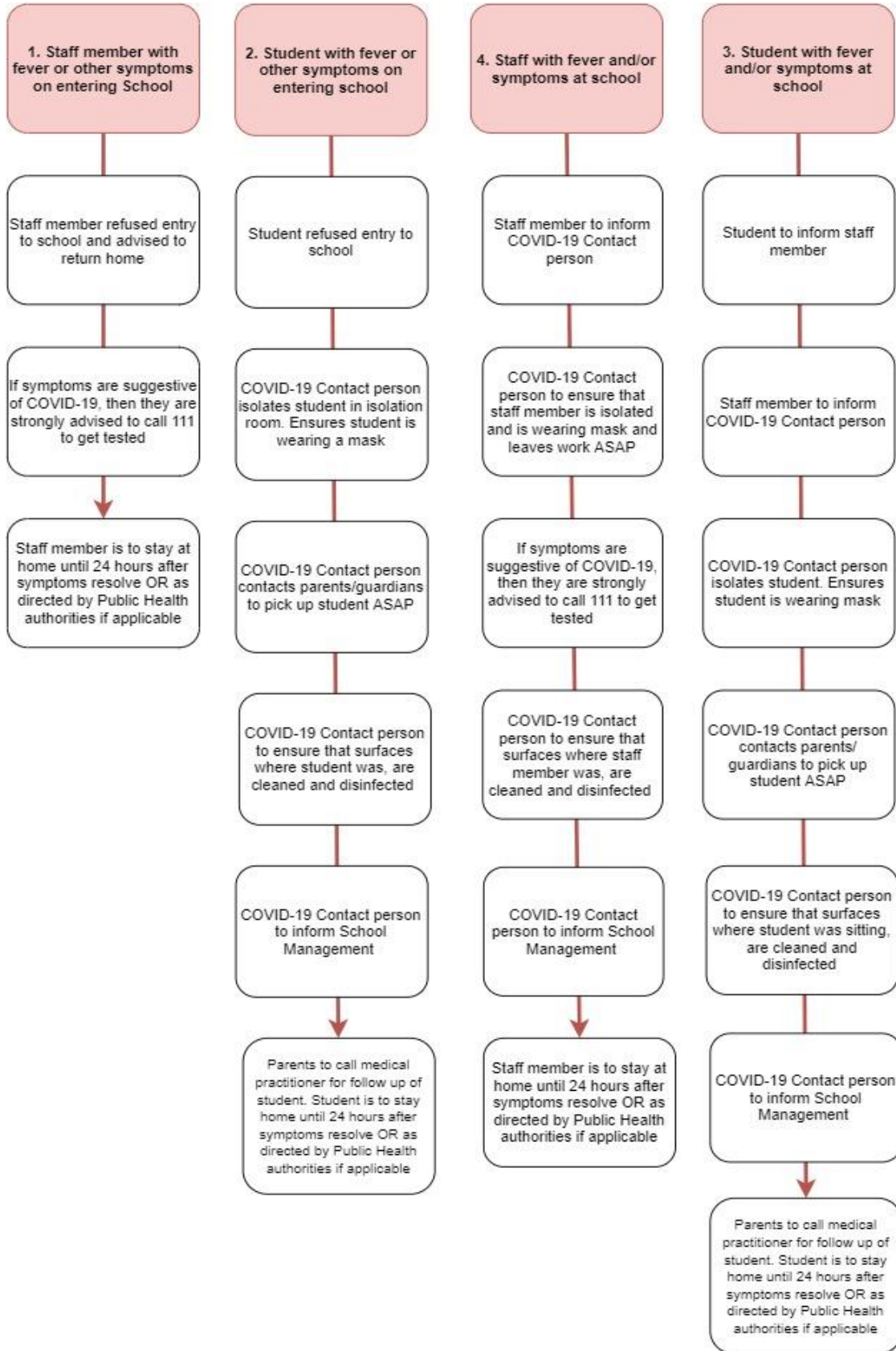
Please check your child daily for these symptoms

- A temperature of 37.2°C
- Sore Throat
- New uncontrolled cough (for students with a chronic allergic/asthmatic cough, a change in their cough from baseline)
- Diarrhoea, vomiting, abdominal pain
- New onset of severe headache, especially with a fever

History of exposure

- Has the child been in contact with anyone who was confirmed as a case of COVID-19 in the last 2 weeks
- Has the child travelled from a non-corridor country or a country on the amber list in the last 14 days

## Annex 2 - Health Procedures





- A doctor's certificate may be required before a return to school. This may vary depending on school and general epidemiological situation.
- The School is to hold accurate and timely records (time-in and time-out) of attendances and composition of groups and staff attending all times. Staff and parents/guardians and students of legal age are to sign a consent form allowing the School to provide, on request, the Public Health Authorities with any information related to the operations of the School, including personal details of the staff, parents/guardians and students attending the School. The requirement for submission of any data to the Public Health authorities is in line with the Public Health Act.

## Annex 3 – Water Systems

*Note: This annex applies only to those Schools which form an integral part of a larger complex or building, which larger complex or building has not been in use for more than 4 weeks.*

The following are the legal requirements to be carried out on the water systems prior re-opening of the premises:

1. Carry out a full system disinfection of the cold-water system, flushing through to all outlets to achieve 50 mg/l free chlorine for at least an hour checking that this level is achieved at the furthest outlets. This may be also achieved by making uses e.g. 5 mg/l for 10 hours (this all depends on the water piping system condition). It is important to top up when required throughout this process;
2. Flush out and refill the system to achieve maximum normal operating target levels of disinfection (equivalent to at least 0.2 mg/l free chlorine);
3. Refill and carry out a thermal shock by raising the temperature of the whole of the contents of the hot water storage heater from 70°C to 80°C then circulating this water throughout the system for up to three days. To be effective, the capacity and temperature of the hot water storage heater should be sufficient to ensure that the temperatures at the taps and appliances do not fall below 65°C. Each tap and appliance should be run sequentially for at least five minutes at the full temperature, taking appropriate precautions to minimise the risk of scalding;
4. Monitor temperatures and biocide levels where applicable, adjust where necessary, for at least 48-72 hours and then take Legionella samples

from sentinel outlets (microbiological samples taken before 48 hours following disinfection may give false negative results);

5. Ensure you keep all documentation for inspection by the Competent Authority, including the review and update of the risk assessment manual including monitoring data, etc., with evidence of who carried out the monitoring, add time, date and signature;

6. Laboratory results for Legionella analysis which have to be carried out at an accredited laboratory, together with all the necessary documentation referred to in point 5 above and a declaration from the private water consultant under whom this water system treatment has been carried out are to be sent to the Water Regulatory and Auditing Unit within the Environmental Health Directorate prior reopening of the establishment;

7. Once it is found that your systems of the hot and cold water are under control then the establishment can reopen.