

Guideline for reopening of schools/institutions

1. Introduction

The school/institution closures in response to the COVID-19 pandemic has presented an unprecedented risk to children's education, protection and wellbeing. Although the role of children in transmission of COVID-19 is limited and unclear, data from few studies shows little transmission in school setting.

The Ministry of Health has reinforced the surveillance system, capacity of the health professional enhanced; medical supplies are adequately stockpiled including personal protective equipment (PPE) and test kits; adequate number of testing and diagnostic facilities established and the COVID-19 Centers well established. Further, the Government has initiated many other interventions including the closure of border, regular testing of high-risk communities and frontline workers at border. These measures have reduced the risk of introduction of COVID-19 in to the country significantly.

Therefore, considering the current situation and preparedness measures put in place, schools and institutions can be opened with the public health measures outline below.

2. Rationale for re-opening

- Long school closures can result in a reversal in educational gains
- The longer children stay out of school the higher the risk of non-return
- Many children benefit from school nutritional programs and health support (for example vaccination)
- Children in school allows parents to work and earn
- Conventional teaching is effective teaching-learning and ensure coverage of the prescribed curriculum

3. General prerequisites

- Those teachers/lecturers who are working as Desuups in quarantine facilities should end their duty at least 2 weeks before and tested negative before reporting to schools /institutions
- Those teachers/lecturers who are working for COVID-19 response in other capacities should end their duty at least 7 days before and tested negative before reporting to schools /institutions
- Rest of the teachers and support staff should resume their duties at least one week before the planned date of school reopening
- All schools/colleges/institutions used as quarantine or temporary accommodation of people should be vacated, cleaned and disinfected at least few days before the proposed day of school re-opening.

Guideline for reopening of schools/institutions

- Each school/institution should designate at least two dedicated **COVID-19 Safety Focal Officers** (preferably School Health Coordinator and the Counsellor).
- The COVID-19 Safety Focal Officers will be trained by the health officials of the respective health centers
- Parent teacher meetings (in small groups) to be held few days before children resume schools for the following:
 - to inform and seek parent's support on the smooth functioning of schools/institutions
 - to make parents aware of the need to monitor their children's health and hygiene and report to school of any illnesses in their child
 - discuss any other issues of concern from parents and vice-versa
- Students should be briefed on the new norms by calling them to the school/institution a day before the start of actual classes. On this day, the following should take place:
 - A session on risk communication and preventive measures
 - A briefing and tour of new norms in the school such as handwashing stations, entry and exits points,
 - Students should be encouraged to come to school/institution right on time and leave directly to home as soon as classes are over.
- Mechanisms or rapid communication with health centers should be established and disseminated
- Line list the students and staffs with the co-morbidities (existing medical conditions) and disability as per the format in Annexure 1.
- Plan ahead and update emergency contact lists.

4. Resource and Infrastructure

There must be adequate school/institution resources and infrastructure to maintain COVID-19 prevention and control measures as follows:

- Ensure adequate hand washing stations at strategic locations
- ensure adequate number of toilets
- ensure continuous supply of water and soap in washing stations and toilets
- identify sick room to temporarily separate sick students and staff
- training for school staff on safe operations
- all schools/institutions are advised to have a thermal gunner
- flexible or partial tele-schooling
- Prepare marking for physical distancing at all locations including classroom, library and laboratory settings

5. Public health measures

- i. Clean and disinfect buildings, classrooms and toilets at least once a day, particularly surfaces that are frequently touched by many people (desks, railings, tables, sports equipment, doorknobs, window handles, teaching and learning aids etc.)
- ii. Ensure that toilets and washing stations are supplied with soap at all times
- iii. Staff and students to practice frequent hand washing and cough etiquette diligently
- iv. Encourage maintaining at least 1 meter during any school activities (may consider rearranging classroom sittings, staff room, assembly lines, multi-purpose hall etc.)
- v. Conduct daily reminders to students on hand hygiene, cough etiquette, social distancing and reporting of any illnesses.
- vi. Avoid school events that need gathering of large number of students/teachers to reduce in-person interaction (assembly, prayers, fetes, concerts)
- vii. Plan activities that need big groups to be held in open space
- viii. Students and staff **must stay home or isolated from others (boarding facility) if they are sick**. Separate anyone who suffer from flu-like symptoms time during school hours and seek medical advice
- ix. Monitor student absenteeism and get updated information daily by class teacher or health coordinators
- x. Encourage students and staff to distance themselves from outsiders
- xi. If suspected or confirmed cases occur in school- assist in identifying people who might have been exposed (contacts)
- xii. Maintain confidentiality of the student or staff member who was suspected or has tested positive to prevent stigmatization
- xiii. Plan and prepare to temporarily dismiss or cancel classes or events if the school have a suspected case
- xiv. Encourage everyone to wear cloth face mask and keep at least one-piece face mask for emergency
- xv. Develop a plan to provide special care and monitor health of most vulnerable students
- xvi. Address Mental Health/Psychosocial support needs in close coordination with health sector
- xvii. Ensure that outsiders/visitors are screened for fever before entering into the premises

6. Procedures for management if students or staff become unwell

- Ensure a procedure for separating sick students and staff from those who are well – without creating stigma
- Establish process for informing parents/caregivers, and consulting with health care providers/health authorities wherever possible.
- Students/staff may need to be referred directly to a health facility, depending on the situation/context, or sent home.

Guideline for reopening of schools/institutions

- If suspected of COVID-19, the management of the suspected case should be carried out as per the following flowchart.
- The COVID-19 focal should submit the report to the health authorities as attached in annexure 2.

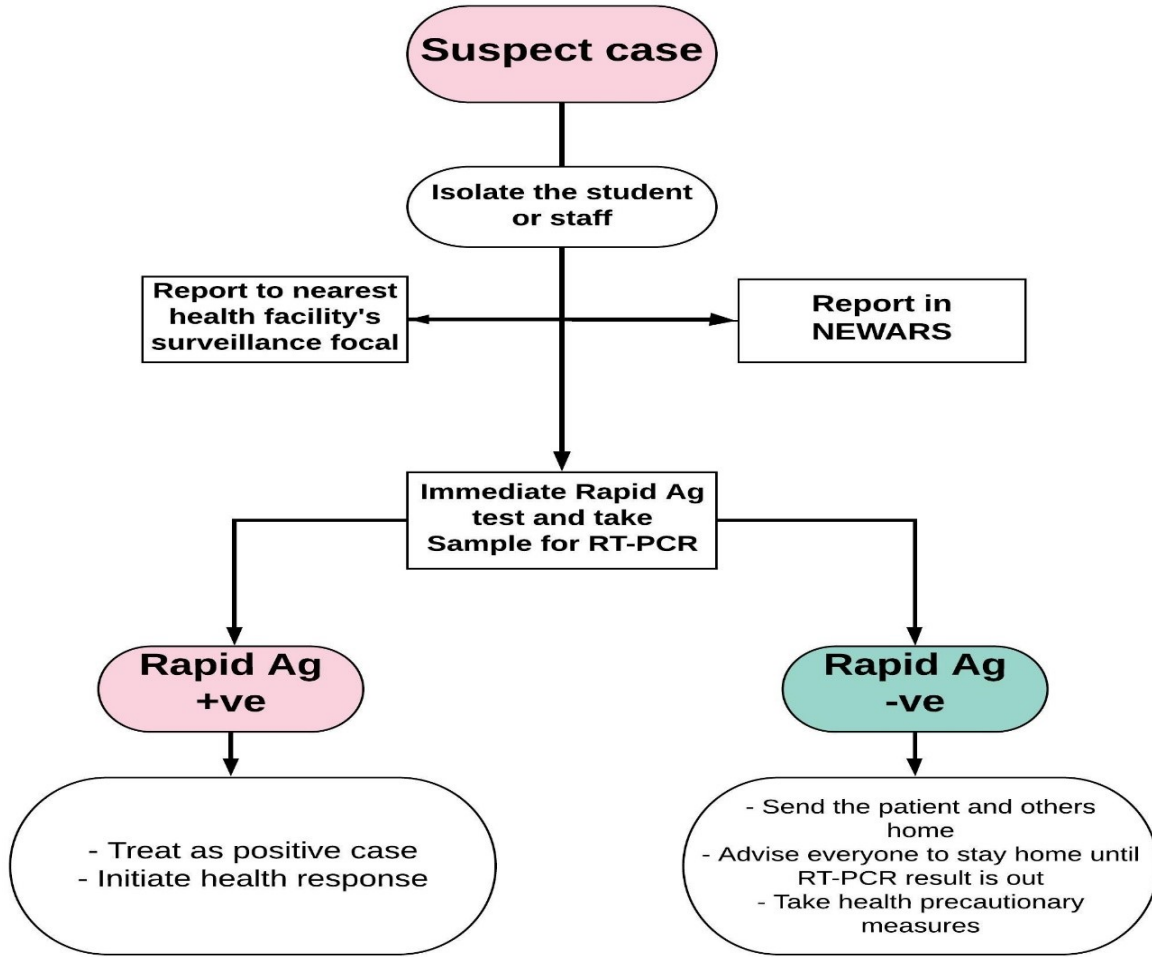


Figure 1 Management of COVID-19 suspect case in school/institution setting

7. Role of parents/caregivers and community members

COVID-19 is a new virus and many information remain unclear, especially about how it affects children. We know it is possible for people of any age to be infected with the virus, but so far there have been relatively few cases of COVID-19 reported among children.

- Parents and caregivers should understand basic information about coronavirus disease (COVID-19), including its symptoms, complications, how it is transmitted and how to prevent transmission.
- If your child is sick, keep them home from school and notify the school of your child's absence.

Guideline for reopening of schools/institutions

- Stay informed about COVID-19 through reliable sources such as WHO, UNICEF and Ministry of Health advisories. Be aware of fake information/myths that may circulate by word-of-mouth or online.
- Recognize the symptoms of COVID-19 (coughing, fever, shortness of breath) in your child
- Seek medical advice by first calling health helplines (112) or COVID-hotline (2121). Remember that symptoms of COVID-19 can be similar to those of the flu, or the common cold, which are a lot more common.
- Healthy children can be allowed to attend school unless a public health advisory or official advice has been issued
- Instead of keeping children out of school, teach them good hand and respiratory hygiene practices for school and elsewhere, like frequent handwashing, covering a cough or sneeze with a flexed elbow or tissue, then throwing away the tissue into a closed bin, and not touching their eyes, mouths or noses if they haven't properly washed their hands.
- Wash your hands often, especially before and after eating; after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing; going to the bathroom/toilets and whenever your hands are visibly dirty.

8. Role of students

Children should understand basic, age-appropriate information about coronavirus disease (COVID-19), including its symptoms, complications, how it is transmitted and how to prevent transmission. Children should stay informed about COVID-19 through reliable sources such as Ministry of Health, WHO and UNICEF advisories. Be aware of fake information/myths that may circulate by word-of-mouth or online.

Students should be advocated of the following:

- It is normal to feel worried, confused, scared or angry. Know that they are not alone and talk to someone they trust, like their parent or teacher so that they can help keep themselves and their school safe and healthy.
- Ask questions, educate themselves and get information from reliable sources
- Protect themselves and others
- Wash their hands frequently, always with soap and water for at least 20 seconds
- Remember to not touch their face with unwashed hands
- Keep a distance of at least 1 meter away from others
- Do not share cups, eating utensils, food or drinks with others
- Children should be encouraged to take leadership roles to keep themselves, their school, family and community healthy.
- Share what they learn about preventing disease with family and friends, especially with younger children/siblings
- Model good practices such as sneezing or coughing into elbow or *Hemchu* and washing hands regularly
- Children should not stigmatize their peers or tease anyone about being sick; remember that the virus can affect anyone
- Inform parents or caregiver if they feel sick, and stay home

9. Annexures

9.1. Annexure 1. Schools/Colleges/Institutions details

Name of Schools/Colleges/Institute:Gewog:

Location: Dzongkhag:

Total number of students/staffs:

No. of Boys: No. of Girls:

No. of differently abled students:

No. of students with pre-existing medical conditions:

1. Cardiovascular diseases:
2. Kidney disease:
3. Lung diseases including asthma:
4. Diabetes:
5. Hypertension:
6. Autoimmune disease:
7. Cancer:

No. of Teachers/Faculty: No. of Support Staff:
.....

Name of reporting officer..... Mobile

No:.....

9.2. Annex 2: Immediate Symptomatic Reporting Form from School/ Institution to Health Surveillance team

Students/staff suffering from fever and accompanied by any one or more of the following signs and symptoms: cough, sore throat, loss smell/ test, fatigue or breathlessness should be immediately notified to nearest local health authority with the following details.

Name of Schools/Colleges/Institute:

Gewog:

Location:

Dzongkhag / Thromde:Date:

Name of COVID-19 Safety Officer: Mobile

no.:

Email:

S N	Name	Age	Sex (F/ M)	Catego ry [Std (1) / staff (2)]	Class with secti on (if std)	Date of onset of sympt oms	Symptoms (please tick whichever signs or symptoms are present)									
							Fev er	Co ug h	Sore thro at	Loss of smel l	Loss of tast e	Fatig ue	Breat hlessn ess	Head ache	Runni ng or stuffy nose	Diarrh ea