

SoP and Policies for Reopening of School

I. Safety Operating Procedure

Emergence of new cases recently in Germany, South Korea and China after the reproduction rates (R) had dropped below the critical value of one have stoked fears of the possibility of a second wave of the pandemic. There is also no conclusive evidence of whether it is possible to develop immunity against the virus. Moreover, there is still a host of unanswered questions in regards to the characteristics of covid-19 virus and the differences in the dynamics of its interaction with adult, teenage and infant humans. An effective vaccine to counter the corona virus threat might take yet another year to develop. If we are to resume school attendance in July, then, in light of the current situation, it seems that the best course of action would be to adopt a set of rigorous measures that would effectively prevent the spread of the virus among students and staff when they are in transit between their residence and school and when they are within the school premises. To this end, we propose a two-pronged plan that would:

- A. Prevent the contagion from entering the school premises
- B. Eliminate the possibility of spread through person-to-person and surface-to-person mechanisms within the school premises.

The following measures have been designed keeping in mind that covid-19 pathogen is transmitted through air by means of small particles—respiratory droplets—over time and distance. Studies based on controlled experiments suggest that inanimate surfaces (such as door handles) that have been contaminated with the pathogen are not effective at spreading the pathogen, however, the results are not conclusive. Therefore, an effective prevention plan must include measures to prevent person-to-person transmission of the pathogen by means of respiratory droplets and person-to-surface-to-person transmission by means of objects that are commonly shared.

A. Preventing the contagion from entering school premises

1. Background checks

Background checks for all students and staff including teaching faculty, administrative, janitorial staff and transport vehicle drivers must be conducted to assess the probability of possible exposure to the contagion. The background check for an individual would entail:

- a. Checking the individual for symptoms that are caused by covid-19 infection
- b. Checking for instances of sickness among their immediate family members

- c. Checking the state of infection in localities where the individual has been residing for the past three months
- d. Checking the travel history of the individual in last three months

All individuals who have cleared the background checks will be issued a card. Access to school premises and school staff is contingent upon the possession of this card. Any individual, including staff and students, who wishes to enter the school premises is required to produce this card at the school's main entrance.

In case of any doubt as to whether an individual is a potential carrier, the individual must take a covid-19 test.

2. Sanitation measures

- a. All vehicles used to transport students and staff must be thoroughly sanitized using an alcohol-based or a soap-based sanitizer or disinfectant. This must be done at the end of every school day so that there is about a twelve-hour time span between sanitization and the next use of the vehicle.
- b. At the school's entrance, every individual must undergo check-up and sanitation routine which includes:
 - i. Temperature check using a non-contact infra-red thermometer
 - ii. Application of an alcohol-based sanitizer on hands and gloves
 - iii. Application of an appropriate cleaning substance on shoes and bags

Staff conducting and monitoring this process must wear masks and disposable gloves.

3. Canteen services

Given the current circumstances and the limitation of our resources, it is not possible to trace the origin of products that our canteen staff procure. This is a probable source of infection. Therefore, all canteen services are hereby suspended until such time as when we have ascertained the origin of the edible materials procured by our canteen staff and have verified that these materials have not been exposed to or contaminated by covid-19 virus during transport and handling.

All staff and students must bring their own food, tea and water.

4. External meetings and activities

To further reduce the risk of the contagion entering the school premises, all activities entailing face-to-face interaction with persons from outside of the school are hereby suspended until further notice. Meetings with persons from outside of the school must be conducted remotely on a suitable video conferencing platform.

B. Adopting measures to eliminate the possibility of spread of the contagion within the school premises

Following are a set of measures and guidelines designed to prevent the spread of the covid-19 virus from a potential source within the school premises. All individuals in school premises are required to strictly adhere to these measures.

1. General instructions

All students and staff must

- a. Maintain a distance of three feet or more between themselves and other individuals when inside the school premises
- b. Not exchange their lunch or any other edible items and must carry their own water bottles
- c. Must not exchange articles unless absolutely necessary in which case they exercise caution and ensure cleanliness
- d. Must take care to avoid touching door handle-bars and hand-rails and walls on the staircase
- e. Must download and install the Aarogya Setu app on their mobile devices.

Students must use face masks in school except when seated in class; observing social distancing norms within the classroom obviates the use of face masks. Staff must use face masks and gloves when handling students.

2. Class attendance

First day of the school

- a. Students must bring to school all of their necessary books and stationary items that they will need to use during school hours and place them in their designated lockers.
- b. In case students wish to operate their lockers, they must do so under the supervision of their teachers. Gathering around lockers is to be strictly avoided.
- c. Students must avoid bringing any unnecessary items to the school.

3. Recess and lunch break

Students and staff must avoid exchanging food items and bring their own food, tea and water bottles.

4. Dispersal

Dispersal at the end of the school-day is to be conducted in an orderly fashion in accordance with the social distancing norms. Teaching staff must ensure that students board their respective vehicles without violating these norms.

5. Minimize person-surface-person contact

There is a possibility that the contagion may spread through contaminated surfaces. Therefore, to render this mode of spread ineffective, following measures must be taken to minimize the number of surfaces that are commonly used by staff and students:

- a. During the school day, students must not switch places or exchange chairs and desks.
 - b. Door handles are among the objects that are commonly shared by all. Doors that need not be closed must be kept open during the school hours. This will help minimize the number of instances of person-surface-person contact.
 - c. Students and staff refrain from sharing goods or articles of any kind including stationary. In cases where this is unavoidable, persons involved in sharing the goods must ensure that the item being shared is clean. If in doubt, they must approach a teacher nearby.
- 6. Games and sports that necessitate any kind of physical contact between individuals or use of shared objects must be avoided
 - 7. Desks and chairs used by students and staff must be wiped clean with a soap-based solution at the end of the school day
 - 8. Assemblies and other programs that require gathering of students and staff are hereby suspended until further notice.
 - 9. To ensure that these measures are being adhered to by all individuals, supervisor teachers will monitor the activities on each floor of the school building.
 - 10. In case a student or a staff member develops symptoms of disease during school hours, they will be isolated in a designated room and will be attended by the on-duty school nurse while observing all of the necessary safety precautions.
 - 11. If a student is found to exhibit elevated temperature or symptoms of disease, they will be accommodated in the school hall on the ground floor temporarily and then sent back home with a parent.
 - 12. **Online guidance and orientation sessions**
It is imperative that we join forces and work cooperatively to manage the situation and to address the associated challenges successfully. To this end, before the school reopens in June, we will provide online guidance and orientation sessions for students, parents, and teaching and non-teaching school staff.
 - 13. Posters highlighting key social-distancing guidelines and norms that are to be followed by everyone must to be displayed in areas visible to all on all floors of the school building

In addition to the above measures, the school will

- 1. maintain the medical history and record of individuals including students and staff who suffer from health conditions that compromise the body's immune system. This information will enable the school to provide necessary medical assistance in case of an emergency

2. set up a rapid-task team in collaboration with block and district medical officers to ensure timely action in case of an outbreak
3. set up a surveillance team comprising our teaching faculty, as an added security measure, to monitor activities and ensure that the approved safety operating procedures are being implemented throughout the school premises.

II. Guidelines for Janitorial Staff

1. All janitorial staff must use face masks in addition to the gloves they usually wear when handling cleaning materials and equipments
2. All cleaning materials and equipments must be stored in areas that can be accessed by students so as to avoid any risk of their inadvertent exposure to potentially hazardous or contaminated materials
3. Used cleaning materials that might act as source of contaminants must either be stored in a secure place until they are cleaned and sanitized and deemed safe of reuse, or they must be discarded immediately in a safe and secure manner
4. Care must be taken to keep the unused and use cleaning materials and equipments separate to avoid cross-contamination
5. Surface and object in shared facilities such as washroom must be kept clean and dry at all times
6. All janitorial staff must observe social distancing norms throughout their stay in school premises
7. Automatic hand sanitizers are placed in key areas on all floors. On-duty janitorial staff must use these to sanitize their hands after having visited the washroom or having undertaken a cleaning task
8. In case they spot a student who may have missed using hand sanitizer after visiting washroom or after having handled commonly shared objects outside of classroom, they must politely remind the student to sanitize his/her hands
9. Janitorial staff face greater risk of being exposed to the contagion. Hence, they must take precautions and follow the safety operating procedures to protect themselves and others when carrying out their duties
10. The school administration will organize orientation programme for the entire janitorial staff to retrain them in safety operation procedures and social distancing norms

III. Guidelines for Security Staff

1. Security personnel stationed at the entrance gate must allow admission only to the school staff and students.
2. Admission to parents, vendors and other individuals is prohibited. In case an individual, who is not a staff or a student, is invited to visit the school premises, the security personnel must follow the following protocol:
 - a. Confirm with the office staff whether the visitor has an official appointment with any school staff
 - b. If confirmed, ask them to keep their belongings such as a bag in a secure area, but allow them to carry valuable belongings such as phone, laptop, etc.
 - c. Ask the visitor to apply sanitizing agents to their hands and shoes
 - d. Check the their body temperature using the touchless infra-red temperature sensor facility installed on site
 - e. Ask another staff to accompany them to the place of meeting in the school premises
3. When interacting with students, school staff and visitors and when handling objects such as bags, security personnel must use gloves and face masks
4. At the time of dispersal, the on-duty security staff must assist other staff in ensuring that all students are following social-distancing norms and are escorted out of the school campus in an orderly fashion.
5. The school administration will organize orientation programme for the entire security staff to retrain them in relevant safety operation procedures and social distancing norms

IV. Reopening of school

Covid-19 presents an unprecedented situation rife with challenges that are completely new to all of us. We must make appropriate amends in our habits and work methodology to face these challenges successfully. However, cultivating new habits requires time, cooperation and careful planning. Hence, we plan to adopt the following systematic approach when we resume our operations.

- The Administrative staff will resume their duties one week (1st week) prior to the scheduled commencement of the academic session, and ensure that
 - Facilities such as projectors and other equipment in classrooms are functional
 - School premises has been cleaned and sanitized thoroughly
 - There is adequate stock of cleaning agents, soap and hand sanitizers
 - Safety measures such as fire-fighting equipment are serviced and in place.

In order to allow teachers and students sufficient time to adapt to the new way of working and conducting themselves, we will resume the regular school session in five phases.

- Phase 1: School will reopen for only teaching staff one week prior (2nd week) to opening for students so as to allow them sufficient time to make the necessary arrangements. During this time, classes for all grades will be conducted remotely.
- Phase 2: In-person classes will commence in the following week (3rd week) in the morning session

Medical and travel history: To gain admission to the school premises, all staff and students are required to provide their and their immediate family members' medical and travel history. This will help us identify persons who might be exposed to covid-19 pathogen and might be potential carriers. A parent may agree or disagree to their ward attending the school. In either case, the parent or legal guardian of every student must make their wish explicit by submitting a consent form.

Both the medical and travel history form and the consent form are to be submitted before the school reopens. The forms will be shared by the school administration soon.

We will carry out a thorough examination of our facilities and assess the situation at the end of every school day and plan for the following day accordingly.

The covid-19 epidemic is unfolding rapidly in the city of Mumbai. We are following the updates from the local and national government agencies and monitoring the situation in the city on a daily basis. In case there is an unforeseen outbreak, we have put contingencies in place that will ensure the safety of our students and continuation of their education without disruption. We are committed in our effort to create a safe and inclusive learning and working space for every learner and teacher.

V. School Attendance Policy

Admission requirements for school staff

1. In order for a school staff, whether teaching or non-teaching, to gain admission in school premises, they must
 - a. have received the two doses of any of covid-19 vaccines as approved and prescribed by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare
 - b. submit a certificate as a proof of complete vaccination
2. In cases where only a single dose has been administered, they must continue to work remotely from home but must ensure that they get the second dose administered after the prescribed time gap without delay.
3. In case a school staff member and/or in any of their immediate family members exhibit covid-19 symptoms, they must self-quarantine for the recommended period of 14 days, and thereafter they must update the head of the school of any new developments and may apply for permission to attend school premises. However, the permission will be granted only after a thorough medical background check of the staff and their family members.

Important: It is the personal responsibility of individual staff members to ensure that they get themselves fully vaccinated as soon as possible. Failure to get vaccinated despite availability of vaccines will be considered as **wilful delay**. In cases where wilful delay is evident, the concerned staff members will be **marked as absent** from the day when the school reopens.

Admission requirements for students

1. In order for students in age groups 5 - 12 years and 12 and older to gain admission in school premises, they must have been administered with doses of covid-19 vaccine as prescribed by the government directive and as soon as the vaccines are available in market for students in these age groups.

Parents must ensure that they and their wards abide by directives issued by the government concerning covid-19.

2. In case a ward and/or any of their immediate family members exhibit covid-19 symptoms, they must continue to attend classes from home.

In such a case, parent(s) must wait for 14 days before reapplying for permission for their ward to attend school in physical capacity. Thereafter, when reapplying for permission, the parent(s) must submit medical documents that would confirm, beyond any doubt, that ward and immediate family members no longer exhibit covid-19 symptoms.

Parents must ensure that their wards are fully vaccinated as soon as the vaccine becomes available so that their wards may begin to attend school for face-to-face sessions.

VI. Transportation Policy

For school staff

School staff, teaching and non-teaching, who have been fully vaccinated against covid-19, and they and any of their family members do not exhibit any of covid-19 symptoms, **must** avail public transportation services or private vehicles to commute to school.

For students

For safety reasons, the school will not provide bus service in the initial stages of reopening of school. Parent(s) of students who have been adequately vaccinated, and neither they nor any of their family members exhibit any of the covid-19 symptoms, may avail private transportation to facilitate their wards commute between school and home.