

Health and Safety Guidelines for Re-Opening of School Premises in the UAE

Version 1.1



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GEMS Health & Safety Guidelines for Returning to Schools

Introduction

The document forms the draft considerations and actions that will be required for the re-opening of GEMS schools in September 2020. The document has been updated following the requirements released from the Ministry of Education and local school regulators..

A number of countries have commenced their journey towards re-opening both public and private schools, including China, Taiwan, Denmark, Japan and Norway, as the curve begins to flatten on new Covid-19 cases. With most other countries expected to reopen their schools for the start of the new academic year..

Aim of the document

The aim is to establish a robust set of health, safety and operational procedures and protocols, which schools can follow, in order to support the safe re-opening of schools. The document will focus on the safety and operational measures that will be implemented. Each school will need to review the document and make any specific adjustments to suite their educational and operational needs. The document is to be used in partnership with each school's educational plan and medical plan. Each school will be required to submit their specific plan to the school regulator for approval, prior to opening.

Scope

The scope of the document covers all GEMS operated schools within the United Arab Emirates and other global operations.

Risk management

A detailed risk assessment has been developed to support this document and will be reviewed to each school's needs. The GEMS health and safety department will support each school in developing their specific risk assessment and ensure that it is continuously reviewed for changes. Quality assurance checks will also be conducted to monitor the effectiveness of each school's plan.

Training

All staff will undergo specific Covid-19 E Learning training prior to the start of the new academic year. In addition, teachers will regularly communicate and provide information to students on the associated risks, safe practices and controls. All students will be briefed on this plan prior to the start of the academic year.

Key risks to consider when re-opening

The following section will summarise some of the key general risks to consider for GEMS schools to re-open. Schools will need to consider specific risks also and these will be defined within each school's risk assessment.

- Wide spread transmission through heavily populated classrooms and general school areas.
- Transmission through large gatherings in confined spaces, including canteen areas, assemblies, assessment sessions, parent pick-up areas etc.
- Access and egress points into schools creating bottle necks, as a result of additional safety controls, such as temperature checking at entrances.
- Teachers and student who are within the higher risk category (underlying medical conditions, pregnant or our older teaching community).
- Transmission through outsourced food suppliers and other contractors who are required within the school for day-to-day operations. Operatives usually live in labour accommodation which have a large number of people in confined spaces leading to a higher risk of contracting the virus.
- Ensuring sufficient and adequate isolation spaces and medical supplies/personnel are available to support containment.
- Transport provisions risks need to be managed carefully depending number of students allowed in school premises at any one time.
- Managing minor or significant outbreaks of Covid-19 within schools.



GEMS procedures for managing the risks associated with Covid-19

The following section details the procedures required for specific elements related to the safe management of Covid-19. Each school may have additional and specific requirements and controls, these will be addressed at a school level and defined within the school safety plan.

1. Students arriving and leaving schools



Students will arrive and leave the school at the determined start and finish time. Schools may look to implement staggered start and finish times, based upon year groups, to further reduce the risk of larger groups.

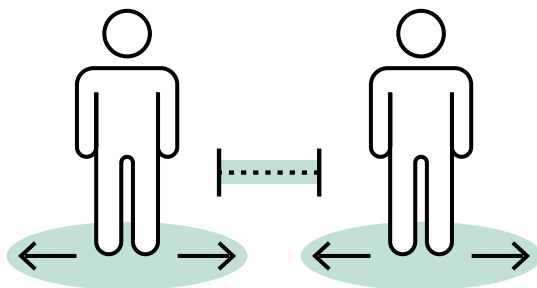
One designated drop off and pick-up area is to be identified within each school. Access to the rest of the school should not be permitted. Schools will implement a detailed traffic management plan to ensure the safe drop off and collection of students. Trained security personnel will be present at each school to support traffic flow and ensure health and safety measures are adhered to.

Upon arrival at school, students will pass through a number of designated entrance points. The entrance points will be fitted with thermal imaging cameras, which will record each student and staff member's temperature.

For those persons with a temperature above 37.5°C, they will be removed to a dedicated medical room within the school, where further temperature and medical checks will be taken. Detailed medical procedures are available at each school.

2. Physical distancing procedures

It is important to note that physical distancing procedures are an integral part of managing the risk and spread of Covid-19. Physical distancing is particularly challenging within an educational setting, particularly in the younger years' settings, where physical interactions are part of everyday learning and development.



Physical distancing in classrooms

Classrooms will be set up to accommodate reduced capacity, it is envisaged that this could be a 50% reduction, which would mean an average of 15 students per class. Each school will need to plan accordingly based upon their occupancy and classroom sizes. Where it is possible for schools to accommodate 100% classroom population and maintain social distancing requirements, this should be factored into their specific plan for approval.

Desks will be set at a safe distance apart of 1.5 meters, it is likely that physical markings will be used in classrooms to ensure desks remain in the correct locations.

Teachers will be positioned at the front of the classroom area, at a distance of 1.5 meters from the front row desks.

Physical distancing in corridors

Safety markings will be set up throughout corridors, the markings will dictate safe distances of 2 meters. Students will be monitored to ensure adherence.

One-way pedestrian flows will operate and will be marked out accordingly.

It is likely that students will remain within a single section or area of the school throughout the day, this will likely be

based upon year groups and will limit cross movement.

Physical distancing in canteen areas

Seating arrangements will be clearly marked out in canteen areas, no students will be permitted to sit directly adjacent or next to one another. Students from the same class must adhere to 1.5 meter safe distances, students from different classes must maintain 2 meter safe distances.

Staggered break times may be considered to reduce capacities in dining halls.

Schools will operate pre-packed lunch service, with no live cooking taking place at school. Students are also permitted to bring their own food from home.

Water dispensers are not permitted to be used.

Physical distancing in large assembly areas

Large gatherings will be cancelled or strictly limited.

Where such gatherings are permitted, strict controls will be implemented at a school level. This will include reduced capacities, with seating arrangements to accommodate safe distancing of 1.5 meters.

3. Personal Protective Equipment Requirements (PPE) and hand washing

Teachers and students above the age of 6 are required to wear face masks. Face masks can be removed during strenuous physical activity

Face shields can be worn for those employees who are in direct contact with students.

It is suggested that students will be required to bring two disposable masks to school per day or one re-usable option, it will be the responsibility of the students to ensure that they bring the required number of masks each day and ensure any disposable masks are washed in line with the manufactures guidelines

Schools will hold an available stock of spare masks to supplement any student or visitor's needs.

Students will be required to replace their masks following the lunch break.

Staff members will be provided with masks from GEMS, we are currently evaluating both disposable and reusable options.

Hand sanitising stations will set up throughout the school, with clear instructions and signage available. Students will be encouraged to wash their hands and sanitise at regular intervals through the day. In particular, post and pre-lunch time.

Teachers and teaching assistants will monitor the younger age phase students to ensure they are following the required hand washing procedures.

Medical teams will be provided with the required medical PPE needed.

Waste bins will be required for the safe disposal of any disposable masks.





4. Cleaning and hygiene procedures

Each school will conduct a review of all potential frequent touch points, including, door handles, light switches, hand rails, taps and washbasins etc.

Increased cleaning and sanitisation will be conducted across these areas throughout the duration of the day.

A thorough clean of each school will be conducted each day, the clean will be conducted by an approved vendor, using approved Municipality chemicals.

A thorough deep clean and sanitisation of the school will be conducted at the end of each week.

Cleaning staff will wear the required PPE for all cleaning activities.

5. Maintenance

All maintenance works within schools are conducted by an approved third party

Regular planned preventative maintenance activities will take place, in line with any authority requirements.

Regular cleaning and sanitising of AC systems will take place across schools

All maintenance teams will adhere to the requirements determined by GEMS and the relevant authorities, this includes, daily temperature checks, PPE requirements, hand washing standards etc.

All contractors and vendors will be issued with a set of requirements which they must adhere to.



6. Vendors and contractors

Only pre-approved vendors and contractors are permitted onto the school premises, in line with authority requirements.

All vendors and contractors must adhere to the GEMS contractor/vendor requirements document.

Performance and health and safety standards of all vendors and contractors will be monitored on a daily basis.

Failure to comply with the GEMS requirements could result in the removal from site and the pre-approved list.

7. Student and staff travel

Any staff or students who travel must adhere to any UAE authority requirements, including any self-isolation and testing requirements

Travel deceleration forms will be required for all those who travel; these must be submitted to the school prior to travel occurring.

Anyone displaying any Covid-19 symptoms when returning from travel must not come to school, ensure they notify the school and self-isolate.

8. Medical procedure

Managing a potential Covid-19 case in school

If a student is suspected of being a positive Covid-19 case, they will be immediately removed to the school isolation room.

Only the school medical and emergency services team are permitted to enter the isolation room, full PPE must be worn when entering the room.

The students' parents will be contacted immediately by the school doctor and the required authorities will be notified.

The school will strictly adhere to the health authority requirements for managing and transferring any suspected cases of Covid-19

All areas which may have been accessed will be thoroughly deep cleaned and sanitised following any suspected cases. These areas will be closed immediately until the deep clean is completed.

Tracing will be conducted to identify those who may have come into contact with the student or staff member. Health authority requirements will be strictly adhered to, this may include additional testing and isolation of persons who have come into contact with a positive case.

Each school will have a detailed medical procedure plan in place, which will detail the emergency procedures for each school. This will be developed in consultation with the GEMS Senior Medical Supervisor and school medical teams.

Further details can be found in each school's detailed medical plan.

Managing a confirmed case

A confirmed case could be in the form of a student, staff member or contractor.

In such cases the person will be in isolation for a period of time, this may be at home or in a medical facility.

Upon receiving notification of a confirmed case, a tracing exercise will be conducted by the school, this will identify all other persons who may have come into contact with the positive case.

Any persons who have come into close contact with the confirmed positive case will be sent home from school immediately, with a potential isolation period of 14 days. Further advice from the authorities, including the health authority and education authority, will be required on this aspect.

No persons who have tested positive will be permitted to return to school without firstly providing evidence of a negative test result, in line with authority requirements.

All relevant areas will undergo a thorough deep clean and sanitisation exercise.

Communication of a confirmed case

It is important that parents are provided with suitable information regarding confirmed cases within the school. It is also vital that people's individual privacy is maintained.

Parents will be notified when there is a positive case to a class member or class teacher.

The required procedures will be followed for notifying the authorities.

A confidential central log of all confirmed cases will be held by the GEMS Health and Safety team.

Temperature checking

Each student will undergo a temperature check upon arriving at school each day.

GEMS will use thermal imaging cameras established at strategic entrance points into the school. This will include entrance points for bus students.

Temperature checks will also be conducted prior to a student entering the bus prior to boarding the bus. This will act as a first layer of control.

Additional temperature checks can be conducted by the school medical teams as and when required throughout the day.

A detailed GEMS medical manual has been developed and is available at each school, the manual complies with UAE health authority requirements.

9. General Health, Safety & Operational requirements

Certain Emirates may implement mandatory Covid-19 testing of all staff and students, in such cases schools must adhere to the local requirements. GEMS SSC will identify suitable testing companies.

Schools must maintain adequate medical records for their students and staff. This should include any self-declaration of medical consent forms. The school medical team are responsible for monitoring and maintaining such information.

Schools must maintain records of any persons that enter the site outside of the school hours.

Frequently used electronic devices are to be disinfected after each use.

Showers and changing facilities are not to be used.

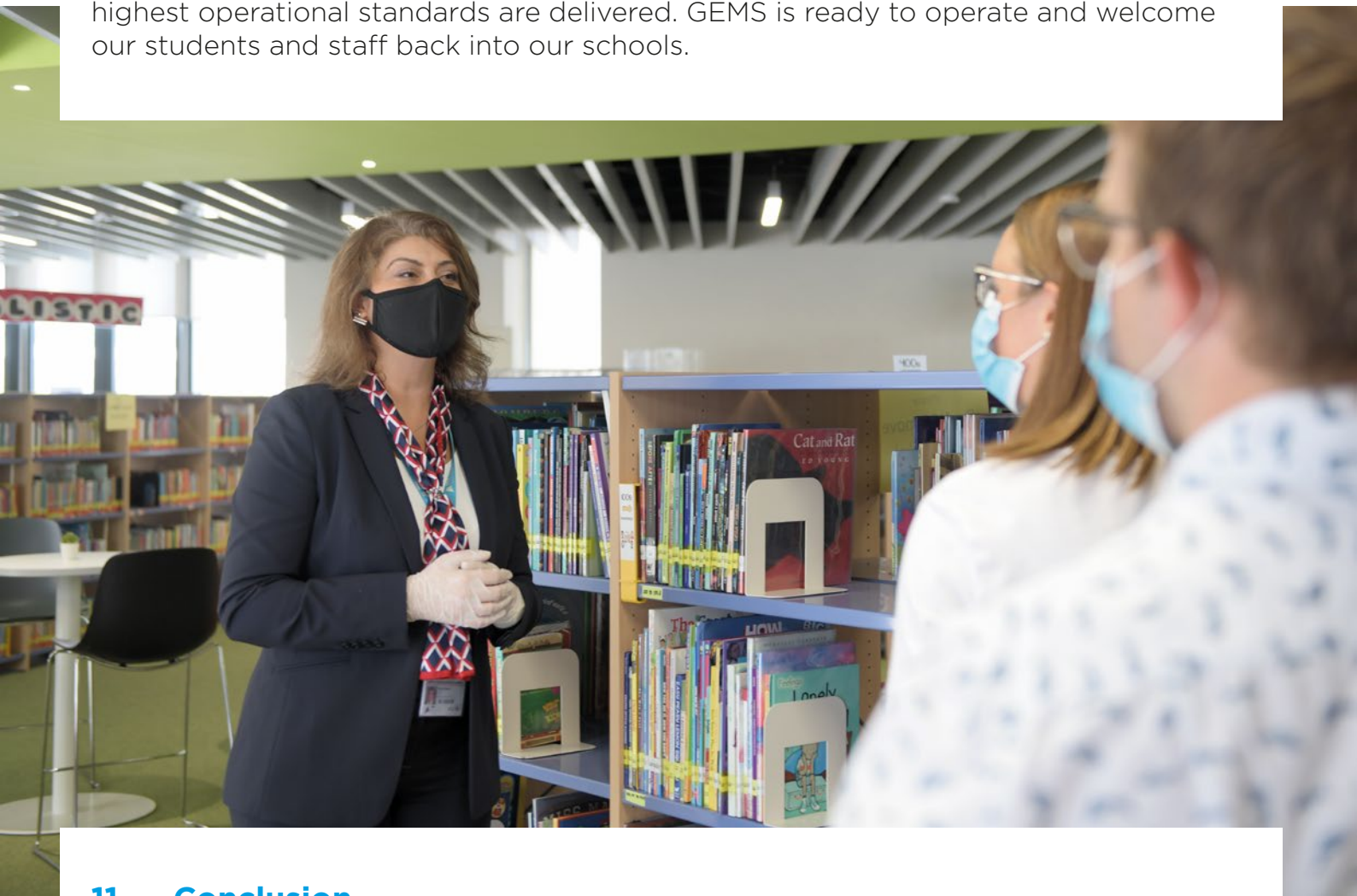
Special events are to be cancelled or postponed until further notice.

Equipment in classrooms such as toys, books, stationary equipment etc is to be disinfected after each use.

For further specific information, schools can refer to the documents issued from the school regulators. Certain aspects may vary from Emirate to Emirate, schools must comply with their specific Emirate requirements.

10. The GEMS team

GEMS has a dedicated team of diverse professionals who are leading our return to school project. This includes experts, in operations, health and safety, crisis and risk management, medical care and security. The team are working to ensure that the highest operational standards are delivered. GEMS is ready to operate and welcome our students and staff back into our schools.



11. Conclusion

The health, safety and welfare of our students, staff and parents is of utmost priority at GEMS. We have 60 successful years of experience in delivering the highest health and safety standards not only in the UAE but globally.

This document has established the health and safety procedures and standards that will be followed across GEMS schools. This is a dynamic document and will evolve over the coming months, as we move towards the re-opening of schools in September 2020. We also understand that there may be variances from school-to-school and that these requirements should be used as a framework, for which schools can safely operate within.

We appreciate that further instructions and guidance will be provided by the UAE authorities. GEMS are here to support the UAE in the safe return to school operations. We have a dedicated team of trained and experienced health and safety professionals who will ensure that the highest health and safety standards are delivered across all our schools. We look forward to the safe return to school premises.



EDUCATION

We see **genius** in every child