



**MINISTRY OF EDUCATION,
TECHNOLOGICAL &
VOCATIONAL TRAINING**

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A Roadmap for the Safe Reopening of Schools in Barbados

STRUCTURE

STRATEGIES

SOLUTIONS

SUCCESS



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Introduction

Given the challenges associated with the COVID-19 pandemic, the Ministry of Education, Technological and Vocational Training (METVT) recognizes the importance of creating a framework that allows for the maintenance of quality education. While a face-to-face return is not certain for Term II of the academic year 2021-2022, it is necessary to plan for the safe, effective and efficient reopening of schools. This document outlines such a plan.

The roadmap begins by describing the Barbadian context and states the requirements for a safe return to face-to-face school. It also identifies the target groups that will receive priority for face-to-face classes if the Ministry of Health and Wellness (MHW) advises that it is safe to return to the classroom. Lastly, it describes the roles and responsibilities of key stakeholders in ensuring the consistent delivery of education whether face-to-face, blended or online.

The following objectives guided the creation of this roadmap:

- Describe plans to facilitate the safe, effective and efficient delivery of education
- Sensitize all partners in education about the requirements for the safe return to the classroom
- Identify the roles and responsibilities of key stakeholders to ensure the safe operation of schools during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The METVT has consulted with the following partners to develop this roadmap:

- The Ministry of Health and Wellness
- Principals of Public and Private Schools
- Teachers of Public and Private Schools
- The Barbados Union of Teachers
- The Barbados Secondary Teachers' Union
- The National Union of Public Workers
- The Association of Principals of Public Primary Schools
- The Barbados Association of Principals of Public Secondary Schools and
- The National Council of Parent-Teacher Associations.

The roadmap is intended to be used in conjunction with the Guidelines for the Safe Operation of Schools posted on the METVT Media Resource Department website.

[Safe Operations in Schools.pdf \(mrd.gov.bb\)](https://mrd.gov.bb/Safe%20Operations%20in%20Schools.pdf)

The METVT is cognizant of the fact that we cannot embark on this safe reopening alone and urges you to be active participants in making it a reality. We also encourage you to be patient and understanding as we strive to fulfill our vision and mission during these difficult times.

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Health and Safety Context

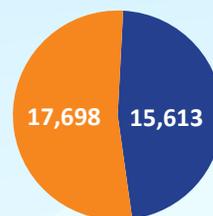
The COVID-19 pandemic has negatively impacted lives and livelihoods across Barbados, the region and the world.

Factors such as the high rate of community spread and the emergence of the Delta and Omicron variants and other highly transmissible variants are still of national concern. This has resulted in visible strain on the healthcare system and delays in the formal return to the classroom.

- As of 12 January 2022, the total number of confirmed cases locally was 33,311 with 267 deaths
- Out of the total number of cases, 5973 were students between 3 and 18 years old
- Of a total population of 289,000 people, 63.6% of the vaccine-eligible population have been fully vaccinated
- Additionally, out of the approximately 21,000 students in Barbados between 12 and 18 years old, 47.4% have been fully vaccinated and 5.5% have been partially vaccinated
- Up until 12 January 2022 there were 47% of 12-18-year-old students who had not received at least 1 dose of an approved vaccine.

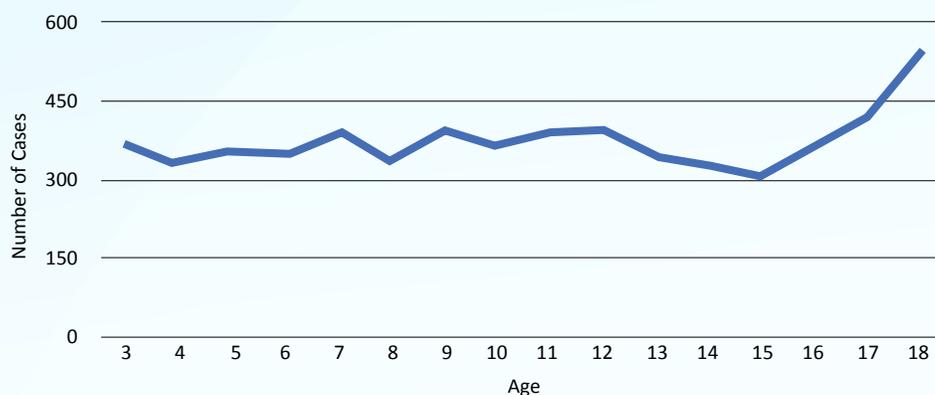
Total Cases Nationally by Sex as at 12 January 2022

Total Cases as at 12 January 2022	33,311
Male	15,613
Female	17,698



Confirmed Cases in School-Aged Children as at 12 January 2022

Age	Total
3	363
4	336
5	356
6	353
7	389
8	331
9	393
10	369
11	388
12	389
13	339
14	328
15	308
16	363
17	422
18	546

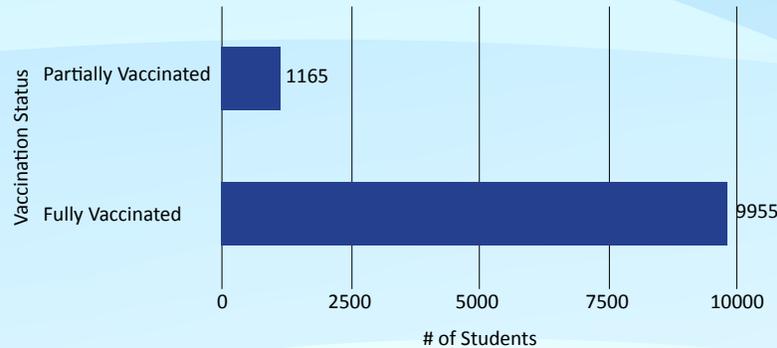


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Vaccination Status as at 12 January 2022

Vaccination Status	National	≤18 years	%
Fully Vaccinated	145,217	9955	47.4
Partially Vaccinated	157,038	1165	5.5



Age	Total	Fully Vaccinated	Requires Second Dose
12	1470	1254	216
13	1488	1341	147
14	1524	1395	129
15	1498	1350	148
16	1511	1374	137
17	1601	1449	152
18	2028	1792	236
	11,120	9955	1165



*Vaccination status as at 12 January 2022

Students who did not take at least 1 dose

	Total	%
Did not take at least 1 dose of an approved vaccine	9880	47.4

The METVT is cognisant of the trends. However, given the challenges associated with the delivery of online education, there is a need to outline a roadmap for the **safe** return to the classroom.

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Proposal for the Safe Reopening of Schools

Evaluation of Risks

The METVT will continue to evaluate the risks associated with fully online classes vs. fully face-to-face or blended approaches to instruction.

Just before the reopening of schools in September 2021, the decision was made to facilitate instruction online due to the increasing level of community transmission and relatively low vaccination coverage. Since this decision, the situation has evolved, with more students and school staff adding another layer of protection by becoming fully vaccinated.

Additionally, exclusive online education has resulted in challenges such as:

- Reduced collaborative learning
- Inequality of access to devices, Wi-Fi and electricity
- Impairment of the attainment of relevant developmental milestones
- Absence of the social interaction necessary for child development
- Limited opportunities for students to develop skills in particular subject areas
- Deterioration of physical and emotional well-being of teachers and students.

Therefore, in consideration of mitigating further challenges to the development of our students, we propose a **phased** reopening of schools under specific conditions.

Snapshot of Requirements

Requirement	3-5-year-olds	Primary	Secondary	Tertiary (BCC, SJPI, ETTC, BVTB)
Distancing	3ft	3ft	3ft	3ft
Testing	Frequency based on vaccine status			
Mask wearing	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Sanitizing stations	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

As previously reported, there is a 47.4% vaccination rate of eligible persons under 18 years old. While vaccination thresholds are not requirements for staff and students, the METVT encourages the vaccination of all staff and vaccine-eligible students.

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Rationale for Requirements



Testing

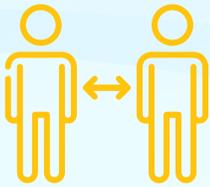
Random testing will be based on vaccine status with guidance from the Ministry of Health and Wellness for students and all staff. This will help determine the ongoing status of possible infection within the school so that outbreaks can be handled effectively.

Parental consent forms will be made available, and nursing students from the Barbados Community College and their instructors will assist in the testing exercise at various locations.



Ventilation

Where possible, all windows of the classrooms should be open to facilitate good ventilation. Where classes are to be held in air-conditioned rooms, these rooms must be assessed by the COVID-19 Monitoring Unit. If windows must be closed due to inclement weather, they should be reopened as soon as the rain stops to facilitate good air exchange.



Physical distancing

There should be a minimum of three feet (3ft) spacing between students.

To facilitate physical distancing, classes should be scheduled to include a blended teaching modality. Students should be placed in consistently maintained groups for this scheduling, wherever possible.

Additionally, it is recommended that outdoor classes be utilised to increase the number of students that can access face-to-face classes.



Mask wearing

Due to the widespread circulation of COVID-19 in the community, mask wearing is mandatory for all students, staff and visitors to the school. Masks should be well fitted. If cloth masks are being used, they should be made with three layers of cloth. There must be a **zero tolerance** for breaches of this protocol. **The protocols that were established during the first reopening of schools must be observed.**

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Reminder of Existing Protocols



Personal hygiene

Hand hygiene - regular washing and/or sanitizing of hands must be observed. **Hand sanitizing stations will be placed in all nursery, primary and secondary public classrooms.** Private schools are encouraged to do the same. Students and staff must also be encouraged to always observe good respiratory etiquette.



Required absences

Students or staff members must stay home when sick, especially if they feel as though they are having cold or flu symptoms or if a member of their household has been diagnosed with COVID-19.



Sanitization of schools

Cleaning and disinfection must be carried out as per the existing protocols.



COVID-19 Monitors

Students and staff must be reminded of the existing protocols daily at the beginning of classes. The COVID-19 Monitor should be a senior member of staff who works with a team to monitor and implement COVID-19 protocols at all times.



Contact tracing

A daily register of all persons at the school or visiting the school must be kept for a minimum of one month to facilitate contact tracing. Information such as date, name, temperature and time of arrival to the school compound are critical to the data collection process.

It is also very important for teachers to have daily records of students' attendance and this should be captured in open EMIS. In the event that difficulties are encountered in accessing the software, the physical school attendance register should be used.



Who Will Return to School and When?

The return to face-to-face school will occur using a phased approach. Those students who require physical interaction will be given priority.

Early childhood (Nursery and Reception), Infants A, Infants B: These students are the most vulnerable due to their inability to self-regulate and their inability to navigate devices on their own.

Class 4 students: Need to transition to secondary school, and they must be adequately prepared to do so.

1st Forms: Need to be given the opportunity to experience the culture of their secondary schools in the physical environment.

4th (where necessary), 5th and 6th Forms: Are preparing to write external examinations and may need to engage in practical activities for their school-based assessment and/or the subjects they are pursuing may require full face-to-face engagement.

Students with special needs and vulnerable students: Require full engagement to realize their potential. Face-to-face stimulation can help to improve their cognitive and psychosocial development. Moreover, these students may also be vulnerable due to a possible inability to self-regulate and navigate devices on their own.

It must be noted that face-to-face classes for the aforementioned groups of students will occur only when all criteria for the safe reopening of schools have been met.

Other classes will be phased in depending on the effectiveness of operations at each school plant. The decision to have other classes on the school plant will also be guided by other factors such as:

- The capacity of the school to house other form levels for face-to-face classes whether on site or at satellite locations
- The capacity of the school to facilitate blended learning.

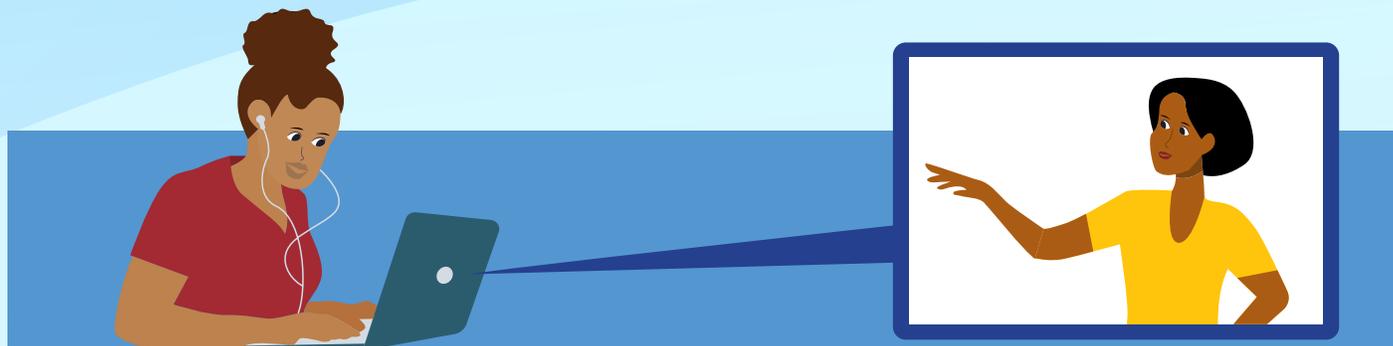
Those schools that require more than one phase to accommodate the safe return to school for students and staff will be allowed to complete that process under the careful guidance of the principal. Schools will be required to communicate directly with the parents regarding the specific arrangements for the return to school for each institution. The METVT will provide the requisite oversight for the smooth transition back to the classroom as well as the effective monitoring of the entire process.

Phase 1	Phase 2
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nursery Level <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Nursery Schools – Nursery Classes • Primary Level <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Reception classes – Infants A – Infants B – Class 4 • Secondary Level <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – 1st Form – Forms 4, 5 and 6 • Special Needs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Special Needs Schools – Special Needs Classes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Primary Level <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Class 1, 2 and 3 • Secondary Level <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Forms 2 and 3

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Please note that the phasing in of groups will be dependent on the effectiveness of the protocols established. Reviews will occur after two weeks and determinations will be made based on data collected.

Mode of Instruction: Online Learning



Continued Use of Online Instruction

Students will be engaged in learning at home using a learning management system (LMS) such as Google Classroom and a video conferencing platform such as Google Meet.

Responsibilities of the School – Online Learning

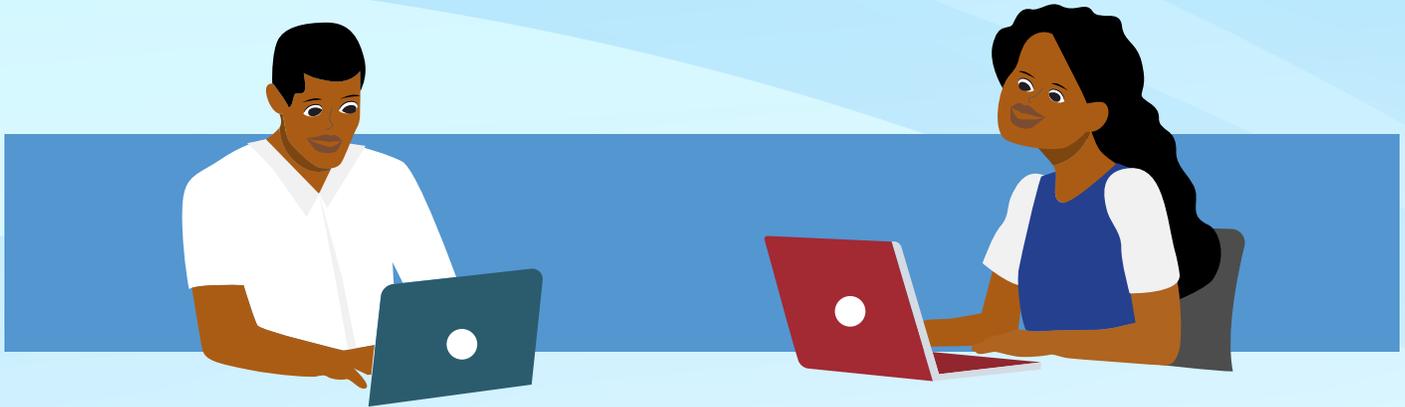
The school is required to promote best practices for the use of the technology in the online environment. The following factors should be considered in fulfilling this mandate.

- **Safety** – Ensure that the online environment is safe for its users, e.g., length of time online
- **Security** – Minimize occurrences of unwanted intrusion
- **Access** –
 - Everyone must have access to a device, learning materials and the online environment
 - All students and teachers must have an email address
 - Teachers are to provide timely dissemination of links to their classes
 - The school must ensure that the officers of the Ministry of Education and Principals can always access online classes.
- **Fairness** –
 - Each online session must have adequate time allocated. Additional support (e.g., extra time, separate instruction) must be provided for struggling learners.
- **Monitoring** –
 - Principals and senior teachers must visit the online classes and provide any support necessary for their staff. Note must be made of student non-attendance and participation so that effective interventions can be put in place.
- **Communication with stakeholders** –
 - Schools need to communicate with students and parents when classes have been cancelled, that is, if a teacher is unavailable for a scheduled session or for any other reason.

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Mode of Instruction: Blended Learning



Students will have some face-to-face sessions but on a shift system.

Over a two week period, all classes should have received at least one week (five days) of face-to-face teaching, e.g two days (Week 1); three days (Week 2).

Responsibilities of the School – Blended Learning

- Ensure that students have devices. If not, Principals/Information Technology Coordinators (ICTs) should inform the METVT through the use of the template provided or by making contact with the Information Technology Quality Assurance Unit at itqau@mes.gov.bb
- Explain the blended timetable to parents and students
- Organize explanatory webinars for parents
- Ensure ICTs are available to assist with technical issues
- Register students for all classes, whether face-to-face or online instruction
- Inform parents/School Attendance Officers if students are not attending classes
- Ensure that there is adequate personal protective equipment (PPE) available at the school
- Identify a space for unwell students
- Inform parents/guardians when students are feeling unwell so that the student may be collected as quickly as possible.

Responsibilities of Parents and Students - Online/Blended Learning. Parents Should Ensure that:

- The designated learning space is conducive to learning
- Children follow the timetable and attend scheduled classes
- There is connectivity at home and children have devices (METVT/own devices)
- Children complete set activities and return them in a timely manner.
- Children have all the required resources for classes (books, stationery, etc.)
- Students attend all classes on time and are familiar with the platform
- Students comply with all online etiquette (dress, respect)
- All learning devices are properly configured by making contact with the school's ITC.

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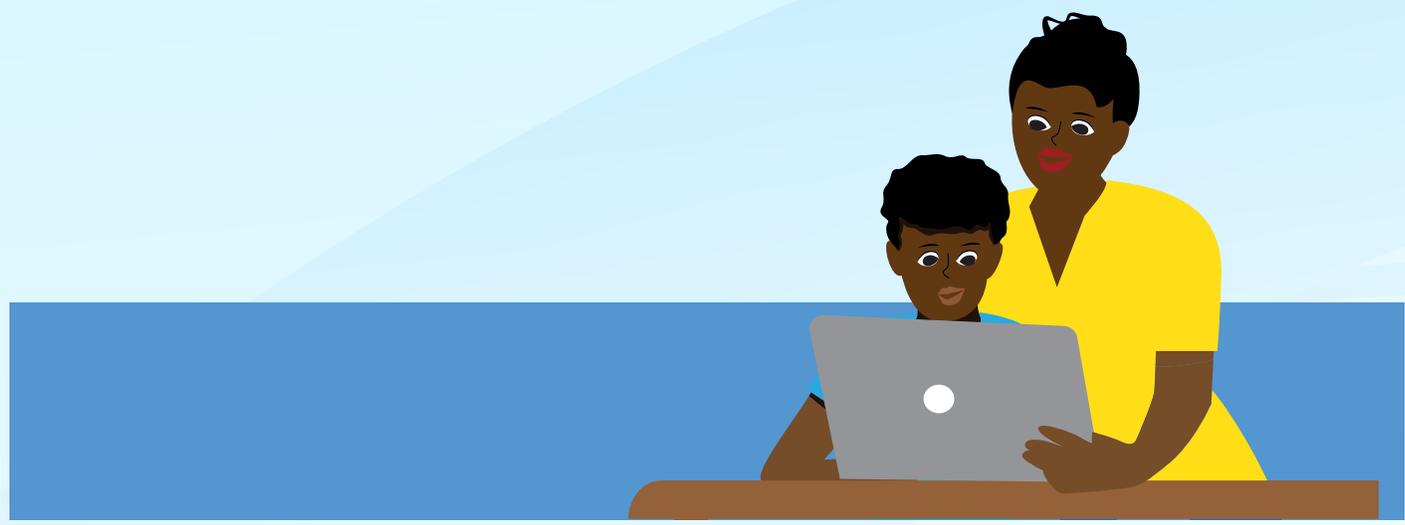


Parents Should Also:

- Try to attend form/class meetings online
- Support their children but not do the work for them or interfere with the delivery of lessons
- Inform the school of any difficulties related to student learning
- Report all challenges relating to attendance or behaviour to the Principal or the Ministry.

Responsibilities of Students – Online/Blended Learning. Students Need to:

- Be mentally ready for learning
- Tell teachers when they are encountering difficulty in understanding concepts
- Treat learning devices with care
- Be respectful to teachers, educational leaders and peers at all times.



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Mode of Instruction: Face-to-Face



All students will have access to the school compound in accordance with established COVID-19 protocols.

The METVT is cognizant of the possible use of schools as Isolation Centres. Students may be affected if there is continued use of these schools in this way. As a result, alternative arrangements must be sought to facilitate blended or face-to face learning.

A review will occur every three weeks and a team will be assigned to collect and analyse information regarding the safe return to these schools when it is required.

Responsibilities of the School – Face-to-Face. Each School is Required to:

- Ensure that all persons on the school compound wear face masks in compliance with the national policy
- Inform parents and students about safety measures in place
- Reinforce the need for strict compliance with the guidelines for the safe operation of schools throughout the COVID-19 pandemic
- Take appropriate action against anyone found to be in breach of school protocols
- Ensure that janitorial staff are provided with the adequate cleaning and disinfecting supplies and personal protection equipment necessary to carry out cleaning and sanitizing tasks
- Keep a record of the cleaning regime of vital areas, such as bathrooms, which must be displayed and inspected daily by supervisors
- Reduce the opportunities for contact between personnel making deliveries and staff and limit the number of staff designated to handle deliveries
- Plan deliveries in a staggered manner, if possible, to avoid having too many external persons present at the school at the same time.

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Responsibilities of Parents – Face-to-Face. Parents Should:

- Ensure that children have a personal hygiene kit: hand-sanitizer and two masks
- Ensure children have the necessary stationery and textbooks
- Discuss school protocols with their children and encourage them to obey them
- Keep children who are feeling unwell/displaying symptoms such a fever/runny nose at home and inform the school of the child's absence
- Keep children known to have been exposed to a COVID-19 positive case at home/in quarantine
- Leave children at the school gate on arrival and collect them promptly at the end of the school day
- Schedule appointments with school staff when they are necessary
- Follow the instructions of the School Monitors.



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Protocols for Sick Students



Precautions for Unwell Students. Parents Should:

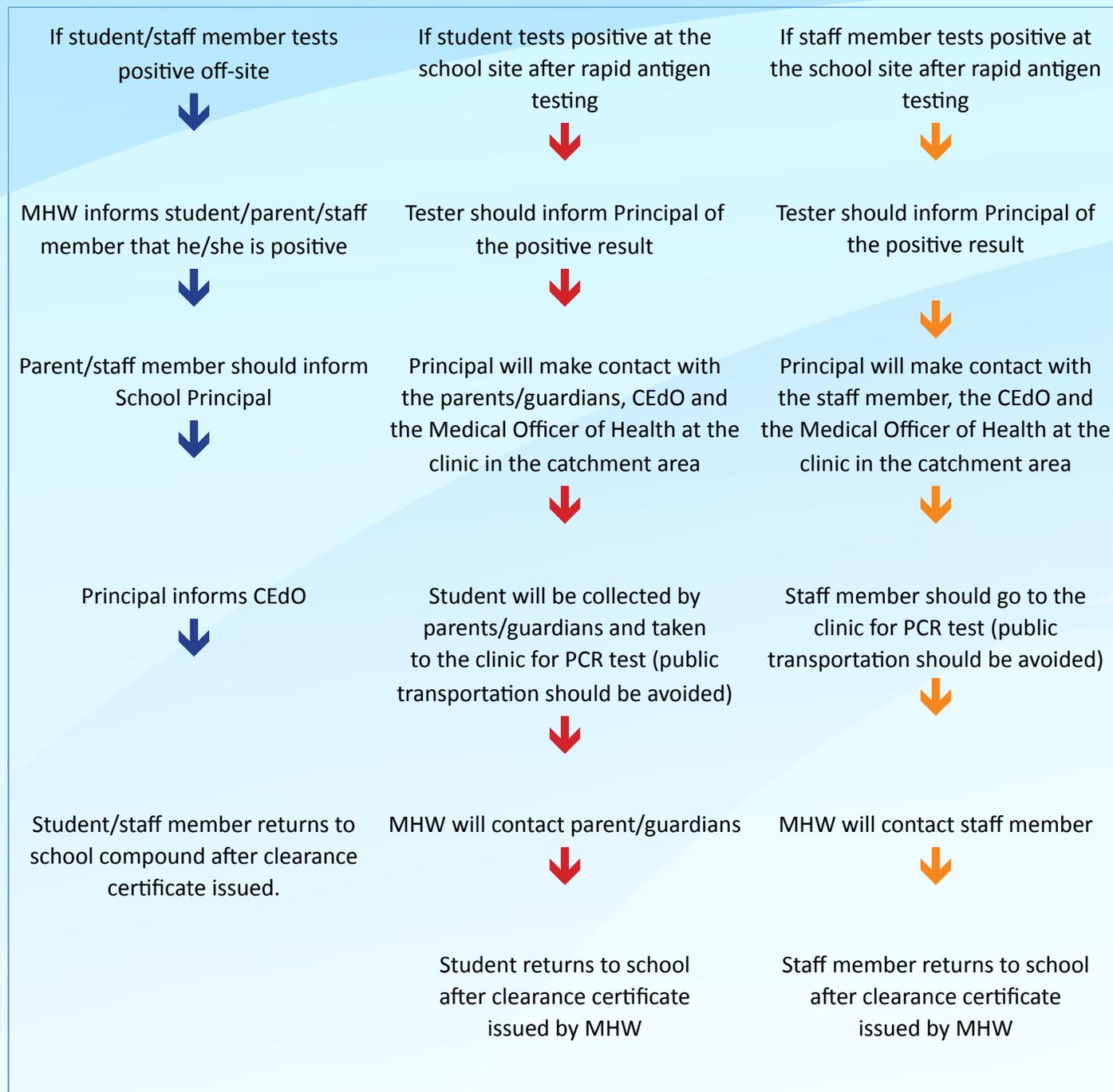
- Keep their sick children at home, inform the Principal, contact a medical doctor, medical facility or call the **HOTLINE 536-4500** and explain the situation
- Seek advice from the MHW on what to do when someone in the household is sick and self-quarantining or self-isolating
- Follow the national protocols when students display any of the symptoms of COVID-19 (for example fever, dry cough, sore throat, shortness of breath, loss of sense of smell or taste).

Parent Sensitization – General Guidelines

- Each school is required to take appropriate action against individuals found to be in breach of the protocols while on the school compound
- Any student who exhibits signs of illness during class or while at school must be sent/taken to the designated isolation area
- Parents of any student in need of mental health or psychosocial support may email counselling@mes.gov.bb or call the **HOTLINE NUMBER on 535-0853**.



How Will Confirmed COVID-19 Cases be Handled?



In each case, the student or staff member will be required to quarantine on receipt of a positive rapid antigen test result.

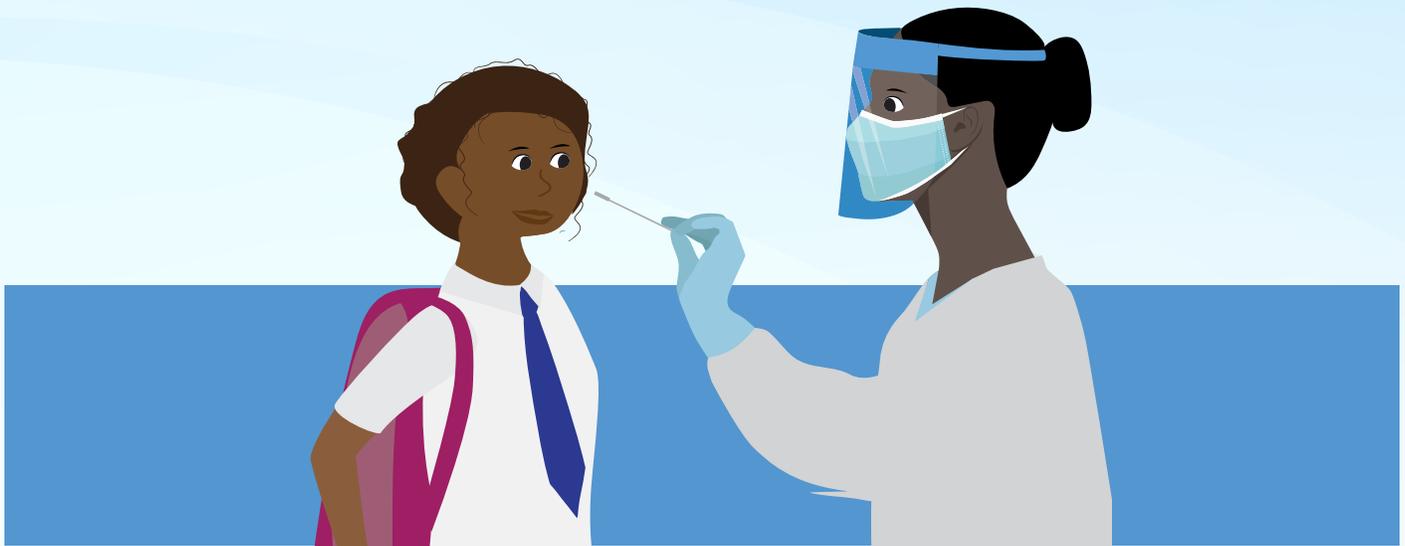


How Will Primary Contacts be Handled?

- Schools must have an updated list of all students; this should be reviewed on a four week basis to ensure that it is current
- Principal must contact the Chief Education Officer and a Senior Official in the MHW
- MHW will guide the contact tracing process and will make further decisions regarding who else may be at risk/need to be tested
- Students' primary contacts should be quarantined at school until collected and encouraged to be tested
- Staff primary contacts will be encouraged to get a PCR test immediately
- No public transport should be used (if possible)
- Staff members' primary contacts should quarantine for **five** days and be retested:
 - If positive, isolation begins
 - If negative, return to school/work showing a negative test.

Approach to Student Testing

Students will only be tested with the consent of their parents or guardians.



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Roles and Responsibilities of Key Stakeholders

For the safe return to the school environment several key stakeholders will need to work together i.e., Janitors, Safety Officers, School Monitors and Counsellors.



Roles of Janitors

- Follow all MHW protocols
- The school/institution must:
 - Establish a cleaning plan
 - Provide training for new janitorial staff
 - Provide refresher training for the current janitorial staff
- Depending on the number of janitorial staff at the institution, staff should be assigned specific areas to clean (rooms, blocks)
- Cleaning frequency of the assigned areas must be increased. The number of times should be determined by how highly trafficked the area is
- Handrails and doorknobs should be cleaned after every break and as needed
- Bathrooms should be cleaned more frequently at various high-traffic times throughout the day
- Classrooms should be cleaned every morning, during lunch and after school. Teachers and students can also maintain their areas as needed
- Janitorial staff should be reminded not to congregate but practice physical distancing
- For further guidance, janitorial staff are encouraged to visit the Barbados Government Information Service. Click on the link below:

<https://gisbarbados.gov.bb/blog/covid-19-protocol-developed-on-public-service-cleaning/>

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Protocols for Handling Equipment and Other Resources

Within schools, there are many types of equipment for various subject areas found in specialist rooms and laboratories on the compound.

The links for the protocol booklets for Specialist Rooms/Areas, prepared by the METVT, are listed below:



Music

<http://mrd.gov.bb/resources/Protocol%20for%20Music.pdf>



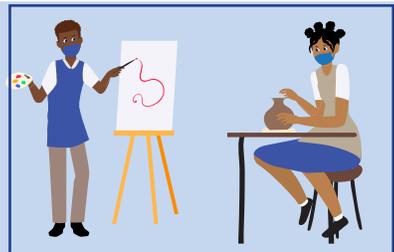
Theatre Arts

<http://mrd.gov.bb/resources/Protocols%20Theatre%20Arts.pdf>



Physical Education

<http://mrd.gov.bb/resources/Protocols%20for%20PE.pdf>



Visual Arts

<http://mrd.gov.bb/resources/Protocols%20Visual%20Arts.pdf>



Labs

<http://mrd.gov.bb/resources/Protocols%20for%20Science%20Lab.pdf>

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Special cleaning supplies must be supplied for sanitizing the equipment. In addition, the janitorial staff and the specialist teachers who work in these rooms should be trained how to use the sanitization supplies.

Classrooms/labs/study areas should be sanitized between uses.

Protocols for School Meals Servers

- Servers are required to wear masks at all times while on the premises
- Three (3) face shields should be issued to each Server and these must be worn when outside of the nutrition room, e.g. within the general school environment
- Frequent hand washing is encouraged and soap will be provided for each nutrition room to facilitate this
- Servers should be reminded to practice physical distancing.
- For service of hot meals, fruit and sanitised cutlery must be kept inside the nutrition room and must be placed on trays by Servers for students so as to minimise contact.
- Guidelines for the cleaning and sanitising of food contact surfaces and for the cleaning of nutrition rooms in general, will be circulated to all schools.

Protocols for Lunchtime

- Stagger lunch times across age groups to prevent student congestion
- Students having lunch from school canteens should pre-order
- Students who are not taking school lunch should bring their own pre-packed meals. These students will remain in their bubble and the monitor will assist in cleaning at the primary level
- Students should have their lunch at their desk where feasible
- There should be frequent sanitizing of the serving areas.
- Students should remain in their bubbles for the duration of their lunch period
- Empty containers should be placed in bins in designated areas in the corridor.



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Eating Accommodations

- Designated eating areas must be identified where the classrooms cannot be used. Distancing protocols must be observed
- There should be proper and frequent cleaning of tables, counters and cupboards.

Roles of Safety Officers

- Ensure that there is compliance among staff and students, i.e., wearing of masks correctly, sanitization
- Assist with physical distancing – lunchtime supervision, boarding transport
- Collect data to help inform what is going well and what needs to be improved:
 - Protocols at the gate, canteen and bus.

Role of School Monitors

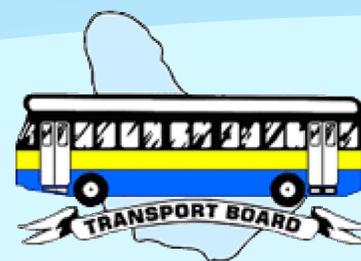
- Assist with the enforcement of the COVID-19 protocols which includes taking temperatures, hand sanitizing etc. of all persons entering the school compound
- Promote behaviours that limit exposure to, and reduce the spread of, COVID-19 e.g. washing of hands, correct wearing of masks
- Support students in the correct wearing of masks
- Assist with the supervision of students during lunchtime to reinforce physical distancing and compliance with protocols.



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Protocols for Transportation

- Board buses in an orderly fashion while observing physical distancing
- Make use of the sanitizers on the bus and at the departure gates
- Masks must be worn during travel.



Roles of Counsellors

- Guidance Counsellors should lead HFLE teams to facilitate lessons on coping skills, emotions management, grief, problem solving, etc. The HFLE curriculum should place heavy emphasis on social and emotional learning to help students manage the present circumstances
- Students identified as having more intense needs should be referred to the Guidance Counsellor so additional support can be arranged
- Counselling support teams should make internal provisions for students in need of social and emotional support where possible, with individual counselling sessions arranged
- An internal referral system should be created for staff to refer students who show signs of distress, anxiety and difficulty coping, with staff made aware of this referral process
- Provisions should also be made for parents to refer students who need psychosocial support and for students to self-refer
- Updated records of students accessing support should be forwarded to the METVT on an ongoing basis via the identified Google form, for data analysis purposes
- The counselling team should facilitate a session for staff on 'utilizing a trauma-informed approach' to deal with student needs
- Teachers needing counselling support should contact Network Services directly or should reach out through the school's Guidance/School Counsellor/Social Worker
- The counselling team should collaborate and coordinate with families, teachers, administrators, community and social service providers for effective case management
- School Counsellors should engage parents and students using in-person and online modalities (depending on the recommended COVID-19 protocols)
- Individual counselling sessions should be arranged for students in need.

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Counsellors Should Also:

- Facilitate intense, targeted, individual and small-group counseling support to students referred
- Facilitate whole-school social and emotional programming promoting student success
- Consult with teachers about building classroom connections and employing effective classroom management, taking trauma experiences of the pandemic into consideration
- Share strategies that support student achievement with families, teachers, administrators, school staff and community organizations
- Provide individual education planning where necessary, given the expected learning losses that some are likely to be experiencing.

Social Workers Should:

- Support parents with any queries and questions about the safe reopening of schools
- Organize counselling sessions for individual students as needed
- Facilitate contact with social agencies and religious organizations (e.g., for back-to-school supplies)
- Conduct 'bounce-back' sessions for students (groups)
- Continue mental health support for individuals and families, students, teachers, parents, guardians in conjunction with School Counsellors and consultants
- Help Principals to coordinate responses to any social challenges that may arise on site
- Liaise with the peripatetic teachers (SSS) to support and refer students with learning difficulties
- Inform the Principals of dates for scheduled school visits so that appointments can be made for parents as needed
- Refer cases when necessary.

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**For further information, please feel free to call 535-0600 or
email us at info@mes.gov.bb**

Let Us Work Together For the Safety of Our Children!



**MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, TECHNOLOGICAL
& VOCATIONAL TRAINING**

JANUARY 2022