



**MINISTRY OF HEALTH,  
WELLNESS AND THE  
ENVIRONMENT**

**Ministerial Building, Kingstown,  
Saint Vincent and the Grenadines**

## **EDUCATION BRIEF**

**Purpose:** The purpose of this brief is to provide actionable guidance to school officials for the prevention and early detection of COVID-19 in the school setting. This guidance will assist in making a determination of the reopening schools in the coming weeks. In the longer term, it is anticipated that it will encourage officials, teachers and students to become advocates for disease prevention in and out of the school setting.

### **Context**

COVID-19 has been declared Public Health Emergency of international Concern (PHEIC) and the virus has spread to many countries and territories. As a pandemic no country or region is unaffected by the disease.

The virus is transmitted through direct contact with respiratory droplets of an infected person and through touching surfaces contaminated by the virus. The symptoms of COVID-19 include fever, cough, and shortness of breath. In severe cases, it may lead to pneumonia, breathing difficulties and rarely death.

No section or age group of the population is immune the virus. Older persons and those with underlying medical conditions tend to have a more server form of the disease.

In the absence of a vaccine, treatment for COVID-19 is non-specific and aimed at reducing symptoms. The main tools for preventing the spread of COVID-19 are frequent hand washing, respiratory etiquette, cleaning frequently touched surfaces, staying home when sick (staff and students) and physical distancing.

St. Vincent and the Grenadines has recorded 29 cases of COVID-19. None of these required hospitalization and there were no fatalities. All person have recovered.



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**Key points**

- Each school should develop protocols for ill teachers, staff and students. As far as possible ill persons should be separated from the school population while undergoing or awaiting assessment. A thermometer (preferably non-contact) should be used for objectively evaluating body temperature. A process for informing parents/ guardians and health care officials should be established.
- Flexible attendance and sick leave policy should be introduced for both students and teachers alike. This will allow for sick persons to remain at home and for caregivers to provide care for ill family members.
- School attendance should be monitored for frequent absence among staff and students due to illness. The Ministry of Health should be informed about increased absenteeism due to respiratory illness.
- In the event of school disruption, school authorities should work with vulnerable students to ensure continuation of their needs (school feeding, counseling etc)
- Promote and teach proper and regular hand washing to students
  - Ensure soap and clean running water is always available
  - Install additional water fountains/ hand washing stations to adequately meet the needs of the school population.
  - Encourage frequent hand washing for staff and students
  - Place hand sanitizers at entrances and exits, hallways, classrooms and staff rooms
  - Ensure toilet facilities are kept clean throughout the school day
- Clean and disinfect school building each day. Particular attention should be paid to doors, railings, toilets/bathrooms and frequently touched surfaces: lunch tables, desk and chairs, windows, teaching aides etc.
- Cleaning should be done with 0.5% hypochlorite solution and 70% ethanol for small surface areas
- Post signage to encourage hand and respiratory hygiene
- Ensure solid waste is removed daily.
  
- Open windows to encourage increased air flow where possible
- Promote physical distancing measures:
  - Cancel assemblies, PTA and staff meetings, sports, games and other events that encourage mass gatherings



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- Stagger the beginning and ending of the school day
- Stagger the times for break and lunch
- Where possible, ensure work stations (classrooms, staffrooms, labs), for students and teachers, are at least three feet apart
- Where possible, reduce the number of persons on the school compound at any given time
- Encourage non students and teachers not to be present on the school premises unless absolutely necessary
- Where possible school provisions should be delivered outside of school hours.
- Avoid teaching methods that require group work or gatherings of any sort
- Conduct sensitization for both teachers and students alike, regarding the spread and consequences of COVID-19 with clearly defined pathways to counseling where necessary.

*Please note that this document may be revised at any time at the discretion of the Health Services Subcommittee of the National Emergency Committee/COVID-19 Task Force, Ministry of Health, Wellness and the Environment.*

Revised July 1 2020