

# COVID-19

## GUIDE FOR SCHOOLS

**Supporting Health  
and Safety for All**



October 2021

## Principles Used to Develop the Guide:

- That the plan addresses all aspects of the Board's operations and prioritizes physical safety along with the mental health, well-being, and emotional safety of students and staff.
- That Human Rights Code-related needs and equitable approaches and outcomes will be considered in all aspects of school operations, decision making and implementation, to ensure responsiveness to and respectfulness of individual identities, strengths, needs, experiences and circumstances.
- Accommodating staff and students' disability/medical and other Human Rights Code-related needs are entrenched in our work.
- That we are committed to fostering an inclusive environment that respects the diverse identities of our school communities and values their input.
- Ongoing communication and engagement with students, families, staff, union/federation partners, Trustees and community members are prioritized.
- That in order to meet the needs of rapidly changing contexts, the plan is easily adaptable and able to quickly address changing conditions.
- The plan meets the requirements of the [Ministry of Education's COVID-19: Health, safety and operational guidance for schools \(2021-2022\)](#).
- The plan was informed by recommendations in the reports from partner associations and the medical community about school reopening.
- The measures outlined in the plan have been carefully reviewed and supported by the Durham Region Health Department.
- Student learning for 2021-22 will be available in different forms to meet the needs of students within the context of a pandemic.

*Note: The links contained in this guide are meant for internal use to support the safe and effective operation of schools and may not be publicly accessible.*

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### Summary of key updates:

1. **Vaccination Protocol and Testing Requirements** - A summary of the COVID-19 Vaccination Protocol and Testing Requirements has been added.
2. **Management of COVID-19 in Schools** - The PPE Kit instructions for Isolation Rooms have been updated and a link to the resource provided.
3. **Student, Staff and Visitor Screening** – This section has been updated to include information on international travel and the return to school.
4. **Attendance Recording and Contact Tracing** - The COVID-19 Visitor/Contractor Sign in Sheet has been updated to reflect the most current screening requirements.
5. **Visitors and Volunteers** - A clarification on the role of volunteers and vaccination requirements updated.
6. **Use of Non-Medical Masks for Students** - Updated student masking requirements when participating in physical activities.
7. **Ventilation** – A direct link to the DDSB Ventilation Measures Report has been added
8. **Classroom Set-Up** - Provided additional guidance to help facilitate student spacing/desk set-up
9. **Shared Equipment and Materials** – Added guidance related to the handling of cash
10. **Lunch Break and Food Programs** – Provided additional guidance to support culinary food programs (items for purchase)
11. **Academic Programs Guidance** – Link to resource has been included
12. **Early Years COVID-19 Guidance** – Updated the Kindergarten program to re-emphasize health and safety protocols (use of PPE by staff, limiting cohort interactions, regular cleaning and disinfection of toys).
13. **Extra-curricular Activities** – updates have been provided based on guidance received from public health and provincial associations. Information related to field trips has been added.

## Introduction

The priority of the Durham District School Board (DDSB) is always the safety, well-being and human rights of our students and staff. The aim of this COVID-19 guide for schools is to support health and safety for all who enter our facilities.

Thoughtful planning from a cross-section of DDSB staff and input from students and families has gone into developing this guidance. Many daily operations and methods of delivering education are similar to the 2020-21 school year, and most will require a continuous re-evaluation as the situation continues to unfold.

In addition, we will continue to consider Human Rights Code-related needs and equitable approaches and outcomes in all aspects of school planning, decision making and implementation to be responsive to and respectful of students' and employees' individual identities, needs, experiences and circumstances.

We are closely monitoring the evolution of the COVID-19 pandemic and are working collaboratively with the Durham Region Health Department to implement lessons learned through the 2020-21 school year, to better anticipate and respond to challenges, and to adjust as information changes.

All parties including staff, parents/guardians and students must work together and be vigilant about following the public health and safety protocols in this document to ensure that we continue to stay safe. This includes getting vaccinated if you are eligible as it will not only benefit you but those around you.

Everyone has a shared responsibility to keep each other safe and we will continue to encourage this through COVID-19 awareness materials in schools and online. We will also continue to focus on the mental health and well-being of all members of the DDSB community with a renewed emphasis on strategies to support students and staff. Thank you for your attention and commitment to this goal and we look forward to having a safe and successful school year.

## Human Rights and Equity

The DDSB is committed to providing learning environments, services and workplaces that are welcoming, respectful, safe, inclusive, equitable, accessible and free from discrimination and harassment. We will prioritize Human Rights Code-related needs, and equitable approaches and outcomes, in all aspects of reopening planning, decision-making and implementation. This includes:

- Prioritizing, promoting and supporting human rights, equity and inclusion when applying all sections of this guide.
- Considering diverse student, employee and community voices and perspectives to inform planning, decision making and implementation.
- Using flexible approaches and providing supports and resources that are responsive to and respectful of individual identities, needs and circumstances.
- Accommodating new, existing or changing human rights related needs, to the point of undue hardship on the Board.
- Identifying, preventing and addressing human rights related barriers.
- Taking appropriate action to address discriminatory behaviour, including and not limited to discrimination against individuals or groups because of biases, assumptions or stereotypes

against anyone who has (or who is believed to have) tested positive for Covid-19, is self-isolating, awaiting test results, and/or is unable to wear a mask.

- Supporting inclusive, equitable and culturally relevant and responsive learning and providing differentiated approaches and supports to address students' needs.

## Student and Staff Mental Health and Wellbeing

Our primary consideration is the physical safety, mental health, well-being and human rights of all members of the DDSB community. Planning for a mentally healthy return to school includes consideration of circumstances which may have varied for students, families and staff. Students and staff will be approaching the transition from a range of vantage points, needs and experiences.

The foundation of a mentally healthy return to school is grounded in relationships. A focus on developing caring and attuned relationships is key to the success of students, families and staff. As we re-engage in learning this September, focusing on the foundations of mentally healthy classrooms and leveraging the power of connection provides an opportunity to support both the student and the educator relationships and well-being, while deepening our partnerships with families, and broadening our understanding of what leads to engaged learning, what contributes to academic success, and a more inclusive and equitable learning environment.

Educators will be provided with resources that support the implementation of everyday strategies that foster strong, positive and inclusive classroom practises, and will in turn lead to mentally healthy classrooms. [\*The Foundations of a Mentally Health Classroom: The First 20 Days \(and Beyond\) of Creating Connection and Well-Being Guide\*](#) will provide Educators with the opportunity to establish the conditions for a classroom culture of trusting, respectful and safe relationships, where purposeful moments of connection become the vital ingredients for enhancing a young person's mental health and creating the optimal conditions for learning and development. This guide has been revised for the start of the 2021-2022 school year. It is vitally important that the strategies within the guide are implemented centring the lived experience and identity of our students. The revisions to the guide include considerations for the impact of systemic racism and the impact to student's everyday social interactions in the creation of mentally healthy classrooms.

A helpful framework to consider when planning for a mentally healthy return to school is to "Think in Tiers". Using a tiered approach to achieve a mentally healthy return to school ensures that planning occurs for students, families and staff across a continuum of needs.

- **For ALL** - Universal Supports (Tier 1) - all students and staff will need a chance to debrief, to build relationships, to feel a sense of belonging, and to re-engage with school life. General school guidelines to support transitions back to school for all will be developed.
- **For SOME** - Additional Supports for those more impacted by COVID-19, racism, systemic discrimination and oppression and world events (Tier 2) - Some students, families and staff will need extra support to re-establish school relationships. These students and staff may need access to additional mental health supports via Inclusive Student Services (Psychological Services, Social Work) and EFAP, respectively.

- **For FEW - Specialized Supports** for those with significant needs and who have been the most vulnerable or affected by the COVID-19 crisis, racism, systemic discrimination and oppression and world events (Tier 3) – Services pathways will need to be available for those requiring more intensive mental health support during the transition back to school. For more information on the pathways available for students, consultation can occur with Social Work or Psychological Services Staff. For more information regarding the pathways available to staff, contact with HR and/or the EFAP provider will be required.

## Vaccinations

Vaccinations are an important tool to help stop the spread of COVID-19, and in allowing students, staff and families to safely resume normal activities. Vaccinations for all eligible youth and adults will further reduce the risk to everyone within the school community. The DDSB will continue to work closely with our Public Health partners to support COVID-19 vaccination for those eligible.

## Vaccination Protocol and Testing Requirements

As required by the Government of Ontario, all DDSB employees, Trustees, and student transportation drivers as well as all individuals attending on school premises frequently and having direct contact with staff or students including students on educational placement, volunteers, those who provide professional services to children at school and visitors, including third-party contractors, are required to attest if they are fully vaccinated against COVID-19. If fully vaccinated, proof of vaccination status is required by all DDSB employees.

Any third-parties with employees, students or volunteers must provide the DDSB with a certificate of compliance that all their employees, students or volunteers are compliant with the protocol.

Individuals who are not fully vaccinated or who prefer not to disclose their vaccination status must undergo regular COVID-19 Rapid Antigen Testing twice weekly and provide proof of a negative result. Those without a medical reason must complete a mandatory education program as prescribed by the Ministry of Education.

The DDSB has posted depersonalized vaccination statistics to the COVID-19 Advisory page of the DDSB website [COVID Advisory](#). Vaccination statistics will be updated monthly and will continue to change to reflect updated attestations provided to the DDSB. The [DDSB COVID-19 Vaccination Protocol](#) can be viewed here.

## Management of COVID-19 in Schools

COVID-19 case, contact, and outbreak management will continue to be led by the Durham Region Health Department with guidance provided by the Ministry of Health and Ministry of Education.

Provincial guidance can be accessed through the [Ministry of Education's COVID-19: Health, safety and operational guidance for schools \(2021-2022\)](#).

## Communicating with the School Community

Parents, students and staff will continue to be notified of confirmed cases within the school setting.

A [COVID-19 Advisory](#) section will be posted on the DDSB website that will provide a status update on confirmed cases involving a staff member or student in a school setting. The COVID-19 advisory section will also include any notices of classroom, cohort or school closure. We will also have information about ventilation standards (early-September) and staff vaccination rates for the District (mid-September) readily available on our website once school begins.

### Designated Isolation Area

Each school will continue to have a dedicated space that will serve as a location to manage individuals that may become ill while attending school or work. The isolation area will be equipped with a PPE Kit as well as instructions (schools will post these instructions with the PPE Kit, and in the dedicated isolation area). Arrangements will be made for pick up of the ill individual and the designated isolation area will be cleaned once pick up has occurred.

### PPE Kit and Isolation Room Instructions

## COVID-19 Workplace Safety Plan

At the start of the school year, each school will review their school based COVID-19 Safety Plan using the provided [template](#) accessed on eBase. The Plan will be led by school administration with input from health and safety representatives within the school. The Plan will be shared with all school-based staff and posted on the health and safety bulletin board. The Plan will be revised as required.

## Student, Staff and Visitor Screening

All staff, students and visitors must continue to screen daily prior to coming to school/childcare/work on DDSB property.

- Staff will complete the daily self assessment email to confirm that they have completed the screening and follow any direction indicated on the screening questionnaire.
- Parent/guardians/students can continue to use the [Ontario School Screening Tool](#) and follow the directions provided on the screening tool. Parents may wish to post [this screening poster](#) in a convenient place in the home as a quick reference for symptom screening each day.
- All visitors must self-screen before entering the school and verify screening is complete by signing the visitor log.

### International Travel

The federal government has provided return to school requirements for unvaccinated students who are returning from international travel. Unvaccinated students may not attend school or child care for 14 days upon return. The Ontario School Screening tool has been updated to reflect these changes.

### International Travel - Return to School

## Attendance Recording and Contact Tracing

Daily records of attendance of all persons within the school building will be kept up-to-date and available to Durham Region Health Department in order to facilitate contact tracing in the event of a confirmed COVID-19 case.

Classroom seating plans will be established and kept up to date.

All occasional staff, itinerant staff, visitors, contractors and deliveries must report to the main office so that their time at the school can be tracked and recorded on the visitor log.

[COVID-19 Visitor/Contractor Sign-In Sheet](#)

## Visitors and Volunteers

Currently, all individuals who are not employees of the DDSB wishing to access a building or school site must call the school directly to schedule an appointment before appearing on site. Unscheduled visitors and family members of child(ren) will not be able to enter DDSB schools or buildings without previous arrangements. Wherever possible, telephone meetings with parents/guardians, vendors and outside agencies will be held.

Parents/guardians/visitors are reminded to always maintain a physical distance while interacting with others on school property (during drop off and pick up). Masks for visitors are mandatory inside the school building as well as outside when physical distancing is unable to be maintained.

Volunteers in our schools are only permitted *under exceptional circumstances* and at the discretion of the principal. This discretion should be solely based upon the need for the volunteer to complete an essential task that is unable to be fulfilled by staff. These exceptions would be limited to a very small number of individuals (e.g. volunteers that support our nutrition program). The use of student volunteers is not permitted at this time.

Any volunteers attending on school premises frequently and having direct contact with staff or students must comply with the DDSB COVID-19 Vaccination Protocol.

We encourage parents/community members to continue to volunteer and support our work through School Community Councils. The SCC meetings will continue to meet virtually. We look forward to inviting our volunteers back into our schools when the COVID-19 safety protocols are no longer required.

## Use of Non-Medical Masks for Students

Students in Grades 1 to 12 are required to wear properly fitted non-medical or cloth masks indoors in school, including in hallways, classrooms and on school buses. Outdoor times like recess can be used as opportunities to provide students with breaks from wearing masks within their cohorts.

Students in Kindergarten are strongly encouraged but not required to wear masks in indoor spaces.

Masks may be temporarily removed indoors when consuming food or drink, with a minimum distance of 2 metres between cohorts and as much distancing within a cohort.

Masks are required for all indoor physical activities. Masks are not required for outdoor physical activities.

Students may be entitled to Human Rights Code-related accommodations regarding the requirements to wear a mask or granted an exemption from wearing a non-medical mask for reasons related to a medical condition. Principals will follow Board Procedure [Protocols During COVID-19 Pandemic](#) for guidance on mask accommodations and exemptions. Children and youth who are not able to remove their non-medical mask without assistance should not wear a non-medical mask due to safety concerns. Students, parents/guardians and staff must be aware that there may be individuals in a school, building, or bus who may not be wearing masks based on accommodations/approved exemptions. All staff and students must be respectful of those who wear masks and those who cannot wear masks and have an accommodation/approved exemption.

Parents/students are responsible for the safe use and cleanliness of their non-medical mask.

Each school will maintain an emergency stock supply of disposable and reusable cloth masks for student use in the event the student's mask becomes damaged or misplaced.

[Mandatory Mask Poster](#)

[How to Wear a Mask Poster - Students](#)

[Wearing your Mask 101](#)

## Staff Personal Protective Equipment Requirements

All staff are required to wear the Board provided medical masks (surgical/procedural). Medical masks are required to be worn indoors at school, including in hallways and during classes. When outdoors, staff must wear a mask if they are unable to maintain a 2-metre distance from others. Staff must maintain at least two metres distance when consuming food/drinks.

Eye protection is required for education staff working in close contact with students who are not wearing masks (for example, students in kindergarten, students with an approved mask exemption or special education circumstances). Eye protection is not required for education staff working with students who wear masks, although it will continue to be provided and may be worn by staff as an additional layer of protection.

Schools are required to maintain a stockpile of PPE for occasional staff in the main office. Occasional staff are to be provided with a box of masks as needed.

Staff PPE specific to the needs of individual students will continue to be delineated in student safety plans. Staff must continue to comply with such program-specific PPE in addition to the required COVID-19 PPE.

Staff can refer to the [DDSB Personal Protective Equipment \(PPE\) Resource](#) for more information including the care and use of PPE.

## Ventilation

Ventilation upgrades have been an ongoing priority at DDSB. Over the last five years, there have been 181 projects related to ventilation in schools across the District with an investment of more than \$30 million. Projects completed range from energy controls, partial ventilation upgrades in older sections of schools, ventilation duct work upgrades through to complete new systems. These projects take place based on need to help ensure that we continue to have high functioning and efficient ventilation systems.

Since the start of the pandemic, in order to support improved ventilation and air quality within schools, DDSB has implemented a number of measures to enhance air quality within all schools:

- There has been an increase in the minimum ventilation rate on all HVAC systems, including a full air exchange post and pre-occupied times.
- DDSB has invested in upgraded filters from MERV 7 to MERV 13 for all ventilation systems.
- Systems have been recalibrated to optimize air flow within each building.
- Ventilation checks have been completed on all systems.
- The DDSB has purchased 1,870 portable HEPA air filtration units. These units will enhance air quality in localized areas/classrooms and will be installed in various schools across the district depending on age/equipment/type of building. Furthermore, the Ministry of Education has supplied an additional 311 units. These individual units have HEPA-level filtration and filter the air within spaces that are not fully mechanically ventilated, as well as all Kindergarten classrooms regardless of ventilation type.
- Duct cleaning is being completed at schools to boost overall ventilation system efficiency.
- There is the continued recommissioning of all pneumatic controls and existing HVAC systems to maintain optimal performance.
- Building automation systems are monitored daily for any HVAC related issues.
- DDSB has also been working to complete duct cleaning to aid in the efficiency of ventilation systems and to enhance ventilation.

The DDSB will continue to undertake ventilation enhancements and upgrades in order to ensure that ventilation continues to be at a high level in all schools. Our priority is to ensure a safe learning and working environment for all students, staff and visitors at our school – and we recognize that ventilation is an important part of that.

For school specific ventilation information please refer to the [DDSB Ventilation Measures Report](#).

## Cohorting

- The term *cohort* is used to describe the group of students and educators within one classroom.
- Elementary classes will remain in one cohort for the full day for as much as the school day as possible. The same teacher will remain with the class, or if different teachers or educational support staff are required, those staff will come to the classroom, so students will not change rooms. Exceptions can be made in specific situations such as the use of the gymnasium.

- Elementary students and staff of different cohorts can interact outdoors with distancing in place as much as possible or indoors with masking and distancing.
- Students may be placed into small groups (e.g. special education support) with students from other cohorts.
- Secondary, students are part of two classroom cohorts (one cohort per course). However, given the limitations of scheduling, students will be in contact with the broader student body during breaks and lunch.
- Secondary students will be encouraged to keep a consistent cohort during their lunch periods to assist with contact tracing.

## Hand Hygiene and Respiratory Etiquette

- Hand hygiene supplies will be available in all classrooms and offices, and restocking will occur as required on a regular basis using the work order system.
- All persons entering the school will be required to sanitize their hands upon arrival.
- Hand sanitizer will be placed at the entrance to each school and in classrooms.
- Soap and paper towels will be provided in every classroom with a hand washing sink.
- If hand sanitizer is used on children, they must be supervised. Safe placement of the hand sanitizer to avoid consumption is important, especially with young children.
- A schedule to regularly clean hands will be incorporated into the daily routine.
- If hands are visibly soiled, soap and water must be used.
- Students will continue to be educated on proper cough and sneeze etiquette and to avoid touching eyes, nose and mouth with unwashed hands.
- School will post hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette signage throughout the school building.

[Hand Sanitizing Station Poster](#)

[How to Wash Hands Poster](#)

[How to Sanitize Hands Poster](#)

[Cover your Cough Poster](#)

## Enhanced Cleaning and Disinfection

- Enhanced cleaning and disinfection protocols have been reviewed and meet the current public health requirements. See the [DDSB Facilities Services Cleaning and Disinfection Protocols](#) for further details.
- High touch point areas will be cleaned and disinfected at least twice a day throughout the building. Cleaning and disinfecting of counters, tables, desk tops and touch points on chairs will take place routinely throughout the day using the board's approved disinfectant.
- Only Board approved cleaning product can be used. Staff are reminded of the importance of not bringing in their own cleaning materials.
- Custodial staff can provide Board approved cleaning materials to staff for classroom use if requested.

## Physical Distancing Measures

### School Arrival and Departure:

- Schools will continue to have directional signage and visual cue markers (i.e. one-way traffic) to regulate traffic flow and minimize student/staff encounters in the building.
- Student entry/exit for elementary schools will be staggered to provide for physical distancing and less congestion in hallways and corridors.
- Before entry into the building, elementary students will be required to line up with their class (cohort), maintaining as much distance as possible between cohorts.
- Outdoor clothing (i.e., jackets/boots) that are placed in the hall on hooks will be kept neat and one hook will be designated for each student. Students should visit hooks in small groups to maintain physical distancing.
- Child Care providers will take all children outside 10-15 minutes prior to bell time to allow for students to line up and enter school with their cohort. Plans for transitioning during inclement weather days should be planned between the school principal and child care supervisor to ensure traffic flow and distancing can occur.
- Secondary school students should arrive just prior to the morning start time, allowing sufficient time to use their locker and proceed to their homeroom classroom, limiting any time to congregate in the hallway.
- Lockers will be accessible to students (elementary and secondary). If lockers are required to be shared by two students, they will be part of the same classroom/cohort.

### Classroom Setup:

- To support physical distancing, all efforts should be made to organize the classroom furniture to minimize student contact; e.g.
  - space single desks and tables apart as much as possible; avoid grouping
  - students should face a single direction whenever possible
  - if shared tables are used, students should be staggered to minimize face to face contact with other students
- Every effort will be made to keep classrooms clutter free in order to facilitate enhanced cleaning at the end of each school day.
- Educators should avoid bringing personal materials from home, unless the learning is dependent upon those materials.
- Class pets/animals are not to be brought back into the school, although service animals will continue to be accommodated based on our Service Animal Policy and student needs, and subject to health and safety requirements.
- All soft surface items such as area rugs have been removed.

### Main Offices:

- Non-essential visitors to the school will be limited. Wherever possible, telephone meetings with parents/guardians, vendors and outside agencies will be held. If an in-person meeting is required, an appointment must be made in advance.
- Physical distancing markers can be placed on the floor to facilitate a safe distance between visiting staff/students and office staff. Stanchions/pylons can also be used to restrict traffic into

the office space. If space is limited and a 2-metre physical distance cannot be obtained, then a plexiglass barrier may be installed. However, wherever possible, restricting the movement to and from the office is preferred.

- Sign in sheets for occasional staff and the visitor log will be placed on a surface that is at a distance from the office staff. Hand sanitizer will be placed next to the sign in sheets.
- Elementary students needing to obtain a late slip will receive one through the use of a late slip printer that is placed at a distance from the office staff.
- Secondary students will not report to the office to obtain a late slip. They can report directly to their classroom and their classroom teacher will record the late entry on the school's late entry tracking form.

[Physical Distancing Boot Print Decal](#)

[Be Safe Make Space Decal](#)

[Directional Arrow Decal](#)

### Library Use

Libraries at elementary schools can be used with the following protocols and precautions in place:

- Create a schedule and limit the number of students in the library at one time (i.e. one class in the library at a time) to allow space for physical distancing.
- Limit the number of chairs per table to ensure physical distancing. Remove any excess chairs and furniture.
- Limit the amount of touch points on materials (i.e. lay out books on a table for students to choose from).
- Hand sanitizer stations will be placed at the entrance to the library and students and staff will be required to sanitize hands upon entry and exit. Additional hand sanitizer should be placed on the circulation table.
- All students must use hand sanitizer before and after using the self circulation computer. If the Teacher Librarian is available to check out books, it is recommended that they check out the books for all students, using proper hand sanitizing methods.
- Teachers may borrow books from the library to be kept in the classroom and read by their class.
- Books may go home with students.
- A supply of disinfectant wipes will be available.

Libraries at secondary schools can be used for group and individual use, including drop in study time with the following protocols and precautions in place:

- Capacity limits posted to ensure physical distancing.
- A sign in process will be in place (manual and/or digital). Schools can create a digital sign using a Google Sheet or Form as an option. The sign in should contain the students first and last name, homeroom teacher, and the date and time they were in the library. A QR Code can be created for students to complete the sign in from their device.
- Limit the number of chairs per table to ensure physical distancing. Remove any excess chairs and furniture.
- Single user is recommended for booth style seating.

- When different cohorts interact in shared indoor spaces, masking and as much distancing as possible should be maintained.
- Hand sanitizer stations will be placed at the entrance to the library and students and staff will be required to sanitize hands upon entry and exit. Additional hand sanitizer should be placed on the circulation table.
- A supply of disinfectant wipes will be available.

## Shared Equipment and Materials:

- Shared materials such as art supplies, toys, games, physical education equipment are an important component to learning. Whenever possible shared equipment should be disinfected between cohort use. Regular hand hygiene will need to be incorporated into the activity.
- Technology devices can be cleaned with 70% isopropyl alcohol or by using the Board approved disinfectant sprayed on a microfibre cloth and wiped. Do not spray directly on technology devices or saturate the devices, as that will potentially damage them.
- Staff in schools are permitted to handle/process cash with a focus on hand hygiene before and after, along with cleaning/disinfecting surfaces after completing the activity (i.e. wiping the desk/table with spray disinfectant and paper towels).

## Assemblies

At this time assemblies will continue to be held virtually until further notice.

## Lunch Breaks and Food Programs

- Elementary students remaining at school for the lunch hour will eat in their classroom or outdoors with their cohort, with as much distancing as possible within the cohort. If more than one cohort is sharing a space, a minimum of two metres should be maintained between cohorts.
- Cafeteria spaces and additional established lunch break locations will be available for secondary students. Capacity limits to support physical distancing for each cafeteria will be established by each school.
  - Whenever possible, students will be encouraged to eat their lunch at home or outdoors (weather permitting).
  - Students of different cohorts can interact during lunch with distancing in place as much as possible. Students should be able to identify the location they eat lunch so as to assist with contact tracing. Students will be encouraged to eat their lunch with members of their am or pm cohort as much as possible.
- Staff and students will perform proper hand hygiene before and after eating.
- Breakfast programs/nutrition programs/third party food events (e.g., SCC fundraisers) are permitted to operate, provided they follow the necessary health and safety protocols.
- All food program volunteers must have a 'Food Handler Certification' and wear a mask at all times.
- Food programs/third party food providers will need to operate as a "Grab & Go" style (individually pre-packaged) OR as a basket program sent to each classroom.

- Culinary programs are permitted to make individual pre-packaged items for sale to staff and students. All industry health and safety requirements need to be followed. Physical distancing measures will need to be in place if lines are formed to purchase items.
- Water bottle refill stations will be available however drinking fountains will continue to be off limits. Students are encouraged to bring their own water bottle.
- [Lunch Room Protocols](#) will be reviewed at the start of the school year and posted in each classroom.

[Lunch Room Protocols Poster](#)

[Water Bottle Filling Station Poster](#)

## Staff Lunch Rooms, Staff Work Rooms, Mail Rooms and Staff Meetings

- Principals will review and post the [Staff Room Protocols](#) at the beginning of the year.
- Principals will set capacity limits in each staff room, work rooms and mail rooms to avoid staff from congregating.
- Principals should consider the use of a virtual staff room for breaks and socialization.
- Staff work rooms should be reconfigured to allow for physical distancing. Where possible, assign staff to dedicated work areas and discourage the sharing of desks, phones, and equipment.
- Where established, the staff rooms will continue to be used as a food preparation area for licensed child care spaces.
- Staff meetings will continue to be conducted virtually whenever possible. If it is necessary to hold a staff meeting in person, it must comply with the current provincial requirements under the [Reopening Ontario Act \(e.g. Step 3, indoor gathers must not exceed 25 persons, with 2 metre spacing and masking\)](#).

[Staff Room Lunch Protocols Poster](#)

## Transportation

The DDSB continues to work with Durham Student Transportation Services (DSTS) and the Durham Catholic District School Board (DCDSB) to develop a unified transportation plan with an increased emphasis of staff and student safety. The following protocols will be required.

### Seating and Capacity:

- Elementary capacity – Regular capacity, up to 3 per seat to Grade 6, and up to 2 per seat for Grade 7 and 8.
- Secondary capacity – Regular capacity, up to 2 per seat.
- The seat directly behind the driver will remain empty.
- Students will be assigned a seat on the bus and will be required to stay in their seat until they can exit the bus at the appropriate stop.

### Enhanced Cleaning on Buses:

- Bus operators will clean their buses twice per day, focussing on the high touch point areas.

#### Health and Safety for Bus Drivers:

- Daily self-screening is required for all bus drivers before work.
- All bus drivers will be required to wear a medical mask at all times and will be provided with a face shield/eye protection for use at times of student boarding and de-boarding.
- Additional PPE may be required for drivers who are transporting students with special needs. This may include gloves and in some cases gown, face mask and shield. DSTS will work with Inclusive Student Services to determine the PPE needs that are required.

#### Expectation of Students Riding the Bus:

- Students are to follow the [Bus Safety Rules](#).
- The use of non-medical masks for all students (K-12) riding the bus will be required. Exceptions will be made for students with medical conditions or special needs that prevent masking.

#### [Bus Safety Rules Poster](#)

## Emergency Management and Fire Procedures

#### Emergency Drills:

- Schools will continue to be required to meet the regulatory standard for frequency of conducting emergency drills including lockdown (minimum one per school year), hold and secure (minimum once per school year) and shelter in place/bomb threat evacuation (minimum once per school year).
- Drills are to be conducted while maintaining physical distancing, maintaining cohorts and wearing a face mask (as required).
- Bomb threat drills can be accomplished through discussion and/or visual demonstration (no evacuation required).
- Fire drills (6 drills per year – 3 in fall/winter, 3 in spring) should continue to be held, while practicing physical distancing, maintaining cohorts and masking as required.
- Schools should notify local emergency services in advance of scheduled drills.

#### Medical Emergency/First Aid Response:

Wear appropriate personal protective equipment when attending to a situation that requires first aid. Additional masks, gloves, disposable gown and a face shield should be placed with all first aid kits. At a minimum, gloves a mask and face shield will be worn when performing first aid. If there is a potential for exposure to blood or bodily fluid, a disposable gown will also be worn.

- Follow Public Health Guidelines around hand hygiene following any first aid interaction.
- Dispose of any waste in a safe fashion.

## Academic Programs Guidance

The [Academic Programs Guide](#) provides subject related curriculum delivery and includes provincial best practices that have been established to mitigate the risks associated with COVID-19.

The DDSB will continue to work with provincial associations for additional guidance on the delivery of subject specific curriculum.

## Special Education

The Inclusive Student Services team is working to review all aspects of COVID-19 that may impact the safety of staff and students.

### Student Services in Schools, Clinical Supports, and Community Partnerships

Inclusive Student Services (ISS) team members greatly value the way in which their services are embedded within the overall support provided to students, staff and families. Health and Safety considerations when Inclusive Student Services staff are on site in schools:

- ISS staff are included in the count of staff/student on site.
- ISS staff are organized in terms of schedule of visits and access to school spaces.
- Clinical spaces will be set up according to guidelines set out by Health and Safety, along with Facilities Services. These spaces are designated for the prioritization of clinical purposes 1) ISS team members; and 2) School Based Rehabilitative Services. Team members will be responsible for the coordination of access. School level responsibility is to ensure that spaces are not repurposed. School Administrators will be asked to identify and submit the designated location for the 2021-2022 school year.
- Clinicians will be following protocols, such as those developed for assessment materials, to support the health of students and team members.
- Note: Consideration should be given for travel between schools and in order to minimize exposure and contact. Strategies such as the use of optional tools, such as MS Teams, where parent/caregiver preference is remote connection, will be maintained within practice.
- Wherever possible, integrated ISS team meetings will be conducted virtually.
- To ensure adherence to health protocols and clinical professional standards, many adaptations to our service model are being made to ensure safety for all with partners including, but not limited to: Grandview Children's Centre, Community Partners in Nursing, our Grove (Education Community Partnership Program) agency partners and many others.
- These protocols will be communicated directly to impacted schools and the families of children receiving these services.

#### Protocol: BMS

- In working with students with challenging behaviors, there is a necessity to consider Human Rights Code-related needs, mitigating factors and accommodations and to maintain key BMS procedural guidelines as they are structured to ensure staff and student safety.
- Practices will be supplemented by the use of PPEs, as directed by Health and Safety according to level of student need for proximity, (e.g., face shields, masks, gloves, standard PPE), etc.
- Planning at the school level, should have focus on tiers of response and staff responsibilities which have staff regularly assigned (e.g. permanent and LTO) to the school engaged in Behaviour Safety Plan program implementation/support to students presenting with risk of injurious behaviours, and supply staff assigned to other students.
- Guidance related to the Behaviour Management Safety (BMS) procedures has been reviewed provincially. The BMS Safety Procedures in which staff are trained must remain intact, as they are built upon essential principles that maintain student and staff safety.

Health and Safety protocols must be used *adjunctively* to ensure appropriate precautions for mitigating the risk associated with COVID-19 exposure. In the event of physical contact and/or the use of containment, both the safety principles from BMS and the protocols from Health and Safety must work in tandem.

### Alternative Learning Environments

- Some students access Alternative Learning Environments such as sensory and calming rooms. Ongoing communication between educators and Facilities Services/Custodial team members is essential with regard to the access and cleaning of these spaces.
- When these designated spaces are within a special education class setting, they are considered part of the program space and can be accessed by any student within the cohort with class-based cleaning protocols implemented (e.g, student specific materials brought in/out with individual student).
- When these designated spaces are accessed from a hallway, deeper cleaning between student/staff access is required as students/staff will be from a variety of cohorts within the school.

Challenge/Consideration	Variables/Factors to Consider	Possible Strategies/Solutions
Calming Rooms	Multiple students accessing same space	-Schedule times within a cohort of students -Each student could have an individual bin of items for sole use - -Cleaning protocol of surfaces between students' use
Sensory Equipment	Many of these items go into a child's mouth	-Students will need sole access to the preferred items -Items should be disinfected. EAs and educators clean sensory tools as per existing procedure

## Early Years: COVID-19 Guidance

### The Kindergarten Program

The goal of this section is to support Kindergarten educators in creating and implementing a play-based Kindergarten program that continues to follow enhanced health and safety measures which include an increased focus on frequent hand hygiene, physical distancing where possible and the use of masks. Our goal is for Kindergarten programs to support the healthy development of all children by incorporating fundamental aspects of early years pedagogy and a return to programming that best supports the needs of all children while maintaining health and safety requirements.

### Health and Safety

- Children in Kindergarten are not required to wear masks but are strongly encouraged. Masks do not need to be worn outside but distancing should be encouraged between cohorts.
- Kindergarten educators are required to wear eye protection in addition to their medical mask while interacting with students in the classroom. Kindergarten educators are also required to wear eye protection if interacting with unmasked students outdoors.
- Although cohorts can play together during outdoor time with physical distancing encouraged, schools are still advised to limit cohort interaction as much as possible by staggering outdoor times or using other areas of the school property for outdoor activity and learning.
- Encourage physical distancing between children where possible throughout the flow of the day.
- Spread children out during dressing times or stagger children in the cubby area to encourage more distancing. Cubbies are permitted to be used.
- Use visual cues to promote physical distancing in the learning environment that are age-appropriate.
- Hand hygiene should take place frequently throughout the day, more so than just at typical times such as lunch, snacks and transitions.
- Use of shared materials (toys, art supplies, blocks, etc.) is permitted as long as regular hand hygiene is being practiced throughout the day.
- Sensory play is permitted as long as children are washing hands before/after use.
- Indoor sensory play such as sand and playdough must continue to be personal use only.
- Regular cleaning and disinfection of toys/sensory materials is required.
- Singing is permitted indoors with masks on.
- Outdoor equipment is permitted to be shared between cohorts as long as children are washing their hands before/after use.
- Parents/guardians/visitors are reminded to always maintain a physical distance while interacting with others on school property during drop off and pick up. Masks for parents/guardians are required to be worn outside when physical distancing cannot be maintained.

### Frequently Asked Questions for Kindergarten...

<p><b>Are children allowed to move around the classroom?</b></p>	<p>Children should have opportunities to move around the learning environment during large blocks of uninterrupted play as it is not developmentally appropriate for Kindergarten children to be seated all day.</p> <p>Educators should consider small group instruction and avoid large groups as much as possible to allow for children to be as distanced as possible. Children at this age learn best in small groups; engaging and learning with small groups of students is a researched based approach to differentiate and support our learners while keeping them distanced and safe at the same time.</p>
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<p><b>Should children have assigned seats?</b></p>	<p>Children should be encouraged to move around the learning environment as a means to engage in developmentally appropriate play-based learning opportunities – however, during long sustained activities (ex. lunch time, read-alouds) it is recommended children have designated seats where they sit to limit the number of children they are in close, sustained contact with.</p>
<p><b>Can children play with other children?</b></p>	<p>Children should be encouraged to interact with their peers in the learning environment to support their social and emotional development and well-being. Educators should continue to encourage physical distancing where possible.</p>
<p><b>Can children play with the same material as someone else or share materials?</b></p>	<p>Children may share materials with their peers as long as they are practicing frequent hand hygiene throughout the day.</p> <p>Regular cleaning and disinfection of toys/sensory materials is required.</p> <p>Indoor sensory play such as sand and playdough must continue to be personal use only.</p>
<p><b>Can children use their cubbies for their personal belongings?</b></p>	<p>Children should be using their cubbies to hang up their personal items/belongings. Careful consideration should be given to staggering children’s transition times in the cubby area to promote physical distancing.</p>
<p><b>Can we add furniture to our learning environments that was removed?</b></p>	<p>Kindergarten educator teams should collaborate to set up their learning environments, so they are conducive to a play-based program where children have voice and choice in their learning. Careful consideration should be given to support physical distancing where possible.</p>
<p><b>Can children engage in dramatic play?</b></p>	<p>Children should be encouraged to engage in dramatic play as it supports many aspects of their social, emotional, cognitive and physical development.</p>
<p><b>Can children sit together for whole/small group activities?</b></p>	<p>Children within one cohort may sit together with as much physical distancing as possible.</p>

<p><b>Do all children need to be in desks facing forward?</b></p>	<p>Kindergarten programs should include movement around the classroom and limit the amount of time children are sitting for sustained activities.</p>
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### Extended Day Kindergarten, Before and After School Programs and After School Recreation Programs

The Durham District School Board’s Early Years departments mission is to enhance an integrated system of programs, supports and services that are well-coordinated, high-quality and provide each child with the foundation for healthy development.

It is critical that schools and child care partners work together to ensure that all health and safety requirements set out by the Ministry of Education and Public Health for both core-school program delivery and extended day before and after school program delivery.

#### Groupings

Best practices to limit interactions between students from different classes and reduce transmission of COVID-19 may include:

- Making best efforts to group the before and after school program class with the same core day class (e.g. determining core day classes based on whether the child is enrolled in the before and after school program).
- Make use of the outdoor spaces as much as possible.
- Maintain up-to-date lists of students in each before/after school program cohort to facilitate timely follow-up should a confirmed case of COVID be identified.

#### Enhanced Cleaning and Disinfection

Cleaning protocols between child care school staff are being reviewed and information will be shared as a guide to support cleaning responsibilities within shared and exclusive spaces.

Child Care will transition children outdoors in the morning for a minimum of 15 minutes to allow rooms to be cleaned. In the afternoon, child care will take the children outside for 30 minutes of outdoor play time (as detailed in the CCEYA), this will provide custodial staff and child care with time to wipe down surfaces and high touch points.

Shared space classrooms are encouraged to keep a cleaning and disinfecting log to track and demonstrate cleaning schedules.

All classrooms will be cleaned and disinfected in the evening to prepare for the next day.

#### Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) for Staff and Masking for Children

All child care staff are required to wear medical masks indoors while in the program, as well as in the hallways and staff rooms. When outdoors, staff must wear a mask if they are unable to maintain a 2-metre distance from others.

Eye protection is required for child care staff working in close contact with children who are not wearing masks (for example, children younger than grade one). Eye protection is not required for child care staff working with children who wear masks.

All children in grades one and up are required to wear a mask at all times during indoor programming. Children in Kindergarten are strongly encouraged to wear a mask during indoor programming.

Reasonable exceptions to the requirement to wear a mask are expected to be put in place by child care providers. Reasonable exemptions for medical conditions or special circumstances are acceptable and must be consistent between core day and extended day programs.

### Screening

All individuals including children attending before and after school programs must be screened each day before entering the program. Children who have been screened for symptoms prior to entering the before and after school program would not need to be re-screened for the core day program. Similarly, an individual that has been screened prior to the before school program or core day program, would not need to be re-screened for the after-school program. All screening stations must be equipped with proper hand sanitizer that contains 60% to 90% alcohol content.

All child care partners are expected to have a process in place to validate the daily self-screening of individuals upon their arrival. Confirmation or proof of self-screening should be in a form deemed appropriate and accessible by the program operator.

If an individual does not pass the screening and is not permitted to attend the program, the child care staff will be sent home and asked to self-isolate and this information would be communicated to the school Administrator.

### Pick Up and Drop Off Procedures

School administrators and child care staff will collaborate to develop procedures that support physical distancing and the separation of children as best as possible during pick up/drop off times. (e.g. children from the Kindergarten extended day program enter door A and children from the school age program enter door B).

### Attendance Records

Child care will maintain daily attendance records of anyone entering the shared space child care room and note the approximate length of their stay. This includes school custodians, classroom core day educators, support staff, school Administrators etc. The records will include name, contact information, time of arrival/departure, screening completion/result and must be kept up-to-date and available to facilitate contact tracing in the event of a confirmed COVID-19 case or outbreak.

### Illness Protocols

COVID-19 case, contact, and outbreak management will continue to be led by the Durham Region Health Department with guidance provided by the Ministry of Health and Ministry of Education.

Any student or staff member that is symptomatic or has been advised to self-isolate will not be able to attend the program. If a child becomes symptomatic during the child care before and after school program, they are to be isolated in a separate room (where possible) and their families contacted to arrange pick-up. Children must be supervised at all times. The use of the space is to be communicated with school administrators and custodial staff to ensure the space is properly cleaned and disinfected. Please refer to Public Health protocols for further information on best practices when someone demonstrates symptoms of illness.

### Washrooms and Toileting

The Ministry has recommended that only one group access the washroom at a time and recommend that the facilities be cleaned in between each use. School Administrators, Chief Custodian and Child Care supervisors should work collectively to develop a plan for the school.

### Space Set Up and Physical Distancing

We recognize that it will be challenging to keep children physically distanced in the before and after school program and encourage educators to maintain a welcoming and caring environment at all times. The Ministry of Education has developed a document to support your practice entitled 'Building On How Does Learning Happen?', this tool provides ideas on how to deliver an engaging environment while physically distancing.

When using common spaces such as hallways and entrances, physical distancing of at least 2 metres should be maintained between different groups/cohorts and should further be encouraged between children in the same group/cohort.

Shared spaces that have not been cleaned in between groups/cohorts cannot be used.

### Food Preparation and Provision

All partners should follow regular food preparation guidelines. Family style meals are permitted to operate provided that food handlers use adequate food handling and safety procedures. Nutrition/third party food programs are permitted to operate. Proper hand hygiene needs to be practiced when staff are preparing food for all individuals before and after eating. Where possible, children should practice physical distancing while eating.

### DDSB Early Years Hubs/EarlyON Guidelines

The Durham District School Board partners with family support and early years agencies that provide programming for children ages 0-4 and their caregivers. We play a critical role in the early years sector by providing environments where services can be co-located and integrated for the purpose of reducing transitions, building cohesion and alignment across early years pedagogy and stronger connections between children, families, and early years and school professionals and educators. Now more than ever school board leadership is vital to supporting comprehensive and continuous education.

Early Years programs are essential for the growth and development of our youngest learners, programs are designed to enhance children’s development and provide parents and caregivers with tools to further their child’s learning, development and emotional well-being at home.

### Locations

To ensure all children, families and educators in our school buildings remain safe at all times, we are only going to allow Early Years Hubs that have exclusive space within our school buildings to operate first with the other sites being revisited shortly after. Where a location has an exclusive space with a need for a shared washroom facility, conversations regarding safety and distancing will take place to determine if the space can safely open.

### Program Delivery

All Early Years Hub programming will need to be delivered through registered programming to all staff to collect contact information, conduct screening and review health and safety protocols for those in the program. Partners will follow their own policies and procedures related to registration and reservations in to programs they operate. All programs must operate with physical distancing measures in place

Families and caregivers who have not registered or signed up in advance will not be permitted to access the Early Years Hub/Early ON space.

### Outdoor Programming

Many of our EarlyON programs have provided outdoor programming over the summer months. This practice is strongly encouraged to continue as a program delivery model. Where this is offered on school grounds, early years partners will be required to collaborate with school Administrators to ensure that there is no conflict with school recess and outdoor classroom times.

### Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) for Staff and Masking for Children

All staff members are required to wear medical masks while inside the building. Eye protection must be worn by those working in close contact with children who are unable to wear a face covering. All adults (parents/caregivers) are required to wear a face covering or non-medical mask while inside the building.

Masks are not recommended for children under the age of 2, any child over the age of two involved in the registered programming should be encouraged to wear a mask.

### Cleaning and Disinfecting

Early Years Hubs/EarlyON programs must follow the advice of Durham Public Health to develop policies and procedures on their day to day operations. School Board custodial staff will do one complete clean of the space on a nightly basis. Custodians will continue to support with the mixing of cleaning solutions.

Custodians and Early Years Hub/EarlyON educators are encouraged to keep an active cleaning log in place.

### Screening

All individuals including children, staff, parents and caregivers must be screened each day before entering the school building. Program staff will remind parents and caregivers of the screening requirement at the time of registration as well as through visible signage on entry doors. Early Years Hubs/EarlyON staff will be required to keep daily records of screening results and make them available to Public Health in the event of an outbreak. Programs will ensure that an alcohol-based hand sanitizer containing 60%-90% alcohol content is placed at all screening stations at a level high enough to be out of reach to young children.

### Attendance Tracking

Early Years Hub/EarlyON staff are responsible for maintaining daily records of everyone that enters the school to access their program as well as the length of their stay. This includes custodial staff, educators, maintenance staff and Administrators. Records will be stored safely and be made accessible if required to facilitate contact tracing.

### Early Years Support

Visit the Early Years resource document on SPARK for additional information to support you.

A member of the early years team can be reached through board email or our general email box at [early.years@ddsb.ca](mailto:early.years@ddsb.ca)

### Extra-curricular Activities

The DDSB continues to work with the Durham Region Health Department and provincial associations for guidance on extra-curricular activities including intramural and interschool sports.

Schools are required to follow the outlined protective strategies (e.g. masking, distancing, hand hygiene) as well as any specific academic program requirements when facilitating extra-curricular activities. An attendance list of participants must be maintained for all extra-curricular activities.

### School Clubs, Non-sport Activities

School clubs and non-sport activities are permitted. Cohorts can interact outdoors with physical distancing encouraged, and indoor with masking and appropriate physical distancing. Currently, there are two requirements related to band and cross-cohort choirs:

- Band is only permitted without wind instruments.
- School choirs outside of the student's classroom cohort cannot commence at this time. Singing is permitted outdoors with distancing maintained between cohorts; masking is required if distancing cannot be maintained between individuals within a cohort.

### Intramural School Sports

Low-Contact activities that are indoor require participants to be masked, follow proper hand hygiene, and follow safety protocols identified by the teacher. Masked indoor intramural sports may resume for no-contact, low cardio sports and outdoor intramurals will resume unmasked, with minimal contact.

Low and High-Contact activities that take place outdoors will resume unmasked. Participants are required to follow safety protocols as identified by the teacher. Attendance records will be maintained.

## Inter-school Sports

Outdoor inter-school extra-curricular activities at the secondary school level and intermediate level (grades 7 and 8) are permitted. While players may engage in these outdoor sports unmasked during active participation, players and coaches not actively participating (e.g. observing from the sideline) must remain masked. Spectators are strongly discouraged for outdoor sports.

Currently, only indoor inter-school volleyball activities at the secondary school level and intermediate level (grades 7 and 8) are permitted. For indoor volleyball, masking is mandatory for all participants and coaches, whether on or off the court. Spectators will not be permitted to attend.

## Field Trips

All field trips will continue to be on hold until further notice. Two exceptions may be granted:

- Where a field trip directly impacts the credit of a course in secondary, for example SHSM courses, an exception *may* be approved as an exceptional circumstance. All such exceptions must be vetted through your Family of Schools System Lead to ensure that appropriate health and safety measures are in place and must be given *prior approval* by the Operations Department. Family of Schools System Leads will co-ordinate the approval process for these exceptions. No trips are to take place without prior approval.
- Where excursions are to support the essential skills development for students in a special education placement with life skills focus, a Transition Co-ordinator, working with the System Lead Inclusive Student Services, must vet the proposed program and grant approval. No trips are to take place without prior approval.

## Community Use of Schools

The DDSB is reviewing the Community Use of Schools. A decision to resume community bookings will be made in consultation with the Durham Region Health Department.

## Youth Hubs

The 'Make A Difference' Community and Partnership Development department is reviewing Youth Hub operations for the 2021/2022 school year. A decision to resume programming in the Hub space will be made in consultation with the lead partners and Durham Region Public Health Department.

## APPENDIX A: RESOURCES

[Ontario COVID-19: Health, safety and operational guidance for school \(2021-2022\)](#)

[Durham Region Health Department School Re-Opening Tool-kit](#)

[Child and Youth COVID-19 Vaccination Fact Sheet – Ministry of Health](#)

[COVID-19 Guidance: School Case, Contact and Outbreak Management – Ministry of Health](#)