Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa,
Elementary & Secondary Education Department

Dated Peshawar the 18/08/2020

NOTIFICATION.

No. SOG/E&SE/1-48/2020 In continuation of this Department's notification of even number dated 04.08.2020, the following Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) are hereby notified for strict implementation by educational/training institutions, District Education Officers and schools' administrations. These SOPS include essential preparatory measures that need to be taken before school opening, and the precautionary procedures that need to be adopted to minimize the risk of COVID-19 spread and ensure safety of children, teachers and staff once the educational/training Institutions and schools open for academic activity.

Standard Operating Procedures for Opening of Private Schools

Background

An outbreak of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) caused by the 2019 novel coronavirus (SARS-CoV-2) has been spreading rapidly across the world since December 2019. Since the beginning of March 2020, the number of cases outside China has increased manifolds and the pandemic has now affected almost all the countries. On March 11, 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared a global pandemic as the coronavirus rapidly spread across the world. According to WHO, as of 18th of August, 2020 the outbreak has resulted in an estimated 21,732,472 cases and 770,866 deaths across the world. Here it is pertinent to indicate that the number of Coronavirus positive cases in Pakistan are 289,832 with 6,190 deaths officially recorded. Out of the total COVID-19 positive caseload in Pakistan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has crossed 35,337 confirmed cases with 1239 deaths and 32,522 successful recoveries.

One of the earliest responses by the government to contain the spread of this disease was to declare the closure of schools. After the review of the situation, the National Command and Operation Centre (NCOC) has decided to allow the educational institutions to re-open with effect from 15th September 2020. The permission comes hedged with a number of preconditions that are to be met before the educational institutions are allowed to function, as the closure has resulted in the disruption and displacement of education for over 7 million children studying in public and private schools in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. We face additional risks when it comes to preserving recent gains made in education-related opportunities with respect to access, retention, learning, quality and governance, especially for students who come from vulnerable families.

The proposed re-opening on the schools enjoins significant responsibility on the management to assess the state of preparedness of their schools. As the schools have remained closed for over four months, it is incumbent upon the management and their staff to proactively review the situations at their end and develop school re-opening plans in accordance with the Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) to be adopted in the wake of ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic has had varied degrees of impact on different districts as per the daily data generated by Health Department. Some of the districts in the province have a very high incidence of disease while other have either very low prevalence or are moderately affected. Similarly, mortality rate also varies significantly from district to district.

If the schools are to function, it is necessary that we learn to live in post-corona pandemic until a durable treatment or vaccine is invented by the scientists. With a view to averting the likelihood of schools becoming hub for spread of infection with the potential of far-reaching effects on the families and local communities, a strategy needs to be formulated to deal with the ongoing health crisis. However, the key concern is its implementation in letter and spirit.

Elementary and Secondary Education Department has is assessing the situation with respect to Coronavirus impact on the education of the children and is in the process of devising a calibrated strategy in collaboration with the other stakeholders in public sector as well as international development partners. The Elementary and Secondary Education Department (E&SED) vide its notification No. MO-II/ESRU/E&SED/COVID-19/CRRU/2020 dated 7th of May 2020 has established COVID-19 Response and Recovery Unit (CRRU) at Education Sector Reform Unit (ESRU) for planning and implementation of an effective and coordinated response to COVID-19. The CRRU Plan, has already been prepared and is ready for implementation.

CRRU has developed these SOPs for re-opening of the schools. Adherence to SOPs is critical for the continuous functionality of the schools. These SOPs inter-alia cover the requirements for social distancing, personal hygiene and disinfection of the premises. The school re-opening shall be governed by compliance with these SOPs by the staff as well as students. In this regard, it is important to hold early engagements with parents and the communities for dissemination of school re-opening SOPs in order to sensitize the parents about the importance of ensuring safe and disinfected educational environment for the teachers as well as students.

However, before discussing the SOPs for re-opening of the school, it is imperative to highlight the actions that need to be performed before the schools re-open for students.

Actions to be performed before the commencement of educational activities:

i. Review the premises as to its functionality with respect to building condition, availability of amenities etc. pursuant to the protracted closure of schools for over four months

ii. Management shall be responsible to establish and strengthen coordination mechanism with District Health Office and the Office of the Deputy Commissioner to remain updated on the prevalence of COVID-19 related morbidity and mortality in the vicinity of the school and the areas where the staff hails from. The decision to re-open and how to re-open any particular school will be contingent upon such information.

iii. The Management should conduct a traffic light analysis of the schools on the basis of disease information. The schools whose adjoining population has high incidence of reported cases, should be flagged as red, while in the localities where the disease prevalence is moderate should be flagged as yellow and where the reported case in the adjoining communities are low or none, then that school should be flagged as green. The decision to re-open and how to re-open should be sequenced accordingly.

iv. Raise rigorous awareness among the communities through local administration, local representatives, prayer leaders in that area about the COVID-19 disease and its symptoms. The children, who themselves have or any of their family members has fever, dry cough, sore throat, sneezing, body-aches, vomiting or diarrhea, shouldn't be sent to school for at least 7 days till further assessment of the situation at home by the parents.

v. Assess availability of water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) infrastructure for handwashing and cleaning.

vi. Liaise with local area government and well as political representatives to ensure water supply in the school.

vii. Ensure the toilets are functional and are clean.

viii. The management will be responsible to prepare school opening plan that should inter alia addresses the need to stagger classes in view of the pandemic situation in the vicinity of school to meet the requirements of social distancing. Detailed

guidance on scheduling of classes and curtailing the class size is provided later under the SOP section.

ix. School management to hold sessions with the parents and sensitize them beforehand about the wearing of at least cloth mask by the children during school hours. Such masks (generally cotton) could be tailored at home with nominal cost. However, children who have trouble breathing with masks should be allowed to take it off.

x. Management shall ensure that cloth mask making leaflet is developed and provided to parents to make low cost face mask

xi. Mandatory training of the managers/teachers/administrators to ensure they are aware of school re-opening protocols.

xii. If the schools that operate transport, then safe distance measures and disinfection protocols will apply to the transport facility as well.

xiii. Maintain information about the number of teachers above the age of 50 years and also those with any underling health condition which could be exacerbated by COVID-19 infection.

xiv. Ensure early coordination with district administration, health department as well as local area government officials (including Water and Sanitation Service providers) regarding Cleaning and disinfection of schools in accordance with agreed protocols.

General SOPs when schools re-open

i. Make arrangements of temperature checking at the entrance of the school.

ii. Any child or staff with temperature more than 37.3 degree Celsius or 99-degree Fahrenheit should not be allowed to enter the school

iii. Ensure school cleaning on daily basis with proper waste management practices

iv. Arrange orientation of the students as well as parents on new school protocols including school opening and closing

v. Staff and students should wear face masks as recommended

vi. Encourage hand-washing at multiple times during the day and help children from age 4 to 7 in handwashing and hygiene practices

vii. Maintain physical distancing and respiratory hygiene amongst students and staff

viii. Avoid group gatherings such as assembly and clustering of children during recess

ix. Encourage healthy eating and exercise routines but avoid contact sports

x. Pay attention to health and well-being of teachers and students

xi. Establish a no-tolerance policy for parents/students who do not follow recommendations of cloth masks, hand-washing, and physical distancing

xii. Exposed or symptomatic students should be sent off for at least 7 days; and students who test positive and their class group should be sent off for at least 14 days. The school management or assigned faculty member should liaise with the government's health authorities

xiii. Share and display clear, concise and accurate information about COVID-19. Normalize messages about fear and anxiety and promote self-care strategies not only for students and their families, but also for teaching and non-teaching staff.

xiv. Review and strengthen referral system with health department in collaboration with district administration.

xv. Send any student or school staff developing symptoms of Covid-19 home and inform the government at helpline number 1166

xvi. A school monitor (teacher, students, or community volunteer) to be present at the school gate to support safe school entry in high enrollment schools

xvii. Teachers should also assess their temperature and health condition with respect to COVID symptoms, then they should inform the school management and stay at home till their symptoms go away

xviii. If a child or school staff has been in contact with a COVID patient in the past two weeks, then they should not come to school and inform the health authorities immediately

xix. Sick students, teachers and other staff should not be allowed to come to the school

xx. Decontaminate the school at least over weekends and soon after the infection is reported in the class or school

xxi. Reduce the number of visitors to the school from outside and make arrangements to handle their matters at the entrance of the school. Under extreme situations, the visitors should be permitted to approach the head teacher or office.

xxii. All other social SOPs pertaining to handshakes and individual prayers should be strictly observed in order to avoid spread of infection

xxiii. Staff meetings should be avoided and if need be, should be conducted online.

xxiv. Office equipment should be regularly disinfected with available disinfectant.

xxv. Clean and disinfect frequently used surfaces such as door handles, railings, sink handles and water taps etc.

xxvi. Discourage children from using each other's stationery and books

xxvii. Ensure ventilation systems operate properly and increase circulation of outdoor air as much as possible by keeping windows and doors open.

xxviii. Encourage students and staff to bring their own drinking water in bottles to minimize common use of drinking water taps.

xxix. Limit non-essential visitors, volunteers and activities involving external groups or organizations as much as is possible especially from the individuals who are not from the local vicinity.

Social Distancing SOPs

i. Staggering the beginning and end of the school

ii. Where possible, create space for children's desk to be at least one meter apart

iii. Avoid body contact sports, ensure "no touch policy", and avoid "hand games" (which involve children touching each other's hands, face).

iv. Do not share food or drink from the same cup.

v. Encourage children to bring their own food.

vi. Selling of cooked as well as junk food should be stopped.

vii. Where it is not possible to close canteen, all cleanliness protocols to be applied for safe distancing.

viii. Staff of canteen to wash hands regularly and use sanitizers

ix. Decrease huddling of parents and students outside school at drop off and pick up

x. Ways to maintain social distancing in overcrowded classroom:

   a. Split crowded classrooms into two shifts in the same day. Stretch out school hours between early morning and late afternoon with staggered start, staggered break time and staggered day end to avoid large gathering. On weekly basis rotate the students of first shift into the second shift. **OR**

   b. Split the shifts between days during a week. One group coming to the school Monday to Wednesday and the second group from Thursday to Saturday. **OR**

   c. Split the shifts between week. One group coming to the school one week and the second group coming the next week. **OR**

   d. Engage with community leaders through for alternative learning space within the community to ensure continuity of learning. The management should also strengthen dialogue and engagement with the community elders/leaders and parents if their school does not have enough space to ensure recommended social distancing. The community should be made aware of the impact of learning losses in view of the students' inability to resume educational activities in crowded environment. Additional learning spaces should be identified in the adjoining communities in well ventilated

environment such as local Hujras, large house verandas, and/or spacious rooms. The individuals offering those spaces should be realized that it is just a temporary arrangement being worked out to make amends for the learning losses for the children.

e. Consider phased return of students to school
f. Whenever possible use halls, laboratories, libraries and open spaces (weather permitting) for conduct of classes

WASH SOPs

i. Establish handwashing points for students and staff
ii. Ensure availability of soaps for the students and staff.
iii. In case of non-supply of water on any day, the management to immediately take measures to resolve
iv. Develop and disseminate protocols for handwashing in collaboration with district administration and health department
v. Arrange for regular supply of soap and cleaning at the school
vi. Ensure social distancing practices during handwashing
vii. Develop handwashing posters and distribute to all schools

Secretary

Endst: No. & date even.

Copy forwarded to:

1. Principal Secretary to Governor, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Peshawar.
2. Principal Secretary to Chief Minister, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Peshawar.
3. Secretary to Govt. of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Information Department.
4. Secretary to Govt. of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Relief & Rehabilitation Department.
5. All Deputy Commissioners in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.
6. The Director, Elementary & Secondary Education Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.
7. The Director, Information Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Peshawar.
8. The Managing Director, PSRA, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Peshawar.
9. All District Education Officers (Male/Female) in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.
10. PSO to Chief Secretary, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Peshawar.
11. PS to Minister E&SE Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Peshawar.
12. PS to Secretary, E&SE Department.
13. PS to Special Secretary, E&SE Department.
14. PA to Additional Secretary (Estab), E&SE Department.
15. PA to Deputy Secretary (Admn), E&SE Department.
16. The Deputy Director EMIS, E&SE Department with the request to upload the same on official website.

(Bakhtiar Wali Khan)
Section Officer (General)