



# Continuity of Education Policy Guidance for Schools COVID-19 Pandemic

April, 2020

## Aim

This policy guidance will support education decision making to develop and implement effective education responses to help reduce learning loss.

## Key Documents & Deadlines

- **Appendix 1: 'COVID-19 Pandemic: Snapshot of Education Provision'**, provides a template for each school to monitor provision and engagement throughout the pandemic. It should be completed by the school principal and submitted by 5:00 p.m. every Friday from 1st May until 26th June, 2020. The completed template should be submitted to:
  - Public Schools: the respective Senior School Improvement Officer
  - Independent or Assisted (Private) Schools: Principals to submit to the Education Strategy Officer in the Ministry of Education, Youth, Sports, Agriculture & Lands (Ministry of Education) at [assistedschools@gov.ky](mailto:assistedschools@gov.ky)
- **COVID-19 Education Response Plan.** Each school is to develop a plan for the 2020-2021 and 2021/2022 academic years that addresses the loss of learning that would have occurred whilst schools are physically closed to students.
  - All plans (public and private schools) are due to the Ministry of Education by Friday 26th June, 2020. Please email plans to ([COVIDeduresponseplan@gov.ky](mailto:COVIDeduresponseplan@gov.ky))

## Introduction

Mitigating the impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic will depend greatly on the actions of everyone in our community. Slowing down the spread of infection is possible through measures such as, but not limited to, shelter-in-place orders and social distancing.

The health and wellness of persons in our community is of utmost importance and is the key priority in any response to the COVID-19 Pandemic. However as this pandemic continues to impact the world, it is essential to attend to the educational needs of children and youth.



The necessary social isolation measures will disrupt school-based education for extended periods of time and will limit opportunities for students to learn during the period of the shelter-in-place and social distancing orders. Learning loss for students must be addressed as we navigate this pandemic.

Education Leaders should take steps to develop and implement strategies which mitigate the learning loss due to the pandemic. This policy guidance will support education decision making to develop and implement effective education responses to help reduce learning loss due to the pandemic.

### Health and Safety of Students and Staff

A key priority of schools is the well-being of students and staff. Maintaining effective social relationships between learners and educators will contribute to that goal. Evidence shows that children's' learning may be significantly impacted if they are hungry, feel insecure or unsafe. This pandemic, and its multiple effects in the health, income and well-being of individuals and communities, is likely to strain the psychological reserves of all, including students, parents/guardians, teachers and other education personnel.

To the extent possible, schools should continue to facilitate delivery of health and wellness services that students may have received at their schools. It is recommended that schools:

- Provide access to counsellors, educational psychologists, special-needs teachers/specialists, or other personnel with guidance on maintaining needed health, counselling, and other services for students with physical and mental/emotional needs.
- Encourage families to access services provided by the Health Services Authority (HSA), Family Resource Centre (FRC), the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS), the Needs Assessment Unit (NAU), and any other public or private organisations that provide similar services during this public health pandemic.

Any suspicions or allegations of child abuse or neglect, by law, must be reported. The Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) is the primary child safeguarding focal point with strategic and operational responsibility for all child welfare matters in the Cayman Islands. Contact information is as follows: call **1-800-534-2273** or **945-0545** or email **[MASH@gov.ky](mailto:MASH@gov.ky)**.

Staff welfare is also of critical importance. Regular communication with staff is essential throughout this pandemic. Support for staff is available through a range of services:



- The Health Services Authority (HSA) provides a mental health hotline. Call 1-800-534-6463 (MIND) Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm.
- The Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) is a non-profit organisation providing consultation and counselling for professional and personal issues to enrolled businesses, their employees and their families. Phone 949-9559 for assistance.
- There are also a number of private and public sector organisations that provide counselling and mental health support. Please contact your preferred provider as needed.

It is also recognised that there may be an increase in domestic abuse during this time and families may need additional support. The Cayman Islands Crisis Centre (CICC) is a non-Governmental charitable organisation that provides services and programmes focusing on domestic and sexual abuse. Call the 24-hour Crisis Line on **1-800-534-2422** or **943-2422** or email [info@cicc.ky](mailto:info@cicc.ky) if you are being hurt by your partner, or you suspect someone you know is. Clients access the CICC safe shelter programme through the 24-hour Crisis Line and women and their children may live at the home for up to 60 days.

If you are in distress, or think you are in danger of hurting yourself or someone else, including a child, and just need someone to talk to, call the 24-hour Crisis Line. This Crisis Line serves the entire Cayman public, men, women and children.

Dial **911** if you are experiencing an emergency that puts you, your loved one or others in immediate danger.

## Continuity of Free Nutrition Services

Many students require free nutrition services (free schools meals) throughout the normal school calendar year. The number of students requiring support has increased as some parents/guardians are newly unemployed or struggling, for other reasons, to provide nutritious meals for their families. **Monitoring students throughout this pandemic is essential for ensuring students receive meals.**

Parents/guardians should be referred by the principal and/or designated personnel (see Policy guidelines) to the various agencies (private, public and non-profit) that provide support. Information to families should include the name and location of the food bank/pantry/kitchen, operating hours, and any other information needed to access their benefits. These arrangements apply to all schools.

Families requiring food/financial support can be referred to the Needs Assessment Unit at [NAUInfo@gov.ky](mailto:NAUInfo@gov.ky) or 946-0024.



The Ministry of Community Affairs is accepting applications for temporary food assistance from non-Caymanians. For more information, call 244-8000 Monday to Friday, 10am to 4pm or email [CIGCOVIDSupport@gov.ky](mailto:CIGCOVIDSupport@gov.ky).

Any suspicions or allegations of neglect or child abuse, by law, must be reported. The Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) is the primary child safeguarding focal point with strategic and operational responsibility for all child welfare matters in the Cayman Islands. Contact information is as follows: call **1-800-534-2273** or **945-0545** or email [\*\*MASH@gov.ky\*\*](mailto:MASH@gov.ky).

## Continuity of Education Instruction

Schools are expected to continue instruction during periods of school closure due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Continued instruction is important to maintain learning, and to engage students in constructive activities while they are not physically in school. Engaging students will provide them with a sense of normalcy during a crisis, as well as providing a constructive outlet for interaction. Maintaining routine or normal activities during an emergency has been found to be a positive coping measure that assists with recovery following the crisis. Student well-being is a vital consideration in the development of continuing education plan. Whilst significant efforts are being made to maintain a sense of normalcy, it must be recognised that the pandemic makes it extremely challenging for some schools and some parents/guardians to facilitate the usual levels of provision.

Consideration should be given to the needs of all students including, but not limited to students with special educational needs and disabilities, in developing plans (related to students' Individual Education Plans/Learning Support Plans where appropriate) to continue providing education during this pandemic.

In addition to using paper copies of instructional materials, such as books, workbooks, and other documents, schools can employ a range of technology-based solutions to increase the probability that a significant number of students can continue their studies.

Technology based options can provide valuable opportunities for teachers and students to interact in real-time and can offer children some reassurance, as well as a sense of ongoing connection with their teachers and their peers. The expectation is that there are daily interactions with students.



**Whilst in-person instruction is not permitted during the pandemic, one or more of the following categories of learning should be employed for students of compulsory school age.**

Categories of Learning	Description
Online Learning	Learning provided through a range of online platforms. This includes but is not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• teacher led classes using appropriate platforms</li> <li>• assignment to specific learning platforms for students to work independently or supported by parents/guardians</li> </ul>
Paper-based Learning	Learning provided through a range of paper-based mediums. This includes but is not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• textbook and workbook assignments</li> <li>• learning packets prepared by teachers</li> </ul>
Combined online & paper-based learning	Learning provided through online and paper-based mediums.

**All forms of learning used should be based on resource availability, students’ individual needs and/or their grade level.**

Schools for students of compulsory school age (5 – 17 years old) must maintain a register of student engagement in learning whilst not physically attending school.

In situations where parents and children are unable to engage due to challenging circumstances they are experiencing (i.e. mental health issues, unemployment strain, inability to meet basic needs, etc.), in addition to seeking support for the family through the Truancy Officer, the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) and MASH/DCFS intervention, the school should seek to formalise ways to creatively support the family through a document similar to a Learning Support Plan in collaboration with partner agencies, where appropriate.

Schools should make every reasonable effort to track every student enrolled (prior to the pandemic) for the 2019/2020 academic year. There may be potential health and welfare concerns for students, of compulsory school age, who cannot be contacted or tracked. In this event please report as follows:



*All schools (Public, Assisted and Independent)*

- Email the Truancy Officers at the Department of Education Services ([errol.levy@gov.ky](mailto:errol.levy@gov.ky); [marion.webster@gov.ky](mailto:marion.webster@gov.ky); [Ricardo.mclean@gov.ky](mailto:Ricardo.mclean@gov.ky) (Cayman Brac and Little Cayman); further referrals to the MASH or DCFS, will be made by the truancy officers, supported by the DES DSL as needed.

It is recognised that not all households are equitably equipped to support students who are receiving education in their homes. Many students do not have access to a computing device (or computing devices are shared by parents/guardians working from home or other siblings also requiring education at home). Others have limited or no internet access. Some are in households where education is not a priority as families are trying to manage meeting basic needs (such as securing food and lodging), abuse, loss of employment, illness, sustained stress, mental health issues, etc.

The education solution may differ depending on the needs of students and their families. For example, utilising only online provision may unintentionally disadvantage some students who do not have access to the necessary resources, or whose parents/guardians are unable to assist. The Ministry of Education recognises the crucial role that parents/guardians play in supporting their children during this crisis and the need for schools to include parent/guardians in their plans. Continuous communication and monitoring of students is critical to understanding their health, wellness and learning needs during this pandemic.

Continued instruction is important to maintain learning, and to engage students in constructive activities while they are not physically in school. Engaging students will provide them with a sense of normalcy during a crisis, as well as providing a constructive outlet for interaction.

Monitoring of student progress and achievement during this pandemic is critical. It is recognised that the quality of student learning will not be consistent across households and may not be of the same high quality as provided in schools. It is therefore, essential that schools develop a 'COVID-19 Education Response Plan' for the 2020-2021 and 2021/2022 academic years which addresses the loss of learning that would have occurred whilst schools are physically closed to students. Monitoring student progress and achievement will provide the foundation for understanding students' needs and methods required to address them.



Appendix 1: 'COVID-19 Pandemic: Snapshot of Education Provision', provides a template to monitor students throughout the pandemic. It should be completed by the principal of every school and **submitted by 5:00 p.m. every Friday from 1<sup>st</sup> May until 26th June, 2020**. The completed template should be submitted as follows:

- *Public Schools*: Principals will submit to their respective Senior School Improvement Officer.
- *Independent or Assisted (Private) Schools*: Principals will submit to the Education Strategy Officer in the Ministry of Education, Youth, Sports, Agriculture & Lands [assistedschools@gov.ky](mailto:assistedschools@gov.ky).

A combined report of:

- All Public Schools (collated by DES); and
- All Assisted and Independent schools (collated by MEYSAL);

shall be submitted to the Chief Officer for Education in MEYSAL by the following Tuesday of each week.

### External Examinations

Schools should prioritise provision for students scheduled to take external examinations.

City and Guilds examinations currently remain on schedule. Examinations previously scheduled by Cambridge, AQA, WJEC and Pearson are all cancelled as indicated by their respective boards. Schools should follow the requirements of their respective boards in respects of awarding grades for the above mentioned exams.

The Caribbean Examination Council (CXC) announced a number of changes to the May/June 2020 examinations schedule.

- CXC has revised the exams schedule to July 2020.
- CXC continues to be guided by the protocols set by the governments within the region.
- In person or on-site moderation across all practical subjects is suspended until further notice.
- Paper 1 for all exams will be delivered electronically, and the results will be used in conjunction with School Based Assessments (SBAs) to provide students with



an assessed grade. The exceptions to this arrangement are Modern Languages, Visual Arts and Human and Social Biology.

- Completion of SBA practicals have been rescheduled and schools will be advised of the revised deadline for submission.
- Online resources geared towards CXC exam preparation are available at [learninghub.cxc.org](http://learninghub.cxc.org) and also on the Harper-Collins website; in addition, the Department of Education Services and the Ministry of Education are working with FLOW and One on One Educational Services Ltd in Jamaica, to provide access to additional content.

### School Reopening After the Pandemic

Schools will reopen when the all-clear is provided by the Public Health and Government Authorities. All schools should be thoroughly deep-cleaned/sanitised and inspections and maintenance checks conducted prior to reopening.

The process for reopening a school after this pandemic will be similar to processes already established for reopening after summer and other breaks, with some special considerations:

- It is recognised that the emotional, mental health and wellbeing of students and staff may be significantly impacted by this pandemic. Mental health and wellness sessions, stress management, establishing clear routines and maintaining effective communication will be crucial for both students and teachers. Awareness training for staff and the provision of resources that support responses to various behaviours will need to be arranged. Principals should utilise support from educational psychologists, counsellors, and other specialists within the public and private sector to support students and staff.
- There may be a change in staffing as some staff may have opted to leave the island and others may not be in a position to return to work for various reasons (illness, death in the family, etc.). Consistent communication with staff regarding their plans/existing circumstances is crucial for staff planning for the re-start of schools. Each principal should establish a contingency plan for a lack in the full-complement of teaching staff in place for the reopening of school.

There may be a change in student enrolment as parents may opt to home school, relocate to other countries or switch schools. Schools should remind parents of the relevant forms/processes to enable these changes. For Public Schools, the relevant forms can be obtained by emailing [edu.registration@gov.ky](mailto:edu.registration@gov.ky).





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### ***COVID-19 Education Response Plan***

Each school is to develop a 'COVID-19 Education Response Plan' for the 2020-2021 and 2021/2022 academic years which addresses the loss of learning that would have occurred whilst schools are physically closed to students. Where possible, plans should be developed with input from stakeholders (students, teachers, specialists, parents, etc.). Plans should be distributed to parents prior to 30<sup>th</sup> June, 2020.

**All plans (for public and for private schools) are due to the Ministry of Education, Youth, Sports, Agriculture & Lands by Friday 26<sup>th</sup> June, 2020. Please email plans to [COVIDeduresponseplan@gov.ky](mailto:COVIDeduresponseplan@gov.ky).**

**APPENDIX 1: COVID-19 Pandemic: Snapshot of Education Provision – A template will be provided to record the information**