

COVID -19
“HOW TO” GUIDE
FOR SGBs ON PREVENTION AND
TRANSMISSION
OF COVID-19

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Table of Contents

Section 1: INTRODUCTION	4
Section 2: PURPOSE OF THE GUIDE	4
Section 3: FACTS ABOUT COVID-19.....	5
3.1 What is COVID-19?.....	5
3.2 What are the symptoms of COVID-19?.....	5
3.3 How does COVID-19 spread?	5
3.4 Who is most at risk?	5
3.5 What is the treatment for COVID-19?	5
3.6 How can the spread of COVID-19 be slowed down or prevented?	5
Section 4: THE ROLES OF SGBs IN RESPONDING TO COVID-19	6
4.1 Assisting parents to understand how prevent the transmission of COVID -19 within the school premises, classroom and surrounding communities	6
4.2 How to support the school and SMT on prevention of COVID 19 transmission in schools.....	7
4.3 The role of SGBs in ensuring the safety of the school premises, educators and learners.....	9
4.4 Establishing SGB sub-committee on Health, Safety and COVID-19	11
4.5 Adapt school policies where appropriate to make Regulations and Guidelines applicable to your school.....	11
4.6 Stigmatisation	12
4.7 Amend the budget in line with COVID 19 needs	14
4.8 Ensure payment of SGB employed teachers by UIF	15
Section 5 : SUMMARY OF ROLES FOR PARENTS AND SGBs	15
Section 6 : CONCLUSION	16

Section 1: INTRODUCTION

This SGB guide is intended to provide clear guidance on:

- Assisting SGBs to understand how to prevent the transmission of COVID -19 within the school premises, classroom and surrounding communities
- How to support the school and SMT
- How to ensure Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) are well-kept, well maintained and in good working order
- The role of SGBs in ensuring the safety of the school, learners and educators and non-educators

Section 2: PURPOSE OF THE GUIDE

Quickly work through this activity to find out what are your concerns about COVID-19?

ACTIVITY 1.1

What is safe social physical distance when learners return to school?

How will I use this manual?

What do I do when a COVID-19 case has been discovered at the school?

What do I do when there is substantial COVID transmission in my community?

Is COVID-19 curable?

Where do I go to test for COVID-19?

How do I support the SMT to organise the school to prevent COVID-19 transmission?

Who should be part of the School COVID-19 Orientation Teams (SCOTs)?

What is the role of the Health and COVID-19 Safety Committees in your school?

Why COVID-19 is classified as a **pandemic** not an **endemic**?

Which global goal do you think COVID-19 pandemic is affecting?

What knowledge do you still need on COVID-19?

This guide aims at capacitating School Governing Body members in the best application to support the prevention and transmission of COVID-19. Teachers oversee children of different ages at school, they need to create and manage a safe learning environment for all learners. SGB members need to support the SMT and teachers to ensure a safe learning environment.

This guide will also help SGB members, the school and Districts to understand how to help prevent the transmission of COVID-19 within the school settings and communities. It will also help schools respond quickly to COVID-19 cases. Furthermore, support and information resources are shared in the guide for schools for further guidance and support.

Section 3: FACTS ABOUT COVID-19

3.1 What is COVID-19?

COVID-19 is a disease caused by a new strain of coronavirus. ‘CO’ stands for corona, ‘VI’ for virus, and ‘D’ for disease. Initially, this disease was referred to as ‘2019 novel coronavirus’ or ‘2019-nCoV.’ The COVID-19 virus is a new virus linked to the same family of viruses as Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) and some types of common cold.

3.2 What are the symptoms of COVID-19?

Symptoms can include fever, cough and shortness of breath. In more severe cases, infection can cause pneumonia or breathing difficulties. More rarely, the disease can be fatal. These symptoms are similar to the flu (influenza) or the common cold, which are a lot more common than COVID-19. This is why testing is required to confirm if someone has COVID-19.

3.3 How does COVID-19 spread?

The virus is transmitted through direct contact with respiratory droplets of an infected person (generated through coughing and sneezing). Individuals can also be infected from and touching surfaces contaminated with the virus and touching their face (e.g. mouth, eyes, and nose). The COVID-19 virus may survive on surfaces for several hours, but simple disinfectants can kill it.

3.4 Who is most at risk?

We are learning more about how COVID-19 affects people every day. Older people, and people with chronic medical conditions, such as diabetes and heart disease, appear to be more at risk of developing severe symptoms. As this is a new virus, we are still learning about how it affects children.

We know it is possible for people of any age to be infected with the virus, but so far there are relatively few cases of COVID-19 reported among children. This is a new virus and we need to learn more about how it affects children. The virus can be fatal in rare cases, so far mainly among older people with pre-existing medical conditions.

3.5 What is the treatment for COVID-19?

There is no currently available vaccine for COVID-19. However, many of the symptoms can be treated and getting early care from a healthcare provider can make the disease less dangerous. There are several clinical trials that are being conducted to evaluate potential therapeutics for COVID-19.

3.6 How can the spread of COVID-19 be slowed down or prevented?

As with other respiratory infections like the flu or the common cold, public health measures are critical to slow the spread of illnesses. Public health measures are everyday preventive actions that include:

- staying home when sick;
- covering the mouth and nose with flexed elbow or tissue when coughing or sneezing. Dispose of used tissue immediately;
- washing hands often with soap and water;
- cleaning frequently touched surfaces and objects; and
- practicing social distancing.

As we learn more about COVID-19 public health officials may recommend additional actions.

Section 4: THE ROLES OF SGBs IN RESPONDING TO COVID-19

Schools as education institutions have an important role to play in preventing the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic and in ensuring that learners and teachers have a safe and healthy learning environment. Schools serve communities throughout society. All these people may have close contact in the school setting often sharing space, equipment and supplies.

4.1 Assisting parents to understand how prevent the transmission of COVID -19 within the school premises, classroom and surrounding communities

In the light of the COVID 19 pandemic, the SGB has to develop ways of ensuring that conditions at school are conducive for learning and teaching.

SGB members are parents before they become members of the School Governing Body. It is therefore imperative that they understand their roles as parents. This will ensure that when they play their role at school, they have that basic understanding of COVID 19 as parents.

The following is a checklist and key messages for parents and caregivers by UNICEF:

1. Monitor your child’s health and keep them home from school if they are ill.
2. Teach and model good hygiene practices for your children,
 - Wash your hands with soap and running water frequently. If soap and water are not readily available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol. Always wash hands with soap and water, if hands are visibly dirty.
 - Ensure that safe drinking water is available and toilets or latrines are clean and available at home
 - Ensure waste is safely collected, stored and disposed. Cough and sneeze into a tissue or your elbow and avoid touching your face, eyes, mouth, and nose.
3. Encourage your children to ask questions and express their feelings with you and their teachers. Remember that your child may have different reactions to stress; be patient and understanding.
4. Prevent stigma by using facts and reminding children to be considerate with one another.
5. Coordinate with the school to receive information and ask how you can support school safety efforts (through parent-teacher committees, etc.)



Figure 1



Figure 2

PREVENT AND PROTECT: UNICEF

4.2 How to support the school and SMT on prevention of COVID 19 transmission in schools.

The SGB must support the Principal, educators and other staff members of the school in the performance of their professional functions according to Section 20:1 (b) of SASA Act 84 of 1996. The SGB must do this by ensuring a safe and harmonious environment which is conducive to teaching and

learning. This can be done by making sure that policies are aligned to the current needs of the school relating to COVID 19.

2.1 Cleaning and disinfecting of facilities and Waste Disposal

- a) The SGB together with the SMT must ensure that cleaners:
 - (i) clean and disinfect school buildings, classrooms and especially water and sanitation facilities at least, once a day;
 - (ii) clean and disinfect surfaces that are touched frequently by many people (railings, lunch tables, sports equipment, door and window handles, toys, teaching and learning aids, etc.) must be cleaned more frequently; and
 - (iii) dispose of ordinary waste materials and contaminated waste material regularly.

- b) The cleaning and disinfecting of facilities and disposal of waste material should be done in accordance with Circular 6 of 2020 relating to Directives regarding the COVID-19 procedures for cleaning and disinfecting of Education facilities.

2.2 Procurement for Hand Washing Stations and Hand Sanitization facilities as well as Personal Protective Equipment (PPE’s)

- a) To promote the washing of hands and the sanitization of hands, the SGB of fee paying schools, should fund the preparation and maintenance of handwashing stations with soap and water and set up hand washing stations with clear signage and procure hand sanitizers for the placement in each classroom, at entrances and exits, at the reception/front office, and near lunchrooms and toilets; and

- b) The SGB must always ensure that the stock of soap and sanitizers are regularly refreshed and the continuous supply is ensured.

- c) The SGB must of fee paying schools, must also procure masks and other relevant PPE’s for cleaners.

2.3 Promoting Social Distancing

Since the school needs to implement social distancing practices that may include:

- (a) Staggering the beginning and end of the school day, this will require the SGB to decide on school times for learners;

- (b) Cancelling assemblies, sports games and other events that create crowded conditions, the SGB should be aware there will be no co-and extracurricular activities at school;

- (c) Creating space for children’s desks to be at least 1, 5 metres apart (see the Department’s guidelines on School Social Distancing), this will reduce the number of learners), this may require the employment of additional teachers.

SGB “How To” Guide

- (d) Hold SGB meetings at school only if and when necessary but maintain social distancing rules, the wearing of masks and the washing of hands. If it is possible, the SGB may hold meetings using online platforms.

4.3 The role of SGBs in ensuring the safety of the school premises, educators and learners.

By following this standard procedure, educators, learners and other staff members can be safe at the school. This process should be the responsibility of the SMT, however, everybody entering the school should understand it.

The figure below uses 3 scenarios to describe how the school will handle suspected/ confirmed cases of COVID 19 amongst learners and is based on information provide by the Department of Education’s Standar operating Procedures :

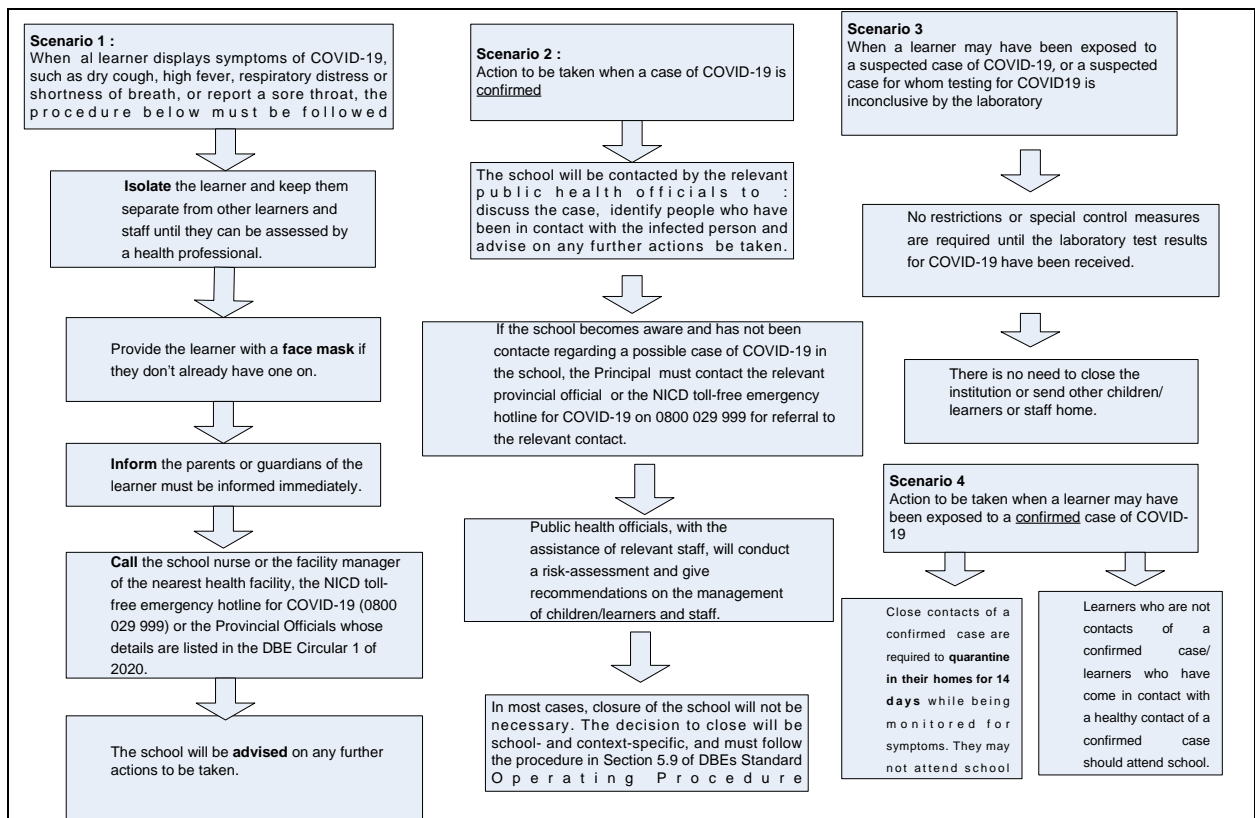
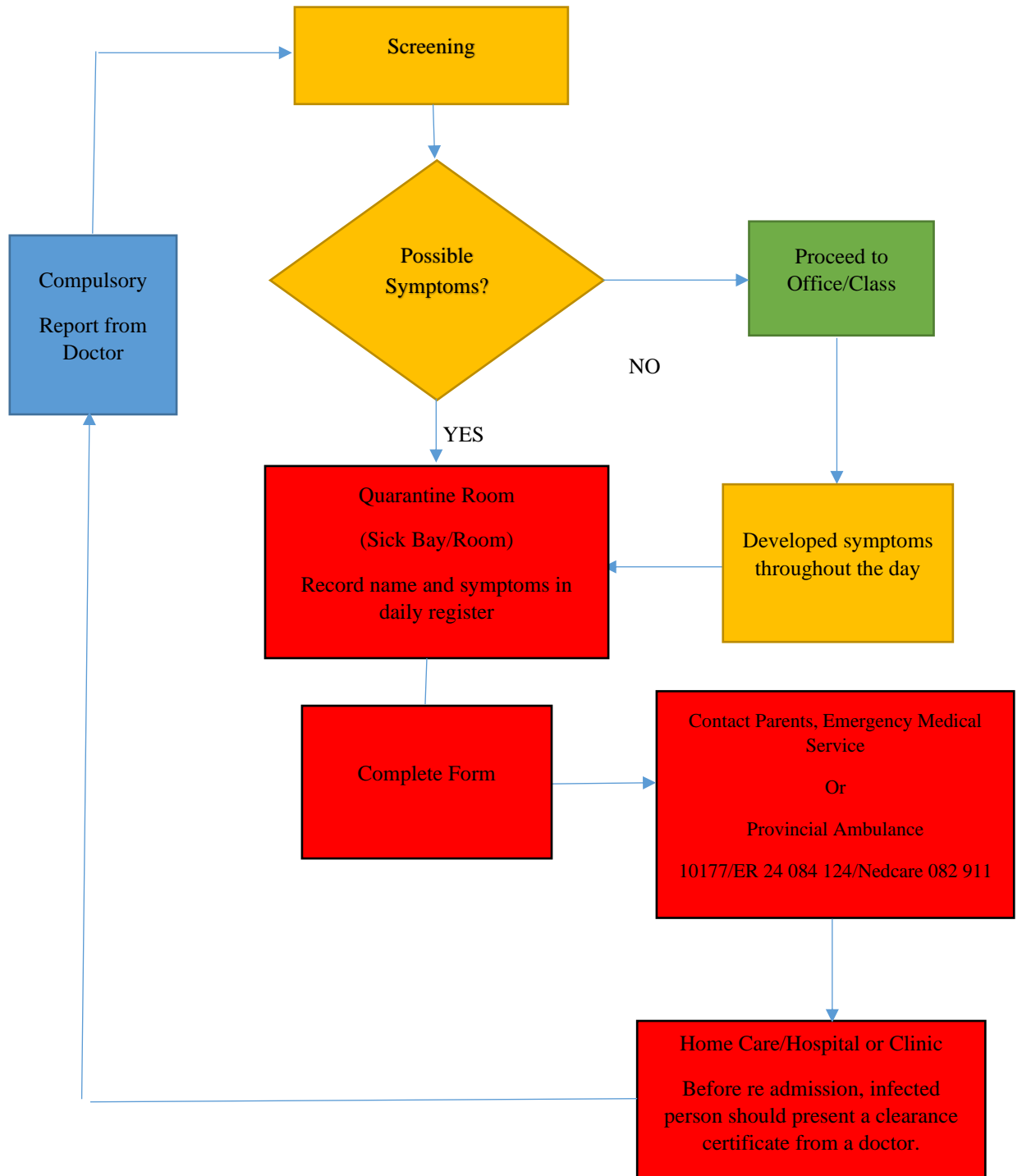


Figure 3

COVID-19 Flow Diagram Staff, Student and Visitors



4.4 Establishing SGB sub-committee on Health, Safety and COVID-19

The establishment of committees is the responsibility of the SGB as stipulated in SASA 84. 1996. It is therefore recommended that two committees be established in line with the requirements of dealing with the pandemic. A health and safety committee could be established to deal with the safety of all staff members and learners at the school if it does not exist. The second recommended committee is a COVID 19 committee. The number of members of the committee is not prescriptive but will depend on the size of the school, not more than five members including a member of Representative Council of Learners in case of schools with Grade eight upwards. The two committees to collaborate especially at the needs analysis stage.

4.5 Adapt school policies where appropriate to make Regulations and Guidelines applicable to your school

School policies are policies by the School Governing Bodies and are authorized to do so by National or Provincial legislation e.g. a School Governing Body is authorised to make develop a language policy at a school, subject to National and Provincial legislation, Regulations and Policy. It usually deals with a detailed implementation at school level of the broader laws. School policies may also be dictated by situations that present themselves at schools e.g. the present COVID 19 pandemic.

The SGB should work together with the SMT to adapt school policies to take the current context into consideration, for example:

a) The Code of Conduct may need to be amended to reasonably promote social distancing and the wearing of masks as part of the school uniform. The school may have to be flexible on the issue of haircuts as learners may not have been able to cut their hair during the lockdown and also discourage stigmatisation

b) The learner attendance policy may have to be amended to consider learners that stay at home by parental choice or as a result of having comorbidities (e.g. Hypertension, Diabetes, Asthma, Heart Diseases, etc.) and to remove the use of perfect attendance awards.

c) The school maintenance policy may have to be amended to include issues relating to the regular cleaning of classroom, offices and surfaces that are touched by many people (railings, lunch tables, sports equipment, door and window handles, toys, teaching and learning aids etc.) , ensuring the provision of safe water and that sanitation and waste management facilities are available and functional and proper environmental cleaning and decontamination , as well as waste disposal procedures are followed.

d) The School Safety Policy may have to be amended to provide for promote the basic principles in (4.1), screening and testing, social distancing and procedures to be followed when suspected and confirmed cases of COVID 19 are identified.

e) The School’s finance policy may require the suspension of clauses relating to the use of school facilities for hire and by vendors as these will not be taking place. *“The governing body may allow the reasonable use of the facilities of the school for the community, social and school fund-raising purposes” (SASA Act 84 1996 20:2).*

4.6 Stigmatisation

School policy development is also the responsibility of the SGB. Like HIV/AIDS people are stigmatised if infected with COVID -19. It is therefore recommended that a policy on COVID 19 be developed which will cover issues dealing with Stigmatisation

What is Social Stigma?

Social stigma in the context of health practitioners is the negative association between a person or group of people who share certain characteristics and a specific disease. In an outbreak, this may mean people are labelled, stereotyped, discriminated against, treated separately, and/or experience loss of status because of a perceived link with a disease. Such treatment can negatively affect those with the disease, as well as their caregivers, family, friends and communities. People who don't have the disease but share other characteristics with this group may also suffer from stigma.

The current COVID-19 outbreak has provoked social stigma and discriminatory behaviours against people of certain ethnic backgrounds as well as anyone perceived to have been in contact with the virus.

Impact of the Stigma

Stigma can:

- Drive people to hide the illness to avoid discrimination.
- Prevent people from seeking health care immediately.
- Discourage them from adopting healthy behaviours.

It is critical to maintain confidentiality of the learner or staff member to prevent discrimination.



Figure 4



Figure 5

STIGMA: UNICEF March 2020

4.7 Amend the budget in line with COVID 19 needs

The SGB must prepare a budget every year according to the prescriptions of the Member of the Executive Council (MEC) as stated in SASA 84 of 1996 (38) 1.

The main reason for setting a fixed budget is to forecast and plan for the school’s income and expenditure for the year. The school takes different factors into consideration, such as income from school fees or government allocation, and expenditure for all academic activities and identifying the areas of the school that need improvement. The budget serves as the financial compass for such spending and will be used to identify areas where financial adjustments should be made to ensure that the funds are being spent in the best possible way to support teaching and learning.

Based on the COVID 19 pandemic, SGBs need to amend the school budget to cater for the new needs as outlined by the different committees to deal with COVID- 19, the “NEW

NORMAL”. Line items which were budgeted for sports, coral music, and other mass participation activities should be redirected to support health related needs, since the said activities are unlikely to take part.

4.8 Ensure payment of SGB employed teachers by UIF

The SGB must together with the principal meet and discuss how to apply to the Unemployment Insurance Fund (UIF) so that SGB employed educators are paid, where necessary. The government has passed regulations on the process on ensuring speedy payment of employees during the closure of schools and work. According to the Department of Labour, the employer must apply for UIF on behalf of the employee so that payment is done speedily.

Section 5: SUMMARY OF ROLES FOR PARENTS AND SGBs

The following roles for SGB members have been identified:

- Establish sub-committees of SGBs (a) Health and Safety and (b) COVID-19
- Adapt school policies where appropriate to make Regulations and Guidelines applicable to your school – times of school day
- Develop a policy to deal with stigmatisation;
- Amend school budget to shift funds from non-essentials to respond to the demands of COVID 19, especially for the non-pharmaceutical items;
- Ensure that the maintenance budget is utilised to create a conducive learning environment;
- Ensure that there is adequate communication and consultation with the school’s stakeholders, internally and externally;
- Suspend all contracts for the hire and use of school facilities;
- Suspend the selling of food by vendors at the school;
- Regulate the transportation of learners by parent and transport providers, to be COVID-19 compliant
- Play an oversight monitoring role (not management) to support the school and ensure that Regulations and Guidelines are adhered to; and
- Work with the UIF to ensure that SGB employed teachers are not affected by the non-payment of school fees.
- Ensure water availability at all times at designated areas

The following roles for parents have been identified:

- Recognise symptoms of COVID -19;
- Report any suspicious COVID- 19 symptoms immediately;
- Enforce the washing of hands regularly;
- Transport your child to school where possible or arrange transportation where children will be transported in smaller groups;
- Discourage children from forming groupings;
- Ensure that the child leaves home with the provided sanitary bag and are wearing a mask;
- Provide a lunch pack where applicable to avoid children buying from vendors or queuing at the tuckshop;
- Collect your child immediately after class or ensure that the child is transported home immediately after school;
- Make sure that your child's mask is washed daily; and
- Adhere to all Regulations and Guidelines provided by the School and Government.

Section 6: CONCLUSION

The Department considers the School Governing Body as a vital component of its stakeholders and makes a humble appeal to all SGBs to support parents, learners, staff members and the SMT through these challenging times that will pass. Your voluntary support as representatives of our communities is indeed appreciated. BE SAFE!