



MINISTRY OF EDUCATION,  
TECHNOLOGICAL &  
VOCATIONAL TRAINING

# GUIDELINES FOR THE SAFE OPERATION OF SCHOOLS IN BARBADOS

SEPTEMBER 21, 2020





**MINISTRY OF EDUCATION,  
TECHNOLOGICAL &  
VOCATIONAL TRAINING**

The Ministry of Education Technological & Vocational Training, in consultation with the Ministry of Health and Wellness, along with its stakeholders, Barbados Union of Teachers, Barbados Secondary Teachers Union, National Union of Public Workers, Association of Principals Primary Public Schools, Barbados Association of Public Secondary Schools has developed the following measures for the effective and safe operation of schools as every effort is made to ensure that students, teachers and other staff can conduct educational activities in safe and secure environments.

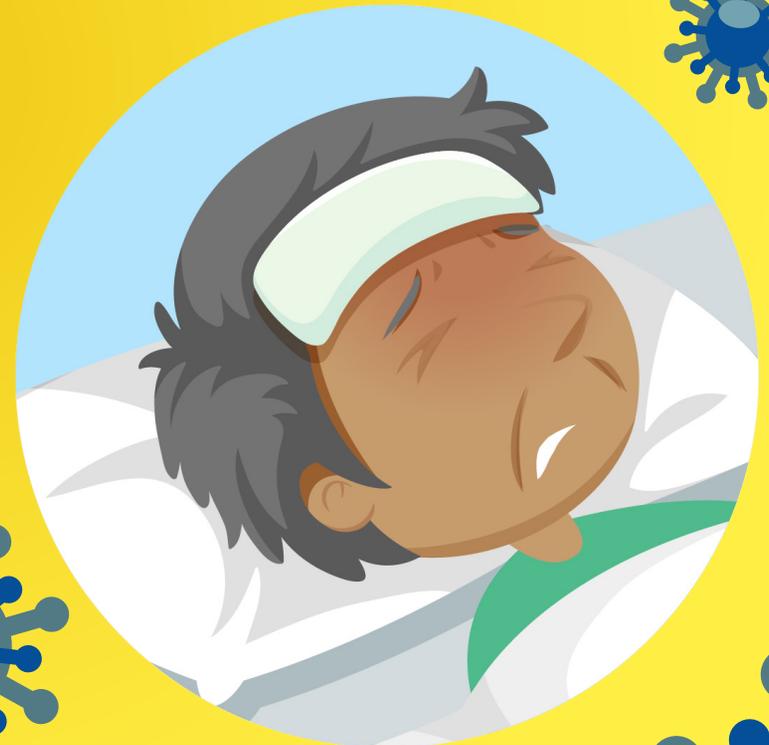


## **SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF COVID-19**

The Corona Virus (COVID-19) has different effects on different people. People who have been infected by the virus have demonstrated a wide range of symptoms ranging from mild to severe illness. Symptoms may become evident within 2-14 days after exposure to the virus. People who exhibit these symptoms may have COVID-19:

- Fever or chills
- Cough
- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- Fatigue
- Headache
- Loss of taste or smell
- Sore throat
- Congestion or runny nose
- Nausea or vomiting
- Diarrhoea
- Abdominal pain

People with symptoms of COVID-19 should call the **HOTLINE 536-4500** and outline their conditions or contact a medical doctor or medical facility.



## PRECAUTIONS FOR UNWELL STUDENTS

- Students who are unwell must stay at home.
- Staff and parents of students must inform the principal about any illness.
- Any student who exhibits signs of illness during class or while on the school compound must be sent/taken to the designated isolation area.
- Notify the parents of the student immediately.
- Follow the national protocols where students display any of the symptoms of COVID-19 (for example fever, dry cough, sore throat, shortness of breath, loss of sense of smell or taste). Parents must keep their children at home, contact a medical doctor, medical facility or call the **HOTLINE 536-4500** and explain the situation.
- Parents of children who display symptoms of COVID-19 should call the **HOTLINE 536-4500** and explain the situation.
- Recommend that the student be taken to a medical facility.
- Encourage parents and students to follow the guidance from the Ministry of Health and Wellness on what to do when someone in the household is sick and self-isolating.



## PRECAUTIONS FOR UNWELL STAFF

- Staff members who are unwell must stay at home.
- Designate a room to accommodate staff who may develop or display signs of illness while on the compound.
- Any staff member who exhibits signs of illness while on the school compound must follow the national protocols set out by the Ministry of Health and Wellness.
- Any staff member with any of the symptoms of COVID-19 (for example fever, dry cough, sore throat, shortness of breath, loss of sense of smell or taste) must stay at home, contact a medical doctor, medical facility or call the **HOTLINE 536-4500** and explain the situation.
- Persons with symptoms should call the **HOTLINE 536-4500** and explain the situation.
- Staff and parents of students must inform the principal about any illness.
- Staff members must follow the guidance from the Ministry of Health and Wellness on what to do when someone in the household is sick and self-isolating.



## **SAFE OPERATION OF SCHOOLS: GENERAL GUIDELINES**

- Those who are unwell must stay at home.
- All individuals on the school compound are required to wear face masks in compliance with the national policy.
- Each school is required to inform parents and students about the measures that are in place to allow for the safe operation and administration of the institution to accommodate classes and other school-related activities.
- Each school is required to explain to the students the importance of ensuring compliance with the protocols.
- Each school is required to reinforce the need for strict compliance with the guidelines for the operation of schools throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Each school is required to take any appropriate action against individuals who are found to be in any breach of the protocols while on the school compound to protect the interest of staff and students.



## HYGIENE AND SAFETY PRECAUTIONS

- Janitorial staff must be provided with adequate cleaning and disinfecting supplies and personal protection equipment necessary to carry out cleaning and sanitizing tasks.
- A record of the cleaning regime of vital areas, such as bathrooms, must be displayed and must be inspected daily by supervisors.
- Janitorial staff must undertake daily and frequent cleaning of high touch / high traffic areas.
- Staff must desist from sharing common office supplies (e.g. pens, staplers)
- Janitorial staff must wear disposable gloves to clean and disinfect all areas.
- Janitorial staff must clean surfaces using soap and water, then use disinfectant.
- Janitorial staff must use an approved disinfectant against bacteria, fungi and viruses (some may be certified to work against corona viruses)
- Use diluted bleach solutions if appropriate for surface areas.



## VENTILATION

- All work spaces, laboratories, specialist rooms and classrooms must be properly ventilated.
- Keep all doors and windows open, wherever possible.
- Fans must be limited as their use can spread the virus.



## PERSONAL HYGIENE AND PROTECTION

- All persons on the school compound must wear facemasks as stipulated in the national protocols.
- Facemasks should not be reused and must be carefully handled and removed to avoid self-contamination.
- Staff and students must have spare masks stored in a container or Ziplock bag.
- Posters demonstrating how to safely wear and remove facemasks should be strategically displayed around the school
- All staff and students must practice frequent and proper hand washing with soap and water.
- Staff and students must wash hands with soap and water, for at least 20 seconds, especially upon arrival at school, after using the bathroom, after blowing their nose/coughing/sneezing, and before eating.
- Paper towels must be used to dry hands and must be properly disposed of in bins.
- Posters and signs promoting correct hand washing must be strategically placed around the school.
- Alcohol-based hand gels or sanitizers must be used in cases where it is not possible to wash hands with soap and water.
- Staff and students must avoid, as far as possible, contact with objects or surfaces used or touched by other people (e.g. door handles) and must wash their hands after contact with such surfaces or objects.
- Sanitize books, apparatus and other learning materials used by teachers/students or other persons as appropriate or as needed.
- Facilities for sanitizing should be available at all points of entry to the institution.
- Students should bring soap, hand sanitizers and other disinfectants to school.



## RESPIRATORY HYGIENE

- Individuals must cover their mouths and noses and cough or sneeze into a tissue or the bent elbow and immediately discard the used tissue in a bin and perform hand hygiene.
- Contents of bins must be properly disposed of by the janitorial staff and those bins must be disinfected during the school day.
- Posters and signs reminding students and staff they should avoid touching their nose, eyes or mouth should be strategically placed around the school.
- Bins should be emptied regularly and recorded on the same schedule of the cleaning in the bathrooms and high traffic areas.



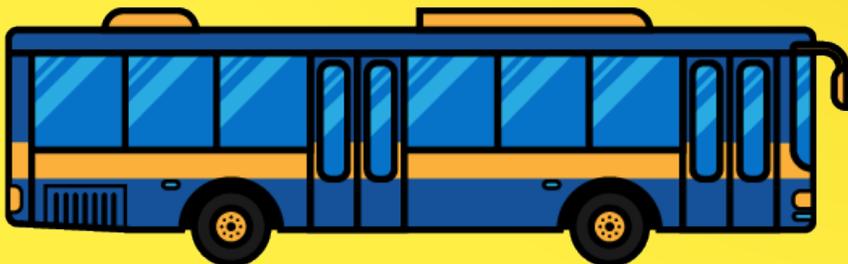
## REMAIN AT HOME IF UNWELL

- All staff and students are required to maintain good hand and respiratory hygiene before, during and after travel between school and home.
- Any student or staff with any of the symptoms of COVID-19 (fever, dry cough, sore throat, shortness of breath, loss of sense of smell or taste) must stay at home, contact a medical doctor, medical facility or call the **HOTLINE 536-4500** and explain the situation.
- Those with symptoms should call the **HOTLINE 536-4500** and explain the situation.
- Staff and parents of students must inform the principal about any illness.
- The guidance from the health authorities must be followed on what to do when someone in the household is sick and self-isolating.



## TRANSPORT TO AND FROM SCHOOL

- For short distances, individuals should walk to the school or travel by bicycle.
- Those who have to take public transportation should wear face masks and comply with the national protocols outlined by the Ministry of Health and Wellness for travel on public service vehicles (PSVs).
- Wherever possible, the windows of the bus should be kept open.



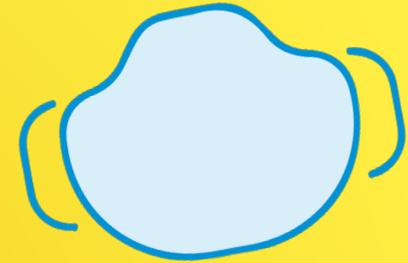
## SCREENING

- Perform temperature checks on anyone entering the school using a reliable, infrared thermometer.
- Communicate to staff that temperature screening is to protect them from potential contagion.
- Sensitize designated individuals on the effective way to conduct temperature checks.
- Conduct temperature checks in a consistent and uniformed manner.
- Inform each individual of his/her temperature readings.
- Inform staff that data protection and privacy rules should be respected.



## ON ARRIVAL AT SCHOOL

- There must be strict enforcement of wearing masks for everyone entering the school premises.
- The hand hygiene policy for entry must be enforced i.e. Staff and students must wash their hands with soap and water or apply an alcohol-based hand sanitizer on entry to the school.
- Ensure there is a system for proper registration and identification of visitors entering the school compound.
- Limit the number of people entering the school compound/premises – people who are not directly involved with the school's activities should not be allowed entry.
- Visitors should be encouraged to make an appointment to transact business at the school.
- Inform **ALL** staff and students about the school's hygiene and safety policies before they enter the premises. Signage to this effect may be strategically posted.



- Implement measures to avoid congestion at the entrance/exit of the school.
- Ensure the enforcement of physical distancing by using aids such as: floor markings, ribbons or physical barriers.
- Stagger departure times for students to limit exposure to crowding.
- Consideration should be given to arranging for different small groups of students, according to Class/Form, subjects or nature of the activities to enter and exit the school to reduce congestion.
- Restrict the number of entry points into the school to control the flow and number of people on the compound.
- Designate separate access and exit routes for various groups, where appropriate.

### DURING SCHOOL

- Teachers must avoid assigning groupwork to students to ensure compliance with the social distancing protocol.
- Limit the number of students undertaking classes to ensure compliance with the physical and social distancing protocols
- Students must store their personal belongings in the Class/Form in a designated area.
- Space desks to accommodate physical distancing of 6 feet where the removal of facemasks during classes is allowed.
- Enforce the wearing of facemasks or face coverings at all times while on the compound, especially where the social distance is 3 feet or less.
- Wherever possible schools are encouraged to conduct classes in open spaces.
- Keep open, where feasible, all doors to classrooms, Labs, specialist rooms and other areas occupied by staff and students.
- Post at the door entrances the maximum number of people that can safely stay in the room at any given period.
- Prohibit students from congregating while at school.
- Ensure regular cleaning and sanitizing of desks, chairs and the general classroom, laboratory or specialist rooms must be done before and after each use.
- Limit or prevent the mixing of classes during school and after school activities
- Restrict/limit the switching of groups or teachers. Encourage students to stay with the same teacher for the duration of their instructional sessions.



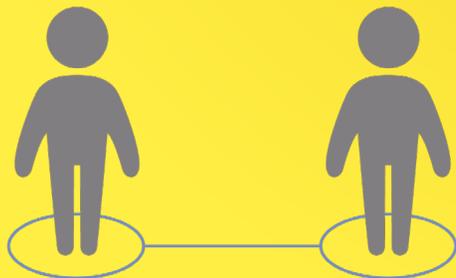
## **DURING SCHOOL (CONT'D)**

- Implement measures to control the movement of students into and out of the classroom and around the school (Floor markings must be encouraged).
- Encourage students in a class to stay in one classroom for the duration of their class session.
- Discourage/prohibit the sharing of resources such as electronic devices, textbooks etc.
- Assign a specific desk and chair to each student which should be used by that student only, where feasible.
- Sanitize all desks and chairs used by students and teachers prior to the start of classes and at the end of classes.
- Place garbage bins which are outfitted with disposable garbage bags in each classroom, staffroom, Lab, workshop or specialist room.
- Ensure that garbage bins are disinfected and emptied daily and washed at least twice a week.
- Establish an order for each class to enter and leave the building/classroom.



## BATHROOM FACILITIES

- Staff and students must wash hands before and after using the toilet with soap and water.
- Toilets must be flushed with closed lids, wherever possible.
- Physical distancing must be respected as much as possible.
- Restrict the number of persons allowed or present in the toilet area at the same time.
- Ensure regular cleaning and sanitising of bathroom facilities and areas especially in the morning and afternoon and throughout the day.
- Cleaning records of bathrooms must be displayed and inspected frequently by supervisors.



## **BREAK/SNACK/LUNCH ACCOMMODATION**

- Stagger lunch and break times for various age groups to ensure there is no congestion.
- Individuals who are not taking meals prepared by the School Meals Department, or the school canteen, must travel with their pre-prepared meals/lunches and their own utensils.
- Students and staff must not share utensils (cups, plates, cutlery) or food.
- Pre-ordering of lunches from school canteens is encouraged for those secondary students who choose that option.
- Each school should provide for in-class breaks for students.
- Students are required to have their snacks/lunches at their desks wherever feasible.
- Designated eating areas must be identified and used where class/form rooms cannot be used. These areas must comply with the social distancing protocols.
- If the canteen area or a common space is used for lunch, social and physical distancing measures must be applied to such eating areas.
- Keep lunch/dining areas clean and hygienic.
- Where take-away is delivered the national guidelines provided by the Ministry of Health and Wellness must be strictly complied.
- If the canteen area or a common space is used for the distribution of lunches, social and physical distancing measures must be applied.
- Anyone using common equipment such as microwaves should be encouraged to properly sanitize such equipment before and after use.
- Lunch/dining areas must be kept clean and hygienic.
- Proper and frequent cleaning of staff lunch facilities such as tables, counters and cupboards must be undertaken.

## STAFF ACCOMMODATION

- Organise work so that physical distancing rules are respected by those present at school.
- Create sufficient distance between workstations by spacing them further apart.
- Rearrange workstations in a way to maintain a sufficient distance e.g. do not use certain desks in open spaces, place some workstations in separate spare rooms.
- Place workstations in a way that people work back to back or side by side rather than face to face.
- Apply floor markings showing safe distance between workstations.
- Limit internal circulation as much as possible – instruct staff not to go to rooms or places where they do not have to be present.
- Use sanitary wipes or alcohol to sanitize telephones.

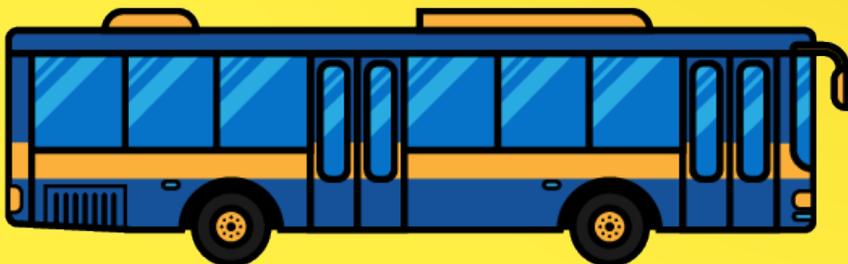


- Institute one-way traffic or priority rules on narrow stairs where people cannot keep a sufficient distance when passing each other (for example, priority for those coming down).
- Introduce one-way traffic restrictions in corridors where people meet often or without sufficient distance. Use these rules both inside and outside the building, for example in car parks.
- Cancel non-essential meetings and trainings.
- Where meetings are necessary, seek to have them convened in well ventilated areas with adequate physical spacing. Keep meetings to the shortest time possible to be effective.
- Suspend any meeting requiring the presence of a greater number of people than the maximum determined by national requirements or recommendations.
- Use alternatives to face-to-face meetings, such as digital tools and digital means of communication.



## AFTER SCHOOL

- Instruct staff and students to wash their hands with soap and water before exiting the school.
- Stagger the exit times for students to avoid congestion.
- Ensure students who are not participating in organized extra-curricular activities do not gather and socialize after school.
- Direct students to promptly leave the compound and proceed to their homes.
- Remind staff and students to wash hands upon arrival at home.
- Remind everyone using public transportation that they must to comply with the national protocol for travel on public service vehicles.



## OTHER PRECAUTIONS

- Keep a supply of additional disposable masks on hand in case of any eventuality.
- Keep doors open, wherever possible to reduce contact with the door handles.
- Establish specific procedures for the receipt of goods or supplies.
- Reduce the opportunities for contact between personnel making deliveries and staff.
- Limit the number of staff designated to handle deliveries.
- Staff receiving deliveries are required to wear masks.
- Those receiving deliveries must wash hands immediately after receiving goods
- Delivery personnel must wash or sanitize hands before and after every delivery.
- Plan deliveries in a staggered manner, if possible, to avoid having too many external people present at the school at the same time.
- Disinfect deliveries at point of delivery before entry into the building.
- Provide a place where mail or parcels can be deposited without contact.



## MENTAL HEALTH AND PSYCHOSOCIAL SUPPORT

- Schools are encouraged to develop intervention strategies to address the social and emotional learning needs of students who show signs of distress, anxiety or inability to cope during the return to school.
- Develop internal support systems for staff members who may require assistance to cope with the challenges of working in the new normal environment.
- A safe room or safe space should be established by each school to accommodate counselling services for students affected by the virus.
- Parents of any student in need of mental health or psychosocial support may reach out for assistance by emailing [counselling@mes.gov.bb](mailto:counselling@mes.gov.bb) or calling the **HOTLINE NUMBER at 535-0853.**
- Staff in need of mental health and psychosocial support may make use of the counselling services provided by the government.
- School leaders should communicate regularly, clearly and accurately information to staff to ensure that they are kept informed of important developments associated with the virus.

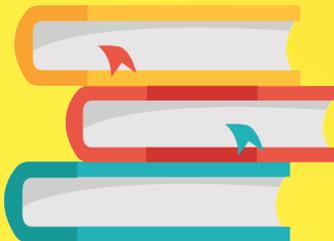


## **ADDITIONAL GUIDELINES FOR SPECIAL NEEDS STUDENTS**

In addition to the general protocols for the safe operation of schools, the following additional guidelines must be enforced for the care and safety of students with special needs:

- All Special Needs facilities must conform to all protocols that have been put in place for the safe operation of schools.
- All teachers and teaching aides must be sensitized about the special precautions to be enforced for the care of, engagement and interaction with special needs children.
- Establish routines for the safe and healthy functioning and engagement of students.
- Janitorial staff must be trained in the correct ways to clean indoor and outdoor facilities for children with special needs.

- All toys, equipment, apparatus and learning materials must be thoroughly sanitized before use.
- All toys should be washed twice daily. Those that cannot be washed should not be used.
- Sanitize the area where students' bags and personal items are stored particularly after use.
- Sanitize outdoor/playground equipment before use.
- Cover and frequently sanitize learning resources where feasible and appropriate.
- An adequate supply of “child-friendly” sanitizing agents must be kept at the facility.



## **ADDITIONAL GUIDELINES FOR SPECIAL NEEDS STUDENTS (CONT'D)**

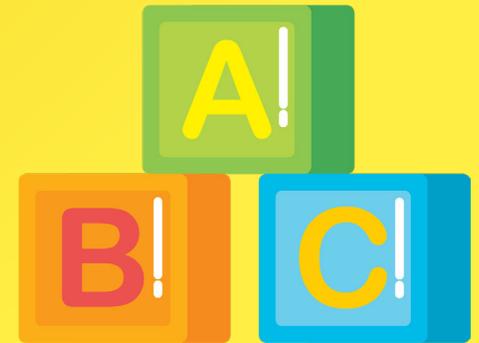
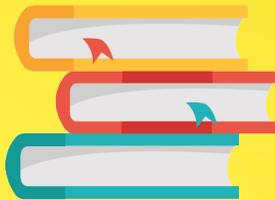
- Conduct sensitization sessions for parents on the procedures and guidelines that are enforced for the safe operation of Special Needs schools/facilities.
- Train special needs children in proper hand hygiene, cough etiquette, social and physical distancing and consistently enforce safe practices in the learning environment.
- Teachers and teacher aides must wear facemasks or appropriate face protection at all times when interacting with students who cannot wear facemasks or other face protection.
- Extra special attention should be paid to hand hygiene in class/form rooms and other places of direct contact with students who cannot wear facemasks or other face protection.
- Stagger snack/break and lunch breaks and encourage children to eat meals at their desks.
- Establish guidelines for the safe drop-off and collection of children.



## **SPECIFIC PROTOCOLS FOR NURSERY SCHOOLS**

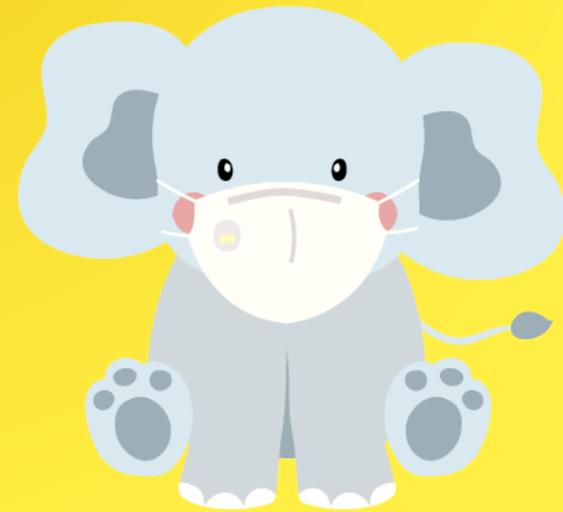
In addition to the general protocols for the safe operation of schools, the following additional guidelines must be enforced for Nursery schools:

- All Nursery schools must conform to all protocols that have been put in place for the safe operation of schools.
- Enforce the hand hygiene protocol at the points of entry i.e. Staff and students must wash their hands with soap and water or apply an alcohol-based hand sanitizer on entry to the school.
- All teachers and Nursery Aides must be sensitized about the special precautions to be enforced for the care and interaction with young children.
- Janitorial staff must be specially trained in the correct ways to clean indoor and outdoor facilities for young children
- All toys, equipment, apparatus and learning materials must be thoroughly sanitized before use.
- All toys should be washed twice daily or as frequently as needed. Those toys that cannot be washed should not be used.
- Every child should be supplied with a plastic container with lid for the storage of their personal learning resources.
- Properly label all personal items of students.
- Sanitize the area where students' bags and personal items are stored particularly after use.



## **SPECIFIC PROTOCOLS FOR NURSERY SCHOOLS (CONT'D)**

- Sanitized outdoor/playground equipment before use.
- Cover and frequently sanitize learning resources where feasible and appropriate.
- An adequate supply of “child-friendly” sanitizing agents must be kept at the facility.
- Conduct sensitization sessions for parents on the procedures and guidelines that are enforced for the safe operation of the Nursery school.
- Train children in proper hand hygiene, cough etiquette, social and physical distancing and consistently enforce safe practices in the learning environment.
- Stagger snack/break and lunch breaks and encourage children to eat meals at their desks or designated spaces.
- Establish guidelines for the safe drop-off and collection of children.



## **CLEANING OF SPECIAL WORK SPACES, WORK EQUIPMENT AND FACILITIES**

- Janitorial staff must thoroughly clean and sanitize all rooms, floors, walls, corridors and other areas of schools to be used by staff and students.
- Janitorial staff must properly clean and sanitize desks, chairs, workstations, tools, equipment, classrooms, Labs, Workshops, specialist rooms and facilities used by staff and students as needed.
- Janitorial staff must be provided with adequate supplies of cleaning and disinfecting agents.
- Janitorial staff must be provided with training and personal protection equipment necessary to carry out cleaning and sanitizing tasks.

