

MOE's School Continuity Plan For Haze Situation 2013 Frequently Asked Questions

GENERAL

1. What should teachers pay extra attention to during the haze period?

Teachers would look out for children with existing heart and lung conditions in their class and be sensitive to any symptoms that may develop during this time. They will ensure that these children receive medical attention promptly, when necessary.

2. What should parents do during the haze period?

Parents should keep their child's school informed if their child has existing heart and lung conditions, such as asthma. They should ensure that their children take their medications and have these medications with them according to their doctor's instructions and seek medical attention early should their child feel unwell.

Parents may also wish to note that children should adhere to the recommendation to minimise outdoor activity* when the health advisory is 'unhealthy' and avoid outdoor activity** if the health advisory is 'very unhealthy' or 'hazardous'.

The following links provide more information (in English, Mandarin, Malay and Tamil) provided by MOH on how to cope with the haze:

<http://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLH2CR4s1lqyhFRM8jgmfSi3rOOY-ypLth>

For more information, refer to MOH's website:

http://www.moh.gov.sg/content/moh_web/home/pressRoom/Current_Issues/2013/haze/frequently-asked-questions--faqs--on-haze-and-your-health.html

* Minimise outdoor activity = Allows for regular travel from one building to another e.g. home to shopping mall, school, but outdoor activities would not be advocated e.g. strolling in parks

** Avoid outdoor activity = Allows for essential travel from one building to another e.g. commuting to school

SCHOOLS' MITIGATION MEASURES

3. What mitigation measures do schools have in place to manage the haze situation?

For as long as school remains open for students, schools will take the following mitigation measures, which are based on the health advisory for the day:

Mitigation measures taken while in schools	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• School activities will be guided by the daily health advisory. For example, should the health advisory correspond to the 'unhealthy' level or above, there will be no outdoor activities.• To better enclose classrooms should the haze situation deteriorate, classroom windows and doors will be closed as far as possible while allowing adequate ventilation. Schools will also maximise the use of existing air-conditioned spaces for teaching and learning.• Lessons will be scaled down if necessary.• Each school has an air-conditioned room with an air purifier to temporarily accommodate students or staff who develop respiratory symptoms and / or are not feeling well, before they are taken to seek medical attention if necessary.
Response to transient rise in health advisory forecast to 'hazardous' level while students are in school	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• All classroom windows and doors will be closed.• Lessons will be scaled down.• Students will be moved from classrooms to other enclosed indoor spaces, such as the library and school hall. The distribution of students across all enclosed indoor spaces will allow better thermal comfort and ventilation.• Students and staff who are unwell or have a medical history of chronic heart and lung disease will be taken to the air-conditioned room with an air purifier before they are taken to seek medical attention.

4. In the event of severe haze conditions, what would be the recess arrangements for the children in this scenario?

Schools will arrange for students to consume their food indoors.

5. What are the learning provisions put in place for students who are unwell due to the haze? Will there be remedial lessons planned for them?

Schools have existing provisions to help students who are unwell at any time to catch up on the curriculum which they have missed.

6. Will school assemblies in the parade square still continue?

If the health advisory is at the "unhealthy" level and above, schools will cease all outdoor activities, including school assemblies at the parade square. Schools can conduct assemblies in enclosed indoor spaces, such as the school hall.

7. Will parents be given the discretion to pull out their children from attending school lessons and activities such as CCAs and after-school lessons in view of the haze situation?

We wish to assure parents that schools will monitor the haze situation closely and take the necessary mitigating measures to ensure the welfare of the students, including stopping all outdoor activities, based on daily health advisory.

SCHOOL CLOSURE

8. Under what circumstances will MOE consider closing schools for students?

MOE will consider closing all primary and secondary schools for students when the health advisory for the next day indicates that the air quality will be at 'hazardous' levels.

Should the health advisory for the next day correspond to the 'hazardous' level, MOE will announce the closure of schools at around the same time that the health advisory is released. This will be around 6.00pm the day before the schools are to be closed. The schools will contact parents to inform them of the school closure for students via phone or SMS. The school closure will also be announced in the media.

9. Why did MOE decide to use 6pm for the announcement? Could MOE inform parents earlier on school closure as many would need to make last minute arrangements?

MOE is only able to make announcements on school closures at about 6pm as the health advisory for the next day is only available in the late afternoon each day. Hence, we seek parents' understanding that relatively short notice for any announcement of school closure can be given. Parents are encouraged to make advance care arrangements for their children for such a possibility as needed. For parents who are unable to make alternative arrangements in time, if their children report to school on a school closure day, schools will receive and care for them.

10. If the haze condition makes a sudden turn for the worse in the night or early morning, will MOE consider making a last-minute announcement on school closure?

MOE will not announce school closure in the hours before the start of the school day as parents might not have sufficient time to make alternative arrangements for their children on such short notice. Schools will remain open for the day, although parents may decide not to send their children to school under such circumstances.

Similarly, should the haze condition improve overnight, and MOE has made the announcement to close school for the day for students, MOE will stay with its

decision to close the schools, as parents would have made prior arrangements in view of the announcement of closure.

HOME-BASED LEARNING (HBL)

11. What will schools do to ensure that students' learning is not disrupted during school closure?

Schools are ready to implement home-based learning plans for their students should there be extended school closure.

Schools will deliver lessons and monitor students' progress through various channels, such as telephone, email and the school's learning management system. Students will be guided so that they can continue learning from textbooks, school-prepared materials or internet resources.

Schools will keep parents informed of the learning activities and accompanying study schedule through email or their school webpages.

12. What will be in the lesson guide for students to help them learn from home during an extended school closure?

Typically, a lesson guide will include teachers' instructions for the students, stating the activities that the students will do, making references to the resources that the students would need to carry out the task and highlighting the learning points. The resources may include textbooks, school-prepared materials, or internet resources.

13. How will students be assessed if they were to study from home?

Schools will continue to assign homework and teachers will monitor the students' learning progress. As far as possible, assignments should be marked and returned so that students continue to receive feedback on their learning.

14. How will schools ensure that learning will be effective from home?

It is not possible to replicate the learning experiences that students have when they are physically in school and interact face-to-face with their teachers and fellow students. The lesson guides and assignments will be used to support learning for students. Teachers will monitor the students' learning progress through appropriate channels such as phone calls and e-mails. Parents can also play a role by helping and monitoring their child's efforts in following the lesson plans prepared by the teachers. Schools will reinforce their students' learning when schools re-open, and teachers will follow up with the students on their learning progress, and go over lessons again, where necessary. School-based assessments will also be adjusted, taking into consideration the overall pace of learning of the classes.

15. Will there be a need for students to go for make-up classes and extra lessons after school reopens?

Schools will decide and plan for the learning needs of their students according to the extent of adjustments needed as a result of the mitigation measures.

AIR PURIFIERS AND N95 MASKS

16. Are schools currently equipped with air purifiers?

All schools have prepared an air-conditioned room with a portable air cleaner to accommodate students with respiratory symptoms and / or are not feeling well, before they are taken to seek medical attention if necessary.

17. Who should use an N95 mask? When?

N95 masks are recommended for individuals who undertake prolonged and strenuous work outdoors when air quality is in the very unhealthy range. N95 masks are also recommended for individuals who are outdoors when air quality is in the hazardous range. N95 masks are not needed for short exposure, like commuting from home to school or work.

N95 masks are also not needed in an indoor environment.

Elderly people and people with lung or heart problems should stop using a N95 mask if they feel uncomfortable. Those with severe lung or heart problems who have difficulty breathing at rest or on exertion should not wear N95 masks. They should consult their doctor as to whether they should use the N95 mask.

Women in the 2nd and 3rd trimesters of pregnancy should not use the N95 mask for more than a short duration each time.

N95 masks are not certified for use in children, and are ineffective for young children when a proper fit cannot be achieved, so children should try to stay indoors when air quality is poor.

18. What about children? Children's N95 masks are not available.

The N95 masks that are currently available have not been designed by the manufacturer for use in children. Further, to be effective, N95 masks need to maintain a well-fitted seal at all times, which may be difficult to achieve in young children. In addition, young children may find it uncomfortable to wear a tight-fitting mask and will very likely adjust the mask that is worn, reducing the effectiveness of the mask.

Although certain types of N95 masks are being offered for sale for young children, their claims of effectiveness have not been verified by the relevant authorities such as the US Food and Drug Administration (US FDA) or Singapore's Health Sciences Authority (HSA).

While older children (e.g. upper secondary school and above) may be able to fit the smaller-sized N95 masks for adults, please note that the mask manufacturers do not certify effectiveness of the mask for this group. (Based on height and weight data of Singaporean children, an average upper secondary child is similar in size to a small-sized adult.) Older children with chronic heart and lung disease should not be using N95 masks without medical (paediatric specialist) advice.

Children should adhere to the recommendation to minimise outdoor activity* when the health advisory is 'unhealthy' and avoid outdoor activity** if the health advisory is 'very unhealthy' or 'hazardous'.

For more information, refer to MOH's website:

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19. Will schools be providing N95 masks to the students?

MOH's advisory states that N95 masks are not specifically designed for use in children: to be effective, N95 masks need to maintain a well-fitted seal at all times, which may be difficult to achieve in young children.

N95 masks may fit older/ bigger children. However, older children with chronic heart and lung disease should not be using N95 masks without medical (paediatric specialist) advice.

Further, N95 masks are generally recommended for adults only if they are engaged in prolonged and strenuous outdoor activities for the higher PSI bands. Under those conditions, schools would have stopped all outdoor activities. Hence there is no need to provide masks to students.

SCHOOL ACTIVITIES

20. How will the P1 registration be affected? What are MOE's measures in the event of severe haze conditions?

We will be guided by the health advisory for all MOE planned events. P1 registration will continue as planned, unless MOE informs parents otherwise, and schools will use their indoor facilities for the event.

EXAMINATION MATTERS

21. How will schools ensure that the students are ready for their examinations should there be a long duration of suspended classes?

If there is a prolonged suspension of classes and schools are not able to complete the syllabus, MOE will provide guidance and advice to schools. Taking into consideration the duration of the closure, appropriate adjustments will be made to the examinations.

22. What are the national examinations to be taken in July?

O- /N- / A-Level Oral Examinations are scheduled in July.

23. Will the Oral Examinations be cancelled or postponed? When will MOE make a decision on it?

On days where there are oral examinations for GCE 'O' and 'N' Levels, candidates from secondary schools affected by school closure will have their oral examinations rescheduled.

Examinations set on days when there is no school closure will proceed according to the current schedule. The announcement on the rescheduling of examinations would be made together with any announcement by MOE on school closure. There is no plan to cancel the national examinations at this point.

24. How will students who are unable to take the examinations due to haze-related illnesses be assessed?

There are processes in place to ensure that all candidates who are ill during the national examinations are fairly assessed.

POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS (PSEIs)

25. In the event of a school closure for Primary and Secondary schools, will it apply to PSEIs as well?

The considerations for closure of PSEIs – namely the Autonomous Universities, Polytechnics and ITE – and Junior Colleges/Centralised Institute are different. This is because most of the teaching and learning takes place in enclosed indoor spaces, and the students are older. MOE will work closely with these institutions to ensure the well-being of their students and be guided by the health advisory.

26. What measures are in place in the PSEIs to ensure the welfare of the student population during the haze situation?

PSEIs will take reference from government advisories provided by the Inter-agency Haze Taskforce, MOM, NEA and MOH. Each institution will implement

suitable arrangements and mitigating measures. Outdoor activities may be replaced with alternative indoor arrangements, or postponed or cancelled, if necessary. PSEIs will also prepare air-conditioned rooms equipped to cater to students who develop respiratory symptoms before they are taken to seek medical attention if necessary.

27. Will classes be cancelled if the situation worsens? Under what circumstances will classes be cancelled?

The PSEIs will take reference from the government advisories.

VWO-RUN SPED SCHOOLS

28. Will SPED schools follow the same guidelines for school closure?

SPED schools will be guided by MOE on the issue of school closure and this will be taken in tandem with the decision to close mainstream schools. When effected, SPED schools will use their established channels to quickly contact their parents to inform them of the closure. For parents who are unable to make alternative arrangements in time, if their children report to school on a school closure day, schools will receive and care for them.

When the term re-opens, SPED schools will inform their parents that due to the fluidity of the haze situation, school closure (if any) can only be made known at around 6.00pm the day before the schools are to be closed, as the health advisory for the next day will only be released then. Hence, parents will need to be prepared to make advance alternative care arrangements for their children in the event of such a possibility.

29. What measures are in place to ensure the well-being of the SPED school student population?

SPED schools will take reference and be guided by measures taken by mainstream schools, customised to the profile and needs of their students. For instance, SPED school staff (teachers and allied health professionals) will be vigilant in monitoring students' well-being especially students with existing heart and lung conditions and be sensitive to any symptoms that may develop during this time. They will ensure that these students receive medical attention early. Each SPED school will have at least one air-conditioned room with an air purifier for students who feel unwell or develop respiratory problems and will ensure that they receive prompt medical attention.

30. SPED school students may have more health concerns than students in mainstream schools. Will there be additional measures or a stricter advisory for SPED schools?

SPED schools will take reference and be guided by measures taken by mainstream schools, customised to the profile and needs of their students. All SPED schools have Allied Health Professionals (such as nurses, therapists, etc) to provide additional care support for their students. SPED school leaders will

also be flexible in allowing their students to stay at home upon requests of their parents, depending on their health condition, and particularly if they develop symptoms in reaction to the haze.

SCHOOL-BASED STUDENT CARE CENTRES (SCCs)

31. In the event of a school closure, will school-based student care centres remain open?

Student care centres will not operate during periods of school closure.

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