

Approved by a ministerial decision
on November 5, 2020

In the context of COVID-19
Framework of School Reopening 2020

Government of Nepal
Ministry of Education, Science and Technology
Singha Durbar, Kathmandu

Framework of School Reopening 2020

1. Introduction

Following a decision, dated March 18, 2020, of the High-level Coordination Committee on Prevention of Infection and Control of COVID-19, formed by the Government of Nepal (GoN) for the prevention of contagion by COVID-19, which has spread globally, educational institutions and training centres of all types all over the country were closed. Amidst the lockdown enforced by the GoN beginning March 24, 2020, a number of schools were also used as quarantine and isolation centres. With the aim of facilitating the educational activities of the schools closed due to COVID-19, through a decision of the GoN, Council of Ministers (CoM), dated July 27, 2020, the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MoEST) was assigned the responsibility of issuing a framework of school reopening. As the MoEST, through a decision of the GoN, CoM, dated October 08, 2020, has received an approval to resume teaching in schools by adopting a suitable modality, including turn-by-turn shifts, at those local levels where the risk of COVID-19 does not exist or is diminishing to facilitate and streamline teaching-learning and examination and assessment activities in educational institutions, as well as an approval has been given in principle, through a decision dated October 01, 2020, to all schools and teaching institutions to conduct examinations of all levels, subjects and types by fully complying with the public health and safety norms issued by the GoN, provincial governments and local levels, and, through a decision of October 08, 2020, to conduct examinations of the secondary education examination (grade 12), which had been postponed in 2076, by managing the methods, system, process and other necessary examination-related arrangements, this framework has been prepared and issued in order to ensure that the process of school opening and closing is systematic and safe.

The MoEST has prepared this framework based on the suggestions received from the province and local levels by reviewing the situation of COVID-19 pandemic at local and school levels and making children's teaching-learning and examination and assessment processes simple and continuous by running schools in a fear-free and safe manner or by reclosing schools for fixed duration, if needed considering the risk situation and reopening them if the situation allows, as well as based on the consultations repeatedly held with stakeholders of school education.

This framework presents the preparations to be made for the reopening of all schools of public and private investments throughout the country as well as the minimum activities to be carried out in the course of school reopening. In this framework, the basic activities that the provincial governments and local levels can carry out after preparing strategies suitable to their local conditions on subjects such as children's safety in the schools in their areas, protection from the contagion of the pandemic, and building of an easy learning environment are incorporated.

2. Objectives of the Framework

The main objective of this framework is to chart out a clear roadmap on the processual issues of reopening of those schools that have been closed down for the prevention of the COVID-19 contagion as well as those schools that were used as quarantine or isolation centres. This framework provides guidelines for the reopening of safe schools from the viewpoint of COVID-19 pandemic and public health by streamlining the core actions to be taken in the context of the preparations to be made by the local levels and schools before reopening schools, student intake, school reopening and teaching-learning management and conducting of postponed examinations, apart from laying down criteria for taking decision on whether to close school or reopen school based on analysis of local situation.

3. Preparations for School Reopening

3.1. Regarding decision-making process of school opening, coordination and collaboration

- (a) Regarding the issue of whether to close or reopen school by remaining within the parameters of the public health and safety norms and directives issued by the GoN, provincial governments and local levels, the local levels shall review the bases for opening schools in consultation with people's representatives, educationists, office-bearers of the teachers' federation and the umbrella organization of school operators, head-teachers, teachers, office-bearers of the school management committees (SMC) and parents-teachers' associations (PTAs), health workers, and members of child and youth clubs, to the extent they are available. If school teachers, students, school staff cannot be present during review due to health reasons or due to being infected, deliberations shall be held on alternative arrangements.
- (b) Based on the review done according to point no. (a), the local levels shall solicit proposals from schools on the possibility of operating schools through turn-by-turn shifts or any other suitable modality. Issue instructions on whether to operate or close schools by coordinating with the District Crisis Management Committee (DCMC) regarding the proposals received from schools. While operating or reopening school, arrangements can be made for starting it from those schools that are situated in the areas that are not at risk of contagion or are at the least risk. Resource classes and special schools can be reopened in consultation with health experts.
- (c) The local level or school, as directed by the local level, shall publish a notice with the time and date of school reopening. While publishing and broadcasting such notice, informative materials on topics, such as the school opening day and the days children are to attend school, information on the norms to be observed while travelling to and from school and while at school, sanitization of school buildings and the facilities available in school, shall also be published and broadcast in local languages, as needed.
- (d) If the schools were used by the local level as quarantine site or isolation centre, all quarantine or isolation activities shall be halted and school buildings and premises sanitized.

- (e) SMCs, with the support and under the guidance of the local level, shall inform their teachers, staff, parents, and children about the criteria for opening schools as well as the public health and safety norms and mentally prepare children for attending school.
- (f) The local level shall maintain communication and coordination between health facilities, communities, parents, and school, employing the social development committee or rural/municipal education committee or other mechanisms. The SMC and PTA shall be galvanized to support this task.
- (g) Local levels shall carry out necessary tasks by coordinating and collaborating with the nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and community-based organizations (CBOs) working at local level.
- (h) With regard to the children with disabilities and special needs, the local level shall make arrangements in coordination and collaboration with the organizations working in the disability sector as well as parents. While doing so, necessary arrangements shall be made on matters such as special facilities, remedial teaching, midday meal management, etc.
- (i) In order to run teaching-learning activities in schools smoothly, local levels shall coordinate regarding the receipt and distribution of the learning materials developed by the Centre for Education and Human Resources Development (CEHRD), Curriculum Development Centre (CDC), and the provincial and local levels and also ensure that all children have received such materials.
- (j) Local levels shall continuously coordinate and facilitate the tasks performed by the provincial Social Development Ministry, District Coordination Committee), and local-level NGOs and CBOs.

3.2 Regarding Public Health, Safety and Psycho-counselling

- (a) Local levels and schools shall make arrangements for minimum infrastructure for children's safety (furniture, toilets, adequate light, and cross-ventilated classrooms, etc), soap, water, and sanitizer for health and sanitation, and temperature checking of visitors to school.
- (b) SMC shall formulate, with the participation of teachers, school staff, students, and parents, a code of conduct to be observed while going to school, while at school and while returning from school, covering issues such as mandatory wearing of masks by teachers, school staff, students, and parents; maintaining physical distance; managing tiffin, and make arrangements for its mandatory compliance by all stakeholders.
- (c) Local levels shall form ward-level monitoring and facilitation subcommittees through the social development committee or rural/municipal education committee or, through them, to ascertain whether the minimum safe school standards of school reopening have been fulfilled or not. For this, verify schools against the Safe School Checklist shown in annex 1 and, if the standards are not found met, make arrangements for school reopening by fulfilling them.

- (d) Schools shall make arrangements for immediately informing the local level, parents or families if any health problem arises, or any symptoms similar to those of COVID-19, are observed among children, teachers and school staff attending school.
- (e) Set up a help desk staffed by health workers, as needed, or conduct, in coordination with a nearby health facility, programmes such as continuous health check-up or counselling. Inform the children at high risk of infection in advance to attend school only after a health check-up at a nearby centre and make arrangements for temperature check-up in school.
- (f) Build an environment for infected teachers, school staff and children to not attend school until they have fully recovered and determine alternative learning continuity measures in advance.
- (g) Each school shall update the details, including contact numbers, of the office-bearers of its SMC, teachers, staff members, and parents as well as those of school health workers, psychosocial counsellors, hospitals, ambulances, etc at the local level and share the details with the local level, as needed.
- (h) Local levels shall make arrangements for giving psychosocial counselling to children, teachers, school staff, and parents, as needed, by designating local health workers, social mobilizers, psycho-counsellors, and contact teachers to rid them of the fear of COVID-19.
- (i) In case of children with disabilities, local levels shall make arrangements for giving counselling to parents as well. If it is not possible to bring children with disabilities to school, school to make arrangements for alternative teaching-learning (home schooling).
- (j) Schools and teachers shall listen to children's experiences, appreciate their sensitivity, and ensure that no discrimination, gender violence, abuse, etc of any form takes place against them.

3.3 Regarding Educational Plan and Training

- (a) For the management of educational sessions by fulfilling the learning achievements specified in the National Curriculum Framework and grade-wise and subject-wise curricula, teachers shall prepare annual calendar for the pandemic period as per the Curriculum Integration Framework 2077, developed by the CDC, and all teachers shall prepare annual academic plans for the pandemic period.
- (b) Provincial education training centres shall conduct training and orientation programmes for teachers based on, among others, the Student Learning Facilitation Guidelines 2077 and the Curriculum Integration Framework 2077. In addition, supervision and training in the methods and processes to be adopted for learning facilitation in difficult circumstances shall be provided to teachers as per immediate need to suit the curriculum.

- (c) Schools, in coordination with the local level, shall conduct orientation for teachers through facilitators based on the nature of the subject-matter to enable them to efficiently conduct the activities specified by this framework.
- (d) While conducting training and orientation activities, provide special training to teachers and staff of resource classes and special schools.
- (e) Local levels shall develop and implement response plans for infection management and children's learning continuity.

3.4 Regarding Physical Facilities and Seating Management

- (a) SMCs shall re-manage or repair, as needed, classrooms, furniture, toilets, hostels, conference halls, etc to build a learning environment with physical distance maintained.
- (b) For facilitating management, local levels shall prepare and implement the most appropriate alternative among those mentioned below, considering the risk of infect, student population and available physical infrastructure:
 - 1) Conduct class in the same shift for all grades and students;
 - 2) Conduct separate classes or levels in different shifts;
 - 3) Shorten the duration/period of school opening and class;
 - 4) Start classes either for lower or upper grades first, considering the situation (risk and ease);
 - 5) Conduct classes in turns so that certain grades are conducted on certain days and the remaining other grades on other days;
 - 6) Conduct classes in turns so that some students of the same grade attend class on some day or shift and the remaining students on other day or shift;
 - 7) Conduct classes a few days a week, a few hours a day.
- (c) The local levels shall make arrangements of water, health and sanitation facilities and for sensitizing about the special sanitation rules (eg washing hands, covering the mouth while coughing or sneezing, using other safety equipment, and cleaning the equipment) and make arrangements for also practising them at home.
- (d) Include subjects of mandatory compliance of the minimum physical distance to be observed by teachers, students and school staff at places such as classroom, toilet, drinking water area, etc.

- (e) Make arrangements for sanitization and regular cleaning of child development centres and school compound, classrooms, furniture, vehicles, canteens, libraries, laboratories, toilets, hostels, etc as per the disinfection methods prepared by the Ministry of Health and Population.

4. Activities to be done during School Running

4.1. Regarding safe reopening

- (a) Hold teachers' staff meetings in school from time to time and discuss pandemic management and prepare and implement strategies and action plan, as needed.
- (b) Check all entering the school, including children, teachers, and staff, for temperature after obtaining health consultations, in coordination with the local health facility.
- (c) Wearing of mask shall be made compulsory in school; all students shall be made to wear mask properly. Schools, in coordination with and support of the local level, shall provide masks for children from highly disadvantaged communities.
- (d) Prohibit entry of persons other than school family into school premises and, in case it is unavoidable, make arrangements for them to enter only with head-teacher's permission and by wearing mask and maintaining physical distance.
- (e) Draw up a code of conduct and list of dos and don'ts for the pandemic period and display them at a prominent place for all to see.
- (f) Designate a teacher (a health education or science teacher, if available) as a focal person. Make provision of a monitor grade-wise and group-wise to manage students' activities.
- (g) Make arrangements for washing hands regularly, with adequate amounts of clean water, hand-washing area, soap and other cleanliness items, based on the number of students.
- (h) In case health problems or signs of infection are seen in teachers, school staff and students during school reopening, use the isolation cell for keeping them immediately. Make arrangements for transporting them to parents and health facilities and notify them to not attend school until they have fully recovered.
- (i) Make daily seating arrangements for students by maintaining a distance of minimum 1 metre between one student and another in early child development centres and schools. Give continuity to the practice of always keeping the students of the same grade or section in the same group or grade till the time the risk persists. Make the classrooms amply cross-ventilated by keeping the doors and windows of the classroom open.
- (j) Stringently comply with the school health and sanitation rules; make arrangements for sanitary pads and separate toilets for girl students and sanitize the toilet daily.

- (k) Assign tiffin break at different hours for each grade; do not let children share food and eat in the classroom. Serve midday meal, with at least the minimum nutrients as stipulated in the Midday Meal Management and Facilitation Guidelines, to the students who are required to be provided midday meal, as far as possible, in school, keeping in mind their nutrition and health.

4.2 Regarding Learning Facilitation

- (a) Teachers shall ensure that children have the basic learning materials (such as textbooks, pens, exercise books, self-study materials, stationery, etc). Schools shall distribute these to the children who cannot arrange the basic learning materials by coordinating with the local level.
- (b) Give continuity to the learning activities in accordance with the Student Learning Facilitation Guidelines 2020. Follow the Textbook Integration Framework 2077, prepared by the CDC, for learning facilitation. In addition, use the learning materials prepared or approved by the CEHRD and the CDC.
- (c) Do not allow sharing of teaching-learning materials (such as textbooks, exercise books, pens, markers, dusters, etc) and sports items with each other.
- (d) Use the materials for the children of early child development without sharing, as far as possible, and disinfect or sanitize them after use.
- (e) Facilitate children's learning by evaluating their pre-learning (learnt at home, learnt through alternative means or learning loss during school closure) and determining their level and need.
- (f) Teachers to regularly monitor children's learning, and identify the children who are lagging behind in learning and provide extra support to them for their learning.
- (g) Give continuity to learning of children who cannot physically attend school regularly due to illness or infection by using alternative systems, methods and materials. Furthermore, facilitate learning of children outside the regular learning process (not enrolled in school or irregular or dropped-out) by following the Learning Facilitation Guidelines 2020 by being based on the local needs and by using the available resources and materials.
- (h) To involve children with special needs in the learning process, manage learning materials and conduct teaching-learning process based on need.
- (i) Give less priority to group activities until the risk of infection is over. If physical distance cannot be maintained, do not conduct group activities such as prayers, group sports, etc. Conduct exciting and creative life skill activities individually considering the situation or physical and Yoga exercises regularly by maintaining physical distance.

- (j) Regularly exchange experiences among teachers to solve the problems emerging in day-to-day operations, and if complicated problems arise, consult experts to solve them. For this, consultations with experts may be held online if necessary and possible.
- (k) Share information about the usefulness of digital literacy to make children's dependence on information technology positive and productive.

5. Tasks to be done while School is Running

- (a) While conducting and managing examinations of all levels, subjects and types to be conducted in school, the local level and each school shall ensure compliance of the public health and safety standards issued by the GoN, provincial government and local level from time to time.
- (b) As regards the examinations to be conducted in school premises, the activities stated in the code of conduct prepared by schools as stipulated in this framework shall be carried out, apart from those stated in the provisions on physical facilities and seating management and safe reopening.
- (c) Schools shall assess students' learning from the teaching-learning activities conducted in accordance with the students' learning programme through alternative systems conducted since June 15, 2020, along with managing remedial teaching-learning conducted as per the Textbook Integration Framework 2020.
- (d) Tasks shall be performed in accordance with the matters mentioned in relation to the examinations conducted and managed by the National Examinations Board, including the deferred grade 11 examinations and Secondary Education examinations (grade 12), in addition to the procedure, standards and the responsibilities assigned by the National Examinations Board from time to time.

6. Continuous Monitoring and Supervision

- (a) Head-teacher of the school shall regularly observe the general health of the teachers and staff of the school, whereas the teachers shall regularly observe the general health of the students of their class, and if symptoms similar to those of COVID-19 are observed or if any student, teacher and school staff are found absent due to health reasons, the local level shall be informed.
- (b) If midday meal in school is supplied from outside, the SMC shall regularly monitor and facilitate full compliance of the health measures by the cook or canteen.
- (c) Head-teachers shall perform self-evaluation of their schools based on the Safe School Checklist shown in annex 1 and make [the report] available to the SMC and the local level. SMCs shall

regularly monitor whether the activities mentioned in the list have been carried out or not and implement them.

- (d) Local level and other monitoring agencies shall use, apart from the checklist shown in annex 1, other prescribed means to determine whether necessary standards are being met or not in school.
- (e) Local level shall mobilize social development committees or rural/municipal education committee for regular appraisal and monitoring of school reopening and make the SMC and PTA more active.

7. Postponement or Halting of School Reopening

- (a) If the COVID-19 infections rise again in the local level or if the risk of infection heightens in any school within the local level, then the local level shall, in coordination with the DCMC, review the situation based on the public health and safety norms stipulated by the GoN and provincial governments and issue an instruction for postponement of school reopening or closure for specified period.
- (b) In case the situation demands re-closure of schools, give continuity to learning in accordance with the Student Learning Facilitation Guidelines 2020.
- (c) If schools need to be closed due to rise in risk of infection, if schools need to be reopened as the situation eases following disappearance or lessening of risk, situation should be managed from the very beginning in accordance with this framework.

8. Responsibilities and Accountability

8.1 Federal Level

At the federal level, the MoEST shall play the main responsibility in the task of making school reopening effective. For this, the ministry shall mobilize the structures from the centre to the districts. The main responsibilities and accountability of the federal level shall be as follows:

- (a) Prepare necessary additional standards and overall instructions on school reopening.
- (b) Coordinate and facilitate for resource mobilization.
- (c) Make the resources available for school reopening to provincial and local levels as conditional grant.
- (d) Prepare teacher training, parenting education and orientation guidelines.
- (e) Produce and facilitate learning materials developed by the centre for their timely delivery.
- (f) Produce, distribute and broadcast alternative learning materials.

- (g) Monitor and evaluate the overall situation of school reopening by regularly collecting reports from the district level.
- (h) Carry out coordination and facilitation for school reopening.

8.2 Province Level

At the province level, mainly the Social Development Ministry shall carry out additional coordination and facilitation of the task of ensuring effectiveness of school reopening. The core responsibilities and accountability at the province level shall be as follow:

- (a) Provide guidance by reviewing the province's situation in relation to school reopening.
- (b) Identify the funding sources at province level and mobilize them.
- (c) Mobilize the subordinate agencies, including the Education Training Centre and the Education Development Directorate, to conduct and facilitate teacher training and parenting education programmes.
- (d) Monitor and evaluate the overall state of reopening of schools in the province.
- (e) Mobilize the province-level NGOs and education concern clusters.

8.3 Local Level

The local level shall take necessary decision on the issue of implementing this framework at school level after analysis and shall issue instructions to schools accordingly from time to time. With regard to the effective reopening of schools, the local level shall make the school and SMC active by assigning the primary responsibility to its social development committee or rural or municipal education committee or other appropriate mechanisms. The primary responsibility and accountability of the local level shall be as follows:

- (a) Not carry out quarantine and isolation activities in school buildings and premises.
- (b) Make the school buildings that are no longer being used as quarantine and isolation centres fit for teaching activities by sanitizing them in accordance with the prescribed norms.
- (c) Not maintain COVID-19 prevention and control structures by causing adverse effects on school and school premises and on student movement or near the school zone.
- (d) Identify and mobilize local resources for school reopening.
- (e) Coordinate with health facilities, security agencies, DCMC, local administration and Education Development and Coordination Unit, and other agencies.
- (f) Execute school closure and reopening following a situation risk analysis of schools within its area as per public health and safety standards.
- (g) Mobilize NGOs and CBOs operating at local level and coordinate their activities.
- (h) Make students, parents, teachers, and stakeholders more active by mobilizing SMCs and PTAs.

- (i) Carry out monitoring, supervision and facilitation based on the indicators of safe school reopening.
- (j) Ensure availability of learning materials, including textbooks, for children.
- (k) Take appropriate decision on other issues of school reopening by complying with public health and safety standards based on an assessment of risk situation.

Annex 1

Safe School Checklist

Name of school:

Address: District Rural/Municipality Ward no.

Settlement: Contact no.:

S.N.	Details	Provision and Use		Remarks
		Yes	No	
1	Preparation of criteria for opening schools in coordination with and participation of teachers, parents, school community, child/youth club, people's representatives, health workers			
2	Provision of hand-washing facilities with clean water and soap based on the number of children, including child development			
3	Provision and application of disinfecting or sanitizing classrooms, offices, railings, canteen tables, sports goods, learning materials, and transportation vehicles at least once a day			
4	Provision of separate toilets for boys and girls in school and sanitary pads for girls			
5	Provision of first aid room and isolation room			
6	Arrangements for promptly informing parents and families if any health problem is detected in children, teachers and school staff in school			
7	Details, including contact numbers, of health workers, psychosocial counsellors, hospitals, ambulance, etc updated			
8	Seating arrangement in classroom with maintenance of physical distance for students			
9	Mechanism delineating the monitoring responsibility of germfree school and hygiene management			
10	Provision of midday meal for at least up to grade 5 within school			
11	If the school was used as a quarantine or isolation: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. The quarantine or isolation management committee has had it vacated and re-managed or repaired it at least 15 days earlier b. Sanitization done as per approved standards at least 72 hours before running classes 			
12	Orientation in the skills of providing psycho-counselling and motivating children or preparations			

13	Provision of remedial learning with alternative methods as per the Guidelines on Students' Learning Facilitation through Alternative System 2020 for continuous learning of children in difficult situations			
14	Provision of textbooks and learning materials for all children			
15	Provision of coordination between students, teachers, parents, local levels, health facilities, partner organizations, and SMCs			
16	Provision of monitoring and facilitation of compliance of overall daily activities of school, code of conduct and implementation			
17	Preparation of immediate response actions to be taken in case of re-emergence of COVID-19 infections or other difficult situations			
18	Provision of barring entry of outsiders without health check-up into school			
19	Provision of mandatory use of mask by students, teachers and school staff			
20	Provision of preparation for necessary improvements of infrastructure and facilities after school reopening			
Name and surname of person monitoring: 1, 2., Signature: 1, 2., Date:				