

# GOVERNMENT OF THE KINGDOM OF ESWATINI



## MINISTRY OF EDUCATION & TRAINING

### PRESS STATEMENT

#### RE-OPENING OF SCHOOLS FOR THE 2021 ACADEMIC YEAR

1. It has been over a year since the closure of our schools due to the COVID-19 pandemic. This means that a number of Emaswati children have not experienced any effective learning since March 2020 despite all the Ministry's efforts to ensure the continuity of education.
2. Government's decision to re-open schools is not because the virus has been contained but this is done in consideration of the socioeconomic impact of prolonged school closure. The rate of teenage pregnancy, sexual abuse, child labour and early child marriages has notably increased since the closure of schools.

3. With the above said, the excitement of this announcement should not allow us to let our guard down. The virus is still deadly and hence requires stringent adherence to COVID-19 regulations and guidelines.
4. In preparation for re-opening on the 29<sup>th</sup> March 2021, all teachers, from primary to secondary are requested to return to their duty stations as of Monday, 22<sup>nd</sup> March 2021. This is to ensure that they prepare schools to be ready to welcome learners for effective teaching and learning.
5. This will give teachers an opportunity to strategize on how to manage learners' rotational schedules relevant to their context as well as manage the learners on each day of school. This plan should include a detailed approach towards the thermo scanning of learners, demarcating floors in classrooms for social distancing, cleaning schedules, monitoring of COVID-19 guidelines, ensuring hand washing stations are operational and ensuring learners do not mix during breaks, to name just a few.
6. Head Teachers should ensure that their schools have a copy of the Standard Operating Procedures for Preparedness, Management, Detection and Response to the Coronavirus (COVID-19) Outbreak developed by the Ministry working closely with the Ministry of Health,

UN agencies and other stakeholders. This document clearly details what is expected in schools in the following areas;

- Preparation Of Facilities
- General Infection Control
- Screening
- Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)
- Nutrition and School Feeding Exercise, Tuck Shops, Cafeterias And Catering Venues
- Visitors/ Parents/ Guardians
- School Transport
- Boarding Establishments
- Lines Of Reporting
- Psychosocial Support For Learners And Staff
- Communication Protocols

All these guidelines are to be followed strictly.

7. Moreover, the Ministry developed a COVID-19 training module which all teachers are expected to teach to learners on the first week of re-opening. The Ministry believes knowledge is the most effective way to ensure that learners adhere to these guidelines and will further pass this information to their parents and communities.
8. In recognising that there is a lot of learning material to recover, the Ministry developed a compressed curriculum for all subject areas.

Head Teachers should ensure that they fetch these resource materials from their Regional Education Offices so that their teachers adapt to it for teaching following a recorded video which guide them on how to work handle the curriculum.

9. As means of addressing the issue of social distancing in schools, the Ministry developed a plan detailing a blended approach to teaching and learning. This means specific levels will be allowed to school for face-to-face instructional time on specific days and give them assignments to do while they are at home.

10. All schools are expected to follow this outlined schedule;

<b>School Level</b>	<b>Class Level</b>	<b>Attendance Days</b>
<b>Pre-Primary</b>	Grade 0	Monday to Friday (everyday)
<b>Single Stream schools with an enrolment of 150 pupils or less</b>	Grade 1 up to Grade 7	Attend school everyday
<b>Primary Schools with an enrolment of above 150 pupils follow the under listed schedule</b>		
<b>Lower Primary</b>	Grades 1, 2, 3, 4	Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday
<b>Upper Primary</b>	Grades 5, 6	Thursday and Friday
	Grade 7	Monday to Friday (everyday)
<b>Secondary and High</b>  <b>Single Stream schools with an enrolment of 150 pupils or less</b>	Forms 1, 2, 3, 4, 5	Monday to Friday (everyday)

<b>Schools with an enrolment above 150</b>	Forms 1, 2	Monday and Tuesday
	Form 3	Wednesday, Thursday, Friday
	Form 4	Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday
	Form 5	Monday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday
<b>Tertiary Institutions</b>	Should reopen as per each institutions academic calendar observing COVID-19 guidelines	

11. As schools prepare to conduct registration of new learners, Head Teacher's should ensure that they are strategic in handling numbers to avoid overcrowding. Further, all COVID -19 protocols should be followed in these processes each and every day.
12. The same sentiments also apply to teachers who are engaged on contract terms. The Teaching Service Commission will announce dates and venues for contract signing. There is no need to physically come to the Ministry for such activities.
13. In closing, as we open schools, I urge all stakeholders in education, from my hard working teachers, learners down to public transport operators to be vigilant and keep a safe environment. The safe opening exercise requires a collective effort by the entire community in playing their part in adherence to COVID regulations for

the safety of our schools. Parents and guardians have the responsibility to ensure that their children wear a clean face mask on a daily basis. They should also ensure that children do the assignments that will be given to them at school as we implement the blended learning approach.

14. My sincerest gratitude is goes to all the partners who have assisted us to prepare schools to be a safe environment for learners amid COVID-19. May I also appeal to other partners to join in and assist our schools in any form of support from provision of masks, soaps, sanitizers, thermometer scanners, water tanks, water and other infrastructural needs.

15. Lastly, to all the learners, across all levels. With everything around us changing and uncertain, education still remains key in giving us a better future. The country needs more doctors, scientists, researchers and entrepreneurs to match the constantly changing environment. You are our hope and through commitment and dedication towards your studies, it can all be achieved.

16. To all the learners who have been affected by being out of school, either through pregnancy, employment or discouraged to learn,

I urge you all to return to school. Psychological services for all affected students will be provided by the guidance teams in schools.

I thank you.

**HON. LADY HOWARD MABUZA (MP)**

**MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING**

**19 MARCH 2021**