



Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

MEDIA RELEASE

January 24th, 2022

Dear Editor / Head of Department,

**Physical Reopening of Schools for Term II 2021/2022,
February 7th, 2022**

The Ministry of Education (MOE) has held several consultation meetings with stakeholders over the past 3 months regarding the operations of schools in Term II 2021/2022.

While there are many different views on the return to physical school and how it should be implemented, the major concerns center around the safety of all school personnel, and the quality of life and education to which the children of Trinidad and Tobago are exposed.

It is established that physical teaching and learning is most effective for our ECCE, Primary and Secondary School students, but this must be achieved in a manner that is deemed both safe and logistically practical. The results of the SEA and CXC examinations in 2021, when compared with those of 2020, have shown decreases in student performance consistent with the learning loss predicted due to the absence of students from the physical classroom during the pandemic. The results of the Diagnostic Tests in Math and English Language which all public schools

administered in October 2021 also identified gaps in student achievement across levels in these fundamental areas.

Since March 2020, teaching and learning has taken place mainly using the online modality. The GORTT has approached physical attendance of students using a phased, incremental approach, allowing administrators to develop and adjust policies, systems for monitoring and school operations on small cohorts to avoid overwhelming the system.

Students of Forms 4-6 have attended school physically from February-July 2021 and October - December 2021 and are still in physical attendance at this time. In addition, physical examinations, involving thousands of our students, have been held for SEA in 2020 and 2021, as well as CSEC and CAPE, held in June 2020, January 2021, June 2021, and, most recently, January 2022.

The conduct of physical school and examinations in Trinidad and Tobago during the pandemic has been challenging, as it is globally. It has required the understanding and cooperation of all school personnel, including parents, and adjustments to school operations which promote safety. These include:

- Maintenance of entry protocols- including hand washing, temperature checks and sanitization;
- Masking of school personnel at all times;
- Operations of schools at a capacity level which allows for distancing requirements;
- Provision of an adequate supply of cleaning agents and safety equipment to schools;

- Amendment of the janitorial regimen at schools to include more frequent cleaning, especially in high touch/ high traffic areas;
- Formalization of the collaboration between the MOE and the Ministry of Health (MOH), with specific personnel assigned to assist schools in COVID-19 management;
- Clear communication of COVID-19 management procedures, and the availability of support to schools for implementation;
- Availability of COVID-19 vaccines

The Ministry of Education remains committed to working with and learning from all stakeholders and making decisions in the best interest of the nation’s children. In light of all considerations, the following decisions have been taken regarding the physical re-opening of schools in Term II 2021/22:

1. Students of Forms 1-3 or equivalent are required to return to the physical classroom on February 7th, 2022 on a rotational basis - the details of this arrangement for each school will be communicated to parents and students by Principals, but **all students should be required to attend school physically at minimum 2 days per week, and 5 days in a 10-day cycle.**
2. Students who are not rostered for physical attendance are to be assigned asynchronous assignments. It is recognized that since February 2021, many teachers have been assigning asynchronous work for Forms 1-3 as they straddle both online and physical classes. Teachers have, and will continue to receive guidance and training in methods for maximizing hybrid teaching approaches such as the flipped classroom, so that the effectiveness of asynchronous classes will be maximized. Teachers have also received the

critical areas for curriculum completion, which will allow them to make the most of physical classes with students.

3. Standard 5 students are required to attend school physically from February 7th - March 29th; 8:30a.m. to 2p.m., 4 days a week, in preparation for the SEA on March 31st 2022. On Wednesdays, teaching should be virtual to allow for thorough school cleaning.
4. For the duration of the Academic Year, schools will be mandated to relax school uniform requirements, especially with regard to the colour and type of school shoes. The requisite memo will be sent to Principals, who will guide parents or guardians accordingly.
5. The School Feeding Program, which is already in operation for Term II, will continue to be available to eligible students in physical attendance. School Transport will resume when attendance numbers are finalized.
6. Where approved, as presently obtains, temporary virtual school operation will be utilized, on a case-by-case basis, as a part of the overall COVID management strategy.

On the basis of the decisions taken above, detailed Guidelines will be sent to schools via Circular Memorandum, and made available to the public, as the cooperation of parents continues to be crucial to the operations of schools, especially in this time of transition.

The Government maintains the position that COVID-19 vaccines are available, and continue to be the best protection against becoming grievously ill if students contract the virus. Parents are therefore strongly encouraged to vaccinate eligible children as they return to the classroom.

The Ministry lauds the efforts of all staff, stakeholders, parents, teachers, middle management, and Principals as Trinidad and Tobago seeks to offer the best educational opportunities possible, in the time of the pandemic, to our children. Our continued cooperation and commitment during this transitional period will be critical for the best outcomes.

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