

# A PARENT'S GUIDE FOR RETURNING TO SCHOOL

Academic Year 2021/22

# | Message from ADEK

#### Dear Parents,

With preparation for the new Academic Year 2021/22 underway, we conducted multiple roundtables and consultations with schools and all relevant authorities to map a safe and successful return to school for all students and educational staff in Abu Dhabi.

We have harnessed all insights and lessons learned to update the Private Schools Reopening Policies and Guidelines and enable a physical return to classrooms. Our goal is to facilitate greater face-to-face learning, giving your children the opportunity to reconnect with their teachers and friends while maintaining the highest safety measures.

This guide will inform you of the most important changes and policy updates across all private schools in Abu Dhabi.

As we prepare to welcome children back in schools, rest assured that their safety and the safety of all staff and wider community remains paramount. A successful return to schools is only possible when we all come together, both educators and parents, to do our part.

We look forward to an enriching and impactful Academic Year 2021/22 for all our students and educational community.

The ADEK team



# | Will Schools Reopen Fully In August 2021?



#### The short answer: It depends!

The good news is that under the new regulations for school reopening, private schools across Abu Dhabi will be able to welcome more students back on campus this year.

Schools can opt for one of the following reopening models, based on the number of students each can accommodate while meeting all health and safety requirements:



**1. Full return:** All students will attend school every day for face-to-face learning.



2. Partial Return: Depending on the schedule selected by the school, students will have at least 50% of learning face-to-face:

- \* Half day shifts
- \* Alternating days
- \* Alternating weeks



**3. Distance learning:** Schools can choose to offer full distance learning for students who choose this mode.

You should consider the many advantages of face-to-face learning for your child's academic progress and mental wellbeing as you decide which mode of learning you want your children to have for next term.

Similar to last year, you must commit to your choice for the entire term to allow your school to plan better.

As your children's school will monitor attendance and engagement for all modes of learning, we need you to support them by ensuring that your children attend classes diligently.



# | Will Distance Learning be Offered as an Option?

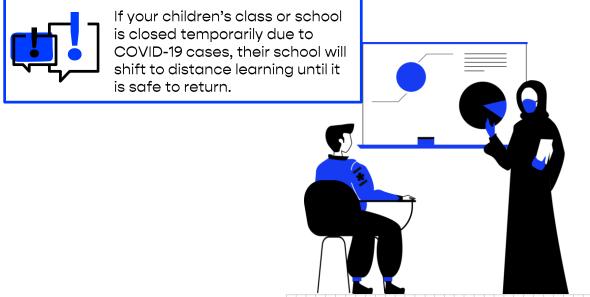
While this year, schools have the discretion not to offer distance learning as a model, they must still provide it for:

- Students who have medical conditions classified as high-risk in relation to COVID-19, supported by a medical certificate from a locally approved healthcare provider.
- Students aged 16 and above who are not vaccinated.
- Students enrolled in schools that have chosen to offer distance learning as an option.

### Are there any implications on school fees?

Schools reserve the right to charge the full tuition fee to all students irrespective of the mode of attendance (i.e., face-to-face or distance learning).

You should not expect a fee increase, as fee increases have only been approved for schools in exceptional circumstances.



# | Are the Safety Requirements to Return to School Still the Same?

To ensure that we begin the new academic year by being mindful of everyone's safety and well-being, children will have to meet three types of requirements:



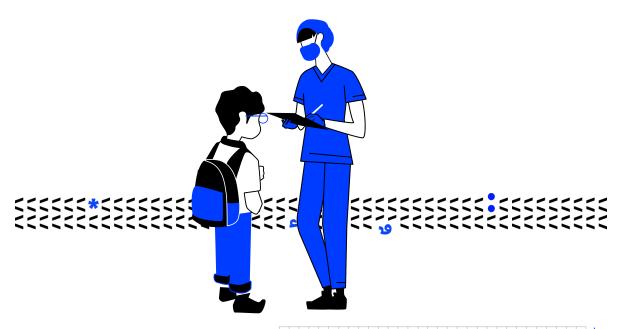


Requirements for students who traveled abroad during the summer

Please ensure that your child meets the relevant vaccination and PCR testing requirements to enter school.

Details on each are provided in the next few pages.

You may also have to fill out and submit some forms to the school prior to the start of the semester. Check out page 22 for all relevant links.



### 1. PCR Testing Requirements

#### WHO IS EXPECTED TO TAKE A COVID-19 PCR TEST?

- All children are required to have a valid negative PCR test result to enter the school. The validity period for PCR tests for first-time entry and during the academic year are provided below.
- Before the start of the term and after returning from long breaks (e.g., winter break, spring break etc.), all students, including Students of Determination, will be required to have a negative PCR test result valid for 96 hours to enter the school premises.
- If your child aged 6 and above has travelled internationally during the academic year, he/she is required to have a 96-hour valid PCR test on the day he/she resumes school post-travel in addition to completing any relevant quarantine requirements and submitting a travel declaration form to the school. This requirement applies to Students of Determination as well.
- In addition to students, staff will also require valid negative PCR test results to access the school premises.

#### HOW OFTEN WILL MY CHILDREN BE TESTED?

The frequency of testing depends on your child's age and vaccination status. For each of the categories below, the PCR test will be valid for the following durations:

Category	29 Aug-27 Sep (first 30 days of school)	28 Sep onward		
Unvaccinated and vaccinated students below the age of 12 (including Students of Determination)	14 days validity	30 days validity		
12+ Vaccinated (including Students of Determination)	14 days validity	30 days validity		
12+ Unvaccinated (including those with approved vaccination exemptions)	14 days validity	7 days validity		

Any changes and updates on required testing may change based on the health situation and will be communicated to you through your children's school.



#### WHEN AND WHERE SHOULD I TAKE MY CHILDREN FOR A PCR TEST?

- The date and schedule for PCR testing will be shared with your child's school directly.
- Please stay in touch with your child's school to have him/her take the PCR test on the designated date to ensure that your child is allowed on the school premises.





### 2. Vaccination Requirements

For the safety of the school community, 92% of the educational staff in all private schools in Abu Dhabi have chosen to vaccinate themselves to date. It is also mandatory for all staff returning for face-to-face teaching to be vaccinated.

We encourage you to play your part by choosing to vaccinate your children.

#### ARE VACCINES REQUIRED FOR ALL CHILDREN?

- Students between the ages of 3 15 years do not have to be vaccinated to attend school.
- Students aged 16+ <u>must be vaccinated</u> with a UAE-approved vaccine- to enter the school premises if they wish to attend school physically according to local health authorities.
- The vaccination status must be verified on the ALHOSN app.
- Students aged 16+ can access the school premises if they are exempted from vaccination.
  - Exemptions should be verified on ALHOSN, or through an official letter from SEHA, or other DOH-authorized providers.
- If your child turns 16 during the academic year, they are required to take the first dose of the vaccine within 4 weeks of turning 16 and they must complete their second dose on time.
- If you choose not to vaccinate your child aged 16+, they can only attend school through distance learning.
  - They will only be allowed to enter the school on the day of any highstakes exam, with proof of a valid negative PCR test.
  - The validity of the PCR test is 96 hours unless otherwise communicated by your school depending on the health situation at the time.
  - If you do not send your child to school for an exam, this might have negative consequences on your child's academic achievement.



#### WHERE CAN I GET MY CHILDREN VACCINATED?

There are over 100 locations around the Emirate that offer the COVID-19 vaccines for children. Please see a list of these facilities and more details on the Department of Health's (DOH) website.

#### Please note:

- Pfizer-BioNTech is available to children ages 12+
- Sinopharm is available to children ages 3 to 17 years old

#### WHAT IF MY CHILD WAS VACCINATED OUTSIDE THE UAE?

The UAE accepts all vaccines as listed on the government's <u>website</u>. If your child has been vaccinated outside of the UAE, please ensure that they carry a proof of vaccination to the school until a system is launched to verify and integrate international vaccination records with ALHOSN.



To enable children aged 12+ to get vaccinated, we have organized vaccine pop-ups. For updates on dates and locations, check our Instagram



**ADEK\_insta** 



## 3. Requirements After International Travel

If your children travelled outside of the UAE over the summer break and you chose a physical return to school:

- You must ensure they follow the quarantine/testing requirements set forth by the Department of Health and NCEMA.
- You must sign and submit a Travel Declaration Form to your child's school.
  - Schools are required to collect these forms before the term starts, so please cooperate with your school and provide the necessary documents and information.
- If your child aged 6 and above travels internationally during the academic year, in addition to the requirements above, you must ensure they have a negative PCR test result (valid for 96 hours) on the day they resume school. This requirement is also applicable to Students of Determination.





# | How will my Child's Safety be Managed at School?

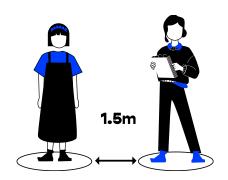
Schools will maintain the strictest safety measures in accordance with ADEK's Private Schools Reopening Policies and Guidelines for Academic Year 2021/22.

In addition, ADEK will conduct regular inspections and monitoring to ensure schools' compliance.

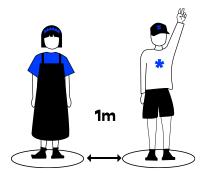
Safety measures include:

- \* Physical Distancing
- \* Masks
- \* Student Groups
- \* Moving to distance learning in case of COVID-19 cases

## **Physical Distancing**



Students must maintain a physical distance of **1-meter** from other students, staff and visitors. This was reduced from last year's **1.5-meter** distance.



Teachers or staff members who require access to multiple student groups as part of their job will maintain a <u>2-meter</u> distance from others.

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#### Masks

Your children will be expected to wear a mask throughout the school day, except if they:

- Are in Kindergarten.
- Cannot wear a mask due to medical conditions.
  - In this case, you will be expected to provide the school with a medical certificate and have your child wear a face shield instead.

### **Student Groups**

- To improve contact tracing, reduce transmission risk and avoid unnecessary shifts to distance learning, students may be arranged into different groups by the school.
- Overall, the entire school will be grouped into macrobubbles.
- Schools can choose to arrange students into classes or bubbles:
  - Classes
    - All students will observe 1-meter physical distancing from each other
    - o The maximum number of students allowed:
      - 25 students in a KG class
      - 30 students in Grade 1/Year 2 Grade 12/Year 13
  - Bubbles
    - Bubbles are only allowed for students in KG, Grade 1/Year 2 and Grade 2/Year 3.
    - The maximum number of students allowed in a bubble is 16 in a classroom.
    - o Alternatively, two bubbles of a maximum of 10 students each may share a single classroom under certain conditions.



#### What's a Macrobubble?

A macrobubble is a group of students and staff which is physically isolated from other groups during the school day.

#### What's a Bubble?

A **bubble** is a small group of students who do not have to observe physical distancing from each other but are isolated from other "bubbles" of students.



# Moving to Distance Learning in the Case of Covid-19 Cases

To minimize disruption and unnecessary shifts to distance learning, we have received approval for updated criteria to shift students to distance learning in case COVID-19 cases are detected in school.

Criteria	Required Action			
2 positive cases in a class, or 1 positive case in a bubble <sup>1</sup>	Shift <b>class or bubble</b> to distance learning			
4 classes shifted to distance learning And/or 8 cases in a macrobubble	Shift <b>macrobubble</b> to distance learning			
3 macrobubbles shifted to distance learning And/or 24 cases in a school	Shift <b>school</b> to distance learning			

Those who are identified as contacts of someone who tests positive for COVID-19 will be quarantined based on the contact tracing and isolation protocols of the Department of Health.



# | How will the School Care for my Child's Wellbeing?

As your children return to school, a range of activities have been approved so that they can engage with their friends and pursue their interests. These activities include:

- 1. Play and breaks outside of the classroom
- 2. Participation in cultural activities
- 3. Access to canteens
- 4. Access to prayer rooms
- 5. Participation in physical education and sports

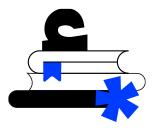


#### Last year:

Many activities were limited to ensure a safe environment for all students.

#### In Academic Year 2021/22:

Physical education classes, cultural activities, use of playground equipment, access to prayer rooms and canteens can be provided to cater for student wellbeing while ensuring safety.



### **Play and Breaks**

- Your children can access playground equipment.
- Playground equipment will be sanitized between usage by different groups of children.
- Multiple classes of children in the same macrobubble will be allowed to use playgrounds while maintaining physical distancing requirements.

### **Cultural Activities**

Your children can take part in cultural activities such as art, choir, band, chess club, debate club, etc., if safety measures such as masks and physical distancing are in place.

#### **Canteens**

Your children's school can now cook again on the school premises and make canteens functional while following guidelines for physical distancing and hygiene and standards set by the Abu Dhabi Agriculture and Food Safety Authority (ADAFSA).

### **Prayer Rooms**

- Schools can reopen prayer rooms, provided they adhere to requirements defined by the General Authority of Islamic Affairs (Awqaf).
- Your children will be supervised while using the prayer room, and safety precautions such as physical distancing and sanitization will be followed.



## **Physical Education and Sports**

- Your children can resume Physical Education lessons in school this academic year.
- Schools have received detailed instructions on how to carry out physical education activities with risk mitigation measures, as shown in the table below.
  - If you would like to learn more about these measures, please ask your school Principal.



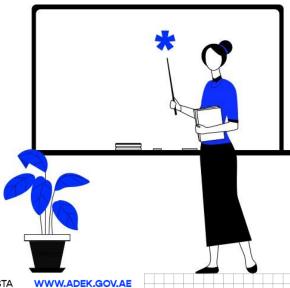
			Risk Mitigation Controls					
Sport Type	Definition	Examples	Mask	Physical Distance (PD)	Adapted Play	Outdoors	90	
High risk	Moderate- to vigorous- intensity activity practiced with close contact between participants	Rugby, American football, football, lacrosse, hockey, cricket, basketball, baseball, group dance, etc.	×	2.5 m	~	~	Space	Space
Medium risk	Moderate-to vigorous- intensity activity	Singles tennis, individual running events, volleyball, active yoga etc.	×	2.5 m	×	<b>~</b>	~	×
Low risk	Light-intensity activity practiced with little to no contact	Archery, golf, low-intensity yoga, etc.	~	1 m	×	~	~	<b>&gt;</b>

- You may choose not to allow your child to participate in swimming. The school will provide them with an alternative activity during the swimming period.
- Your school will require a written request from you if you would like your child to wear a mask during moderate and high-intensity sports.

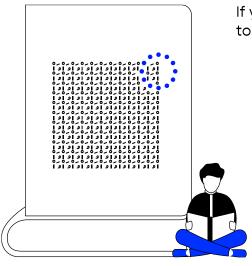
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# | How will Academic Quality be Assured?

- **Standardized assessments** will be administered starting this semester for students in Grade 3/Year 4 and above to identify learning gaps.
  - Your child's school will contact you regarding specific guidelines for remote and on-site assessments.
  - The results of these assessments will be shared with you to inform you
    of your child's progress in school.
- If your child is attending school through distance learning, please ensure that they take all necessary assessments and exams at home. Not doing so may impact their academic outcomes, and may result in additional repercussions at the school's discretion.
- Schools will also deliver extra interventions to students who have experienced severe learning loss due to online learning.
- If your children are attending school in full distance learning mode:
  - At least 50% of their distance learning time will be spent learning through a "live" or real time session.
    - This will involve a teacher and your child/other students interacting at the same time in a shared video or audio session, allowing for onthe-spot feedback and communication.
  - Teachers' cameras will be switched on during live lessons to encourage and increase interaction.
  - All live sessions shall be recorded, (without featuring any students) and will be accessible to you and your children.



# | My Child has Additional Needs. How Can the School Support Them?



If your child is a student of determination, reach out to his/her school. They will work with you to:

- 1. Conduct a risk assessment specific to your child.
- 2. Co-develop an individual education plan with you to best support your child.
- 3. To the extent possible, accommodate your child to ensure that he/she is provided with an equitable learning environment and experience.



# | What about Transportation?

- Schools will offer transportation services this year, with a maximum capacity of 75% per bus.
- Safety precautions such as wearing masks, sanitizing regularly, and checking of symptoms prior to boarding the school bus will be followed to ensure your child's safety.
- If your children carpool with children from other families, please keep track of your daily arrangements, which may be used for contact tracing by the school or health authorities.



# | Can I Visit my Children's School?

You can visit your children's school if you adhere to requirements.

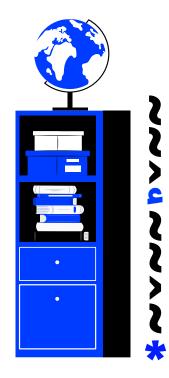
- You must be:
  - Vaccinated and show proof of a negative PCR test (valid for 96 hours).
  - Have a green pass on your ALHOSN app to visit your child's school, effective 29 August 2021.
- If you are accompanied by other children, you must:
  - Show proof of **vaccination and negative PCR test** (valid for 96 hours) prior to entering the school <u>if they are aged 16 and above.</u>
  - Show proof of a **negative PCR test only** (valid for 96 hours) <u>if they are below 16 years of age.</u>
- Pickup/drop-off by parents/guardian is allowed under specific requirements and conditions:
  - One parent/guardian may accompany the students for dropoff/pick-up until the access point/gate.
  - For some KG and Grade 1/Year 2 students, the school may request/allow a parent/guardian to accompany their child to the classroom if the child is distressed.
    - o In this case, the parent/guardian must be vaccinated, and must show a proof of a negative PCR test (valid for 96 hours).





# | What Support Can | Expect from my Children's School?

- Your school will appoint a "COVID-19 Focal Person", responsible for communicating with you in the case of any COVID-related incident at school.
  - Only trust information from the officially appointed focal person.
  - If you personally know someone who may have tested positive for COVID-19, please protect their identity and personal information, and only share it with the appointed focal person.
- If your children are attending school via distance learning, you can expect the school to:
  - Actively involve you in the distance learning process.
  - Contact you regularly to provide feedback on your children's progress during distance learning.



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# | Important Checklists

#### BEFORE STARTING SCHOOL

determination.

Revisit your children's school schedule based on the reopening model that their school is adopting.
 Sign the physical return declaration form.
 Take your children to get PCR tested on the designated date and location, as informed by your school.
 Ensure that:

 Your children aged 16 and above are vaccinated.
 AlHosn app confirms your children's vaccination status when applicable.

 In case of international travel since 17 August 2021:

 Ensure that your children have completed all quarantine and testing requirements.
 Please sign the travel declaration form and submit it to their school.

 Sign the medical risk undertaking form and provide a physician's letter to authorize physical return to school (if applicable to your children).

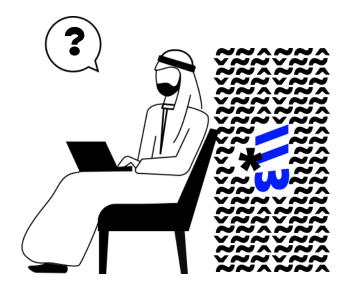
Co-develop and sign the Individual Risk Assessment and the Individual Education Plan (IEP) with your child's school if he/she is a student of



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#### DAILY

- Check your children every morning for COVID-19 related symptoms and keep them home if they are unwell.
- If one or more of your children test positive for COVID-19, inform the school as soon as possible to ensure effective contact tracing.
- ☐ If your children were in contact with someone who tested positive for COVID-19, please follow the isolation guidelines provided by the Department of Health.
- Ensure that your children have a valid negative PCR test before leaving the house.
- Ensure that they have extra masks.
- ☐ Ensure that they have a personal sanitizer.
- Ensure that they have a filled water bottle.
- ☐ If they have a PE lesson on a particular day, ensure that they wear the PE kit to school.
- If your children are attending school through distance learning, ensure that they have access to a device when needed, a calm learning environment, and that they attend and engage in all lessons.



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# | More Questions or Concerns?

We trust that the information we have provided you in this guide has helped you understand on how we can collectively contribute to a safe and successful reopening of schools in Academic Year 2021/22.

#### For further information:

You can view the detailed Private Schools Reopening Policies and Guidelines for Academic Year 2021/22 on our <u>website</u>.



STAY UP-TO-DATE WITH NEW DEVELOPMENTS AND PREVIOUS REGULATIONS THROUGH THE FOLLOWING RESOURCES:

**ADEK Parent Resource Hub webpage** 

ADEK Parents Hotline: 800ADEK (8002335)

**ADEK Social media channels:** 

O ADEK insta

ADEK tweet

Please note that these guidelines may change based on the health situation in the Emirate and subsequent decisions by NCEMA and DOH.

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