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# Executive Council

## Special release about the schools reopening

### **Introduction**

The outbreak management team (OMT) of Saba, has held meetings with all education stakeholders and discussions have come to a conclusion regarding the resumption of schools in physical form on Saba. The schools, day care and after school services will be open again as of May 18<sup>th</sup>.

The different educational institutions on Saba vary in their facilities, resources and the services provided. Therefore, together with advice from the OMT, each institution has established protocols which fit their circumstances. The scale of Saba is, at times like these, an advantage that we should make use of, in order to implement a tailored approach.

### **Children do not have to maintain a physical distance**

On Saba, it is not necessary for children up to 12 years old (Grade 6) to maintain physical distance while playing, doing sports or when they go back to school on May 18<sup>th</sup>. The schools are advised to be lenient with this age limit regarding students that have been held back and are therefore slightly older than their peers in the same class.

### **The situation on Saba is not the same as Europe or the US**

The most important reason for this is the special situation that Saba is in. The virus on Saba has been contained. We went through two incubation periods after the first two patients tested positive and there have been no new patients that have tested positive since then. This means that there has not been a wide outbreak of the virus on the island, and that the situation on Saba can therefore be addressed differently than that of Europe or the United State of America. Each situation is unique and needs a tailored approach.

### **Epidemiological research shows children are seldomly transmitters**

Another reason for allowing children to be in physical contact with each other is that epidemiological studies worldwide show no evidence of children playing a relevant role in the transmission of the virus to family members and others. This means that cases of people being infected at home by a child who is attending school, are very rare. Additionally, the Dutch National Institute for Public Health and the Environment (*Rijksinstituut voor Volksgezondheid en Milieu, RIVM*) reports that less than 1% of the patients with the coronavirus in the Netherlands and other countries, are younger than 20 years.

At the same time, research has shown that children can carry the virus. However, the risk of transmission to other children and adults is small. This small risk needs to be addressed by having children practice good cough and hand hygiene. Children must be taught to cough or sneeze into the crook of their elbow or into a tissue. The tissue must be disposed of afterwards. Children and teachers who are ill with fever and/or cough should stay at home until all symptoms have disappeared. Furthermore, it is important that children learn to wash their hands regularly and thoroughly, before they go to school, at school, after sports and immediately after coming home from school. This should be done with a clean hand towel or with a paper towel.

### **Negative side effects of physical distance on children**

Another reason to not require children to maintain physical distance, is the negative effects of the current measures on their development. Children adapt quickly to new environments and accept the new reality as 'normal'. This means that children learn that it is normal that they cannot go to school, cannot play together, cannot do sports and that there cannot be any physical contact. As result, children grow up with a distorted picture of society. This would result in them not developing as social individuals and have potentially negative consequences.

*Children can sit in class and play outside. The adults at school must, however, adhere to the 1.5 meter distance rule.*

### **Children in vulnerable situations**

The decision to send children back to school on May 18th was also made, because for some children it is not safe to stay at home all the time. In addition, in some cases the home does not provide a proper learning environment. Not all parents can provide adequate guidance and the schools are unable to reach all children. In addition to this, many do not have access to the required ICT aids; in these cases, instructions by teachers are often absent.

In short, the closing of schools some weeks ago, while necessary, has caused disruption in many areas. Parents were under extra pressure because children were at home and needed help with their learning at home. In addition, parents who had to work, had to arrange a babysitter more frequently.

Reopening the schools is also positive for children's routines and their cognitive and social development. Teachers can monitor the social and emotional wellbeing of pupils better and offer direct support where needed. Children can now play with their friends again and also talk to others about Covid-19 and share their experiences in a safe environment.

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, there has been much communication behind the scenes with the different educational institutions, as well as with the different public health authorities. The decision to reopen the schools has not been taken lightly and was done in close continuous consultation with the schools. The situation on Saba is very different than the situation in the US and in Europe. We have contained the virus as much as possible with the four (4) week lockdown. These factors, in combination with the adverse side

effects of school closures for children, led to the decision to reopen. Please bear in mind that the epidemiological situation can change in the coming weeks and months, which in turn can lead to different measures being required again. This is a fluid situation that requires flexibility, patience and understanding from all involved.

### **Summary per topic and institution**

\*\*\*As of the 25<sup>th</sup> of May all regular schedules will have been returned for the different institutions.

#### **School buses**

- Parents are encouraged to transport their children to and from school with their own vehicle, as much as possible. By doing this, the number of children on the buses will decrease and they will therefore not be crowded.
- Especially relevant for the younger children is that on days that you cannot transport your child please contact the bus driver or teacher to ensure that transportation can be organized with the school bus.
- The surfaces inside the school buses and the knobs and handles will be cleaned after each run of the school buses and the school bus windows will be kept open at all times for proper ventilation.

#### **Laura Linzey Day Care Center**

- Extra cleaning will take place of toys, surfaces and knobs as much as possible
- All Parents should sanitize their hands upon arrival at the school
- Parents also need to sanitize the hands of their child upon arrival at the school
- During the operational day, all children should wash or have their hands washed:
  - o Before and after Breakfast/ Lunch/Snack Time
  - o After Outside Play
  - o After using the Potty
- During the operational day, all caregivers should wash/ continue washing their hands:
  - o Upon arrival
  - o Before preparing a bottle or preparation of meals/ snacks
  - o After Outside play
  - o After a Diaper Change
  - o After cleaning up (urine, mucus, vomit, diarrhea, blood from wounds, etc). Workers will ensure to properly wash their hands and wear gloves when attending to a bloody wound
  - o Before meals
  - o After any craft activity
  - o After using the washroom
- Use of gloves only when handling food, diaper changes or clean up
- Hand Sanitizer would be available at the entry.
- Hand sanitizers will be available in every classroom/ group and stored out of reach of children.
- Two (2) extra wash basins are being installed in eating area for ease of accessibility.

### *Limit Interactions*

- *Children*
  - o It has been underlined that young children do not need to keep physical distance
  - o Limit the number of children on the playground during outside time
  - o Children are allowed and encouraged to play with each other
- *Staff*
  - o Staff are allowed and encouraged to have close and warm contact with children
  - o Staff need to adhere to physical distance among each other though and parents
  - o Operate or stay within respective groups
  - o No more than 4 persons in the kitchen at a time
  - o Lunch tables/ eating will be arranged for staff (in the meantime, limit eating in clusters)
- *Parents*
  - o Drop off children, no later than 9 am (as to not disrupt the morning routine)
  - o Drop off and pick up children at the gate or door of classroom (parents are not allowed to enter classrooms, unless invited)

### **Sacred Heart School**

Primary school will be opening their doors to their students again on May 18<sup>th</sup>, 2020 with the following precautions:

- Adapted schedule for each class in the week of May 18 through May 20. Reference is made to the communication of the school director in that regards.
- As of May 25, the regular schedule will start again for all of the classes with the following additional measures in place:
- Students are given hand sanitizer at the gate of the school. From there, they will go straight to their classroom and to their seat.
- Most classes will have a different break.
- Please make sure that your child had breakfast before coming to school and goes to school with her or his lunch and water bottle.
- Students will be asked to wash their hands as frequently as possible.
- Anyone with flu like symptoms will be sent home.
- Different breaks and play areas will be organized with maximums of 25 students.
- The classrooms will be ventilated every hour for 5 minutes
- Parents and other adults are not allowed to enter the school compound unless it is an emergency and they must come to the office first.
- Someone will be stationed at the bathrooms
- Door handles and other public surfaces will be cleaned frequently.
- Extra cleaning will take place of toys, surfaces and knobs as much as possible
- The classrooms and restrooms will be cleaned / disinfected regularly. This includes doorknobs and desks/chairs. Special attention will be given to shared computers.
- Face masks and gloves are not necessary.

### **Saba Comprehensive School**

Teachers have noticed that some students have performed (exceptionally) well in the online learning environment. To continue to challenge these students we have decided to start SCS Online High, the online version of the Saba Comprehensive School, yet more challenging. Also students who have a chronic illness will be required to attend SCS Online High. The students and parents/guardians have been contacted as such and a special ZOOM-information session will be scheduled this week to provide more information and answer any questions.

Students who do not qualify for SCS Online High will be required to be back in school on Monday May 18, 2020. They will have class according to their schedule but on Wednesdays they are free to stay home to work on assignments, projects, and study for tests.

### *Key points*

- Students are required to adhere to the strict hygiene and social distance guidelines at our locations (Technical Center, St. John's, and Office416).
- Students with any flu-like symptoms are requested to stay home and parents/guardians have to inform the SCS Administration. If a student shows any symptoms, he/she will be sent home.
- Parents/guardians/visitors are not allowed to enter the SCS until further notice except with an exemption (to be obtained from the SCS Principal). Parent < > Teacher meetings will be held online / via phone.
- No food deliveries will be allowed to limit the interactions between members of staff and other persons. Students can purchase items from the SCS Cafeteria or they can bring their own lunch/snacks/drinks from home. The water fountains may not be used and students are encouraged to bring their own water bottle.
- The classrooms and restrooms will be cleaned / disinfected regularly. This includes doorknobs and desks/chairs. Special attention will be given to shared computers.
- After school clubs and extracurricular activities will resume as of Monday June 1 on a voluntary basis for activity leaders and students.
- School busses are running as normal. Parents/guardians are encouraged to bring/pick up their child/children to/from school if possible.
- Face masks and gloves are not necessary.
- PE Classes will continue according to the schedule. The PE Teacher will use activities that are based on limited physical contact and/or sharing of materials.
- Walking routes have been put in place when using the stairs, SCS Cafeteria, switching classes.
- parents/visitors are requested not to come to the SCS nor deliver food.

### **Child Focus**

The Child Focus activities will resume from May 18<sup>th</sup>, 2020.

As soon as children get off the bus, they are required to form a line and wash their hands. If the activity takes place elsewhere than the CF building, youth leaders will have hand sanitizer which the children must use before beginning the activity. Parents will have to immediately pick-up their child if she or he

exhibits any Covid-19 symptoms. CF is obligated to notify the Public Health Department. CF will also do their part in ensuring the safety of all by:

- Monitoring staff and youth leaders and ensuring that they stay home if they have any Covid-19 symptoms
- Sanitizing all common areas and toys at the CF building after usage

We kindly encourage parents to:

- Drop-off and pick-up their child when possible
- Send their child with their own labelled water bottle (which can be refilled at CF)
- Practice good hygiene with their children at home
- Limit coming to the office
- Please reach us directly on our Facebook page or via Whatsapp

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