



**Independent State of Papua New Guinea**

**MINISTRY OF EDUCATION**

**Ministerial Policy Statement 2/2020**

**SUSPENSION OF CLASSES IN THE NATIONAL EDUCATION SYSTEM INCLUDING PERMITTED AND PRIVATE SCHOOLS DUE TO CORONA VIRUS (COVID -19)**

The announcement of a confirmed case and other unconfirmed cases in Papua New Guinea compels the Minister for Education to issue this Direction. This direction is consistent with The Prime Minister's Statement on 22 March 2020 to bring forward the Term 1 holidays.

COVID 19 is a new virus for which there is no vaccine to treat it. Schools play a critical role in protecting the health of their students, staff, and the community from highly contagious, infectious diseases such as the current virus COVID-19.

It is possible that nationwide school suspensions or closures can mitigate the incidence of the pandemic, thereby reducing its impact on individuals, groups, health systems, and the economy. The personal hygienic practices, including social distancing with suspension or closing of schools can limit the spread of the pandemic. Social distancing measures help to reduce the morbidity and mortality of the pandemic.

**Direction on Suspension of Classes**

Therefore, today Monday 23 March 2020, consistent with Sections 27 and 91 of the Education Act 1983, I as the Minister responsible for education matters for the State direct the suspension of all public, permitted and private schools from tomorrow 24 March, 2020 until the 03 April, 2020 as a precaution against the spread of the corona virus or COVID-19.

This approval for suspension applies to:

- (a) Provincial institutions, namely elementary schools, primary schools, high schools, secondary schools and vocational institutions);
- (b) National institutions, namely national high schools, Special Education Centres and FODE Centres;
- (c) National tertiary institutions, namely teachers colleges and technical/business colleges; and

- (d) All permitted and private schools that provide education in the country.

### **Protocols and Guidelines**

The suspension of classes must follow the specific protocols as set out below:

#### **(a) Protocols for Provincial Schools:**

1. All Provincial Education Board in consultation with the respective Provincial Government must direct and oversee the suspension of classes until the end of Term 1; and
2. Teachers should help report for student supervisory duties, but strict protocols and preventive measures must be taken all the time.

#### **(b) Protocols for the National High Schools, FODE Centres and Special Education Centres:**

1. All national high schools, FODE Centres and Special Education Resource Centres will be locked down and classes suspended;
2. Heads of institutions must ensure that the close down is orderly and safe;
3. Boarding students who have homes nearby can leave the school campus as of tomorrow;
4. Boarding students who cannot go home immediately will be advised of their repatriation, if necessary, as soon as possible;
5. Teachers, students and the whole school community who will remain in schools during the suspension must take all preventative measures including social distancing;
6. Contact with outsiders must be strictly controlled or totally prohibited; and
7. Social distancing and regular washing of hands with soap is compulsory.

#### **(c) Protocols for Teachers Colleges and Technical Colleges**

The Direction given by the Minister for Higher Education dated 19 March, 2020 titled: *IMMEDIATE ACTION IS NOW REQUIRED ON YOUR CAMPUS REGARDING COVID 19* should be adhered to until further instructions are given.

### **Emergencies and Information**

If there is a suspected case in a school community, the individual/s must be isolated and the school authorities must immediately call the local health clinic or hospital for advice on these numbers.

- The COVID-19 HOTLINE: 71960813
- Free Hotline Help Desk: 1-800-200
- St.Johns COVID-19 Response Team: Tel: 111

For information and guidance in relation to the suspension of schools the Department of Education Hotlines will be:

- DIGICEL: **7163 0650**
- BMOBILE: **7570 4957**

For more information on COVID-19 visit: [www.health.gov.pg/subindex.php](http://www.health.gov.pg/subindex.php)

### **Conclusion**

To conclude,

1. Depending on the COVID-19 status on 03 April, 2020, I will issue another direction if classes will resume for the final week of Term 1, the dates for Term 1 holidays and the commencement date for Term 2.
2. All critical national education calendar activities including examination dates, terms dates, inspections ratings will be reviewed, if and where necessary.
3. All national education events and activities such as workshops are suspended;
4. Access to Fincorp House Headquarters will be restricted, controlled and limited to only SSM and TMT members and critical Units' staff. Other staff will remain at homes and will be called on when and if there is a need.
5. We will put out an advice in both media and Circulars to schools by 03 April, 2020.

It is unfortunate to take these extreme measures, but it is a sensible step in the interest of the health of students and their families, teachers and the greater good of our society.

I urge every parent and citizen to advise your children to practice personal hygiene and encourage him/her to engage in productive educational tasks whilst at home.

For your information, adherence and support.



**HON. JOSEPH YOPYYOPY, MP**  
**MINISTER FOR EDUCATION**

*Approved for Release on: 23<sup>rd</sup> day of March, 2020.*