

Reopening Protocols for Dubai Private Schools

Frequently Asked Questions

Version 3.0 – April 25, 2026

About this document

This document addresses the most common questions raised by schools about the reopening protocols. All responses are grounded in the KHDA Reopening Protocols for Schools (April 2026).

01 Staff Training, Presence & Staffing Requirements

What your team needs to do before any student returns

Q. Can staff — including support and housekeeping — return to school before students?

Yes, all staff may return before students for training, preparation, and site readiness.

This is strongly encouraged. Staff should walk evacuation routes, complete the Emergency Go-Bag check (first aid, register, contact details), and have roles assigned before any students arrive.

Note: Staff returning before approval does not mean students may return. Student entry requires full KHDA approval.

Q. What training is mandatory before reopening, and can schools hold a dedicated staff training day?

All staff must complete a reopening protocols training session (attendance registered). Training must cover: shelter-in-place and evacuation procedures, Psychological First Aid (Look, Listen, Link), and emergency roles and responsibilities.

A dedicated staff training day before students return is the best way to cover all of this — drills, route walkthroughs, role assignments, and a final readiness checklist review.

No school may reopen for students without confirming that all staff have completed the required training.

Q. What is the expected teacher-to-student ratio in safe zones?

Standard ratios continue to apply in safe zones as during normal operations.

Schools must plan safe-zone capacity in advance to ensure that ratios are maintainable across all designated areas. The critical rule is that no student is ever left unattended, and at least two staff members are always present during an emergency.

02

KHDA Approval, Readiness Submission and Inspection

The steps from application to approval — and what each one means

Q. What is the full process for getting KHDA approval to reopen?

There are five steps in order:

1. Submit the 'Educational Institution Physical Reopening Readiness' application form (if not already done).
2. Attend the KHDA reopening protocols training — attendance must be registered.
3. Sign the KHDA Acknowledgement and Consent Form (with intended reopening date).
4. Pass the safe zone inspection — a KHDA team visits every school.
5. Receive approval from KHDA.

No school may reopen to students until all five steps are completed. Staggered reopening — cycle by cycle — is permitted based on readiness.

Q. What is the Acknowledgement and Consent Form, and will a site inspection follow?

The Acknowledgement and Consent Form is the school's formal proof of readiness. By signing, the principal confirms that all safety assessments are in place, staff are trained, and safe zones are identified and mapped.

Yes, submitting the form triggers a safe zone inspection. A KHDA team visits each school to assess its safe zones against a defined rubric. Approval is granted subject to a satisfactory inspection outcome. KHDA may also conduct monitoring visits from time to time after reopening.

Q. Do schools that applied earlier need to re-submit?

No, schools that have already submitted an application are not required to re-submit. If the application is successful, KHDA will contact the school in due course with the Acknowledgement and Consent form. Re-submission is only required where a school is specifically asked to do so by KHDA.

If you submitted but have not heard back, contact KHDA directly to confirm your status.

03 School Transport and Buses

How transport works during the reopening period and what to do if it is suspended

Q. Are school buses operating, and when will transport resume?

Yes, based on the latest update issued by the Ministry of Education, **school buses may resume operations from Monday, 20 April.**

Schools should refer to the updated reopening protocols for guidance on managing transport operations, including procedures to follow during alerts, to ensure the safety of all students and staff.

Q. How should drop-off and pick-up be managed?

Drop-off and pick-up must be staggered to avoid gatherings and congestion outside the school. Students must enter the building immediately upon arrival — no waiting in exposed outdoor areas.

Morning assemblies may now resume as part of normal daily operations, provided they are conducted under direct staff supervision and within defined capacity limits for the outdoor area.

Staff and students using school transport should disembark and enter the building promptly and in an organised manner. During dismissal, boarding of buses should be managed in a controlled, gradual manner to avoid crowding.

If an alert is issued during drop-off or pick-up, students must not remain outside. They should move indoors immediately to the nearest safe area and follow the school's emergency protocols. Children should not enter or exit cars or buses unless it is safe to do so.

If an alert occurs during dismissal, dismissal is paused. Students must remain inside the building or, if already on the bus, remain inside the bus and not disembark in exposed areas until further instructions are given.

If a parent cannot be reached at collection time, the student remains under full staff supervision until an authorised contact is confirmed. No student is released without confirmation of an authorised person.

04

Parent Communication, Consent and Public Messaging

Always clear, calm, and consistent

Q. Is a parent consent form required, and can it be collected electronically?

A parent consent form is no longer required as part of the official reopening process. Schools do not need to collect or submit one to reopen.

However, if your school wishes to maintain a consent form for its internal records, you are welcome to do so. This would be a school-level decision and is **not a requirement for KHDA approval.**

Q. What must schools communicate to parents before reopening?

Schools should effectively communicate all required protocol procedures to parents.

In your communication ahead of reopening, suggested areas include:

- Safety protocols in place at the school
- Safe zone locations and evacuation procedures
- What to do if an alert is issued before or during the school day
- How and when parents will be contacted during an incident
- Drop-off, pick-up, and transport arrangements
- Hybrid learning arrangements

Example: Some schools may choose to hold a brief virtual information session or some might share a simple one-page guide. Both are acceptable.

Q. How should schools communicate during an active alert, and who is authorized to speak?

The School Principal is the sole authorised voice. All updates go through the approved school communication channel only.

During an active alert: do not respond to individual parent calls or messages, do not issue the all-clear until officially confirmed, and do not share any unverified information.

Staff must not photograph, film, or share any content related to an incident — whether on social media or in personal messaging apps, during or after the event.

05 Hybrid, Online and Distance Learning

Dual delivery, same-teacher rules, and what flexibility is available

Q. What are the rules for hybrid delivery, and can one teacher deliver to on-site and online students at the same time?

No, the same teacher must not deliver lessons to on-site and online students simultaneously. Both modes require dedicated, focused delivery — splitting attention compromises both.

Schools must make separate staffing arrangements for each cohort.

Example: If Year 5 has 18 students on-site and 10 online, two separate delivery arrangements must be in place — not one teacher managing both at once.

Q. How long will hybrid remain in place, and can schools delay their in-person reopening?

Schools must provide both face-to-face and distance learning. Both modes must be available — this is not optional. The same teacher must not deliver both simultaneously.

Schools that need more time to be fully ready for in-person may take a gradual approach — for example, staggering by cycle — but all schools must resume face-to-face learning alongside distance learning by April 27.

Schools must maintain both modes until an official transition is communicated. Any change to the mode of delivery must be made in coordination with KHDA — not decided independently.

Q. Can online learning be asynchronous, and how long must it continue for students abroad?

Yes, asynchronous delivery is acceptable where appropriate. Schools should communicate clearly to families which sessions are live and which are self-paced.

Online learning for students who are abroad or unable to attend in person must continue for as long as they remain off-site. The UAE education system is committed to ensuring that no student's learning is interrupted, regardless of location.

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Q. What qualifies as a safe zone?

A safe zone must meet all of the following:

- Solid walls and concrete roof — no exposure to external areas
- Away from windows and glass, or windows fully covered
- Ventilation available without exposure to any source of danger
- Reachable within 1 minute from any location in the building
- Accessible without crossing outdoor or exposed areas
- Clearly marked on evacuation maps and known to all staff
- Multiple safe zones must be identified per building.

Q. What if our safe space cannot accommodate all students?

If a single safe space cannot accommodate your entire student population, you must identify additional safe spaces. Every school has multiple areas that can qualify.

Do not wait for an emergency to identify this gap — map and confirm all safe zones before reopening, and ensure every staff member knows the alternatives for their area of the building.

Q. Can corridors be used as safe zones, and how far from windows should students be kept?

Internal corridors without external-facing windows may qualify as safe zones if they meet all the criteria above.

During normal operations: position students away from windows where possible.

During an active alert: students must immediately move to the designated safe zone, away from all windows, glass, and exterior walls.

General rule: if in doubt, move towards interior walls and away from glass.

Q. What if our school has no suitable room – for example, all rooms face the street or are made of glass?

Safe zones are not limited to classrooms. Corridors and central gathering spaces qualify as safe zones provided they meet the criteria above.

Note: Do not wait for an emergency to identify this gap. Resolve it before reopening.

06 Outdoor Activities & School Events

What is now permitted outdoors and the conditions that always apply

Q. Are outdoor activities and morning assemblies now permitted?

Yes, schools may now use outdoor areas for morning assemblies, break times, extracurricular activities, and school events. This replaces the previous suspension of all outdoor activities.

Q. What conditions must be met before any outdoor activity takes place?

- Direct and continuous staff supervision at all times
- Capacity limits for outdoor areas must be defined before use

- Clear evacuation routes from all outdoor areas to safe zones must be mapped and approved in advance
- Regular drills on evacuation from outdoor areas must be conducted
- Any external provider delivering extracurricular activities must complete in-person evacuation training at your school before starting

Q. Can school events and extracurricular activities take place outdoors?

Yes — school events may proceed with organised, orderly handover of students to parents. Extracurricular activities may take place in outdoor spaces in an organised manner. After-school extracurricular providers must be trained on your school's evacuation procedures before commencing.

Q. What happens to outdoor activities if an official alert is issued?

All outdoor activities stop immediately. The main approved protocols apply — students move indoors to designated safe zones. These outdoor guidelines are fully suspended for the duration of any alert. No exceptions.