

To All Guardians,

Regarding the Response to COVID-19 at Prefectural Schools

Shimane Prefectural Board of Education

To reduce the risk of COVID-19 infection in schools as much as possible, and to guarantee a healthy learning environment for our children, the Shimane Prefectural Board of Education is implementing the following policies.

To effectively implement infection prevention measures, it is important for schools and families to work together. We ask for your family's understanding and cooperation with the policies below.

Depending on the spread of infections, etc., these policies may change.

1. Health Management

(1) Implementing basic infection prevention measures

The main points for infection prevention are "eliminate sources of infection," "eliminate infection routes," and "increase resistance to illness."

① Eliminate sources of infection

Every morning, please record each family member's temperature, and check for any cold symptoms. If your child has any symptoms such as a fever, keep them at home to rest, and call your family doctor to book a medical examination. If you do not have a family doctor, or if you are unable to make an appointment at your family doctor, please call the Shimane COVID-19 "Health Consultation Call Center" (refer to pg. 7 for each public health center's consultation telephone number).

If your child's temperature and state of health was not confirmed before going to school, or if your child becomes ill (during class, etc.), the school will record your child's temperature and check for cold symptoms in the nurse's office. In case there are symptoms such as a fever, the school will request that guardians come to the school to take the child home, and to contact their family doctor. We ask for your understanding in this matter.

② Eliminate infection routes

Schools will maintain a hygienic environment through such actions as thoroughly enforcing handwashing, cough etiquette, and the wearing of masks. In addition, schools will appropriately sanitize locations used by students, particularly areas that are touched by many students (e.g. doorknobs, handrails, light switches, etc.). Also, to help prevent the spread of infection, we ask that you install and use the COVID-19 Contact-Confirming App (COCOA), provided by the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare.

③ Increase resistance to illness

To strengthen your family's immunity to infection, please encourage family members to sleep and exercise adequately, as well as to eat a balanced diet.

(2) Contacting schools if your child receives a PCR or antigen test for COVID-19

If your child receives a test for COVID-19, such as a PCR or antigen test, please promptly contact the school. Please also contact the school regarding test results.

(3) Important points regarding educational activities (lessons, etc.)

Because students may come into close proximity with each other during daily school life, as a general rule, all faculty and students are required to wear a mask, except in situations when adequate social distancing can be maintained.

As well as ensuring appropriate ventilation (in classrooms, etc.), schools have made efforts to space out students' desks and to avoid conversations at close distances, etc.

However, from the viewpoint of promoting "deep learning through independence and interactivity," classroom pair work and group work will still be conducted, but only after implementing adequate infection prevention measures. For example, group work may involve students wearing masks while sitting in appropriately spaced desks before exchanging opinions, or students writing their opinions down on a portable whiteboard to reduce conversation.

(4) Regarding students who require routine medical care or students with underlying conditions

① Deciding whether or not to let students attend class

For students with a high risk of serious illness from infection, such as those who require medical care or have an underlying medical condition, we will decide on a case-by-case basis whether or not they will attend class, under the consultation of the student's family physician or school physician.

② Infection prevention measures for school educational activities

We are committed to reducing the risk of infection for students with a high risk of serious illness from infection, through revising teaching strategies and thoroughly implementing infection prevention measures.

2. Regarding Temporary Closures

If there is a confirmed case of infection among students or staff, the Prefectural Board of Education will consult with appropriate organizations to decide whether to temporarily close all or part of the school, or to continue educational activities without a temporary closure. During a temporary closure, preparations will be made to reopen the school, such as disinfection of the buildings. Depending on the circumstances, if it is decided that educational activities will continue, then along with disinfection of the buildings, we will implement policies such as: revising activities that may carry a high risk of infection; placing restrictions on activities where masks may not be worn, such as physical education classes or club activities; etc.

In case a state of emergency is issued, there is a sudden increase of new infections in Shimane Prefecture, etc., we may temporarily close all prefectural schools in a specific area, under consultation of related organizations.

For special needs schools attended by students requiring medical care or students with underlying conditions, in order to reduce the risk of infection, we may temporarily close all or part of the school, regardless of whether or not there are confirmed infections or "persons in close contact to infected individuals" at the school.

3. Regarding educational guidance

(1) Educational guidance if students cannot go to school due to a temporary closure

If students cannot go to school for a set period of time due to unavoidable reasons, teachers will provide academic guidance and monitor learning progress based on instructional plans. The results of home study during the temporary closure shall conform to classroom learning outcomes and be appropriately added to students'

evaluations, through submission of reports on learning progress, quizzes based on assignments given during the closure, etc.

(2) Responding to class delays

While taking care not to overburden students, we will respond by reorganizing timetables and shortening summer and winter vacation periods, in order to secure more class time.

(3) Teaching of subjects that involve practical skills, hands-on training, etc.

We will conduct such lessons only after thoroughly implementing infection prevention measures, such as disinfecting shared equipment (for experiments, etc.), having students wash and disinfect their hands before using equipment, avoiding crowded situations, etc. We may also change the timing and order of activities as necessary.

In particular, for on-board training as part of the Fisheries course, in addition to the usual pre-boarding medical checkup by the school physician, students will undergo thorough health observation until the start of training, in order to determine their participation.

During training, we will enforce thorough safety and health management, such as monitoring the health of students and staff daily. In addition, we will frequently disinfect areas of the boat touched by students, such as handrails and measuring instruments.

(4) Teaching of subjects that involve singing in a chorus, etc.

Because an extra level of caution is required for lessons and club activities that involve singing, we will thoroughly enforce infection prevention measures such as wearing masks, ensuring space between students, shortening practice time, etc.

Activities where students are in close proximity, such as classroom wind instrument performances (recorder and harmonica recitals, etc.), or activities involving physical contact, will be carried out after implementing appropriate infection prevention measures including the measures outlined above.

(5) Practical skills during physical education classes

During physical education class, in addition to ensuring ventilation, social distancing, handwashing and disinfection, schools will strictly avoid activities involving heavy breathing or shouting when many students are gathered indoors. Along with implementing infection prevention measures as much as possible, we plan to continue such educational activities while making sure to prevent heatstroke.

(6) Practical learning and independent activities at special needs schools

① Practical learning

We will further improve hygiene management for cooking lessons. In case there are visitors, students will thoroughly implement infection prevention measures such as wearing masks.

② Independent activities

Because there may be cases where students are unable to wear masks or where contact is impossible to avoid. In such cases, schools will revise teaching methods, and—when different teaching methods are unavailable—activities will be conducted with even greater implementation of infection prevention measures.

Pool activities will be conducted only after consulting with guardians and the school or family's physician.

③ Learning activities outside the school

We will decide to conduct such activities based on necessity as well as the state of regional infections. When conducting activities, we will thoroughly implement infection prevention measures such as avoiding the "Three Cs" when traveling and at the destination.

④ On-site training

We will conduct training only after considering the state of regional infections, as well as prior consultation and understanding from the businesses, etc. where training will be conducted.

We will prioritize training for students who require consideration for career guidance, such as third-year high school students. When implementing training, we will accurately monitor the health of students and promptly stop training if there is any change in their physical condition.

4. Regarding school events

(1) School assemblies, group study sessions, etc.

While reevaluating the importance and necessity of school gatherings, schools will conduct such gatherings only after thoroughly considering the time of year, location, time (including possibility for delays and cancellations), and method (e.g. using the school's broadcast system or carefully selecting content).

(2) Regarding field trips, school excursions, and study tours

For school events that involve overnight stays, such as school excursions, schools and travel agencies will work together to ensure the safety of students and staff, by referring to the "Guide for Domestic School Trips Based on Guidelines for Responding to COVID-19 in the Travel Industry (4th Edition)" (29 January 2021), published by the Japan Association of Travel Agents.

Before departure, we may ask families for cooperation in monitoring the health of students (including family members living together with the student).

(3) Study activities where visitors are present

Practical learning activities, such as students selling products they have created to school visitors, will result in students and visitors being in contact for extended periods of time. Therefore, when conducting such activities, schools will take measures to prevent infection, such as preventing droplet spray and avoiding crowded conditions for extended periods of time, as well as restricting the number of visitors.

(4) Response for entrance exams, etc.

When taking entrance exams for universities or employment, we will instruct students to take all possible measures to prevent infection during travel, such as wearing masks and washing hands thoroughly. In addition, for students who have returned from outside Shimane Prefecture, school staff will directly monitor their health for approximately two weeks, rather than leaving it up to students themselves.

5. Regarding club activities

In addition to ventilation, social distancing, handwashing, and appropriate disinfection,

club activities will proceed as usual only after implementing infection prevention measures as much as possible. Such measures include strictly avoiding large numbers of students gathered indoors for activities that involve exercise with heavy breathing or shouting. Whether inside or outside, schools will strictly discourage loud talking at close distances.

If a student develops symptoms such as a fever, then the school will instruct the student to not participate in club activities and to rest at home. In addition, we will ask the family to check the health of the student. In case you have any concerns at all, please consider that the student refrain from participating in club activities, and do not hesitate to contact the club's supervising teacher.

In addition to the above, if policies are issued by central sports organizations for the strengthening of infection prevention measures, then the school will follow those policies and conduct appropriate measures depending on each sport.

Regarding student participation in tournaments, practice matches, joint practice sessions or overnight camps, as well as the school hosting such events, the entire school staff—not only the club's supervising teacher—will take responsibility to decide a course of action. The decision to participate or host such an event will be based on national or prefectural stay-at-home orders, the regional state of infections, etc. In particular, for long-distance tours, thorough infection prevention measures will be implemented when traveling by rental bus, etc. and when staying at an accommodation.

6. Regarding mental health care for students

During these abnormal circumstances, such as school events being cancelled, and summer vacation being shortened, we are concerned about the negative emotional effects on students, who may become worried about school life or their career path. At schools, classroom teachers and school nurses are working diligently to meticulously monitor the health of students, and to listen to students to determine their mental health. We kindly ask that families also consider student's feelings while they are at home.

In addition, staff will respond systematically as a team, under the leadership of school management, to provide students with psychological and welfare support, such as through services provided by school counselors and school social workers. By providing information for consultation hotlines like the "Bullying Consultation Telephone," "24-Hour Child SOS Dial," "Shimane Children's SNS Consultation Service 'Sōdan Shite Miru Nya!'," and more, we are paying attention to the mental well-being of our students.

7. Preventing prejudice and discrimination

In order to prevent prejudice and discrimination, we pay close attention to the words and actions of students. We will provide appropriate guidance to words and actions that lack consideration, thoroughly prevent the spread of uncertain information, and systematically respond to cases of prejudice and discrimination.

Calm actions which respect human rights help lead to the early discovery of infections and those in contact with patients, and are ultimately connected to preventing widespread infection among citizens. We ask for your help in preventing slander and defamation towards patients, those in close contact and their families, medical professionals tasked with treatment of this infections disease, and their families as well; we ask for your help in creating a warm and supportive society for these people battling with infectious diseases.

In order to eliminate anxiety which may foster discrimination and prejudice, please give special consideration to obtaining official information (from public organizations), not focusing on negative information only, and not sympathizing with discriminatory words and actions.

8. Regarding lunch (school lunches and bento box lunches)

In addition to students and staff thoroughly washing their hands before and after eating, schools will take measures such as not allowing desks to face each other during lunch (so that droplets may not spread), and instructing students to refrain from conversation while eating.

After eating, schools will instruct students to wear masks when having conversations.

9. Regarding the response at school dormitories

(1) Infection prevention at school dormitories

We will thoroughly implement the basic infection prevention measures outlined in Section 1. (1) at school dormitories.

Particularly regarding the cleaning and disinfection of dormitories, each school will regularly and thoroughly ventilate buildings (more than once every 30 minutes) in addition to cleaning and disinfecting buildings according to the protocols at each school.

During mealtimes, dormitories will take measures to reduce the risk of infection as much as possible, including wearing masks until just before eating, thoroughly washing hands before and after eating, limiting the number of students eating together, avoiding students facing each other, discouraging talking while eating, etc. For use of the bathing facilities, we dormitories will similarly limit the number of students using the facilities at any one time, and discourage talking while bathing.

(2) Response if a boarding student complains about feeling unwell

If boarding students feel unwell, dormitories will immediately alert staff, beginning with the dean of the dormitory. After this response, the school will promptly contact guardians about the condition of affected boarding students, and at the same time consult with the school physician. Then the school will promptly contact the Shimane COVID-19 “Health Consultation Call Center” and follow directives.

The boarding students in question shall then receive a PCR test. If the result is negative, then after consultation with the school physician, if handover to guardians is possible, the school will consult with guardians about having the student rest at home during a period of recuperation. Particularly regarding senior high schools, if boarding students cannot return home (depending on the family’s circumstances), the boarding students will recuperate in the dormitory while avoiding contact with other students.

(3) Returning home during an extended closure

If a boarding student whose family residence is outside Shimane Prefecture wishes to return home during an extended school closure, the school will check the state of infections at the student’s destination. Depending on circumstances, schools may ask boarding students to carefully reconsider travel plans, or to refrain from returning home in consideration of the risk of infection. If students travel home, we ask students to thoroughly practice infection prevention measures such as refraining from unnecessary outdoor travel, in addition to basic measures while at home.

Before students return to their dormitories, regardless of whether they are within or outside of the prefecture, the school will contact the student's home to ask about the student's health and living conditions during the absence, and confirm that there are no problems with the student's return. After returning to the dormitory, students will be required to take basic measures to prevent infection and to take thorough care of their health.

Health Consultation Call Center

Please call the public health center which has jurisdiction over your home address. They will forward your call to the Shimane COVID-19 “Health Consultation Call Center.”

Public Health Center	Jurisdiction	Tel. Hotline
Matsue City/Shimane Prefecture Joint Public Health Center	Matsue City, Yasugi City	0852-33-7638
Utsunomiya Public Health Center	Utsunomiya City, Okuizumo Town, Inada Town	0854-47-7777
Izumo Public Health Center	Izumo City	0853-24-7017
Kenō Public Health Center	Oda City, Kawamoto Town, Misato Town, Ohnari Town	0854-84-9810
Hamada Public Health Center	Hamada City, Gotsu City	0855-29-5967
Masuda Public Health Center	Masuda City, Tsuwano Town, Yoshika Town	0856-25-7011
Oki Public Health Center	Ama Town, Nishinoshima Town, Chibu Village, Okinoshima Town	08512-2-9900

◆ As usual, the Shimane Prefecture Health Promotion Division will provide consultation services through fax for citizens who have a hearing disability, etc.

FAX: 0852-22-6328

※ It may take time to respond. For consultation regarding symptoms, etc., please first consult with your municipal government (through local government emergency dispatch email services, etc.)

◆ As usual, the Shimane International Center will provide consultation for foreign residents.

Shimane International Center Consultation Hotline: 070-3774-9329

(Consultation is also available using Skype. Skype ID: Soudan@SIC)

※ Everyday 9:00~17:00

※ Contact: Culture and International Affairs Division
Multicultural Promotion Staff TEL: 0852-22-6470