

RAK Academy

Frequently Asked Questions

School re-opening in August 2020

Dear Parents,

As you know, we provided you with an overview of our 'Covid-safe' school re-opening plans on 6th August. This provided you with general information on the way that school will open for this year, based on the guidelines received from the Ministry of Education.

Since then we received several queries from parents and based on these, we have developed answers in the form of an FAQ, as below. We feel strongly about the importance of communicating with you, our parent body, to ensure together we can approach the new academic year with confidence and positivity, despite the unusual and challenging times in which we live. In support of this aim, early next week, each Head of School will provide you with further specific information pertinent to your child's school and age-group.

Prior to school re-opening we will also be hosting a series of school-specific webinars for parents which will be presented by each school's leadership team. These will provide full information as well as an opportunity for parents to ask questions of the panel. Information, dates and access details will be shared closer to the time.

I look forward to working closely with you this year and I am sure that the strong family focus within our schools will ensure we are able to deliver excellent learning opportunities while ensuring we all stay safe and healthy.

Kind regards,

Graham Beale

Executive Principal

Questions from parents:

- **When is the school year starting?**

As planned and announced by MOE, school will start on Sunday 30th August. School will apply two learning models, on campus learning for younger and senior students (namely those enrolled in Pre-k, KG1, KG2, Grade 1, Grade 10, Grade 11 and Grade12), while blended learning will apply for students enrolled from Grade 2 up to grade 9 (inclusive).

- **When will the details of blended learning programme be communicated? When will the school send the detailed plans and timetables to parents?**

Details regarding school allocated days for blended learning and other pertinent information for students required to undertake home/school learning will be provided shortly by each school to parents directly.

- **If my child is in the blended learning cohort, what is the teaching and learning plan for the days of home learning?**

The group of learners not in school will access learning online through numerous platforms used during remote learning. We have learned a great deal about delivering online learning, during our experience from March to June, and have taken that knowledge to further refine and enhance the remote provision. Each school will provide further detail for parents.

- **What will the school day timings be?**

Normal school day timings to apply:

Pre-K - 9 am to 2 pm

KG1 - 7:45 am to 2 pm

KG2 up to Grade 5 - 7:45 am to 2:30

In ISK (Grades 6 to 12), the normal school day is from 07:45 am to 3:10 pm.

- **Will siblings be in the same group of A/B split?**

Yes, siblings will be in the same group.

- **Can I choose for my child to attend the school daily if I am a working parent?**

Unfortunately, this is not an option due to health and safety reasons. Students who are allocated to blended learning (day on/day off) cannot move to full-time (this is Grades 2 to 9).

- **Can I opt in for full distance learning program for my child/children?**

Parents may opt in for full-time at home distance learning if they have concerns (ie, elderly relative at home, vulnerable family member, etc.). Parents who wish to take up this should confirm their intentions by sending an email with the subject of '**Full Distance Learning Program**' to the relevant school administration office with the child's name, grade and the reason(s) behind choosing this option no later than Sunday 23rd August.

Email addresses for schools' administration offices:

BSK: hoda.mourkos@rakacademy.org

BSR: nancy.hanna@rakacademy.org

BSH: reem.naser@rakacademy.org

IPK: rama.ibawi@rakacademy.org

ISK: safia.morsy@rakacademy.org

- **Why are grades 2-9 specifically participating in blended learning while the other grades can attend fully? If Gr 2-9 have blended learning, then why are we required to pay full fees?**

RAK Academy would, of course, prefer to have all students attend school daily but due to the strict MOE directives for school re-opening. These Covid-19 regulations mean that for certain grades we are simply not able to accommodate all students in school at the same. Fees will stay the same as school will be providing continuous learning – for Grades 2 to 9 this will be based on a day on/day off blended model using online Distance Learning.

- **If both parents are working, how can we follow through with our child's work?**

As with the Distance Learning Programme, last year, parents will need to explore childcare options to support their children during this time. We will be making use of live streaming of lessons as much as possible to ensure that parental support requirements are minimised.

- **What are the changes to the school uniform? How and when can we order the school uniform?**

Uniform will be available after the 15th August, more details to follow soon. RAKA has also introduced school-branded medical masks as part of the compulsory school uniform.

- **When and how will masks be required and will the school support mask use?**

Masks will be required for all staff and students that are on RAKA school sites. However, children in Pre-K to KG2 are not required to wear masks while at school.

- **What are the cleaning and hygiene procedures?**

Our school has conducted a review of all potential frequent touch points, including, door handles, light switches, handrails, taps and washbasins, etc. Increased cleaning and sanitization will be conducted across these areas throughout the duration of the day. A thorough cleaning of the school will be conducted each day, using approved Municipality chemicals. A thorough deep clean and sanitization of the school will be conducted at the end of each week. Cleaning staff will wear the required PPE for all cleaning activities.

- **What protocols are in place to ensure the safety of our learning community?**

The RAK Academy health and safety department has established a robust set of health, safety and operational procedures and protocols, in order to support the safe reopening of schools.

Quality assurance checks will also be conducted to monitor the effectiveness. Classrooms will be set up to ensure a safe distance for students as per guidelines, and physical markings will be used in classrooms

to ensure desks remain in the correct locations. Teachers will also follow safe guidelines for teaching when working with students.

Safety markings will be set up throughout corridors, the markings will dictate safe distances of 2 metres. Students will be monitored to ensure adherence. One-way pedestrian flows will be required and will be marked out accordingly. Seating arrangements will be clearly marked out in canteen areas, no students will be permitted to sit directly adjacent or next to one another. Students from the same class must adhere to 1.5-meter safe distances, students from different classes must maintain 2-meter safe distances. Food catering at this stage will not be restricted. The school can provide catering services provided it is based on pre-packaged food, while following RAK (public Health Authority) PHA food safety guidelines related to catering services. Families are encouraged to supply food & beverages for their children along with their own plastic safe utensils. Staff must also bring in their own food and drink. Teachers should supervise to ensure that children do not share food. Face shields are encouraged during meal breaks when masks need to be temporarily removed. Dispenser will be removed, water bottles will be available in the canteen and vender machines, however students will be encouraged to bring their own water supply for the day

- **Are bags allowed in the school?**

Yes, bags are allowed in the school.

- **How can students ride the school bus safely?**

Based on health and safety directives, school buses will be allowed to operate at 50% capacity.

These include:

- Staff and students' temperature will be checked before boarding on bus (if the temperature is outside of the safe guideline, the student will not be allowed to enter the bus or attend school).
- Daily records will be maintained
- Buses will be disinfected before and after each use
- Adequate signage will be placed inside the bus
- Procedures are in place should a child display signs of COVID 19 while in the bus

- **Is there any estimate on how long the blended/distant learning will go on?**

As an Academy, we would ideally prefer to have all students back in school for full-time learning. However, we are required to follow very specific regulations and guidelines to support our whole community during this time of Covid pandemic. We will continually monitor the situation and regularly update parents with any changes or additional information as these become known. Our aim is to return to full-time, school-based learning as soon as it becomes practicable within all safety guidelines.

- **Are schools using one platform for Distance Learning?**

Schools will be using Google Classroom as the learning interface for all grade levels. Specific information for parents will be provided shortly by each school to parents.

- **How will the school ensure that our children are safe while online - what cyber safety guidelines are in place?**

Throughout last year's Distance Learning Programme, we practiced e-safety and ensured that only those within the school domain could join live lessons or enter Google Classrooms. We also have our counsellors available should any student wish to raise a concern or speak to them. Information on e-safety and guidelines for parents will be sent out shortly.

- **Will there be a survey for parents?**

As an Academy of schools with a strong desire to support our learning communities, we take the views and ideas of our parents seriously and we will be seeking input on a regular basis., to ensure we are meeting the needs of all our learners.

- **Will there be a webinar meeting for the parents? And how often can it be done?**

We are pleased to announce that we will be holding parents as partners 'Back to School' webinars for each school, prior to reopening. These will be facilitated by our community Liaison Manager, Reham Zahran, and the panels will include each school's Head and leadership team. The new Executive Principal will also be in attendance. Parents will have the opportunity to ask questions and the school's leadership team will provide answers and guidance to ensure that you can feel confident about the start to the new school year for your child. Information regarding these will sent to parents shortly.

- **Are the numbers of cases in RAK low enough for schools to reopen?**

Currently the numbers in the UAE are low and school are required to re-open based on strict MOE guidelines. RAKA keeps a very close eye on the number of cases and keeps up to date with information being sent out from MOHA. We are also in regular contact with MOE for any updates and changes that need to be made. Schools have been directed to re-open

- **Will hand washing stations or hand sanitisers be available throughout the school and will children be instructed to wash hands often?**

Each school will be following specific guidelines for hygiene and personal safety throughout each school. Each class will have a sanitising station for students to use. Students will also be asked to wash hands and sanitize hands before entering the class. Teachers will be guiding and supporting students in age-appropriate ways, to understand the importance of safe habits and protocols in school and these will be strictly enforced.

- **How will physical distancing be maintained throughout the school day?**

RAKA has put in place a range of measures to maintain physical distancing, including class lay-out, floor-marking and physical dividers as required. RAKA will also ensure that physical distancing is maintained with tight supervision from the academic staff. Movement around school for all students will be minimised and break times will be adapted to ensure students in learning 'bubbles' do not mix.

- **How will the school limit the amount of shared surfaces and what is the plan for regularly disinfecting areas throughout the school?**

Each student will be allocated his/her own workstation that they will be required to use daily. RAKA has enhanced its cleaning programme to ensure that regular cleaning of all areas is maintained. Cleaning teams will be cleaning surfaces, handles door etc regally to maintain a safe and clean school. Resources in classes will be kept within each specific learning space and will be sanitised regularly. Sharing of resources will be strictly limited within learning bubbles.

- **How will transportation to and from school change when school reopens?**

RAKA will reduce the number of students on each bus used as per the guidelines from MOE which indicate that all buses must be organised based on a maximum allowable capacity of 50%. We will be implementing physical distancing measures and requiring students to use face coverings. Please note that each student will be temperature checked prior to entering the school bus, and if the temperature is outside of the safe guidelines, students will not be allowed to enter the bus or attend school.

- **What guidance for contact tracing, testing, and quarantine is in place?**

RAKA is following what is recommend from the UAE government health authorities. We will be using thermal imaging devices and will also have in place a logging system that requires visitors to provide all relevant information should the need arise to track and trace. Further detail will be provided to parents shortly.

- **Will students, parents and staff be checked before entering school?**

Yes - RAKA will have in place thermal imaging cameras at each school, to check all who enter. Students using bus transportation will be temperature-checked before entering the buses. Late arrivals will be checked by campus security before being given access to school. We are required to strictly limit access the school, so parents and visitors will not have access to the school unless pre-arranged with the school. For parents of young students, there will be special arrangements for accompanying children which will be shared shortly by Heads of School