



"BE STRICT AND RIGID ON COVID-19 PROTOCOLS AS WE REOPEN SCHOOLS"

BEING TEXT OF PRESS BRIEFING BY EDUCATION MINISTER, ADAMU ADAMU, ON REOPENING OF SCHOOLS NATIONWIDE

Gentlemen of the Press.

Precisely on Wednesday 8th July, 2020, I had at a press briefing after the Federal Executive Council meeting, informed the nation that government will not reopen schools without adequate preparations.

I also indicated that until the curve of infection rate is flattened, it will be unsafe to reopen schools.

Having taken that painful but necessary decision, government has not rested on its oars in the areas of consultation with stakeholders, putting together guidelines for reopening of schools and preparations required of school owners to reopen.

We have consulted widely with stakeholders in the sector, including the Association of Private School Owners of Nigeria, (APSON), National Association of Proprietors of Private Schools, (NAPPS), Provost of Colleges of Education, Rectors of Polytechnics, Vice-Chancellors of Universities, State Governors, our development partners, Honourable Commissioners of Education and relevant international organisations.

Consequent upon these consultations, we developed detailed guidelines for reopening our learning facilities.

Taking the first step, we reopened schools for exit classes to take their National Examinations.

I am glad to report that in all our 104 Unity Colleges, there has not been a single case of COVID-19 infection so far.

The isolated cases we have had in other schools are minimal.

It is gratifying to note that on the whole, there has not been a single fatality amongst the exiting students.

You may also have noticed that the infection curve nationwide has flattened considerably.

In July 2020 when I stated that we will not reopen schools until the infection curve flattens, the country was recording an average of 400 infections daily.

By the end of July and August, the infection rate peaked at an average of 700 cases daily.

Since the beginning of September 2020, we have witnessed a considerable decline in the rate of infections, now averaging 200 recorded cases daily.

Consequently, with the level of preparations put to the test and the flattening of the infection curve, we have come to the conclusion that we have to review our earlier decision, especially against the realization that COVID-19 has come to stay and that we have to live with it.

Consequently, after due consultation with the Presidential Committee on COVID-19, we have decided that all our 104 Unity Colleges should reopen on the 12th of October, 2020.

States and private school owners will work out the modalities for the opening of schools under their purview.

Gentlemen of the press, as we all work towards the reopening of learning facilities nationwide, I strongly urge school owners to put in place systems that meet the following:

- Safe distancing procedures
- Develop and display at schools, simple context-specific reference protocols on day to day actions to be operated in each school.
- Conduct risk assessment with a view to understanding the gaps in the system that can increase the risk of transmission and make recommendations for addressing the gaps
- Safety and hygiene in all stages and phases of the school reopening process, which promotes behaviors that reduce spread, such as school commutes (to and from school traveling), safe distancing, frequent hand washing and the use of facemasks.
- Other guiding frameworks include sensitization and monitoring procedures.

- Ensure adequate Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) facilities across the school premises
- Encouraging the use of open spaces for gathering and promoting outdoor activities.
- There should be regular temperature checks For all the visitors coming into the schools using infrared thermometers.
- Establish a staff/students committee for regular surveillance, monitoring, and enforcement of COVID-19 guidelines.

Let me warn that any school owner that does not comply with these guidelines and an outbreak occurs in the school due to negligence, risk closure.

Be vigilant, strict, and rigid in the implementation of COVID-19 protocols for the safety of our children and ourselves as we reopen schools.

Nothing should be taken for granted.

Let me use this opportunity to thank and appreciate the Federal Ministry of Environment, the Presidential Task Force on Covid-19, and other stakeholders for the various roles they have played, which have brought us this far.

Thank You