

Protocol for Conducting the Educational Process in Primary and Secondary Schools during Heatwaves in the Republic of North Macedonia

Conditions for Implementing the Protocol:

- The Protocol for Conducting the Educational Process in Primary and Secondary Schools during Heatwaves is implemented when the school is located in a region with an orange warning for high temperatures as per announcements/notifications from the Hydrometeorological Service, and when there are no adequate conditions for conducting classes (such as air-conditioned classrooms and other facilities).
- The school principal is required to send an electronic notification to the Municipality and the responsible person for the relevant municipality from the primary/secondary education sector within the Ministry of Education and Science to implement the protocol.
- The school principal designates a responsible person to oversee the planning and implementation of the protocol for handling the heatwave conditions.

Guidelines for Implementing the Protocol

1. Classes should start no later than 7:30 AM, with shorter class periods of 20 minutes each, and should finish by 12:30 PM at the latest. The school should organize extended stays if it can provide air-conditioned classrooms where students can stay longer.
2. Parents are informed about the conditions under which classes will be conducted during the heatwave, as well as any changes to the school schedule and activities.
3. For students with medically confirmed chronic illnesses that may be adversely affected by the heat (with a certificate from their GP) and for students with disabilities, the school is obligated to offer home-based education during the heatwave. Students with disabilities who receive support from an educational or personal assistant and are attending home-based education should continue receiving support for the educational process at home, maintaining continuous communication and coordination with the school's inclusive team and the parents.
4. The functionality of taps and other water stations (e.g., aqua bars, natural springs) should be checked.
5. Parents and students are advised to bring water bottles, and teachers should frequently remind students during classes and breaks to drink water even if they do not feel thirsty, as thirst can occur after dehydration.
6. Ambient thermometers should be placed in multiple locations throughout the school, including some classrooms, the hallway, and other common areas.
7. Clear and visible signs should be placed throughout the school, including in hallways, classrooms, and other spaces, reminding students to stay hydrated, avoid direct sunlight exposure, and find shaded or cooled areas.
8. Students are advised to wear light, bright, and comfortable clothing, as well as a change of clothes in case they sweat. If the school requires uniforms, flexibility should be allowed to ensure clothing is appropriate for the hot weather while still adhering to the school's dress code.

9. Activities scheduled to take place outdoors should be conducted in the morning when it is cooler. Outdoor activities after 11:00 AM, when temperatures are highest during the day, should be avoided.
10. During physical education classes, activities that do not require strenuous exercise should be carried out, with breaks for drinking water and cooling down during the class. Children aged 6-12 should drink 180 ml every 30 minutes, while students aged 13-18 should drink 240 ml every 30 minutes.
11. During breaks, students' time outdoors should be limited unless they are in shaded areas. Students should not be exposed to direct sunlight.
12. Students should eat light, nutritious meals rich in fresh fruits and vegetables and avoid foods and drinks high in sugar, as well as spicy foods, which are hard to digest. If the school serves food, hygiene should be monitored strictly to guarantee food safety.
13. Classroom windows should have blinds or curtains that block out light. If there is an internal cooling system, windows should be closed and covered during the hottest part of the day, with ventilation occurring in the morning or evening when it is cooler. However, if there is no cooling system that uses fresh air, a prolonged lack of air exchange can also adversely affect health, particularly concerning respiratory infections that are airborne. In such cases, classroom doors should remain open to the hallways during lessons.
14. The school should contact the nearest healthcare facility to organize informative sessions on recognizing signs of heat cramps and heatstroke, as well as strategies for managing them.
15. The school, with support from healthcare workers, experts in the field, or non-governmental organizations, should train teachers and school staff to differentiate between mild and severe symptoms of conditions caused by heatwaves and how to act in emergencies.
16. Class teachers and homeroom teachers should educate students on how to protect themselves from heatstroke/sunstroke, recognize the symptoms, and who to contact if they or another student show signs of these conditions.
17. To prevent additional heating of the rooms, all electrical appliances, computers, and IT equipment that are not being used at the moment should be unplugged from the power source, as even being plugged in can generate heat.