



Authorities ensure SOPs are followed before welcoming back students at a school in Vadodara on Monday. Bhupendra Rana

IN GUJARAT

Students back to schools, colleges after nine months

RITUSHARMA & KAMAAL SAIYED
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AFTER STAYING at home for more than nine months, students on Monday got back to schools and colleges in Gujarat that recorded thin attendance. Ahmedabad reported over 29 per cent attendance on the first day in 690 schools — 49 government, 250 grant-in-aid and remaining majority self-financed schools — in the district.

School managements and the state education department are hopeful that the numbers will go up in the coming days.

Not compromising on standard operating procedures (SOPs), a few students who

reached Government Secondary and Higher Secondary School in Makhtampura, Juhapura, without consent letter were sent back by the teachers.

"My parents are out of station for the past two days and I could not get the consent letter signed," said Sanya Chauhan, Class 10 student of the school, where teachers welcomed students with a kit of face mask and sanitiser.

After an assurance that she will get it signed by her elder siblings, she walked home. "We have been instructed not to allow any student without the consent letter... we have already communicated the same on WhatsApp groups," the school principal Nirmalaben Parmar told The Indian Express.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

they were allowed inside the classroom.

Anisha Mahida, principal of Vanita Vishram School, said, "We had 70 per cent of Class 10 and 12 students of both Commerce and Science stream attending classes today. Not only the students but teachers were also happy to see the students after such a long period. There are 750 students in Class 10 and 224 students in Class 12. From Tuesday, we are hoping 100 per cent attendance. Several parents who came to check the arrangements were satisfied."

Dipak Rajyaguru, president of self-finance schools association in Surat, said, "We all happy with schools reopening. Students were made to sit maintaining social distancing, while during interval, we kept an eye on them. We are hoping to see 100 per cent attendance soon. We have got consent from 90 per cent parents to send their children to schools."

Sources said that in Surat, there are around 400 self-finance and grant-in-aid schools imparting education in Gujarati, Hindi and English mediums for Class 10 and 12, affiliated to GSHSEB and CSER.

The school reported an attendance of 15 per cent where 27 students in Class 10 and 18 in Class 12 attended school on the first day. "We were expecting at least 30-40 per cent per cent students to attend the school. But even this is not bad," Nirmalaben said.

"With 23,631 students out of 79,470 total students for Class 10 and 12 enrolled in 690 schools in the district area, the attendance was 29.73 per cent. To check the arrangements, a staff of 150 from the district education offices was out in the field visiting more than five to six schools each. The feedback received is very positive," said district education officer (DEO) Ahmedabad nara, Rakesh Vyas.

Teachers who conducted a survey among parents last week reported having several queries from parents on reopening of schools. "Most of the parents who are daily wage labourers wanted schools to be reopened. Since everyone could not afford a smartphone to attend online classes, even students were eager to return to school," Neha Shah, a higher secondary teacher, told The Indian Express.

At Delhi Public School in Bopal area of Ahmedabad, 20 students reported on the first day. The school, affiliated to CBSE, resumed only Class 12 science and commerce streams for which the school has strength of 350 students. The school will resume Class 10 from January 18.

The school had elaborate arrangements, including portable machines for fumigation, a medical room, social distance markings everywhere, including the playground. As many as 35 teaching and 50 supporting staff reported for duty on the first day.

"Majority of the parents wanted school to resume from February 1, while many agreed on January 18," DPS Bopal principal, Surender P. Sachdeva, told this paper.

Adding that there is excitement among students, while parents are apprehensive, he said, "Parents are not sure but children are insisting that they sign the consent letter to attend classes."

"This being my last year in school, I did not want to miss a single day after the state government allowed schools to reopen. We missed the campus and classes. I am happy to be back in school with my teachers," Kashvi Shah, a Class 12 student.

The school also plans to start the school bus service from January 18, initially with 15 buses.

In Surat, schools recorded 40 per cent attendance on first day. Surat District Education officer HH Rajyaguru said, "We got good response from teachers, students and parents. The attendance was 40 per cent and we hope it will go up after the Uttarayan festival. We have made six teams to make surprise checks in at least 40 schools every day to ensure the SOPs are followed."

At Vanita Vishram School, authorities had made seating arrangements on the ground where open classes were held for language and social science. For Maths and Science subjects,