

St Joseph's Institution International School Malaysia

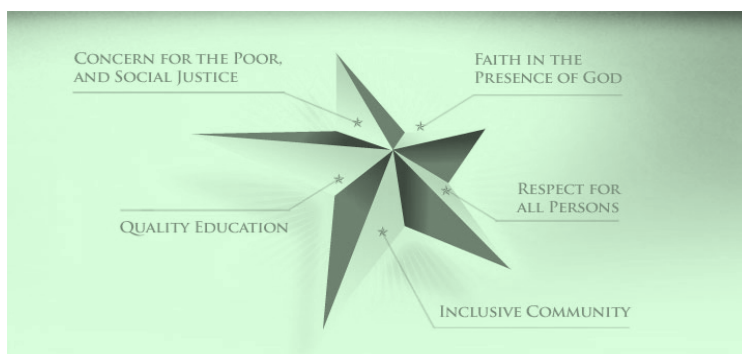
***Enabling youth to learn and to learn how to live, empowering
them to become people of integrity and people for others.***



Haze Policy

Policy Written:	September 2019
Policy Reviewed:	June 2024, 2026
Date of Next Review:	June 2027
Revised By:	Matt O'Shea (Head of School), Farzleen Nadzirah (Operations and Facilities Coordinator)
Signed By:	 Matthew O'Shea, Head of School

This policy is written in the spirit of putting into practice our Lasallian core values



Overview

Each year Malaysia can be affected by smoke haze from forest fires in the region. This usually occurs during the period of May to October. The prevailing winds blow the smoke from the fires in Malaysia's direction and this can negatively impact the health of our students and staff, (see **Appendix 1** for effects of smoke haze). Malaysia uses an integrated air quality reporting index, known as the Air Pollutant Index (**API**). The API reflects a total of six pollutants. These are:

1. Particulate Matter (PM_{10})
2. Fine Particulate Matter ($PM_{2.5}$)
3. Sulphur Dioxide (SO_2)
4. Nitrogen Dioxide (NO_2)
5. Ozone (O_3)
6. Carbon Monoxide(CO)

The Department of Environment (DOE) Malaysia publishes the hourly API readings from the DOE's APIMS system (apims.doe.gov.my).

Information on the Haze Levels can be found from the government at:

<https://eqms.doe.gov.my/APIMS/main>

Incorporating Air Quality Information into School Life

- At SJIIS we are very mindful of the health of all the students and staff. Responsibility for this rests with parents, teachers, the nurse and leadership.
- Parents ensure that the nurse is aware of any respiratory conditions that affect their students. The School Nurse ensures that the student medical database is up to date so that teachers are aware of students in their classes who have respiratory conditions, e.g. asthma.

The School and Governors will...

- Make teachers aware of the guidelines for minimising their health risks on days of smoke haze.
- Monitor the hourly API readings levels and implement the appropriate response, (**Appendix 2**).
- Provide staff with up to date medical information on students in their care.
- Ensure air filters are appropriate and functional.
- Communicate expediently with the parents.

School Response to Different Air Quality Levels (See Appendix 2)

For hourly API, Readings Between 1 and 50

We monitor the DOE readings, but there is no impact on outside sport and play.

For hourly API Readings Between 51 and 100

The Senior Leadership Team and Head of Physical Education are kept aware of the government readings every hour. At this API level, added precautions are taken, including ensuring that teachers advise students to:

- Take more drink breaks
- Go to the nurse if they have any breathing issues
- Not participate in strenuous exercise if feeling unwell

The Teaching staff will...

- Monitor students with known medical issues such as asthma and cardiac conditions. Students may go to the library at break and lunch.
- Advise students to drink more water and if affected to remain indoors during breaks. (Haze may cause irritation of the eyes, nose and throat in healthy individuals.)
- Swap outside duties if a staff member with a known medical condition is affected by haze.

The Leadership Team will...

- Provide reminders to staff about measures to be taken.
- Ensure the policy is implemented effectively.

Parents may...

Provide masks for their children to wear in school and are able to keep their children at home if they would prefer to do so.

For hourly API Readings Between 101 and 199

- The Senior Leadership Team continues to monitor the API levels on-site (every 1 hour) and the following occurs:
 - All outdoor activities to cease
 - Sports to be relocated to gym or cancelled
 - Students to remain inside during break and lunch with the air conditioning running
 - Additional guidance from the Ministry of Education, specific to a current haze incident is followed.

For Hourly API Readings Above 200

School closure is mandatory when the Air Pollutant Index (API) reaches or exceeds 200, in accordance with the Ministry of Education circular dated October 3, 2023. The protocol depends on when the threshold is breached:

- **If API exceeds 200 during school hours:**
 - All outdoor activities stop immediately.
 - Learning activities transition indoors with air conditioning running.
 - School closes immediately for the day. Parents will be notified promptly via school broadcast channels to arrange safe student pickup.
- **If API exceeds 200 before the start of the school day:**
 - School operations are suspended for that day.
 - The Head of School will issue an official closure announcement to parents and staff by 6:00 AM, based on the DOE 5:00 AM hourly API reading.
 - If atmospheric trends indicate sustained elevated API levels on the previous evening, a preliminary alert regarding potential closure may be issued to parents by 6:00 PM the day before.
- **Staff Notification:** School leadership and Governors will brief staff prior to public notifications.

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- **Reopening:** The school will resume normal operations once API levels fall below 200.

Other policies /documents relevant and to be read in conjunction with this Policy:

First Aid Policy policy	Health and Safety policy
Staff Handbook ES and HS	Evacuation and Thunder and Lightning Policy

Appendix 1 - Information on the Effects of Smoke Haze

Health impacts are related to concentrations as well as the duration of exposure, in addition to the health status of the individual. The 24-hour measurements are a reflection of the total exposure of an individual to PM levels. The health advisories adopted by DOE are based on 24-hour API and 24-hours PM_{2.5} measurements as scientific and epidemiological studies on the health effects of particulate matter have been based on these measurements.

The hourly API is an indicative index. It is the state of the air quality at a particular time. While there have been few studies done on the health effects of exposure to short-term spikes in PM levels, it is this reading that is most relevant to us at school. We will use the hourly API index so spikes in PM level will see us take action in line with our policy.

The main pollutant of concern to health during a smoke haze is the fine particulate matter or PM₁₀ particulate (of size 10 micron and below). The health effect depends on the severity of the smoke haze as described by the API (Air Pollutant Index) reading. At API of 101 and above, the air quality is deemed unhealthy.

Respiratory masks, such as N95 masks, are designed to keep out the fine particulate matter and hence protect the wearers from breathing in the smoke haze particles in the air. The mask should be changed when it gets soiled or distorted in shape. Surgical masks and paper masks do not provide adequate protection from the haze particles.

Haze particles can affect the heart and lungs, especially in people who already have chronic heart and lung disease e.g. asthma, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), and heart failure.

There may be up to 1-3 day time lag between exposure to haze and health effects and symptoms. N95 masks are not needed for short exposure like commuting from home to school or work, travel from bus-stop to shopping mall. N95 masks are also not needed in an indoor environment.

A healthy person who has to be outdoors for several hours when the air quality is in the hazardous range (API >300) may reduce exposure by wearing an N95 mask.

People with chronic lung or heart disease, elderly, and pregnant women should avoid or minimise outdoor activity when the air quality is unhealthy (API>200). If they have to be outdoors for several hours, they may reduce exposure by wearing an N95 mask.

Appendix 2 - School Response to Different Air Quality Levels

Hourly API	General School Action	Specific Action - Students with Chronic Lung Disease (inc. Asthma) and Heart Disease
≤ 50 (Good/Moderate)	Normal activities.	Normal activities.
51-100 (Good/Moderate) (On-site monitoring - 3hr)	Students are to be advised to drink more water.	Students with susceptible conditions are monitored and advised to drink more water. If necessary, all breaks are to be indoors.
101-199 (Unhealthy) (On-site monitoring - 2hr)	NO outdoor activities. All breaks to be indoors.	
200 + (Very Unhealthy) (On-site monitoring - 1hr)	School must close immediately (as per government circular dated October 3rd 2023)	
500 + (Hazardous / Emergency)	Teaching/support staff are also excused from reporting to school on-site.	

* When the API reading of PM_{2.5} is above 200, the MOE / MOH Specific Incident Guidance is followed.