



## AIR POLLUTION POLICY

### 1. Purpose

The care and welfare of pupils and staff at Epsom College in Malaysia ("ECiM") is our highest priority. This policy has been produced to provide clear guidance for when the local air quality goes above acceptable levels.

### 2. Background

Air pollution is a growing concern worldwide. Each year Malaysia can be affected by smoke haze from forest fires in the South-East Asia region when prevailing winds blow the smoke from the fires in Malaysia's direction. Research indicates that exposure to air pollution can impact upon an individual's health. Studies on long-term health effects typically focus on individuals who are exposed to unhealthy air for an extended period, often many years. However, evidence also indicates that short term exposure can create health concerns, particular for children, the elderly, and people with compromised immune systems. Young children are at increased risk of these health effects because they tend to be more physically active, their lungs are still growing, and they are more likely to have asthma or acute respiratory illnesses which can be aggravated when pollution levels are high.

ECiM routinely monitors particle pollution, specifically Particulate Matter 2.5 (PM2.5). PM2.5 are fine particulates in the air, which can get into the lungs and may even enter the bloodstream.

The Air Quality Index (AQI) was designed by the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and is used to determine air quality. The EPA developed a series of levels (see below) to help the public better understand the impact of air pollution and determine when air pollution reaches unhealthy levels. ECiM has aligned our practices with other international schools in SE Asia, based on information from the EPA and the Malaysian Department of the Environment.

### **3. Advice**

The following advice is provided by the Malaysian Department of the Environment for how to cope with haze:

- All parties are advised not to indulge in open burning or to allow irresponsible people to partake in open burning on their property.
- Members of the public are also required to work together to eradicate small fires and also report cases of open burning or fires to the Fire and Rescue Services Department at 999 and the Department of Environment (DOE) at toll-free, 1-800-88-2727.
- Those who suffer from diseases such as cough, flu, asthma, eye pain, heart disease or chronic lung disease should be taken to seek medical assistance immediately if the condition of the illness is worsens.
- Nose and mouth cover should be used by all motorcyclists, those who work outside the building or in dusty places.
- As far as possible, people are advised to stay in the building or at home.
- Reduce outdoor activities such as sports.
- People are advised to always wash face and skin parts exposed to the haze with clean water.
- Use the air conditioning in cars
- People are advised to drink plenty of water, at least 8 glasses a day.
- If haze conditions persist at a dangerous level, those at high risk are advised to leave the area.
- People are also required to turn on vehicle lights while driving when haze and visibility is low.

### **4. Air Quality Readings**

Air Quality is classified into five categories as according to their API reading. Their categories are explained below:

- 0-50 (good)
- 51-100 (moderate)
- 101-200 (unhealthy)
- 201-300 (very unhealthy)
- 301 and above (hazardous)

Hourly Index reading can be obtained from the **APIMs website** which provides hourly index readings for all states in Malaysia. [http://apims.doe.gov.my/public\\_v2/api\\_table.html](http://apims.doe.gov.my/public_v2/api_table.html) and is referred to be schools in Malaysia. The College will also cross-reference readings against another reliable website.

ECiM will monitor the API reading at 3 hourly intervals from the Malaysian Department of Environment website. However, where haze is detected the reading shall be monitored hourly. The Headmaster's PA and the Executive Leadership Team PA are responsible for taking the regular reading. If haze is detected, all staff will be notified via e-mail that the College is monitoring the situation and that precautions should be taken where necessary. Staff will be further updated if the levels reach 100 and then 200. Staff will be informed of the website the College is taking its reading from.

## **5. Outdoor Activities & Sports**

In February 2019 the Education Ministry of Malaysia announced that all schools must stop their gatherings and outdoor (sports) activities if the air pollutant index (API) reading exceeds the 100-mark. This new law was decreed after the amendments were made to the “National Haze Action Plan by the Energy, Science, Technology, Environment and Climate Change Ministry”. Schools are required to close if the API reading exceeds 200 and may re-open only if there is a trend indicating that the API reading has been below 200. Under these circumstances, pupils should be advised to wear masks and to drink water more frequently.

ECiM shall adhere to the Malaysian Ministry’s regulations and stop all outdoor sports/gatherings when the reading exceeds 100 and also when the severity of the haze is felt to be stronger in the school’s locality than the official readings indicate.

The decision to cancel outdoor activities/sports shall be at the discretion of the Director of Sport in conjunction with ELT. Any other members of staff with concerns about outside sports/activities must consult with the Director of Sport in the first instance.

### **AQI 0-100**

Air quality in this range is considered to be good to moderate and no action is necessary. Those with underlying heart and lung conditions, respiratory difficulties, the elderly or pregnant women may experience discomfort if the reading is at the higher end of the range. These “sensitive groups” should be monitored by staff and precautions should be taken for any such individuals. This may include not permitting them to go outside or take part in physical exercise.

The Medical Centre circulates a list to all staff of those pupils with known respiratory/heart conditions, including asthma. Staff can find this document in the shared google docs drive by searching for “Health Alerts”.

### **AQI 101-149**

The school will remain open but, as air quality in this range is considered unhealthy, all outdoor activities will not take place. Parents have the discretion to keep children at home.

The following measures will be put in place:

- All Prep School pupils will remain indoors at break and lunchtime;
- All Prep School pupils will go directly to their classrooms on arrival in the morning from 8.00am. Pupils arriving from 7.45am will go directly to the early morning care in the Reception Classroom;
- Games and PE lessons will take place in the Sports Hall or another indoor venue where possible;
- Swimming will be cancelled (swimming teachers will supervise pupils in the classroom);

### **AQI 150-199**

The ELT has the discretion to either open or close the school depending on the severity of the situation.

**AQI 200-299**

Air quality in this range is considered to be very unhealthy and the College is very likely to be closed on government advice. Outdoor field trip decisions will be based on the local air quality at the destination. Staff and parents will be e-mailed of any decision to close the school and/or any modifications that may be necessary for the school to remain in operation (e.g. particularly the need to continue to provide care for Boarders).

The decision to impose restrictions/closure will be made daily by ELT based on the 5.00pm API reading. If the Ministry of Education recommends that the school should be closed to students this advice will be followed. or if the Malaysia Ministry of Education recommends that the school should close. If the school is to be closed the following day because of predicted poor air quality, a notice will be placed on the website by 9pm the preceding day. All parents and staff will also be informed by e-mail by 9.00pm the previous evening, where this is possible, by either the Headmaster's PA or a member of the College Senior Leadership Team.