



The Weight and Carriage of Schoolbags

1. Reducing stress

At times, learners take all their books to school, irrespective of the demands of their timetable. Young learners need to be helped to overcome the fear that makes them take unnecessary books and/or copybooks to school. Schools can reduce this feeling of insecurity through effective transition programmes which build a culture of acceptance and trust.

2. Scheduling the timetable

Use of timetables is commendable in the primary, middle and secondary school levels. Educators are encouraged to assist learners on proper timetabling of books, copybooks/files and homework. Curriculum planning that can result in the avoidance of certain subjects on the same day in order to reduce bag weight is helpful. Additionally, where possible, if the layout of the school permits, clustering of learners in middle and secondary schools, in rooms as close as possible, should be carried out to avoid the unnecessary carrying of schoolbags when moving from one classroom to the next.





3. Use of files

Files need to be used judiciously. Unless there is collaboration about the modality and frequency of the bringing of files to school, their use will create issues. It is recommended that learners bring loose sheets of paper in light plastic folders. They should also be taught how to manage them well to avoid filing the loose sheets incorrectly or losing them.

4. Use of light study materials

Teachers often create their own teaching materials and resort to handouts. In such contexts, care needs to be taken to avoid clipping together the programme of a whole year. Only small sections are to be bound together to ensure that these materials do not create additional weight.

5. The school diary

It is now customary for schools to produce their school diary. Attention needs to be given to ensure that this publication is as slim as possible. Alternatively, lightweight paper is to be used.

6. Use of digital technology

There is a vast array of digital tools available in classrooms that can be used to create a shift from teacher-centred learning to a learner-centred approach where students learn in an innovative manner. Apart from a change in pedagogy, these tools can be conducive to help reduce the weight of heavy schoolbags.

7. Lockers in schools

The provision of locker facilities can help reduce schoolbag weight, and these are to be used where available. Lockers, however, will not eliminate the carriage of books to and from school, if these are required for homework or studying purposes. Additionally, their installation depends on space, supervision and maintenance. If access to these lockers is flexible, with enough time allocated between lessons, they will have achieved their purpose.

8. Drinking water in schools

The carriage of water bottles to schools would be reduced if good quality potable water is available in schools. Learners would then simply need to carry a lightweight bottle to school. Care, however, needs to be taken to place such facilities in appropriate places that can be easily supervised.

9. Carrying out campaigns at the College and/or School level

Various initiatives can be taken at the College/School level, specifically aimed at raising awareness on the issue of keeping healthy, particularly through participating in sport activities and physical exercises. Emphasis can also be made on the risk involved in relation to the carriage of heavy schoolbags and what can be done in order to avoid this risk. There could also be information sessions with students and parents on the effects of schoolbag type on posture and how one can avoid injuring one's back.

10. Implementation of guidelines in schools

Schools are encouraged to adopt these guidelines according to their particular context. They can also refer to other related policies issued by the Ministry for Education and Employment, such as the National Homework Policy (MEDE, 2018), which are aimed at improving the physical and psychological wellbeing of students. During the implementation process, there needs to be effective communication, collaboration and co-operation between all interested parties, in particular, schools, parents and students.

