



Students salute at the opening ceremony on the first day of this year's spring term in Shanghai. — Photos by Dong Jun

Back to normal as students in Shanghai start fresh semester

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Xu Jihong

Deputy principal of Shanghai Huangpu Luwan No. 1 Central Primary School



Yang Meiping

Approximately 1.65 million primary and secondary school students, as well as 530,000 kindergarten students, returned to campuses to begin the new semester on Wednesday.

It is the first semester following China's downgrading of COVID-19 management on January 8.

Even as their parents and grandparents waved goodbye, students at Shanghai Huangpu Luwan No. 1 Central Primary School were happy to see their teachers and classmates.

“I prefer learning on campus to studying at home because I can play with my friends,” said Xu Xiaoyu, a third-grader. “I'm also relieved that we no longer have to take nucleic acid tests now. It was troublesome.”

For first-grader Wang Shuxuan, the downgrading of COVID means her mother can spend more time with her. “My mother works at the disease control center, she was extremely busy during the pandemic outbreak,” Wang explained. “She can now get off work at regular hours.”

Parents are also pleased with regular schooling.

“Finally, children are back to school,” said the mother of a first-grader at the school in Huangpu

District. “I hope they don't have to stay at home and take online classes.”

Last year, parents were required to keep health records for two weeks prior to the new semester and submit negative nucleic acid reports for all family members living together.

They also had to print offline health codes for students to use when taking nucleic acid tests on campus.

“This time, we were also asked to observe children's health conditions, but only those who became ill were required to report to school,” said a mother of a second-grader.

“It's very similar to how things were before the COVID-19 outbreak.”

Parents said the children's return to campus would significantly reduce their burden.

“I feel relieved that the COVID is over and that my children can return to school for regular classes,” said a father of a third-grader.

He claimed that although his family was not infected with COVID, he was not worried about it at all. “Maybe our immunity is strong enough to withstand the virus,” he speculated.

Body temperature screening and hand-sanitizing machines, however, remain in place in schools.

According to deputy principal Xu Jihong, spring is a high season for infectious diseases, and the school is reminding parents and students to protect themselves by wearing masks in public places and washing hands frequently.

“We've asked students and faculty to monitor their health and not to come to school if they get infectious diseases,” she said. “We've also trained teachers and faculty and put together regular disease control materials, like disinfectants and kits for nausea and emergencies.”

Xu said that the school has resumed normal operations because no nucleic acid tests will be held on campus and no test reports will be required.

Most classes will be held as usual, but PE classes will be adjusted slightly due to the health concerns of students who have recently recovered from COVID and are advised to avoid strenuous exercises.

According to Lu Beibei, chief of the school's physical education group, the school held a survey among students about their infection and recovery time. “We would advise students who have recovered within a month to avoid exercises,” he said.

“We would engage those who have

