

# OPERATIONS GUIDE

Victorian Government Schools  
From 10 August 2020

**Updated:** 10 August 2020



<b>For all Victorian Government schools.....</b>	<b>3</b>
New arrangements for school operations for the remainder of Term 3.....	3
Requirements for on-site supervision .....	4
Staffing arrangements .....	4
Operating model .....	7
1. Home provision .....	7
2. Home and on-site learning programs .....	7
3. Access to teaching and learning resources for students at home.....	8
Health and safety measures .....	8
4. Physical distancing .....	8
5. Temperature checks .....	9
6. Face coverings in schools .....	9
7. Other health and safety measures .....	9
8. Child safety, reportable conduct and duty of care in remote learning environments .....	10
9. Mental health and wellbeing .....	10
10. Other school and curriculum settings .....	11
11. Camps, playgrounds and facilities .....	11
12. Sport and recreation .....	11
13. Visitors to schools, interschool activities and school tours .....	11
14. Capital and maintenance works.....	11
15. Cleaning.....	12
16. Personal hygiene products .....	12
17. School buses for on-site students: .....	12
18. Outside School Hours Care .....	13
19. Access to devices .....	13
20. Next steps .....	13
21. Contacts.....	13
<b>Health and safety advice for on-site schooling in the context of Coronavirus (COVID-19) .....</b>	<b>14</b>
An update from the Victorian Chief Health Officer .....	14
Actions for schools.....	15

# FOR ALL VICTORIAN GOVERNMENT SCHOOLS

## New arrangements for school operations for the remainder of Term 3

The Victorian Government has made a series of significant announcements, in line with advice from the Chief Health Officer about restrictions to help slow the spread of coronavirus (COVID-19):

1. From 6pm on Sunday 2 August, Stage 4 restrictions will be in place across metropolitan Melbourne.
2. From 11:59pm on Wednesday 5 August, Stage 3 restrictions will be in place throughout regional Victoria.
3. Mitchell Shire will remain in Stage 3 restrictions.

These restrictions will result in changes to school operations that will come into effect from Wednesday 5 August and are likely to apply until the end of Term 3.

### Senior Secondary Year 11 and 12 (VCE and VCAL)

- Across Victoria, all Year 11 and 12 provision for both VCE and VCAL will move to remote and flexible learning.
- The schedule for VCE examinations and the release of results will remain as previously advised.
- Further advice will be provided in relation to on-site attendance for mandatory assessments, including SACs.

### Prep to Year 10

- Prep to Year 10 students in metropolitan Melbourne will continue with remote and flexible learning.
- Prep to Year 10 students will move to remote and flexible learning, together with the students in Years 11 and 12

### On-site supervision

#### Metropolitan Melbourne

- On-site supervision will be available for students in the following categories, based on revised criteria:
  - children whose parents are permitted workers and for whom no other arrangements can be made
  - vulnerable children including:
    - children in out-of-home care
    - children deemed by Child Protection and/or Family Services to be at risk of harm
    - children identified by the school as vulnerable (including via referral from a family violence agency, homelessness or youth justice service or mental health or other health service)
    - children with a disability where the family is experiencing severe stress.

#### Regional Victoria

- On-site supervision will be available for students in the following categories:
  - children whose parents cannot work from home and where no other supervision arrangements can be made (not only those defined as permitted workers)

- vulnerable children including:
  - children in out-of-home care
  - children deemed by Child Protection and/or Family Services to be at risk of harm
  - children identified by the school as vulnerable (including via referral from a family violence agency, homelessness or youth justice service or mental health or other health service).
- any child with a disability.

### Specialist schools in regional Victoria

- Any child enrolled in a specialist school in regional Victoria will be able to continue to attend.
- Any parent of a child enrolled in a specialist school in regional Victoria who wishes to keep their child at home can do so, and, where possible, the school can provide learning materials and activities for the child to undertake at home.

### Requirements for on-site supervision

#### (All schools, except specialist schools in regional Victoria)

- Schools should provide on-site attendance forms to families requiring on-site supervision so they can indicate the days/ part-days that will be required, to enable schools to plan for adequate resourcing. Forms for Metropolitan Melbourne schools are available [here](#). Forms for Regional Victoria schools are available [here](#).
- The learning program delivered on-site will be the same as the learning program delivered to students undertaking remote learning.
- Students learning on-site will be supervised by school staff on-site but follow the teaching and learning program provided by their classroom teacher.
- Students attending on-site must be supervised at all times by staff with either current Victorian Institute of Teaching (VIT) registration or a Working with Children Check. Education Support staff can provide direct support to and supervision of students, provided they have access to support from a VIT-registered teacher.
- The guide to absence coding is available on the [Promote and Manage Student Attendance](#) page.

### Staffing arrangements

#### Specialist schools in rural and regional Victoria

Principals, teachers and staff will be required to attend for duty at their school in accordance with normal arrangements, making necessary adjustments to support physical distancing between adults.

This does not preclude school-based arrangements to permit staff to work from home where this is compatible with the circumstances of any individual school. This includes arrangements such as merged classes, where this can be managed within the health guidelines. This decision must be made by a principal using the consultative arrangements agreed at the school. The principal must be assured that:

- meeting such a request will not compromise their capacity to provide on-site learning for as many students as may attend on any given school day
- it is reasonably practicable for the teacher or teachers to work from home (including the use of a reliable, safe and secure digital environment).

Specialist schools can provide learning materials for use in the home where parents/carers have chosen to keep their child home for extended periods.

In implementing such arrangements, the principal, teachers and staff have a joint and shared responsibility, through local consultative arrangements, to ensure that to the fullest extent possible a fair and equitable share of the workload involved in supporting on-site learning is maintained, noting that the principal retains full authority for the management of the school workforce.

These arrangements can be extended to members of the principal class providing the above conditions are met, in particular for the school to be managed at an appropriate level of seniority for a full school day.

#### **All schools (except specialist schools in rural and regional Victoria)**

It continues to be the principal's responsibility to make the school-based decisions required to deliver Government education objectives in accordance with the Victorian Government Schools Agreement 2017.

Where teachers and support staff are not required on-site, they must work from home.

Where possible, school leadership should be represented on-site. Principals will need to ensure that there are sufficient staff on-site to run the school's teaching and learning programs.

Principals should consult their staff to identify those willing and able to work on-site, either in an ongoing or rostered basis. They should ensure staff are consulted on, and have input into, the ways work may be organised and allocated.

Staff work hours at home should be consistent with the attendance arrangements already in place at each school, and determined in accordance with the school's local consultative arrangements.

Schools should communicate these hours of work to parents/carers and indicate that teachers and support staff are not required and will not necessarily be available to students or families/carers outside these hours.

Staff working from home, including teachers and education support staff, will not visit or work in students' homes.

Working alone or in isolation from others presents hazards of which employees should be made aware, including impacts on mental wellbeing. Principals and school staff are encouraged to develop a program of regular contact with staff who are working from home.

Departmental policy and guidelines can be found on [HRWeb](#).

On site staffing requirements may vary between schools and may change over time as attendance varies.

If it is necessary to identify which staff are to work on-site either for a specified day or days or as part of a roster to meet the above requirements, the school should follow procedures determined at the school using the school's consultative procedures or in the absence of local arrangements the following process should be used:

- a. The principal will notify all staff they are seeking volunteers to be available to work on-site for a specified day or days or as part of a roster.
- b. If there are insufficient volunteers, Casual Relief Teachers (CRTs) should be engaged. If insufficient CRTs are available, the principal should approach their Senior Education Improvement Leader (SEIL) to establish if any staff from other schools in the network are available.
- c. Where it has been identified through (a) and (b) above, that there are insufficient staff to meet the needs of the school, the principal will provide an opportunity for the employees to provide

reasons why they should not be considered for work on-site for a specified day or days or as part of a roster.

- d. The principal will take into account the overall work needs of the school and the submissions from individual employees in accordance with (c) above in determining which staff will be required to work on-site for a specified day or days or as part of a roster.
- e. The principal will make every effort to ensure that an employee is not identified to work on-site where there are compelling personal compassionate grounds pertaining to that employee.

### Further advice for all schools – staffing

#### School staff access to on-site supervision and childcare

- Those working on-site to support a school's supervision program are able to have their children attend their usual school for those days they are working on-site, where no other arrangements can be made. In metropolitan Melbourne, school teachers and staff working on-site and working from home have access to childcare as permitted workers, where no other arrangements can be made.
- Childcare and kindergarten remain open as usual in regional Victoria.
- Further advice is available on the [DHHS website](#).
- Schools may need to engage CRT staff to cover staff absences and ensure sufficient staffing on-site to meet requirements. If principals are concerned about cost pressures or a forecast deficit budget position, please contact the School Financial Management Support Unit for support or advice: [schools.finance.support@education.vic.gov.au](mailto:schools.finance.support@education.vic.gov.au) or (03)7022 2222
- Schools should continue to receive and accept applications for pre-service placements to ensure pre-service teachers are able to meet graduation requirements. Pre-service teachers can attend schools on-site. For more information, visit the [pre-service teacher placements during coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#) web page. An example of the support that a pre-service teacher can provide during remote and flexible learning is available here: [How final year pre-service teachers can help you](#).
- Advice from the Victorian Chief Health Officer is that, as with other members of the community, teachers and other school staff may be at greater risk of more serious illness if they contract coronavirus (COVID-19) if they are:
  - aged 70 years and older
  - aged 65 years and older and with chronic medical conditions.
  - of any age and have a compromised immune system
  - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and are aged over 50 years and with one or more chronic medical conditions.
- Staff who are medically vulnerable should seek advice from their medical practitioner in relation to their on-site attendance. Where the employee is unable to work either on-site or remotely, they can access personal leave by providing a medical certificate.
- Similarly, staff who are living with or caring for elderly or chronically ill relatives should seek advice from the medical practitioner of the person for whom they are caring to determine if they can attend on-site or should work remotely. They should provide a medical certificate if they are seeking to access personal leave.
- The [Medical Advisory Service](#) is a specialised support service for principals to help them fulfil their responsibilities in relation to employee health.

## Reimbursement of Casual Relief Teachers (CRTs) travel and accommodation costs

- To increase the pool of available CRTs in regional schools, the Department of Education and Training (the Department) is trialling a process of reimbursing regional schools for CRT costs of travel/mileage and accommodation. This trial will run initially from 3 August 2020 to 18 September 2020.
- Schools will be responsible for the payment of the CRT's salary. This arrangement will apply to schools designated by the Department as 'regional'. A list of eligible schools can be found [here](#). It will not apply to schools within the metropolitan Melbourne area.
- Claims for reimbursement of travel/mileage and accommodation costs may be made by schools that engage CRTs either via an agency or as school council employees. The Department has advised the agencies of the trial period, the eligible schools and the reimbursement criteria. Where the reimbursement criteria have been met, the schools are to lodge the claims via the Schools Targeted Finding Governance (STFG) Portal.
- More information about the reimbursement process and criteria can be found [here](#).

## Working from Home Allowance

- Employees will receive the working from home allowance.
- The allowance is \$20 per week for home office consumables and utilities. This \$20 per week will be paid on a pro-rata basis based on an employee's time fraction.
- Employees on any type of leave (paid or unpaid) will not qualify for the payment, until their leave ends and they commence or resume working remotely.

## Operating model

### 1. Home provision

- The parent or carer is responsible for students' general safety at home or elsewhere.
- Students and parents/families should be given clear information about how and when they will receive learning materials and feedback.
- Schools will create and communicate a schedule or calendar that shows what is expected of students in relation to the completion of learning tasks.
- For students with a disability, students in out-of-home care and Koorie students, schools and the parents/ carer should continue to work together via the [Student Support Group](#) (maintaining a current [Individual Education Plan \(IEP\)](#)) to identify and plan responses for areas of need.
- Principals and school staff must:
  - identify risks that are reasonably foreseeable for students who are learning at home
  - take reasonable steps that are in the school's control to prevent reasonably foreseeable harm to students.
  - For more information, see fact sheet: [Child Safety, Reportable Conduct and Duty of Care in Remote Online Learning](#)

### 2. Home and on-site learning programs

- The learning program delivered on-site will be the same as the learning program delivered to students undertaking remote learning.
- The following are the daily minimum guidelines schools are expected to meet for students in Prep to Year 10.

- For students in Prep to Year 2, schools will provide learning programs that include the following:
  - literacy activities that take a total of about 45-60 minutes
  - numeracy activities of about 30-45 minutes
  - additional learning areas, play-based learning and physical activity of about 30-45 minutes.
- For students in Years 3 to 6 and Years 7 to 10, schools will provide learning programs allocated as follows:
  - Literacy: 45-60 minutes
  - Numeracy: 30-45 minutes
  - Physical activities: 30 minutes
  - Additional curriculum areas: 90 minutes
- Where appropriate, for students with disability and students in specialist schools who may be ungraded, teachers will be guided by age-equivalent daily minimum guidelines, with consideration of the student's stage of learning and individual education plan.
- English language schools and English language centres, Tech schools, KIOSC and Maths and Science Specialist Centres should offer remote learning opportunities.
- Where international students are living in a homestay arrangement, the school may need to provide additional welfare support to those students, given their particular vulnerabilities living apart from their family, in a foreign country.

### **3. Access to teaching and learning resources for students at home**

- For students who do not have access to digital technologies at home, schools will loan existing devices, including those previously provided by the Department.
- Where additional devices are required, these will be provided by the Department where schools have used a range of funding sources, including equity funding and CSE funding, to purchase equipment to be loaned to students free of charge.
- The Department will also provide network access to the extent possible for students who may not be able to connect at home.
- Schools are also able to provide hard copies of learning resources in the event of an internet outage or in cases where it is not possible for students to have any digital access.
- Schools must follow e-safety policies and procedures.

## **Health and safety measures**

This guidance applies where schools have on-site learning occurring.

### **4. Physical distancing**

- The Australian Health Protection Principal Committee (AHPPC) has advised that a 'venue density rule' of no more than one person per four square metres is not appropriate or practical in classrooms or corridors, nor maintaining 1.5 metres between students during classroom activities. The Victorian Chief Health Officer has not recommended additional physical distancing measures be put in place for senior students at schools where it is not practicable to do so.



- Close attention and proactive management must be provided so staff can physically distance. Specific attention should be paid to:
  - using spaces within the school that can support physical distancing for staff, such as libraries and vacant classrooms
  - signage and rostering so that access to physical spaces and food preparation areas can be managed
  - offices being appropriately spaced
  - the careful management of movement of adults through school reception, complemented with clear signage and access to sanitiser.
- The [Safety Management Plan for COVID-19](#) applies to all schools, and outlines the key OHS risks and links to the latest guidance. The Department's OHS Advisory Service or local OHS regional officer can assist in tailoring the plan to individual school needs. Schools should use their OHS consultation mechanisms to implement the health and safety guidance to the extent reasonably practicable, and escalate unresolved issues via eduSafe, which is being proactively monitored by the Department to provide support. Principals can also promote the [COVID-19 Health, Safety and Wellbeing Support for Schools](#) page.

## 5. Temperature checks

In order to support community awareness of the symptoms of coronavirus (COVID-19) and to help identify children displaying symptoms, all schools should undertake temperature screening of students participating in the on-site supervision program while the stay at home restrictions are in place. Further advice on these requirements is available [here](#).

## 6. Face coverings in schools

- All school-based staff must wear face coverings at school, and when travelling to and from school.
- Teachers and education support staff will not be required to wear face coverings while teaching, but those who wish to do so, can. Teachers should wear face coverings in other areas of the school when not teaching (for example, in the staffroom, on yard duty and when providing first aid or taking temperatures), and when travelling to and from school.
- Students who attend primary school for on-site supervision, including students in Prep to Year 6 who attend a P-12 school, will not be required to wear a face covering. Students who are aged 12 or over by Year 6 will not be required to wear face coverings.
- Some students and staff are exempt from these requirements, this includes students who attend specialist schools, are over the age of 12 and are unable to wear a face covering due to the nature of their disability. This also includes students or staff who have a medical condition, such as problems with their breathing, a serious skin condition on the face, a disability or a mental health condition.
- Parents/carers will be required to wear face coverings whenever they leave the house, including for school drop off and pick up. If they are travelling in a car alone, or only with members of their household, they do not need to wear a mask.
- School staff should refer to the Department [guidance for the use of personal protective equipment \(PPE\) in education](#) to determine when additional PPE is required.

## 7. Other health and safety measures

- Hand sanitiser will be available at entry points to classrooms and education will be provided on hand hygiene.

- Playground equipment can be used by students. However, students should practise hand hygiene before and after use.
- Schools should consider the necessity of using shared equipment at this time. If used, strict hand hygiene should be followed before and after use. There is no requirement for books to be placed aside for a given period after use or if loaned to students.
- Students should bring their own water bottle for use at school as students should not drink directly from drinking fountains at this time. Taps may be used to refill water bottles.
- The Department's Students Using Mobile Phones Policy remains in place. Remind staff and students to clean their phones regularly. Phones can be turned on with the COVID SAFE app activated immediately before and after school. Schools are managed environments that include records of student, staff and visitor attendance, which can support contact tracing.
- Full Health Advice is provided at Appendix 1.

## 8. Child safety, reportable conduct and duty of care in remote learning environments

- The [Child safety, reportable conduct and duty of care in remote learning environments fact sheet](#) provides advice to all staff about how to support child safety in remote learning environments.
- If school staff become aware of an incident, receive a disclosure or form a reasonable belief that a child has been abused or is at risk of abuse, they must follow all normal procedures for responding to and reporting child abuse, including the [Four Critical Actions for Schools](#).

## 9. Mental health and wellbeing

- The mental health and wellbeing of principals, teachers, school staff and students remains an important consideration.
- The Department continues to provide its full suite of services to support staff mental health and wellbeing. This includes services and resources aimed at addressing individual needs, as well as tools and supports to help guide staff through this time. Specific examples include:
  - **for principal class employees:** [Proactive Wellbeing Supervision service](#) which has been extended to include assistant principals during 2020; the [Early Intervention Program](#) for more intensive support; and all other [Principal Health and Wellbeing services](#)
  - **for all staff:** personalised over-the-phone and video counselling through the [Employee Assistance Program](#)
  - **for all staff and all people managers:** [Wellbeing Webinars](#) cover a range of relevant topics for the current situation for all staff and people managers.
- More information and the full list of supports and services can be found on the [COVID-19 Health, Safety and Wellbeing Support for Schools](#) page.
- More information on supporting students can be found at the [Mental health, wellbeing and support](#) page
- More information on supporting parents can be found at the [Managing screen time, health and wellbeing](#) page
- The Regional Health and Wellbeing contact role and supports for schools will remain in place for Terms 3 and 4. Department Regional staff will be available to attend schools, practising physical distancing.

## 10. Other school and curriculum settings

- The Victorian School of Languages (VSL) and Community Language Schools (CLSs) should provide remote learning options where possible and close for face-to-face provision.
- MARC/MACC services will cease operations until further notice.
- Outdoor education schools and camps, and leadership schools will be closed until further notice.

## 11. Camps, playgrounds and facilities

The following apply to all schools until further notice:

- school camps and excursions cannot take place
- playgrounds should not be made available for community use
- community groups are not permitted to use school facilities (indoor or outdoor).

## 12. Sport and recreation

In line with community advice, reasonable precautions are still advised to reduce the risk of coronavirus (COVID-19) transmission in the context of sport and recreation.

- Outdoor facilities are preferred for physical education and recreational play. Where indoor facilities are used, the number of students should be limited to maximise physical distancing.
- Non-contact sports should be encouraged. Hand hygiene must be practised before and after use of any sporting equipment.
- Swimming and aquatic facilities – in line with the closure of swimming pools, saunas and spas in the community, swimming pools and aquatic facilities on school grounds should close.

## 13. Visitors to schools, interschool activities and school tours

- Visitors to school grounds must be limited to those delivering or supporting essential school services and operations (e.g. student health and wellbeing services, cleaning and maintenance workers).
- Additional staff, including parent volunteers, must not attend school at this time.
- Parent-teacher information sessions and interviews must be replaced with online and video alternatives.
- Activities that involve on-site attendance by students from different educational institutions (e.g. interschool sport or interschool debating) must not take place or be replaced, where possible, with virtual alternatives.
- Schools must not conduct on-site school tours for prospective students and their families at this time.
- Visitors to school grounds must comply with physical distancing and face covering advice set out in this document, and practise good hand hygiene.

## 14. Capital and maintenance works

- Further information about schools undertaking capital or maintenance works will be provided shortly.

## 15. Cleaning

- Extended and increased cleaning arrangements have been introduced and will continue. This involves progressive cleaning throughout the day to ensure that risks of transmission are reduced for high-touch services.
- For schools under the metropolitan area-based model, the Victorian School Building Authority (VSBA) will ensure cleaning providers provide the extended and increased cleaning.
- For regional schools and metropolitan schools that are yet to transition to the area-based model, schools should arrange extended cleaning and altered schedules with their cleaning provider. Schools will be advised of additional funding for their school to undertake this cleaning.
- For cleaning and for personal hygiene product queries, please contact [cleaning@edumail.vic.gov.au](mailto:cleaning@edumail.vic.gov.au)
- In the event of a positive case of coronavirus (COVID-19) at your school that requires an 'Infectious clean', the VSBA will arrange and pay for the clean. Once advised of the need to clean, the VSBA will contact the principal as soon as possible to make arrangements,
- The clean is conducted in accordance with guidelines that have been developed with the Department of Health and Human Services.
- To assist in the event of an 'infectious clean', it is recommended that on-site school staff:
  - keep their desks neat, tidy and file important documents before they leave each day
  - take personal belongings home each day (e.g. jackets, shoes, hats, gloves and masks)
  - do not leave open food containers out in the open (e.g. tea bags, biscuits, fruit)
  - keep personal cutlery in a sealed container and not leave it out on their workstation
  - take laptop, iPad home each night.

## 16. Personal hygiene products

- For the procurement of personal hygiene products (soap, toilet paper, hand sanitiser), schools should actively monitor cleaning and hygiene supplies and reorder in advance of needing access to additional materials.
- Schools should continue to use their usual supplier: the State Purchase Contract supplier for office supplies, Complete Office Supplies (COS), or retail outlets in the first instance.
- If unavailable, schools can purchase products from their cleaning providers. If supplies are unavailable, schools should contact the Department at [cleaning@edumail.vic.gov.au](mailto:cleaning@edumail.vic.gov.au) who will connect schools with a supplier for toilet paper and soap or directly supply schools with hand sanitiser.
- See [Access to cleaning supplies and services](#) for advice on enhanced cleaning, information about personal hygiene products and [Procurement tips for high demand items](#) for advice about procurement of consumables.

## 17. School buses for on-site students:

- In rural and regional Victoria, the School Bus Program will continue to operate as normal.
- "School specials" operated by Public Transport Victoria will continue to operate as normal.
- The Students with Disabilities Transport Program (SDTP) will continue to operate state-wide for students with a disability.



- Bus operators will ensure that high-touch surfaces are regularly disinfected (handrails and seating areas).

## 18. Outside School Hours Care

- Outside School Hours Care (OSHC) on school sites in metropolitan Melbourne can provide before and after school care programs only for the children whose parents work in one of the defined continuing industries and vulnerable children.
- OSHC programs in rural and regional Victoria can continue to operate with the relevant risk-mitigation measures in place. For children whose parents cannot work from home, vulnerable children and any child with a disability.
- For all other queries, schools are advised to contact the Department's dedicated coronavirus (COVID-19) phone advice line from 8am to 6pm seven days a week, on 1800 338 663.

## 19. Access to devices

- For students who are learning from home and do not have access to digital technologies, government schools should continue to loan existing devices and support internet access to students where possible.
- Where students are learning on-site, where necessary schools should ask that devices are brought to school each day and then allow students to take devices home each day. It is important that families understand that devices remain the school's property and that devices support the school's learning and teaching program. These arrangements should apply until further notice.
- Staff using laptops and other portable devices should also be encouraged to take them home at the end of the school day and over weekends.

## 20. Next steps

- Schools should contact their SEIL to discuss any queries.
- Local consultation should continue with staff, Health and Safety Representatives and OHS Committees (if applicable). For further advice and support phone 1300 074 715 or email [safety@edumail.vic.gov.au](mailto:safety@edumail.vic.gov.au)

## 21. Contacts

- **DET COVID-19 hotline:** the Department's dedicated coronavirus (COVID-19) phone advice line on 1800 338 663 can address or appropriately refer calls on all matters. This operates from 8am to 6pm seven days a week.
- **Staff health and safety:** Further advice and support in phone 1300 074 715 or email [safety@edumail.vic.gov.au](mailto:safety@edumail.vic.gov.au)
- **International students (both onshore students and offshore students engaging in remote learning):** [international@edumail.vic.gov.au](mailto:international@edumail.vic.gov.au) or (03) 7022 1000
- **Finance:** School Financial Management Support Unit: [schools.finance.support@education.vic.gov.au](mailto:schools.finance.support@education.vic.gov.au) or (03) 7022 2222
- **Cleaning:** [cleaning@edumail.vic.gov.au](mailto:cleaning@edumail.vic.gov.au)
- **OSHC and other early childhood:** the Department's dedicated coronavirus (COVID-19) phone advice line during business hours on 1800 338 663. This operates from 8am to 6pm seven days a week.
- **Student transport:** [student.transport@edumail.vic.gov.au](mailto:student.transport@edumail.vic.gov.au) or 7022 2247

# HEALTH AND SAFETY ADVICE FOR ON-SITE SCHOOLING IN THE CONTEXT OF CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19)

The purpose of this guidance is to support schools providing on-site learning to provide safe teaching and learning environments for staff and students.

## An update from the Victorian Chief Health Officer

As Victoria's Chief Health Officer, and as a member of the Australian Health Protection Principal Committee, the health, wellbeing and safety of students and staff remains front of mind.

As you know, we have seen an increase in the number of coronavirus (COVID-19) cases across Victoria, in particular in metropolitan Melbourne, with a concerning number of these having been acquired through unknown transmission.

In order to significantly reduce the movement of more than one million students and their families across metropolitan Melbourne and to help slow the spread of coronavirus (COVID-19) across Victoria, I have advised temporarily returning to a predominately remote learning model from Term 3.

For those continuing to receive on-site provision at mainstream and specialist schools, I want to reassure you that schools remain safe places for staff and students when sensible steps as outlined in this guidance are taken. I ask all Victorian school communities to protect themselves and others by following this advice.

The available data suggests that transmission in school settings is uncommon, and the risk to staff and students in both mainstream and specialist settings remains low, with health and safety measures in place.

The vast majority of cases of coronavirus (COVID-19) observed in schools involve the student or staff member acquiring the virus in the community, and these cases have been well contained through reactive and temporary closures.

With significant testing in place, I am confident in our ability to identify and respond appropriately when a student or staff member tests positive to coronavirus (COVID-19).

Reassuringly, evidence also continues to show that children are less impacted by the virus, they tend to have milder symptoms and are less likely to develop severe illness.

I once again thank teachers, staff, students and families for their incredible efforts during these challenging times, and with your support I am confident we can once again flatten the curve of the pandemic in Victoria.

**Adj Clin Prof Brett Sutton**

Victorian Chief Health Officer

## Actions for schools

All schools, including specialist schools, should consider a variety of strategies to support physical distancing and good hygiene practices to reduce the risk of coronavirus (COVID-19) transmission within the practical limitations of a school environment. The following actions are to be considered, adapted and implemented as necessary according to the education setting and the individual needs of the staff, students and the wider school community.

### Attendance on-site

The most important action school communities can take to reduce the risk of transmission of coronavirus (COVID-19), is to ensure that any unwell staff, children and young people remain at home.

While the risk of transmission of the virus in schools is low, staff or students most at risk of severe illness should continue to individually assess appropriateness for on-site attendance with support from their medical practitioner.

As the main risk of transmission of coronavirus (COVID-19) in the school environment is between adults, it is important that visitors to school grounds is controlled, and in restricted areas limited to essential school services and operations.

- All unwell staff and students must stay home.
- Schools located in areas under 'Stay at Home' restrictions should conduct daily temperature checks of students on arrival (Following [Guidance for administering student temperature screening](#))
- Parents/carers of students with complex medical needs (including those with compromised immune systems), should seek advice from the student's medical practitioner to support decision-making about whether on-site education is suitable, noting that this advice may change depending on the status of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic in Victoria. This is in line with the [DET Health Care Needs](#) policy.
- In line with other members of the community, teachers and staff may be at greater risk of more serious illness if they are infected with coronavirus (COVID-19) if they are:
  - aged 70 years and over
  - aged 65 years and over and have chronic medical conditions
  - of any age and have a compromised immune system
  - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and are aged over 50 with chronic medical conditions.

Such teachers and staff may be considered vulnerable and should take additional care to protect themselves and consider working from home.

Schools should control visitor access on site and record contact details for all visitors.

### Hygiene

Everyone can protect themselves and prevent the spread of coronavirus (COVID-19) by continuing to practise effective hand hygiene measures. Enhanced hygiene measures should continue during on-site teaching and learning.

- All staff, students and visitors to schools should undertake regular hand hygiene, particularly on arrival to school, before and after eating, after blowing their nose, coughing, sneezing or using the toilet. This should be directed or supervised by staff where required.
- Where soap and water are not readily available, hand sanitiser should be accessible in every occupied room.

- It is recommended that students do not drink directly from drinking fountains at this time. Instead they should bring their own water bottle for use (and refilling) at school.
- Sharing of food should not occur.
- The Department of Education and Training Students Using Mobile Phones policy remains in place. Staff and students should be reminded to clean their phone regularly.
- Where relevant, ensure the highest hygiene practices amongst food handlers where these services are operating, as per the Department of Education and Training Safe Food Handling policy.
- From 11:59pm on Sunday 2 August, a face covering will be mandatory whenever you leave home, wherever you live in Victoria. See [DHHS advice on face coverings](#) for information and guidance on use of face masks in education settings. It is not compulsory for staff to wear face coverings while teaching or caring for children, as they can interfere with their ability to clearly communicate with children. While teaching or caring for children, Staff can choose to wear masks face coverings if they wish.

### School arrival and departure

As the main risk of introducing coronavirus (COVID-19) to the school environment is from adults, close proximity between adult members of the school community should be avoided, particularly during school drop-off and pick-up.

- Schools should encourage staff and parents to observe physical distancing measures by not congregating in areas inside or around the school.
- Local school arrangements to practise physical distancing and minimise interaction within the school and at school entry points may include:
  - multiple entry and exit points or staggered drop off and pick-up times to reduce the number of adults congregating at the school gate or outside classrooms
  - signs at the school gate to encourage 1.5 metres physical distancing between adults
  - if additional space is required to support parents to physically distance at drop off and pick up, allowing parents to enter school grounds for a short period around these times
- Encourage non-contact greetings.

### Considerations for teaching and learning environments

Density restrictions of one person per 4m<sup>2</sup> in classrooms and corridors, and maintaining a physical distance of 1.5 metres between students during classroom activities will not always be practical in education settings. Physical distancing is most important between adults.

Reducing mixing between different cohorts (either classes or year levels) is recommended as a precautionary measure to minimise risk of spread of transmission and aid containment in the rare event of a confirmed case of coronavirus (COVID-19) on site.

- Promote fresh air flow indoors and maximise use of outdoor learning areas or environments with enhanced ventilation where possible and as practical depending on weather conditions.
- Mixing of staff and students between rooms should be avoided where possible.
- Local school arrangements to reduce mixing between students and staff from different classes or year levels outside of the learning environment may continue to be of use as precautionary measures and include:
  - staggering of break times and separating different classes or year levels when outdoors
  - considering the order and pace in which classrooms are vacated



- organising student traffic in corridors and locker bays (e.g. dividing the corridor for traffic direction).
- Where multiple staff are required in a classroom, remind staff to maintain physical distancing from each other as much as practical.

### Considerations for offices and staff facilities

As the greatest risk of transmission of coronavirus (COVID-19) in the school environment is between adults, close proximity between staff should be avoided where possible and especially in offices and staff rooms.

- Workstations should be spaced out as much as possible, and the number of staff in offices limited. This might mean re-locating staff to other spaces (e.g. library or unused classrooms).
- In line with other workplaces across Victoria, remind staff to maintain physical distance from each other as much as possible in the reception, staff room and offices.

### Cleaning and facilities management

Environmental cleaning, coupled with regular hand hygiene, remains important to reduce the risk of coronavirus (COVID-19) transmission.

- Continued extension of routine environmental cleaning, including progressive cleaning throughout the day to ensure that risks of transmission are reduced for high-touch services. See [Access to cleaning supplies and services](#).
- Schools should consider the necessity of using shared items or equipment at this time. Such items may include shared computers, class sets of teaching and learning materials, musical instruments etc. Hand hygiene immediately before and after use of shared equipment is recommended. Risk can be further minimised by users of high-touch shared equipment wiping items down where appropriate, for example using a disinfectant/detergent wipe or cloth.

### Provision of routine care and first aid

Physical distancing is not practical when providing direct care. In this situation standard precautions, including hand hygiene, are important for infection control.

- Standard precautions are advised when coming in to contact with someone for the purpose of providing routine care and/or assistance (for example, the use of gloves for nappy-changing, toileting, feeding).
- Standard precautions as per the Department of Education and Training Infectious Disease policy and related policies should be adopted when providing first aid. For example, use gloves and apron when dealing with blood or body fluids/substances.
- Always wash hands with soap and water or use a hand sanitiser before and after performing routine care or first aid.

### Management of an unwell student or staff member

It is important that any staff member or student who becomes unwell while at school gets tested and returns home. While it is unlikely that a staff member or student who is unwell with flu-like symptoms will have coronavirus (COVID-19) there are some sensible steps schools can take while a student awaits collection by a parent or carer as a precaution.

- Staff and students experiencing compatible symptoms with coronavirus (COVID-19), such as fever, cough or sore throat, should be isolated in an appropriate space with suitable supervision and students should be collected by a parent/carer as soon as possible. Urgent medical attention should be sought where indicated. It is not suitable for an unwell student to travel home unsupervised.

- Where staff or students are experiencing compatible symptoms with coronavirus (COVID-19), the important actions to follow include hand hygiene, physical distance and putting on a surgical mask (both staff and student where appropriate). See [DET guidance for the use of Personal Protective Equipment in education](#).
- In the context of schools supporting students with complex health needs, if the care of an unwell child or young person is to be prolonged (for example, because it will take some hours for a parent to collect a child) and maintaining distance is not practical when providing supervision or direct care; surgical mask, gloves, gown and eye protection are recommended to be worn by the staff member. See [DET guidance for the use of Personal Protective Equipment in education](#).
- Face masks should not be used in situations where an individual is unable to safely or practically tolerate a mask (for example, a child with complex medical needs including existing respiratory needs. Children who are two years or younger must not wear face coverings as they are a choking and suffocation risk).
- Health care plans, where relevant, should be updated to provide additional advice on monitoring and identification of the unwell child in the context of coronavirus (COVID-19).
- If a staff member is unsure whether a student is unwell it is advisable in the first instance to contact the parent/carer to discuss any concerns about the health status of the student, and taking a precautionary approach, request the parent/carer to collect their child if concerns remain.
- Staff or students experiencing compatible symptoms with coronavirus (COVID-19) should be encouraged to seek the advice of their healthcare professional who can advise on next steps. Where staff or students have been tested, they must isolate until they receive their test result. Staff and students are generally not required to present a medical certificate stating they are fit to return to an education setting after a period of illness, however staff and students should not return until symptoms resolve. Staff continue to be required to present a medical certificate in accordance with personal leave policy for periods of absence on personal leave.
- Follow cleaning guidance according to the situation of the case. If a student spreads droplets (for example by sneezing, coughing or vomiting), clean surfaces immediately with disinfectant wipes while wearing gloves.

### **Managing a suspected or confirmed case of coronavirus (COVID-19)**

The Department of Education and Training has comprehensive procedures in place with the Department of Health and Human Services to manage suspected or confirmed cases of coronavirus (COVID-19) in schools.

- Contact the Department of Education and Training by calling 1800 126 126 to report an IRIS incident alert if a student or staff member is a confirmed case. You do not need to take further action, until directed to do so.
- The Department of Education and Training will notify WorkSafe on behalf of the affected school.
- WorkSafe may be in contact with the affected school to ensure the school is following the health and safety guidance outlined in this document, and has implemented their COVID-19 Safety Management Plan. Please contact the OHS Advisory Service (1300 074 715) for support in managing occupational health and safety matters.