

Protocols for Victorian Independent schools in relation to COVID-19 communication and decision-making

These protocols were prepared in consultation between Independent Schools Victoria, representatives of Catholic education, and the Victorian Department of Education and Training.

They outline processes in the event schools or the Department of Health and Human Services become aware of a confirmed or suspected case of COVID-19.

School has query about possible case

1. Any Independent school that has a query about a possible case where a student or staff has been confirmed with COVID-19, or who has been in close contact with someone who is confirmed with COVID-19, should contact the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) for advice on: 1300 651 160.
2. DHHS will advise the Department of Education and Training (DET) as appropriate so that DET can liaise with Independent Schools Victoria (ISV), which will provide the school with support if appropriate.
3. DHHS will provide any additional specific advice based on their assessment of the particular circumstances and will report that advice both to the school and to the DET Principal Medical Advisor (PMA). The PMA will inform ISV, which will provide support to the affected school.

School aware of confirmed case

1. If a school becomes aware of a student or staff member who has been diagnosed with COVID-19, they will immediately inform DHHS.
2. DHHS will advise DET as appropriate so that DET can liaise with ISV, which will provide the school with support.
3. DHHS will provide additional specific advice based on their assessment of the particular circumstances and will report that advice both to the school and to the DET Principal Medical Advisor (PMA). The PMA will inform ISV.
4. Where a school contacts ISV prior to contacting DHHS, they will be directed to contact DHHS for advice in the first instance.

DHHS aware of case involving school

1. If DHHS becomes aware of a student or staff member who has been diagnosed with COVID-19, the decision about whether to inform the relevant school and any members of the community will be made case by case in the interests of public health.
2. DHHS will advise DET as appropriate so that DET can work with ISV, which will provide the school with support if appropriate.
3. DHHS will provide any additional specific advice based on their assessment of the particular circumstances and will report that advice both to the school and to the DET Principal Medical

Advisor (PMA). The PMA will inform ISV and DET will provide support to the affected sector body if appropriate. ISV will provide support to the school where required.

Overarching protocols

Testing

1. If schools become aware of any testing of staff or students due to being a suspected case, they should contact the DHHS.
2. Unless advised by DHHS, schools should not advise their community of any testing being undertaken or reports of suspected cases.

Self-Isolation

1. DHHS advice is that students or staff members should self-isolate from the school if the following applies:
 - The person is a confirmed case of novel coronavirus
 - The person is a close contact with a confirmed case of novel coronavirus in the past 14 days.
2. This advice will take the form of a directive to the school from the Chief Health Officer (CHO). DHHS will then advise DET, which will advise ISV.

School Closure

1. Where a student or staff member is confirmed with COVID-19, DHHS may advise that a school be closed for 24 hours to enable contact tracing to occur.
2. This advice will take the form of a directive to the school from DHHS. DHHS will advise DET, who will liaise with ISV so that appropriate support can be provided.
3. ISV will support the school in developing communication to be provided to students, parents and close community members. The school will inform their students, parents and close community through their usual communication channels, including their website. ISV will liaise with media, in close cooperation with the individual school as appropriate.
4. The school should make every effort to provide continuity of learning.
5. During the one-day closure, DHHS will conduct contact tracing to identify whether the closure period needs to be extended.
6. DHHS will then advise as to any extension of closure. ISV will support the school in developing communication materials to provide to the school community.
7. DHHS will work with the school regarding the timing of re-opening of the school.