

OPTIONS FOR SCHOOL COUNCIL MEETINGS

This factsheet provides information for school councils on how they can hold meetings when participants are unable to attend in person.

MEETING REQUIREMENTS

School councils may use telephone or video conferencing to conduct school council meetings, including the first meeting after the poll to appoint community members and elect office bearers. For a school council to make a valid decision, the meeting must have a quorum and members must attend either in person or by video or telephone.

The school council's public reporting meeting cannot be conducted remotely. It is recommended that school councils reschedule any planned public reporting meetings until they can be physically attended by the school community.

USING WEBEX FOR OFF-SITE SCHOOL COUNCIL MEETINGS

Webex is the videoconferencing solution provided by the Department. Use this reliable tool to conduct your school council meetings remotely.

Using Webex requires:

- The principal, as Executive Officer to set up school council meetings and send email invites to council members.
- School councillors to download and install the Webex Meetings App on the device of their choice (desktop computer, laptop or mobile device).
- If a school councillor does not have access to a device, they can dial in using a mobile phone or a landline.

Accessing Webex Meetings

The Webex Meetings app can be installed on computers and mobile devices, allowing easy access to videoconferencing anywhere, anytime. Choose the download option that best suits your needs from the options below to join your scheduled school council meetings.

Option 1: Download Webex Meetings for PC

1. Download the Webex Meetings app at webex.com/downloads.html
2. Double click the 'wevexapp.msi' file you downloaded
3. The Webex Meetings set up wizard will launch. Follow the instructions to set up.
4. Once installed, the app will launch automatically.
5. To open the app once installed, double click the Webex Meetings icon on your desktop.

Option 2: Download Webex Meetings for iOS

1. Download the Webex Meetings app at webex.com/downloads.html
2. Open your downloads folder. Double-click the 'webexapp.dmg' file
3. Drag and drop the Webex Meetings icon into your applications folder
4. Open your applications folder and double-click the icon to start using the app.
5. When you have finished installing the app, drag and drop the app icon into your Dock for easy access.

Option 3: Webex Meetings for mobile devices

1. Download the Meetings App for your mobile device at webex.com/downloads.html or from the AppStore or Google Play and follow the instructions to add the app to your device.

Joining a Webex Meeting

You will receive an email with your meeting details, or, if you don't have an email address, the meeting information can be sent to you via other means, such as a text message. You can join your scheduled Webex Meetings in several ways:

- Clicking the green 'Join' button on the popup reminder from the Meetings app on your desktop or mobile device (Note: the join button will not be available until the host has started the meeting).
- Entering the 9-digit meeting number and meeting password into the relevant fields when prompted on the Webex Meetings app.
- If you have been invited by email, joining information is provided at the bottom of the meeting invite. You can join the meeting:
 - via your internet browser using the meeting link contained in the email
 - by accessing educic.webex.com and entering the 9-digit meeting number and meeting password into the relevant fields when prompted
 - via phone (audio only) by calling +61-3-9070-6482 and entering the 9-digit meeting number you have been provided with and following the automated joining instructions.

TIPS FOR RUNNING ONLINE MEETINGS

Online meetings can be difficult to run, especially with people who are not used to participating online. There are a few tips which can help people adapt quickly, feel included and comfortable contributing and feel they have effectively contributed to decision making.

Preparation for the meeting.

- It is important to be clear on the role of the Executive Officer, the Chairperson and other councillors.
- Be clear on what you have to do to prepare - make sure everyone has the equipment they require, that it is working and that they know how to use it.
- Formulate an appropriate agenda. Touch base with the participants individually to get agenda items.
- Ensure any pre-meeting reading is distributed at least 5 working days before meetings.

At the meeting

The Chairperson needs to be clear on what is to be achieved at the meeting and make sure all voices are heard. Going 'round the table', to provide everyone with the opportunity to speak, gives everyone a chance to contribute and can overcome any discomfort with the new format.

Use meeting protocols to facilitate the smooth running of the meeting. They include:

- Always use a headset
- Use mute when you are not speaking
- Allow the meeting host to manage the meeting
- The host should establish the way in which everyone can participate, some examples are:
 - Use visual clues when you want to speak, eg. raise your hand
 - If only using audio, use the chat feature to ask to speak
- For each agenda item, the host asks participants in sequence to speak and follows up at the end for any further questions
- If the quality of the video conference is poor, turn off video and continue with just audio
- If the host is recording the meeting, notify all attendees and seek agree prior to commencing the recording.

Follow up

- Ensure minutes are circulated.
- Follow up any questions.
- De-brief with people you feel may not have contributed because they were uncomfortable with the format.

QUESTIONS?

Please contact the School Operations and Governance Unit on 7022 1343 or 7022 1345 if you have any questions about information provided in this factsheet or school council governance more broadly.

ACCESSIBILITY INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

Learn how to make your information accessible to everyone

On this page

- What you need to know
- What is accessibility?
- Complying with accessibility guidelines
- Principles and rules for creating accessible content
- Accessibility tools and resources

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

The Department is committed to ensuring information and resources are available to the widest possible audience. This includes people with disabilities and impairments, as well as those from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

WHAT IS ACCESSIBILITY?

Accessibility is an inclusive practice based on the idea that information should be equally available to all people, regardless of their physical or developmental abilities or impairments.

Examples of disabilities that digital accessibility affects include:

- visual: blindness, low vision or colour blindness
- auditory: deafness or hard of hearing
- physical: limitations of muscular control
- speech: difficulty with the loudness and clarity of a person's voice
- cognitive: disorders of the nervous system.

Making content accessible means more people have the chance to use the information and resources provided by the Department.

For more information, see: [Web Accessibility Initiative \(WAI\)](#)

COMPLYING WITH ACCESSIBILITY GUIDELINES

In line with the Victorian Government, the Department is committed to improving the accessibility of its digital content and media to comply with Level AA of the W3C Web Content Accessibility Guidelines. These guidelines are widely regarded as the international standard for web-accessible content.

To view the guidelines, see: [W3C Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 2.0](#)

We are all responsible for producing accessible content, which includes everything from creating websites to producing documents with Microsoft Office and Adobe PDF.

PRINCIPLES AND RULES FOR CREATING ACCESSIBLE CONTENT

The Department's approach to achieving accessibility is guided by the following principles and rules.

Accessible by design

Content should be created in ways that support and maximise accessibility. Staff must consider the varied needs of their users and plan for accessibility from the outset.

Meet and maintain WCAG 2.0 AA

All sites created must meet and maintain all WCAG 2.0 AA conformance requirements.

Provide an alternative version of PDF documents

All PDF documents must have an alternative accessible version of the document available in the same location to ensure the largest possible audience can access the information. The equivalent version must be prepared in a way in which all meaningful text, images, diagrams and references found in the original PDF document are accessible.

Take active measures to eliminate discrimination

The Equal Opportunity Act 2012 (Vic) requires organisations to take reasonable and proportionate measures to eliminate discrimination and to actively address any potential causes of discrimination, regardless of whether a complaint has been made.

Progressive enhancement

When building and managing websites, site owners should use the principle of progressive enhancement, and test for accessibility conformance across multiple browsers and operating system functions.

For more information, see: [Accessibility Policy](#)

Assistive technology

Assistive technology is a term applied to equipment or devices to aid people with disabilities, giving them access to information and resources they might otherwise find hard to access.

Examples of assistive technologies include:

- screen readers: used by people who are blind and visually impaired to read textual visual information through synthesised speech or Braille
- screen magnifiers: used by people with visual, perceptual and physical print disabilities to change text font, size, spacing, colour and synchronisation with speech to better improve the visual readability of rendered text and images
- text-to-speech: used by people with cognitive, language and learning disabilities to convey text into synthetic speech
- speech recognition software: used by people who have physical disabilities.
- alternative keyboards: used by people with certain physical disabilities to simulate the keyboard (e.g. head pointers, single switches and other input devices).

Screen readers

Screen reader technology is software that is used by people with visual impairments to navigate a computer. The screen reader software reads out content to the user as they keyboard-operate their computer.

For this reason, it is important that websites use correct HTML coding techniques, as screen readers rely heavily on good HTML mark-up to correctly access and announce web content.

In practical terms, this means the use of good headings, application of ALT text on images, descriptions, correct use of tables and correct declaration of functionality are important.

ACCESSIBILITY TOOLS AND RESOURCES

There are resources available to help you ensure you are creating accessible information.

Microsoft Accessibility Checker tool

Microsoft includes the Accessibility Checker tool as a standard part of its Office Word, Excel and PowerPoint programs. The tool can generate a report of accessibility issues. The tool explains why you should fix these issues and how to correct them.

To learn how to use the tool and for more information, see: [Use the Accessibility Checker on your Windows desktop to find accessibility issues](#)

Free screen reader application

A NonVisual Desktop Access screen reader is available for you to download, if required.

To download this resource, see: [NVDA](#)

Making your website accessible

The accessibility team, situated in the Department's IT team maintains a collaboration site of practical information to help you ensure your content is accessible.

To access the site, see: [Making Your Site Accessible](#)

Guides for creating accessible documents

These guides can help you check the accessibility of documents.

- [Preparing Word Documents](#)
- [Preparing Excel Documents](#)
- [Preparing PowerPoint Presentations](#)

Guides for creating accessible resources

These guides can help you create accessible digital resources and documents:

- [Making Your Sites Accessible](#)
- [Making Forms Accessible](#)
- [Making Images Accessible](#)
- [Making Multimedia Accessible](#)
- [Making Navigation Accessible](#)
- [Making Page Structure Accessible](#)
- [Making Tables Accessible](#)
- [Making Visual Design Accessible](#)

ANNUAL SCHOOL COUNCIL SELF-ASSESSMENT REQUIREMENTS

To :

Principals

School Council Presidents

School councils should be aware that changes to the annual assessment requirement for school councils came into effect on 26 November 2019. This change was confirmed under Division 2 of Part 5 of the *Public Administration Act 2004*.

All school councils are now required to assess their performance annually. A [school council self-assessment tool](#) is available to help school councils meet this obligation.

It is recommended that school councils use the self-assessment tool following the completion of their annual election process.

Actions required

Principals are required to:

1. inform school council of the new requirement to assess their performance annually
2. table the [school council self-assessment tool](#) for consideration at a school council meeting
3. play the new induction video, available on the [School councils](#) web page, which includes information about the Improving School Governance training package and free face-to-face training. This will support induction of new members and assist to develop a common understanding of school council roles and functions.

How assessment can improve your school council

- School councils play a key role in Victorian government schools. Effective councils have a wide range of skills, expertise and knowledge to support good governance and provide the best possible educational outcomes for students.
- By using the school council self-assessment tool early in the life of the new council, a council will be able to assess its strengths and identify areas for development and training.
- It is good governance practice for a school council to regularly review its operation and effectiveness. This can be done by revisiting the tool, or parts of it, later in the year.
- Compliance with self-assessment ensures that enhanced, consistent and high-quality governance arrangements apply to all Victorian government school councils.
- Self-assessment helps school councils in their planning and supports the four-year strategic planning cycle and production of the School Strategic Plan, Annual Implementation Plan and the Annual Report to the school council.

Self-assessment is recommended following the annual election process.

Each school council must assess their performance annually.

The school council should regularly review its operation and effectiveness. It might then revisit the [school council self-assessment tool](#), or parts of it, later in the year.

Action Due: Tuesday, June 30, 2020

SCHOOL OPERATIONS

Advice on the operational aspects to transition to a model of flexible and remote learning

On this page

- On-Site Operations
- Remote Operations
- Platforms and Applications
- Employee Health, Safety and Wellbeing
- Facilities
- Program for Students with Disabilities (PSD) Guidelines
- Corporate Support
- More information

SCHOOL OPERATIONS

This School Operations Guidance page provides advice on the operational aspects to transition to a model of flexible and remote learning and support for students.

It is complementary to the advice and information found at:

- the School Policy & Advisory Guide ([SPAG](#)) and [HRWeb](#). These continue to be the primary source of policy and guidance and common sense should be exercised in contextualising as necessary.
- The Department coronavirus ([COVID-19](#)) and [FAQ](#) sites, where various questions and responses have been recorded and are updated daily.

All government schools will continue to provide on-site programs for students who are not able to be supervised at home, and for whom no other arrangements can be made during regular school operating hours.

All government schools will also provide on-site programs for vulnerable students whose health and safety would be at risk if they are without access to a suitable learning environment during regular school operating hours.

ON-SITE OPERATIONS

Staffing for on-site learning

On-site provision will be available at all government schools, but only for students in the categories listed above, for the purpose of providing continuity of teaching, learning and support.

The learning program delivered on-site will be the same as the learning program delivered to students undertaking remote learning. Students attending onsite will engage in remote learning with their usual classroom teacher under the supervision of staff onsite.

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 possible, school leadership should be represented on-site. However, in cases where school leaders are medically vulnerable (see below) they should not attend on-site and should have arrangements to lead remotely.

Principals will need to ensure that there are sufficient staff on-site to run the school's teaching and learning programs and to continue essential school operations and should refer to the Planning Attendance section below to assist assessment of staffing numbers.

As such, principals should consult with their staff to identify those willing and able to work on-site, either on an ongoing or rostered basis. This should take place in the context of the consultative arrangements in place at each school to ensure staff are consulted on, and have input into, the ways that work may be organised and allocated.

Staff who are medically vulnerable or live with a medically vulnerable person must not work on-site. Staff should seek their own medical advice to determine if they are medically vulnerable.

Staffing requirements may vary between schools and may change over time as attendance varies, and further guidance is released about physical distancing measures.

If principals are not able to identify sufficient school staff willing and able to undertake teaching and supervisory duties, then willing and able Casual Relief Teachers (CRT) will be engaged.

Staff working to provide on-site learning, including teachers and education support, will not visit or work in students' homes.

Maintaining staff and student safety for on-site learning

Maintaining staff and student safety while on the school site requires adhering to physical distancing rules developed in consultation with the Victorian Chief Health Officer (CHO). Full guidance on physical distancing and other transmission reduction measures for coronavirus (COVID-19) can be found on the [Department of Health and Human Services website](#).

Current Department of Education and Training advice can be found on the [Department website](#).

The following the measures should be applied.

- Class sizes should be no more than 10 students. Principals should plan for overall staffing on a minimum ratio of 1:8 to ensure staff are available to assist their colleagues with breaks, relief and other support where required.
- Physical distancing will be implemented in classrooms to the extent feasible.
- Hand sanitiser will be available at the entry points to classrooms, and education will be provided on hand hygiene.
- To ensure consistency with physical distancing measures, students and families will not be permitted to congregate at the school gate before or after school and will be required to maintain 1.5 metres between persons, as far as is practicable on entering and leaving the school grounds.
- Unwell staff and children will be excluded from attending.
- Clear information will be provided to staff and students about covering their cough with a tissue or inner elbow to prevent the spread of germs and disposal of tissues.
- 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.
- If principals are not able to identify sufficient school staff willing and able to undertake teaching and supervisory duties, then willing and able Casual Relief Teachers (CRT) will be engaged.

- 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.
- When determining the working arrangements that enable the transition to remote and flexible learning, the consultative arrangements in place at each school must be used to ensure staff are consulted on, and have input into, the ways that work may be organised and allocated.

While they are expected to work from home where they can, staff, including principals, teachers and support staff, will have access to school sites for professional purposes and must follow these guidelines:

- meetings involving school staff should be held remotely
- avoid sharing office space
- use hygiene supplies and continue to practice good hand washing and cough-sneeze hygiene
- unwell staff members must remain or return home
- windows are open to promote air flow where possible
- physical distancing of at least 1.5 metres is followed.

It is vital that schools are aware of any health issues relating to any students who will be attending on-site (for example, Anaphylaxis) and that there are school staff present at all times who are suitably qualified in first aid to respond to any health concerns or injuries or incidents.

If there is no staff member trained in Anaphylaxis response able to attend on-site, then an anaphylactic child should not attend schools for those days.

Schools should check existing student health records for all on-site students and discuss any concerns with parents/carers.

Find further information on [first aid requirements](#).

Find further information on [asthma requirements](#).

Find further information requirements in relation to [anaphylaxis](#).

Outside school hours care (OSHC)

Outside school hours care (OSHC) and school holiday services are still able to operate at this time for all students, where the provider is willing and able. This is based on advice from the Australian Health Protection Principal Committee (AHPPC) and the Victorian Chief Health Officer.

Where regular and extended OSHC services are offered during Term 2 these can be made available for all students.

Planning attendance – enrolment of students for on-site provision

Principals should seek an application from parents and carers each week of their intention to send their child to school the following week. Schools should obtain this indication by Thursday of the preceding week.

A form template [On site attendance form](#) and [On site Attendance Guidelines](#) are available to support schools with this process.

Recording attendance

Schools must continue to keep a record of school attendance and absences. This applies both to students who are undertaking their learning remotely and to students who are attending on-site learning and teaching programs.

More detailed information on how schools will be required to record student attendance is available on: [Attendance recording advice for remote and flexible learning](#).

Visitors to schools

Schools should continue to monitor those entering their grounds and limit entry only to those who have an essential need to be there such as school staff, external support services, cleaners and essential facilities and maintenance staff, along with contractors undertaking capital and other maintenance related works.

Schools should also consider and appropriately manage entry on an 'as needs' basis to students who may be approved to attend classes, assessment and support processes (e.g. for the Program for Students with Disabilities) or to collect or drop off books or learning materials (in line with the processes that have been communicated to parents) and consistent with broader community social distancing measures that may be in place at any one time.

Student transport

Transport arrangements, as an essential service, will continue to operate for students attending on-site. Social distancing rules should be followed on school buses and other shared transport to and from school.

- In rural and regional Victoria, the School Bus Program will continue to operate for students attending school on-site.
- "School specials" operated by Public Transport Victoria will continue to operate for students attending school on-site.
- The Students with Disabilities Transport Program (SDTP) will continue to operate state-wide for students with a disability attending school on-site.
- Physical distancing guidelines will be followed on school buses, at bus interchange locations, and other shared transport services to and from school.
- Bus Operators will ensure that high-touch surfaces are regularly disinfected (handrails and seating areas).

The Students with Disability Transport Program (SDTP) will also continue to operate. To help prevent the spread of the coronavirus (COVID-19), operators are ensuring that buses and surface touch-points are disinfected (handrails and seating areas).

REMOTE OPERATIONS

Staff working from home

Sufficient staff will be required on-site to run each school's on-site learning program and to continue essential school operations. Where staff are not required on-site to do their work, they should work from home, consistent with the Government direction.

Principals and leadership teams will, with consultation, manage arrangements for teachers, education support and staff working remotely.

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

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

Working alone or in isolation from others presents hazards of which employees should be made aware, including impacts upon 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](#). Further information can also be found on the Department's coronavirus (COVID-19) [Intranet page](#).

Duty of care and child safety

The parent or carer is responsible for students' general safety at home or elsewhere.

Principals and school staff continue to owe a duty of care to take reasonable steps to prevent foreseeable harm (physical and psychological) to students who are learning from home. Mandatory reporters' obligations under law require that 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](#).

Communicating with your school community

Schools should develop a plan to inform parents of preferred methods of communication and how and when teachers will communicate with students and parents/carers.

Plans should give consideration to parent communication needs, including parents with a disability (e.g. deaf or hard of hearing) or from non-English speaking backgrounds.

Plans should outline arrangements for conducting essential parent and student meetings at the school (if required) in the context of social distancing including:

- Student Support Services appointments
- Student Support Group meetings
- how and when students and parents/carers will be able to contact teachers and/or the school to seek support
- contacts for other providers who support student health and wellbeing in your school (e.g. GP in Schools, NDIS-funded providers).

School IT equipment

Please leave power on at all times. Core information and communications technology (ICT) equipment must be left powered on at all times of the day and night, including weekends and school and public holidays. This includes:

- VicSmart router
- eduSTAR wireless LAN controller and core switch
- CASES/eduSTAR servers
- WebEx equipment
- Polycom units
- cooling for core ICT equipment.

Supporting technology

Principals should contact their Regional Service Delivery Manager to discuss any additional support required.

More information about the TSSP and contact information for Service Delivery Managers can be found in the [TSSP Schools Guide](#).

PLATFORMS AND APPLICATIONS

Schools that already have platforms and applications that support learning from home should keep using technologies if they remain fit-for-purpose and have been assessed as compliant with legislation and Department policies

This applies whether the technologies:

- have been provided by the Department, for example, WebEx, ClickView (note that all Department-provided platforms and applications have already been assessed as compliant)
- have been separately implemented by the school, for example, Compass, SeeSaw, Caremonkey.

Technologies provided by the Department

Schools that are not currently equipped with technologies should access Department-provided platforms and applications, which include:

- WebEx – videoconferencing
- 0365 (Microsoft) – learning management
- G Suite for education (Google) – learning management
- FUSE
- ClickView
- Stile Education
- Minecraft: Education Edition (Microsoft)

Your school technician can help you to set up these technologies, and you can use the support resources on the [Learning from Home](#) website to provide access to teachers and students. The Department has existing information packs for schools and parents for all Department-provided software available at [Using Digital Technologies to Support Learning and Teaching](#).

- The Victorian Government has made a clear commitment that every student who needs access to a device or the network will be provided with access to a digital device and network access to support learning from home.
- For students who do not have access to digital technologies at home, schools can loan existing devices.
- Schools can use a range of funding sources, including equity funding and Camps, Sports, Excursions funding, to purchase equipment that can then be loaned to students free-of-charge.
- The Government will loan more than 6000 laptops and tablets to students who do not have access to digital technologies. Schools will also distribute other classroom devices as required to ensure all students have access to a laptop or tablet.
- Priority for the SIM cards and dongles will be given to senior secondary students, students in bushfire-affected areas, and families who cannot afford an internet connection at home.

- The Department is examining ways to provide network access for students who may not be able to connect at home.
- Schools will also be 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.

Third-party technologies

Schools should not 'onboard' new third-party technologies at this time, particularly those with videoconferencing functions. This is because of significant challenges associated with appropriately managing privacy, security and safety.

Schools should contact digital.learning@edumail.vic.gov.au for support if they:

- are experiencing challenges in meeting compliance requirements for existing technologies in their school
- believe they have a technology gap that cannot be met by the technologies provided by the Department.

EMPLOYEE HEALTH, SAFETY AND WELLBEING

The full suite of employee health, safety and wellbeing services can be found on the [intranet](#).

Principal health and wellbeing

The following [Principal Health and Wellbeing Strategy services](#) are being maintained:

- **Proactive Wellbeing Supervision (1300 326 941)** Offers coaching to support principals to be effective wellbeing leaders, and support the health and wellbeing of their school staff within the current context.
- **Principal Mentor Program (8199 2986)** will be increasing its capacity to cater for higher demand, which matches current principals with a highly skilled recently retired principal.
- **Early Intervention Program (1300 090 924)** will be making proactive calls to all principals accessing the program. Case management and psychological treatment services are available by phone and video.
- **Principal Health Checks (8396 0266)** are now available via your own personal general practitioner.

Employee Assistance Program (EAP)

The EAP is a free and strictly confidential 24/7 independent counselling service. It is available for up to four sessions for Department employees (and school council employees such as casual relief teachers) and their immediate family members (18 years old or over).

To make an appointment at a preferred time and location phone: 1300 361 008.

Occupational Health and Safety (OHS)

The Department is providing tailored support to principals and staff to manage the risks of coronavirus (COVID-19) in Term 2. There will be two streams to this work.

- **Centrally managed consultation and risk management** – will be focused on relaying the latest health and safety advice to schools, triaging [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) questions](#) for escalated resolution, and triaged support to schools for issues that are unable to be resolved locally.
- **Locally managed consultation and risk management** – principals should focus on engagement with their local Health and Safety Representatives (HSRs) and OHS Committees to enable implementation at their sites of the latest health and safety advice.

School Councils

School council meetings must be held remotely by video or teleconferencing.

School councils are required to meet eight times a year and at least once a term in order to make decisions which impact on the effective governing of schools.

With the transition to remote learning, school councils still need to make decisions that will support this model of school operation. Meetings should be focussed on key items, such as financial matters that require school council endorsement, and operational matters that fall within the remit of school council, such as the endorsement of the Annual Report and Strategic Plan.

Principals, as Executive Officers, are required to ensure meetings have appropriate video and/or teleconferencing facilities (such as Webex) to enable attendance to achieve a quorum for the meeting to proceed. Please note, for a school council to make a valid decision, the meeting must have a quorum. Proxies cannot be used, nor can decisions be ratified by email or any other electronic means.

FACILITIES

School playground equipment

If access to your school's playground equipment, such as climbing frames, swings and slides, is **controlled and not open to the public** this equipment can remain open for student use.

Children and young people should be supervised to wash their hands before and after using playground equipment.

To further minimise risk, schools should consider strategies to avoid mixing between classroom groups, such as limiting use of school playground equipment to one group of children at a time and rotating use of playground equipment between groups on a weekly basis.

Schools where their play equipment is **accessible to the public outside of school hours** should remain closed to students during school hours. In addition, principals are advised to close the play equipment where possible or alternatively tape up the equipment. Signage should be placed on the play equipment prohibiting use.

Cleaning

For information about routine cleaning, additional cleaning and personal consumables please see the Department [website](#).

Capital and maintenance works

Some schools may have construction work underway that requires workers to access specific areas, which are designated work sites and subject to specific OHS requirements including in relation to coronavirus (COVID-19) measures.

- For VSBA-led works these works generally do not need a school representative to be on site. As per the current process of conducting work during school holidays, access to the required areas can be prearranged between the school and the contractor.
- For VSBA-led capital works projects, please contact the VSBA Project Manager.
- For school-led projects, the school can choose to put them on hold or continue as much as they are able.

Where possible, schools should continue their regular grounds and other maintenance routine to maintain the site and assist in the control of vermin and pests.

Drinking water

Students should bring their own water bottle for use (and refilling) at school. Students and staff should not drink directly from drinking fountains at this time.

Emergency Management Plans

The Emergency Management Plans (EMPs) remain applicable for confirmed coronavirus (COVID-19) cases that directly impact on schools or other critical events. Principals should continue to report and seek advice from the Incident Support & Operations Centre (1800 126 126) for any incident that is impacting upon their school wellbeing of students or staff. Further information can be found on-line for [Managing Incidents](#).

Principals should ensure that:

- principal and emergency contact details, including mobile phone numbers, are accurate in both eduPay and CASES21
- school leadership team has a contact list of regional and central office staff (SEIL, Manager Operations and Emergency Management, Incident Support and Operations Centre etc)
- school leadership team has copies of the school's EMP, including on their phone for quick retrieval.
- school leadership team has student/family contact details electronically and in hard copy.
- school leadership team has offsite/home contact details for all staff (teaching and support)
- school leadership has the ability to contact any contractors
- systems for diversion or answering school telephone/s are implemented where appropriate.

PROGRAM FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES (PSD) GUIDELINES

Program for Students with Disabilities (PSD) guidelines have been updated in response to coronavirus (COVID-19) to provide schools with greater flexibility in application timelines and arrangements for meetings and assessments.

In addition to the July application date, PSD applications can be submitted through to 18 September 2020 and 23 October 2020. Further details are in the PSD operational guidelines for schools 2021, available from the [PSD Guidelines](#).

Transition from an English language school

Schools are encouraged to work with their local English Language School or Centre to discuss arrangements for students who were due to transition from an intensive English language program at the start of Term 2. Arrangements should prioritise a student's health and wellbeing as well as continuity of learning and may include an extension of stay in the English Language School or Centre to ensure the student is as well supported as possible.

CORPORATE SUPPORT

The following corporate support will continue to be available to schools and will be supplemented as required:

Service Desk

For queries relating to ICT, HR, Finance and CASES21

By phone: 1800 641 943, open from 8.00am to 6.00pm, Monday to Friday.

Legal Services

By phone: 9637 3146, open from 8.30am to 5.30pm, Monday to Friday.

Victorian School Building Authority

For queries relating to grounds and building issues

By phone: Make Safe hotline 1300 133 468, open 24 hours, seven days a week.

Security and Emergency Management – Incident Support & Operations Centre

By phone: 1800 126 126, open 24 hours, seven days a week.

Schools Procurement Help Desk

By email only: schools.procurement@edumail.vic.gov.au

Communications advice

By phone: 8688 7776, open 24 hours, seven days a week

For information on business-as-usual corporate support for schools, visit the Department's [intranet](#).

International Student Program advice

Email international@education.vic.gov.au or 7022 1000 during normal business hours. For urgent out-of-hours enquiries, contact the 24/7 enquiry number 0408 515 036. For emergency matters relating to international students, contact the Department's Critical Incident Reporting and Support on 1800 126 126

MORE INFORMATION

Below you'll find more information about school operations.

You can also find more information in the [FAQ portal](#).

What arrangements apply to school council employees while working from home?

The expectation is that school council employees will continue to perform their duties from home in order to assist with the provision of learning continuity for all students.

Principals are responsible for maintaining communication with staff, including providing guidance in relation to the work performed by staff at home.

The expectation is that normal employment arrangements will continue and existing tenure of employment (fixed term and ongoing) will not be altered.

Can schools cancel bus services if most students are learning from home?

If there are no students physically attending school, principals are authorised to make local decisions with bus operators to cancel daily services.

If buses do not run (based on the principal's decision), ensure that your school is able to continue to provide transport to those in need.

Confirm your arrangements with the Student Transport Unit as soon as practical after discussions with bus operators. Email student.transport@edumail.vic.gov.au

What about students doing VCE/VCAL programs where distance learning is not an option?

For courses that cannot be conducted via online learning, small groups of VCE and VCAL students are permitted to attend school, with appropriate physical distancing and hygiene measures in place.

This includes hand sanitiser being available at the entry points to classrooms and education being provided on hand hygiene. Physical distancing will be implemented in classrooms to the extent feasible and unwell students will be excluded from attending.

REMOTE TEACHING AND LEARNING

All schools have been preparing to transition to remote teaching and learning.

On this page

- Remote Teaching and Learning
- Home and Onsite Learning Programs
- Grades P-2
- Grades 3-6 and Years 7-10
- Senior Secondary
- Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting
- Professional Learning and resources for Remote Delivery
- VCE / VCAL
- Onsite Operations For Student Learning and Support
- More information

REMOTE TEACHING AND LEARNING

All schools have been preparing to transition to remote teaching and learning.

Remote teaching and learning programs will differ from school to school, just as on-site programs vary between schools.

All schools will already have a remote learning plan in place. This document sets out guidelines for initial programs of remote learning that represent a basic level of maintenance for teaching and learning, consistent with the resources published by the Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority ([VCAA](#)). Many schools will do more than this, but not all schools are yet in a position to offer high levels of interactive digital delivery, and not all households are able to access such high-level programs. Schools should communicate to parents that not all schools will deliver remote learning in the same way, and that each school's program is tailored to best meet current local needs.

Remote teaching and learning programs that meet the guidelines set out below will ensure students continue to progress with essential learning.

These guidelines should therefore be regarded as a starting point from which schools that do not currently have an advanced plan can gradually build. The remote delivery of teaching and learning will be a new experience for many students, teachers and families/carers. As we switch to remote learning, it is not expected that things will go perfectly smoothly as we all begin this new way of working. Sharing lessons learnt will be an important contribution everyone can make.

Remote teaching and learning programs consistent with the guidelines below can be delivered through either limited digital technology or, where necessary, in hard copy that can be collected by students' families/carers from the school on a weekly or longer basis (schools should consider the way in which digital resources can be adapted to hardcopy format, should that be required).

The following guidelines apply to students across all year levels:

- students and parents/families should be given clear information about how and when they will receive learning materials and feedback

- teachers should together create and communicate a schedule or calendar that shows what's expected of students: what students will be asked to do, approximately how long it will take, and when they should aim to complete the task
- schools should avoid overwhelming students by giving them too many learning activities at once. Generally, no more than a week's activities should be provided at any one time.

Advice on learning platforms that can support remote learning can be found on the Department's Learning from Home [website](#), teaching and learning resources are available on [FUSE](#).

HOME AND ONSITE LEARNING PROGRAMS

From the start of Term 2 most students will be learning from home. 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 an on-site teacher but follow the teaching and learning program provided by their classroom teacher.

The following are the daily minimum guidelines schools are expected to meet:

1. For students in Grades P-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.
2. For students in Grade 3-6 and Years 7-10, 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.
3. Where appropriate, for students with disability and students in specialist schools who may be ungraded, teachers will be guided by these daily minimum guidelines, with consideration to the student's stage of learning and individual education plan.
4. For students in the senior secondary years, teachers will provide learning resources and tasks that enable students to develop and demonstrate the learning outcomes defined in the relevant VCE study designs and VCAL strands.

GRADES P-2

The focus of the program should be on literacy, numeracy, play-based learning and physical activity.

In the first stages of these programs, the aim should be to provide **literacy** activities that take a total of about 45-60 minutes, with 30-45 minutes allocated to each of **numeracy**, **play-based learning** and **physical activity**.

Parents or siblings will not always be able to support tasks that involve complex communications.

- Daily **literacy** program: activities focussed on reading, writing, speaking and listening. This can include, for example, spoken book recordings.

- Daily **numeracy** program should include basic counting and measuring activities that can be conducted using everyday materials.
- Daily **play-based learning** These include free drawing and painting, colouring, folding, collecting, grouping and making and listening to sounds, including, where possible, music.
- Daily **physical activities** that can be completed indoors, for example, simple exercises and dance movements.

GRADES 3-6 AND YEARS 7-10

For students in these primary and secondary years, the program should focus on literacy and numeracy with a broadening of learning to include the key learning areas and general capabilities.

This can be done through subject-based learning and integrated and inquiry-based activities. Students should also be provided with suggestions for physical activity, for example, simple exercises or simple dance routines.

In the early stages of these programs, the aim should be to provide daily activities that focus on:

- literacy for a total of 45-60 minutes
- numeracy for 30-45 minutes
- physical activities for 30 minutes.

The aim should then be to provide learning activities that each week focus on:

- science and technologies, the humanities, the arts, health and languages, with learning activities enabling students to develop the general capabilities of critical and creative thinking, intercultural understanding and ethical understanding as appropriate.
- activities such as guided reflective journal-writing or drawing can be used to support students' personal and social development.

The aim should be to provide these learning activities for about **90 minutes each day**.

SENIOR SECONDARY

Programs should enable students to continue to demonstrate the learning outcomes defined in the relevant VCE study designs and VCAL strands.

For further resources please see the [VCAA website](#).

CURRICULUM, ASSESSMENT AND REPORTING

Schools have teaching and learning models in place that can continue to provide a framework for organising flexible and remote learning.

The [Learning from Home](#) website can help plan for remote learning. This has links to a range of online and offline teaching and learning tools and resources, including sets of up to 12 weeks of editable, printable learning activities for each level of the Victorian Curriculum F-10, including A-D, available from [FUSE](#).

In planning remote learning for students with disability and students in specialist schools, teachers will continue to work towards the goals identified in students' individual education plans.

Assessment of student achievement and progress should continue.

The [Learning from Home](#) website provides further advice and resources about assessment and reporting for F-10.

The Department is currently working with the Commonwealth Government and international education sector regulators to support schools delivering online learning to international students and will be in contact with impacted schools directly to provide this support and advice.

PROFESSIONAL LEARNING AND RESOURCES FOR REMOTE DELIVERY

Initial resources and professional learning opportunities are available to support school leaders and teachers in the transition to flexible and remote learning delivery, and more professional learning will be offered throughout Term 2.

Regional staff are able to provide immediate advice and support on how to engage students, and on curriculum, pedagogy and assessment through remote and flexible learning.

The [Learning from Home](#) website provides further advice on professional learning and resources.

VCE / VCAL

Information about the delivery of VCE and VCAL is available on the VCAA coronavirus (COVID-19) [webpage](#).

ONSITE OPERATIONS FOR STUDENT LEARNING AND SUPPORT

The Victorian Government's direction is that all students who can work from home must work from home.

All students will be learning from home, except for students in the following categories:

Children on days when they are not able to be supervised at home and no other arrangements can be made. This will be available for children of parents who cannot work from home, and 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 and children with a disability).

For learning requirements that cannot be conducted via distance, and considering operational requirements set out below, small groups of VCE and VCAL students are permitted to attend school, with appropriate physical distancing and hygiene measures in place.

Onsite arrangements for VCE and VCAL

Small groups (<10) of senior VCE and VCAL students, where learning requirements cannot be conducted via distance, provided appropriate physical distancing and hygiene measures are in place.

Identifying vulnerable students

Schools should identify and consider appropriate arrangements for vulnerable children without access to a suitable learning environment at home, 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 and children with a disability).

To identify students who may be vulnerable, schools should use the following resources:

- Regional Health and Wellbeing key contacts, who can provide additional support and advice around identifying and prioritising vulnerable students.
- The [Students at Risk Planning Tool](#), which provides some guidance to support schools to identify vulnerable children
- School wellbeing staff, who have a good understanding of the health and wellbeing needs of individual students, and have previous or current involvement with students who are considered vulnerable

There are core processes that schools should continue, including Student Support Groups (SSGs), and the continuation of students' Individual Learning Plans (ILPs). For students with health support needs, principals should ensure that student Health Support Plans are up to date and that school attendance is guided by current advice from the student's medical professionals.

Referrals from agencies

Schools may be contacted by external agencies and support services about a vulnerable student, to request attendance on school sites if it is in the best interests of that student.

This will be a local decision for the school, informed by the school's knowledge of the student's situation and the information from the external agency.

The Regional Health and Wellbeing Key Contact can provide advice and support if this local decision is unclear, or if the student is not enrolled at the school.

Vulnerable students attending on-site, can be further supported by:

- effective communication with parents and carers to ensure that the school has adequate current information to support the student. This may include additional information about the student's current behaviours, health situation and any other relevant situational information
- continuing to connect and refer vulnerable students to available external supports and services where appropriate and available (see [Students at Risk Planning Tool](#) for further information on supports and strategies).

Please refer to [DHHS advice](#) on maintaining a safe learning environment for staff and students.

MORE INFORMATION

Below you'll find more information about remote teaching and learning.

You can also find more information in the [FAQ portal](#).

How do we record attendance during remote schooling?

The Department has developed [attendance recording advice](#).

The key changes are:

- schools will only need to record attendance once a day during remote and flexible learning
- schools are asked to indicate if a child is learning on-site or at home
- schools are asked to upload attendance daily to CASES21 during the initial weeks of remote and flexible learning.

More information can be found on the [Learning From Home](#) web page.

The situation is continuing to evolve and this advice will be updated regularly. The Department will be providing ongoing advice through its [coronavirus \(COVID-19\) intranet page](#), as well as regular departmental emails and the [FAQ portal](#).

If parents work nightshifts, can they send their children to school on-site during the day so they can sleep?

Students can attend school on-site if their parents work a night shift and they cannot be supervised at home during the day.

Is there a policy for schools to mitigate liability if they're instructing students at home to complete tasks such as physical education?

Principals and school staff owe a duty of care to take reasonable steps to prevent foreseeable harm (physical and psychological) to students and others while on school property and while doing school-sanctioned activities away from school property.

In the context of physical education (PE) curriculum delivered in a remote learning environment – should this be required – it is recommended that school staff adopt appropriate risk management and planning activities, which may include some or all of the following:

- undertaking careful activity planning, including through the preparation of relevant risk assessments and information to parents/carers about the nature of any new arrangement, noting that any PE activities will not be subject to 'line-of-sight' supervision by school staff
- considering variations to the PE program to enable the program to be delivered safely in a remote learning environment – this might include consideration of whether focus should be on the theoretical rather than practical aspects of PE if students are not able to do practical PE classes on school grounds or within their physical home environment
- providing communications, resources and tools for staff, students and parents about the benefits of PE and keeping physically active in a remote learning environment. Such communications should also note that schools cannot provide line-of-sight supervision for a child at home, and so school staff can reasonably expect parents and carers to assume a level of responsibility in circumstances where a student requires direct supervision and is learning at home
- offering additional support or adjustments to the learning program to ensure students can access their learning remotely, where appropriate. This might include targeted support or adjustments for students with additional needs (e.g. a student with a disability, medical condition or injury; a student who does not have an appropriate space where they can practise physical PE tasks)
- appropriate communications by phone/email with the student and their parents/carers as to the student's wellbeing and progress with the PE remote learning activities and tools.

STUDENT HEALTH AND WELLBEING

Maintaining support for student health and wellbeing will be a key priority in the transition to flexible and remote learning

On this page

- Student health and wellbeing
- Supporting students to manage anxiety about coronavirus (COVID-19)
- Information for Parent and Carers
- Support for Individual Students
- More information

STUDENT HEALTH AND WELLBEING

Maintaining support for student health and wellbeing will be a key priority in the transition to flexible and remote learning. This is because all students will not have the same access to social supports and vulnerable students will not necessarily have the kind of usual support they are familiar with.

Many students will be experiencing a degree of social isolation, which can increase levels of stress and anxiety. This will impact on all students in different ways, so our focus on student health and wellbeing will be critical to ensure students stay engaged in learning.

This page sets out initial strategies that schools can employ to ensure we continue to support the health and wellbeing of every student. Both teachers and Education Support (ES) staff will be critical to ensuring the ongoing health, wellbeing and engagement of students.

See the fact sheet on [Child safety, reportable conduct and duty of care in remote online learning environments](#) for more information.

International students may be feeling heightened stress and anxiety, particularly those who have been required to self-isolate or have been impacted by travel restrictions. Provide students with information about counselling or welfare services. Remind students that these services are confidential and provided at no extra charge. If students feel anxious or have concerns out of school hours, please encourage them to use the 24/7 International Student Program emergency contact number.

SUPPORTING STUDENTS TO MANAGE ANXIETY ABOUT CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19)

Primary and specialist classroom and secondary home group teachers can use the following guidelines to support the way in which they interact with students when conversations arise regarding coronavirus (COVID-19).

Don't be afraid to discuss coronavirus (COVID-19)

- Most students will have already heard about the virus and educators shouldn't avoid talking about it.
- Not talking about something can make students worry more. Help students feel informed by providing them with facts from trusted sources. This can be more reassuring than what they're hearing from friends or social media.

Use student-friendly honesty

- Think about the age of your student(s). Offer information using language they will understand.

- It's okay if you can't answer everything; being open to the discussion is what matters.
- Do your best to answer honestly and clearly. Don't share too much information all at once, as this may be overwhelming.
- Try to remain positive when talking to students.
- Avoid talking in a way that could make students feel more worried.

Be guided by your student(s)

- Invite students to tell you anything they may have heard about coronavirus (COVID-19), and how they feel.
- Give them opportunities to ask questions, particularly when you can see /hear that it is impacting on their learning and/or wellbeing
- Some students will worry more about others than themselves. Encourage them connect with family and friends as much as possible using technology.

Be reassuring

- Be conscious of the language you use with your student.
- Don't dismiss students' fears. It is understandable for them to be concerned because they (except for students who have previously experienced severe trauma) will not have experienced anything like this before.
- Inform students that doctors and scientists around the world are working hard to learn more about coronavirus (COVID-19) and to keep us safe.

Keep talking

- Find out what students already know or are worried about. It's important to find out if they have incorrect information.
- Ask questions that don't have yes or no answers.
- If students ask you something and you don't know the answer, say so. Use the question as a chance to find out together.
- If students don't seem interested or don't engage in conversations or questions about coronavirus (COVID-19), that's okay.
- Let them know that you are happy to keep listening and talking.

INFORMATION FOR PARENT AND CARERS

A guide to help parents and carers talk to their child about coronavirus (COVID-19) that includes tips on how to have a safe conversation and links to resources to help parents and carers is available on the Department [website](#).

There are also [resources online](#) to support children and young people who do not use speech to communicate, to understand coronavirus (COVID-19).

SUPPORT FOR INDIVIDUAL STUDENTS

Prep to Grade 6 and students in specialist schools

Classroom teachers should aim to contact each student at least once a day. This can be online via interactive digital technologies, by email, phone or text as appropriate.

Teachers should aim to use this to check in on how students are progressing with set learning tasks and engage with students about their health and wellbeing, including any anxiety, worry or stress they may be feeling.

Where a teacher has an immediate and high level of concern about a student's health and wellbeing, they should contact their principal and follow the school-based procedures for notifying Critical Incident Reporting and Support on 1800 126 126.

Where a teacher has a more general health and wellbeing concern, they should discuss with their existing school student welfare team. In addition, a Regional Health and Wellbeing Contact has been provided as a key contact for schools. The key contact will be able to facilitate access to additional specialist health and wellbeing referral services, including Student Support Services.

Year 7 to Year 12

Each student should be allocated to a home group, pastoral care group or similar with an identified staff member taking responsibility for monitoring the health and wellbeing of each individual member within that group.

That teacher should aim to make contact with each student at least once per day. This can be online via interactive digital technologies, by email, phone or text.

Teachers should aim to use this to check in on how students are progressing with set learning tasks and engage with students about their health and wellbeing, including any anxiety, worry or stress they may be feeling.

Where a teacher has an immediate and high level of concern about a student's health and wellbeing, they should contact their principal and follow the school-based procedures for notifying Critical Incident Reporting and Support on 1800 126 126.

Where a teacher has a more general health and wellbeing concern, they should discuss with their existing school student welfare team. In addition, a Regional Health and Wellbeing Contact has been provided as a key contact for schools. The key contact will be able to facilitate access to additional specialist health and wellbeing referral services, including Student Support Services.

MORE INFORMATION

Below you'll find more information about student health and wellbeing.

You can also find more information in the [FAQ portal](#).

How can schools run School Breakfast Clubs in Term 2?

School Breakfast Clubs can be run in flexible ways.

For students undertaking learning from home, schools can arrange times for parents/carers or students to come to the school to pick up the School Breakfast Clubs food supplies the students need.

Schools should package up items for families to collect. Schools should maintain physical distancing guidelines at collection points.

Please note: schools will need to collect parental consent before sending any food items home with students.

For students attending on site, School Breakfast Clubs can run as normal with [physical distancing guidance](#) in place and good hygiene practices followed.

Should we be conducting a health screen or check temperatures of those entering the school grounds?

The Department continues to work closely with Department of Health and Human Services to ensure the Chief Health Officer and health experts' advice is provided to schools and other education services regarding the COVID-19 response.

On the advice of health experts, there are no plans to implement an entry screening procedure in schools at this time.

There is no evidence to support temperature screening as an effective strategy in schools at this time.

Schools should actively encourage staff, children and young people to stay at home if unwell.

How can we support students with additional learning and/or support needs?

Educational settings should continue arrangements and processes to coordinate support for students with additional learning and/or support needs, including existing student support group or case management arrangements.

These arrangements may include students:

- with a disability or learning difficulty
- from Aboriginal backgrounds
- in out of home care
- from refugee or migrant backgrounds
- on youth justice orders or having transitioned from the youth justice system.

Student support groups, or similar arrangements, should continue to be offered to parents, guardians or carers, with the option for these to occur as required via conference call. It is important for these meetings to be responsive to the learning and support needs of students.

Where appropriate, schools may need to request additional assistance (through existing Department or community supports) in response to any change in the circumstances or needs of the student.

CHILD SAFETY, REPORTABLE CONDUCT AND DUTY OF CARE IN REMOTE ONLINE LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS

Includes Child Safe Standards and notifying parents about students moving to remote online learning

On this page

- Reporting child abuse
- Child safety in online learning environments
- Notifying parents about students moving to remote online learning
- Health and wellbeing staff contacting students online or via phone
- More information

REPORTING CHILD ABUSE

During online school learning, 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](#).

More information about responding to incidents, disclosures and suspicions of child abuse can be found on the [PROTECT website](#) or at [Child protection – reporting obligations](#).

Mandatory reporting

Mandatory reporters' obligations under law remain the same. Mandatory reporters must make a report to the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) Child Protection as soon as practicable if, in the course of practising their profession or carrying out their duties, they form reasonable belief that a child or young person is in need of protection, as a result of physical injury or sexual abuse, and the child's parents are unable or unwilling to protect the child from that abuse.

Reportable Conduct Scheme

Principals' obligations under the Reportable Conduct Scheme remain the same. Please see the [PROTECT website](#) or [School Policy Advisory Guide - Reportable Conduct Scheme](#).

CHILD SAFETY IN ONLINE LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS

Child Safe Standards

All Victorian schools are required to comply with the Child Safe Standards.

To comply with the Child Safe Standards in an online learning environment, schools should:

- Consider any risks of child abuse that might arise in an online school learning environment, including grooming, and implement strategies to reduce or remove risks where possible
- Remind all staff that they are required to comply with the school's Child Safety Code of Conduct when engaging in their work online

- Remind all staff of the school's procedures for responding to and reporting suspected child abuse
- Ensure that students have access to online safety education, such as:
- [Bully Stoppers Online Toolkit](#) – supports principals, teachers, students and parents in working together to address cyber safety and cyberbullying.
- [Classroom resources](#) – links to online classroom activities, videos, interactive learning modules, advice sheets and other useful resources to promote the safe and responsible use of digital technology.
- [The eSafety Commissioner](#) – provides a range of tips and resources to help school leaders create safe online learning environments. The Office have also released an [online safety kit](#), which includes evidence-based suggestions and trustworthy links to support parents and carers to stay informed and keep their children safe online.

The [PROTECT website](#) provides guidance and information about complying with the Child Safe Standards.

Duty of care in online environments

Where a school is not providing face to face supervision, including where students are learning remotely rather than on school grounds, the school is not responsible for students' general safety at home or elsewhere.

Principals and school staff must still:

1. identify risks which are reasonably foreseeable for students who are learning at home
2. take reasonable steps which are in the school's control to prevent reasonably foreseeable harm to students.

For example, if a school knows that a student learning remotely is affected by a disability or mental health condition, particularly a condition that might be exacerbated by being alone at home, or has other vulnerabilities (for example family violence or substance abuse), the school must take reasonable steps to address those risks, which may include offering additional supports and ensuring students can access their learning outside the home, where appropriate.

Supporting student wellbeing and safety when teaching in a remote online learning environment

Under the Child Safe Standards and as part of their duty of care, teachers should identify and mitigate known or foreseeable risks to student wellbeing and safety.

Reasonable steps to support student safety and wellbeing might include (but are not limited to):

- notifying parents about students moving to remote online learning
- school uses [Department-approved technology](#) to teach remote online learning
- school staff continue to comply with their existing obligations to behave appropriately and professionally online. For example, only using work email addresses to contact students, not revealing personal information like a home address, having appropriate working and learning spaces, professional dress and presentation, contacting students only during school hours, and complying with the acceptable use of technology agreements
- school staff respond to inappropriate student behaviour online (for example, inappropriate language or behaviour in a videolink) in the same way they would if the behaviour occurred on school grounds

- school staff consider any students with disabilities or behaviours of concern that might be the underlying cause of any online behaviour
- school staff follow the school's procedures for responding to/reporting suspected child abuse
- school staff act within [DET's Using Social Media Policy](#)
- school staff develop and update Student Safety Plans and Individual Learning Plan where appropriate
- school staff provide students with advice/details of school staff they can contact if they have any concerns or issues, including about inappropriate online behaviour (by both other students and school staff)
- reminding parents about how young people are impacted by long periods alone and the responsible and safe use of online platforms and the internet
- school staff provide students with details of mental health and wellbeing support available for students to access remotely, including emergency numbers and non-emergency counselling services.

NOTIFYING PARENTS ABOUT STUDENTS MOVING TO REMOTE ONLINE LEARNING

Schools do not need parents' permission for students to begin remote online learning. However, before remote online learning commences, schools should notify parents about how schools will engage with students in remote online learning (for example, via videolink, email or phone). Schools should also remind parents of their expectations of student behaviour when engaging in remote online learning.

Schools should ask parents to contact a nominated member of staff if they have any concerns.

Here is advice schools could send to parents to notify them about how the school will be engaging with students during remote online learning.

Dear parents

From <insert date>, our school will be moving to remote online learning. Our school will use the following programs and technology to teach students: [insert technology school will use, for example videolink, email, phone and any specific technology or programs that the school will use].

Our school expects students to continue to abide by the school's policies about student behaviour when learning in an online setting. We will continue to follow the school's student engagement policy [insert details] when responding to inappropriate student behaviour online.

Students must continue to follow the Acceptable Use of Technology Agreements provided or signed at the start of 2020.

Students should contact [insert contact name and number] if they experience inappropriate behaviour online.

We will keep you informed about school matters via email. Please let us know if you would prefer to be kept informed by a different channel.

Please contact [insert contact name and number] if you have any questions or concerns about the move to remote online learning

[sign off]

HEALTH AND WELLBEING STAFF CONTACTING STUDENTS ONLINE OR VIA PHONE

Where possible, if school or DET health and wellbeing staff need to contact students as part of their work, (for example mental health support) they should get a [parent's permission](#) before contacting a student directly, unless the student is an adult or [mature minor](#).

Staff should continue to follow the school's Child Safety Code of Conduct and maintain appropriate boundaries, including only using work phones/email addresses to contact students, maintaining appropriate notes and records, contacting students during school hours and providing community emergency numbers (such as Kids Help Line) to students and families for out of hours support.

MORE INFORMATION

Below you'll find more information about child safety and duty of care in remote online learning environments.

You can also find more information in the [FAQ portal](#).

Does the Department have a preferred computer program for staging remote meetings?

The Department will not be mandating a platform for remote meetings, however Webex is the Department's preferred and strongly recommended platform. It is fully licensed and is appropriately secured.

Schools choosing to use alternative products should be aware of the risks associated with these platforms and a PIA should be completed.

Particularly, schools opting to use Zoom should consider:

- The free version has less protections and functionality than the paid version, so it is essential that schools use the paid version.
- Data is hosted in the US, which has different privacy protections than Australia – without doing a full PIA it is recommended that a very clear opt-out approach (if not an opt-in) is communicated to parents, and that parents are aware of how exactly the school is using the system.
- There is a known vulnerability with Zoom where Mac computer webcams are at increased risk of hijacking, so configuration needs to be correct, and communicated clearly to families, to reduce this risk.
- Session recording and transcription functionality should be disabled by default for all users, and only teachers should be able to record or enable others to record – this is not only a privacy risk

but also places strain on storage systems in terms of unnecessary data capture. Permission would ideally need to be granted for any recorded session.

The configuration for Zoom must require students to be placed in a 'waiting room' for entry to the session by teachers. This avoids the risk of anyone else joining the session.

Do we need to complete a PIA if we're using Google Meet as part of our teaching tool kit?

Google Meet/Google Hangouts form part of G Suite for Education. If you're using the Departmentally brokered version of G Suite, you do not need to complete a PIA but must ensure that you use the Department's supporting resources available from FUSE, which includes advice to parents and information about privacy:

- [FUSE – G Suite Advice to Parents Information Pack](#)
- [FUSE – Privacy and Parent Information – G Suite and 0365](#)

If you're using a local version of G Suite, you should complete a PIA if you have not already done so and ensure that use of Google Meet/Google Hangouts is covered. A semi-populated PIA for G Suite is available for use; contact the Privacy team at privacy@education.vic.gov.au

DISTRIBUTION OF DEVICES – ADVICE TO SENIOR EDUCATION IMPROVEMENT LEADERS

Includes priority order for the distribution of devices and the role of SEILs.

On this page

- Priority order for the distribution of devices
- Role of SEILs
- Speaking points for SEILs
- Q&As

The role of Senior Education Improvement Leaders (SEILs) is critical in supporting the efficient distribution of devices to students to facilitate remote and flexible learning.

Of importance, is providing advice to schools on the priority order for distribution of devices and engaging with IMTD where a school has allocated all school-owned devices.

For more information about managing loan devices, visit:

- [Equipment loan agreement](#)
- [Tracking and insurance of devices](#)

For further support, contact:

- [Technical support issues for students/families](#): 1800 080 082
- Requests from SEILs for additional devices and questions about delivery: learning.from.home.technology@education.vic.gov.au
- For SEILs to raise complex allocation/local prioritisation issues: Chris Thompson, Assistant Deputy Secretary, Schools and Regional Services Group: mthompson.christopher.j@edumail.vic.gov.au

PRIORITY ORDER FOR THE DISTRIBUTION OF DEVICES

To support students through the coronavirus (COVID-19) remote and flexible learning arrangements, schools will loan students school owned devices (and supplementary devices available from IMTD).

When responding to requests from families to access a loan device, secondary schools must prioritise by:

1. Year 12 students with Camps, Sports and Excursions Funding (CSEF) eligibility, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Students or in out-of-home care or youth justice clients
2. Remaining Year 12 students
3. Year 11 students undertaking a unit 3 and 4 subject with CSEF eligibility or in out-of-home care or youth justice clients
4. Year 11 students with CSEF eligibility, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Students or in out-of-home care or youth justice clients
5. Remaining Year 11 students

6. Students in all remaining year levels with CSEF eligibility, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Students or in out-of-home care or youth justice clients
7. All remaining students.

Primary schools must prioritise by:

1. Year 6 students with Camps, Sports and Excursions Funding (CSEF) eligibility, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Students or students in out-of-home care or youth justice clients
2. Remaining Year 6 students
3. Students in all remaining year levels with CSEF eligibility, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Students or in out-of-home care or youth justice clients
4. All remaining students.

Schools may make localised decisions to prioritise distribution to priority cohorts, or where the school is made aware of the needs of a vulnerable student.

Schools should where possible allocate laptops or notebooks to Year 11 and 12 students. Tablets are an acceptable alternative where a laptop or notebook is not available for the student.

As some schools have already allocated school-owned devices to students who need them, the Department has taken out an insurance policy to cover all school-owned devices when they are loaned to students for study at home. For insurance and tracking purposes, schools need to update their IT Asset Management System (ITAM) every day when new devices are received or further devices are loaned to students.

School-owned devices should continue to be allocated to students, as this is the most efficient distribution method. This will be supplemented by additional devices based on need identified in the survey. The Department will work with regional staff to confirm the need for additional devices which will be delivered to schools within one week of confirmation that all locally available devices have been allocated.

ROLE OF SEILS

To facilitate the distribution of devices to students, SEILs should:

- Work with schools on the accurate identification of the needs of students for devices and access to the internet through the survey.
- Ensure schools distribute school-owned devices in accordance with the priority order.
- Where an individual school exhausts their school-owned devices, support, through the School Network, the identification and distribution of devices located at surrounding schools, taking a 'whole of system' approach.
- Where all school-owned devices have been distributed, contact IMTD to advise of the additional devices required, and facilitate the process of distributing these to schools.
- To facilitate the distribution of devices to students, SEILs should work with schools to ensure that they track the allocation of devices daily through the Information Technology Asset Management database.
- Work with schools to re-assess their needs during the period of remote and flexible learning.

SPEAKING POINTS FOR SEILS

Distribute school owned devices first, in the priority order listed below.

To ensure the most efficient delivery of devices to students, schools are required to loan school-owned devices in the first instance.

When responding to requests from families to access a loan device, secondary schools must prioritise by:

1. Year 12 students with Camps, Sports and Excursions Funding (CSEF) eligibility, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Students or students in out-of-home care or youth justice clients
2. Remaining Year 12 students
3. Year 11 students undertaking a unit 3 and 4 subject with CSEF eligibility or in out-of-home care or youth justice clients
4. Year 11 students with CSEF eligibility, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Students or in out-of-home care or youth justice clients
5. Remaining Year 11 students
6. Students in all remaining year levels with CSEF eligibility, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Students or in out-of-home care or youth justice clients
7. All remaining students.

Primary schools must prioritise by:

1. Year 6 students with Camps, Sports and Excursions Funding (CSEF) eligibility, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Students or students in out-of-home care or youth justice clients
2. Remaining Year 6 students
3. Students in all remaining year levels with CSEF eligibility, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Students or in out-of-home care or youth justice clients
4. All remaining students.

Where possible allocate laptops or notebooks to Year 11 and 12 students. Tablets are an acceptable alternative where a laptop or notebook is not available for the student.

School may make localised decisions to prioritise distribution to priority cohorts, or where the school is made aware of the needs of a vulnerable student.

As some schools have already allocated school-owned devices to students who need them, the Department has taken out an insurance policy to cover all school-owned devices when they are loaned to students for study at home. For insurance and tracking purposes, schools need to update their IT Asset Management System (ITAM) every day when new devices are received, or further devices are loaned to students.

Schools are permitted to use any unspent 2020 Camps, Sports and Excursion Funding to support home internet access for disadvantaged students by contributing to the cost of new NBN connections or providing locally purchased 4G internet access equipment. If CSEF is used to support intranet access, further CSEF will not be made available for camps later in the year

Where schools have distributed all school-owned devices, SEILs to contact IMTD to access additional devices

Where the survey has identified the needs of students exceeds the number of school-owned devices, Chris Thompson, Assistant Deputy Secretary, Schools and Regional Services Group will seek additional devices from neighbouring schools. If that is not possible, Chris Thompson will advise IMTD that further devices are required, and they will distribute devices to schools.

Tracking devices

So devices can be returned to their original location, and for insurance purposes, please ensure school business managers are updating the Information Technology Asset Management database daily.

Q&AS

Does it matter which device goes to which student?

Schools should allocate laptops or notebooks to Year 11 and 12 students. Tablets are an acceptable alternative while a laptop or notebook is sourced for the student.

Can I update my survey data with new information?

Yes, please update survey data to reflect the changing needs of students. Where additional need is identified, advise IMTD and seek supplementary devices and internet access.

How can a student apply for a device from the State Schools Relief program?

State Schools Relief can assist families who are facing hardship and their program will run in parallel to the Department's program.

Schools are asked to ensure applications are submitted promptly for these students using the standard operating process via State Schools Relief's online application portal. There is no need to complete any additional paperwork or forms.

New packages being offered to students who meet State Schools Relief criteria are:

- Lenovo 11E laptops (in line with the Department's specifications) - applications for these devices will only be received for students who have no access to a device, including any on loan from their school.
- internet USBs with 50GB of data for 3 months - applications for these USBs will only be received for students who have no access to the internet at home.
- study packages comprising of a desk and chair
- standard stationery package

VCE students are being prioritised, with Year 12 students with Camps, Sports and Excursions Funding (CSEF) eligibility prioritised followed by Year 11 students.

Other students will be on a waitlist for support in-line with the Department of Education and Training's priority order.

There is no need to complete any additional paperwork or forms. State Schools Relief will distribute items to schools for collection by (or onforwarding to) families.

If there are any questions, contact State Schools Relief directly at contact@ssr.net.au or by phone on (03) 8769 8400.

What insurance coverage does the Department provide for devices on loan to students?

The Department has arranged separate insurance coverage for Portable Electronic Equipment such as laptops, notebooks or tablets that are loaned to students while on remote and flexible learning arrangement.

Victorian government schools that provide students with these devices can make a claim if the loaned equipment is damaged or stolen whilst on loan to the student.

The coverage provided is based on replacement value and is subject to a \$100 excess and five per cent annual depreciation of the value of the device.

What should schools do before loaning devices to student?

Schools should [register all devices on loan to students in the IT Asset Management System \(ITAM\)](#) during this time and ensure that the Equipment Loan Agreement is signed by parents or guardians.

What should schools do when lodging an insurance claim?

When lodging a claim, schools should complete the Department's [coronavirus \(COVID-19\) Portable Electronic Equipment Claim Form](#).

Supporting documentations required include:

- a quotation for repair costs for Damage claims
- a copy of the "Notice to Victim" statement from Police for Theft claims

The claim form and supporting documents should be emailed to: property.claims@edumail.vic.gov.au

How will internet access be provided to students?

The Department has allocated and delivered 4G internet access devices to schools in bushfire impacted areas and to schools who have identified highly vulnerable students.

- The Department has access to 26,000 4G internet access devices and SIM cards to be distributed over the next fortnight. A SIM card is used when the device is SIM enabled, ie. it has a slot for a SIM card.
- 4G internet access USB devices are used when a device is not SIM enabled.
- These will be available for distribution from week 2 of Term 2.
- SIM cards can be inserted directly into devices such as mobile enabled iPads or laptops.
- USBs can be used in a laptop with a USB slot.
- Technical support to activate the SIMS cards will be available at student's schools.
- The Department will notify schools by the beginning of week 3 of term of their allocation of internet access devices.

Can students access any websites with this free data?

The Department is working with Telstra and our IT providers to limit the websites that can be accessed to school systems and educational websites.

All department owned devices will have cyber-security software loaded that blocks access to inappropriate or risky websites. This software will also detect and prevent malware from being installed on the device that may enable access to the device by external parties.

Where possible, young children should be supervised when accessing the internet to keep them safe.

If there are multiple students in a family will they each receive a SIM card or USB?.

If there is more than one eligible high priority student in a family, they will each get a SIM card or USB, based on the prioritisation criteria.

What if a student lives in an area without 4G reception? How will we support their learning?

The Department has published an extensive range of paper-based teaching materials that schools can provide to students if they are unable to access the internet.

These can be mailed to students or collected by parents and completed tasks can be returned in the same way.

The materials are aligned to the Victorian Curriculum F-10.

Do students get to keep the device after remote and flexible learning is over?

No, the devices will be on loan to the student for the period that the student is learning from home.

Devices will need to be returned to the school when school attendance is reinstated for all students.

ACCESS AND DISTRIBUTION OF LOAN DEVICES

The Department is loaning devices to support students engaged in learning from home and, where possible, provide internet access.

This advice was sent to staff on 23 April 2020. This information was correct at time of distribution and has been uploaded here for later reference.

Dear colleagues,

I would like to provide clarification on the access and distribution of devices to students.

The Department of Education and Training will loan devices – either a laptop, notebook or tablet – to support students engaged in learning from home and, where possible, provide internet access.

All schools were asked to identify student device needs within their communities and report back to the Department through a recent survey.

Survey information will inform how the Department distributes additional devices to support schools where demand exceeds their current stock.

PRIORITY ORDER OF DISTRIBUTION FOR DEVICES

When responding to requests from families to access a loan device, secondary schools must prioritise by:

1. Year 12 students with Camps, Sports and Excursions Funding (CSEF) eligibility, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Students or students in out-of-home care or youth justice clients.
2. Remaining Year 12 students.
3. Year 11 students undertaking a unit three and four subject with CSEF eligibility or in out-of-home care or youth justice clients.
4. Year 11 students with CSEF eligibility, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Students or in out-of-home care or youth justice clients.
5. Remaining Year 11 students.
6. Students in all remaining year levels with CSEF eligibility, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Students or in out-of-home care or youth justice clients.
7. All remaining students.

Primary schools must prioritise by:

1. Year 6 students with Camps, Sports and Excursions Funding (CSEF) eligibility, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Students or students in out-of-home care or youth justice clients.
2. Remaining Year 6 students.
3. Students in all remaining year levels with CSEF eligibility, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Students or in out-of-home care or youth justice clients.
4. All remaining students.

Schools may make localised decisions to prioritise distribution to priority cohorts, or where the school is made aware of the needs of a vulnerable student.

Schools should allocate laptops or notebooks to Year 11 and 12 students where possible. Tablets are an acceptable alternative while a laptop or notebook is being sourced for the student.

The Department has taken out an insurance policy to cover all school-owned devices when they are loaned to students for study at home. This includes school-owned devices already allocated to

students. For insurance and tracking purposes, schools need to update their IT Asset Management database every day when new devices are received, or other devices are loaned to students.

For more information on the intranet about managing loan devices, visit:

- [Equipment loan agreement](#)
- [Tracking and insurance of devices](#)
- [Advice to SEILS – Distribution of Devices](#)

For further support please contact:

- Technical support issues for students and families phone: 1800 080 082
- Requests from SEILs for additional devices and questions about delivery email: from.home.technology@education.vic.gov.au
- Contact for SEILs to raise complex allocation and local prioritisation issues email: Chris Thompson, Assistant Deputy Secretary, Schools and Regional Services Group, thompson.christopher.j@edumail.vic.gov.au

ASSISTANCE FROM STATE SCHOOLS RELIEF (SSR) TO ACCESS COMPUTING DEVICES

The SSR program to provide devices to students facing hardship will run in parallel to the Department program.

While the SSR program is rolled out, schools should continue to loan devices to students according to the priority order described above.

For more information about helping families access this program, visit the [State Schools Relief device program](#) web page.

Thank you for your hard work and commitment during the second week of remote and flexible learning. I appreciate your patience and enthusiasm in tackling this new challenge.

Tony Bates

Acting Secretary