

# OPERATIONS GUIDE

Victorian Government Schools

From start of week 2, Term 3 2020





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# FOR SCHOOLS IN METROPOLITAN MELBOURNE AND MITCHELL SHIRE

## Transition to remote and flexible learning

To increase physical distancing across the population and slow the spread of coronavirus (COVID-19), students in Victorian government schools in Prep to Year 10, except those students enrolled in Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE) or Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning (VCAL) classes and those students enrolled in specialist schools, must move to remote and flexible learning from the start of the second week of Term 3.

The following operating model will apply.

### 1. All students will be learning from home, except for students in the following categories

- a. Students enrolled in Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE) or Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning (VCAL) classes and those students enrolled in specialist schools
- b. 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, any student with a disability 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).

### 2. On-site provision

- a. 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.
- b. All students in the year levels and settings returning to on-site schooling are expected to attend school, including Year 11 and 12 students, Year 10 students enrolled in VCE and VCAL classes and all students in specialist schools. It is not intended that Year 10 students attend for full days except where transport arrangements make that impractical.
- c. Schools are not expected to provide remote learning where parents elect to keep these students at home, except where this is based on medical advice. For further advice see the [Advice for schools and families on medical vulnerability during the coronavirus \(COVID-19\) pandemic](#) factsheet and section 6 below.
- d. The guide to absence coding is available on the [Promote and Manage Student Attendance](#) page.
- e. When on-site learning is provided, temperature checks will be conducted (see Section 4), hand sanitiser will be available at the entry points to classrooms and education will be provided on hand hygiene. Physical distancing will be implemented in classrooms to the extent feasible and unwell students will be excluded from attending. The Chief Health Officer (CHO) has recommended the use of face coverings in schools (see Section 12).
- f. The learning program delivered on-site will be the same as the learning program delivered to students undertaking remote learning. Students learning on-site will be supervised by school staff on-site but follow the teaching and learning program provided by their classroom teacher.
- g. 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.
- h. 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.



Staff will be required to attend for duty at their school in accordance with normal arrangements, making necessary adjustments to support physical distancing between adults. Teachers delivering a remote and flexible program will do so from their school site. Exceptions for some staff may apply as outlined in the Staff Attendance section.

i. Principals, teachers and staff must work on site to ensure the following requirements are met:

- provision of classroom teaching for Year 11 and 12 students, and Year 10 students enrolled in VCE or VCAL program, and all students in specialist schools
- provision of supervision programs for children with a disability, vulnerable children and children of parents who cannot work from home
- maintenance of a safe and orderly environment in the schools (for example, conduct of temperature checks, supervision of drop off and pick up times, supervision of students at lunchtimes)
- delivery of remote and flexible learning (if required) through a safe and secure digital environment
- delivery of a consistent high-quality curriculum and assessment learning program and student support and wellbeing program that includes access to specialist expertise for individual students where necessary or beneficial
- management of the school facility at an appropriate level of seniority for a full school day.

j. Meeting these requirements does not preclude a school-based decision to permit some or all staff to work from home where this is compatible with the circumstances of any individual school. This decision must be made by a principal using the consultative arrangements agreed at the school. The principal must be assured that:

- meeting such a request will not compromise their capacity to ensure the above requirements are met on any given school day; and
- it is reasonably practicable for the teacher or teachers to work from home (including the use of a reliable, safe and secure digital environment).

- k. A decision to permit working remotely should be for a specified day or days and is able to be reviewed and changed at the sole discretion of the principal in order to ensure the above requirements are met.
- l. In both proposing and implementing such arrangements, the principal, teachers and staff have a joint and shared responsibility, through local consultative arrangements, to ensure that to the fullest extent possible a fair and equitable share of the workload involved in meeting the requirements above is maintained, noting that the principal retains full authority for the management of the school workforce.
- m. These arrangements can be extended to members of the principal class providing the above conditions are met, in particular for the school to be managed at an appropriate level of seniority for a full school day.

### 3. Home provision

- a. The parent or carer is responsible for students' general safety at home or elsewhere.
- b. Students and parents/families should be given clear information about how and when they will receive learning materials and feedback.
- c. Schools will create and communicate a schedule or calendar that shows what is expected of students in relation to the completion of learning tasks.



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

- a. The learning program delivered on-site will be the same as the learning program delivered to students undertaking remote learning.
- b. The following are the daily minimum guidelines schools are expected to meet for students in Prep to 10.
  - For students in Prep to Grade 2, schools will provide learning programs that include the following:
    - literacy activities that take a total of about 45-60 minutes
    - numeracy activities of about 30-45 minutes
    - additional learning areas, play-based learning and physical activity of about 30-45 minutes.
  - For students in Grades 3 to 6 and Years 7 to 10, schools will provide learning programs allocated as follows:
    - Literacy: 45-60 minutes
    - Numeracy: 30-45 minutes
    - Physical activities: 30 minutes
    - Additional curriculum areas: 90 minutes
- c. English language schools and English language centres, Tech schools, KIOSC and Maths and Science Specialist Centres in these areas should offer remote learning opportunities. As with secondary schools, Tech schools and KIOSC are able to continue face-to-face provision for Year 11 and 12 students and students in Year 10 studying VCE or VCAL where this is deemed essential for Victorian senior secondary certificate completion and where it cannot be delivered remotely.

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

- a. For students who do not have access to digital technologies at home, schools will loan existing devices, including those previously provided by the Department of Education and Training (DET).
- b. Where additional devices are required, these will be provided by the Department where schools have used a range of funding sources, including equity funding and CSE funding, to purchase equipment to be loaned to students free-of-charge.
- c. The Department will also provide network access to the extent possible for students who may not be able to connect at home.

- d. Schools are also able to provide hard copies of learning resources in the event of an internet outage or in cases where it is not possible for students to have any digital access.
- e. Schools must follow e-safety policies and procedures.

#### 6. Extended student absence for Year 11-12 students and students in specialist schools

- a. Schools are not expected to provide remote and flexible learning where parents or carers of VCE/VCAL or specialist school students elect to keep their child at home, except where this is based on medical advice.
- b. Where a parent/carer indicates that a student will be absent for an extended period and this is not based on medical advice, schools can make the learning materials developed for and provided in the on-site program available for use at home where this does not require additional work, preparation or production by teachers.
- c. Students absent for an extended period will be able to submit their learning exercises and work for comment and feedback if learning materials have been provided, according to the same timelines set for those participating in on-site learning. Teachers can provide comment and feedback in the same way that they would for students participating in on-site provision.
- d. Teachers, and where relevant education support staff, will not be expected and should not be requested by parents/carers or students to provide additional advice or support, including for the learning materials provided, to students whose parents/carers make a choice for them not to attend on-site learning and where this decision is not based on medical advice. This includes by email, phone or other forms of digital communication.
- e. Where students are absent but this is not based on medical advice, those students enrolled in VCE Units 3-4 must attend on site to complete SACs and SATs.
- f. Schools must take steps to ensure that all vulnerable students are able to attend on site where the school identifies that is in the best interests of the child.

# FOR ALL GOVERNMENT SCHOOLS IN VICTORIA

## 7. Staff attendance

- a. Advice from the Victorian Chief Health Officer is that, as with other members of the community, teachers and other school staff may be at greater risk of more serious illness if they contract coronavirus (COVID-19) if they are:
  - aged 70 years and older
  - aged 65 years and older and with chronic medical conditions.
  - of any age and have a compromised immune system
  - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and are aged over 50 years and with one or more chronic medical conditions.
- b. The Chief Health Officer's advice does not require that staff who are caring for elderly or chronically ill relatives should refrain from working on-site.
- c. Staff in these categories, except for those over 70, are required to provide a medical certificate if they are advised they should work from home.
- d. The [Medical Advisory Service](#) is a specialised support service for Principals to help them fulfil their responsibilities in relation to employee health, including provision of advice related to medical certificates.
- e. Normal attendance requirements for school staff will apply, consistent with the VGSA 2017. Policy and Employee Relations Branch at [employee.relations@education.vic.gov.au](mailto:employee.relations@education.vic.gov.au)
- f. Schools may need to engage CRT staff to cover staff absences. If principals are concerned about cost pressures or a forecast deficit budget position, please contact the School Financial Management Support Unit [schools.finance.support@education.vic.gov.au](mailto:schools.finance.support@education.vic.gov.au) or (03) 7022 2222 for support or advice.
- g. Where school staff have children enrolled in Prep– Year 10 in a school in metropolitan Melbourne or Mitchell Shire, if their children are not able to be supervised at home and no other arrangements can be made, those children can attend their usual school.
- h. Pre-service teachers can attend schools. Schools should accept applications for pre-service placements wherever possible to ensure pre-service teachers are able to meet graduation requirements.

- i. Consideration should be given to streamlining work not specifically focussed on the immediate return and routines of students. The engagement of CRTs is encouraged where appropriate.
- j. Staff who may be experiencing higher levels of anxiety or stress are encouraged to access departmental supports. See Other health and safety measures.

## 8. Physical distancing

- a. The Australian Health Protection Principal Committee (AHPPC) has advised that a 'venue density rule' of no more than one person per four square metres is not appropriate or practical in classrooms or corridors, nor maintaining 1.5 metres between students during classroom activities. The Victorian Chief Health Officer has not recommended additional physical distancing measures be put in place for senior students at schools where it is not practicable to do so.
- b. While additional physical distancing measures are not required for senior students the following steps should be considered where practicable:
  - using larger spaces such as libraries for large classes such as English or Mathematics
  - staggering lesson times to reduce the numbers of students in corridors and around locker bays
  - reminding students, including through signage, of the importance of physical distancing where possible.
- c. Students in Years 10 – 12 can participate in their VCE or VCAL classes, including VET studies, where these are held in other schools. They can also attend these classes at TAFEs/ Registered Training Organisations (RTOs). Physical distancing is not required between school students on school sites, including where a school operates an RTO, however physical distancing is recommended if adult students are included in the class. TAFEs and non-school RTOs are required to follow DHHS advice in relation to their operations.

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

## 9. Staggered starts

- a. 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.
- b. Schools must implement actions to:
  - reduce the number of adults congregating outside the school at any one time, including parents and carers at peak times such as drop-off and pick-ups
  - reduce the mixing amongst different year levels, especially in large secondary schools where there may be congestion at peak times, including the start and finish of the school day. Where congestion is a risk, schools must implement staggered start and finish times or other strategies such as different entry/ exit points.
- c. Decisions will be informed by local circumstances, school layout, design and street frontage and will differ from school-to-school.
- d. Schools will need to put in place arrangements that meet the intent of the health advice and ensure community confidence.
- e. Specific attention should be paid to:
  - opening as many entry and exit points to the school as is safe, and allocating staff to ensure students are safely supervised and students and parents feel confident with the arrival/departure from school
  - if required, staggering start and finish times by groups of grades or year levels (for example, junior/middle/senior), while also enabling siblings to arrive/leave together at the same time and be safely supervised while on the school site. For secondary schools in metropolitan areas these strategies can also support reduced congestion at public transport hubs.
  - asking parents to avoid or minimise time in or around the school grounds. Families will need to plan for and adapt to altered arrangements to arrive at specified times
  - liaison with local councils in regards to desired alterations to crossing supervision
  - signage to remind staff, students and families of the need for changed behaviours
  - staggering lunch and recess to reduce mixing of grade levels where possible and reducing possible congestion in staff rooms
  - where possible, allocating different areas of the school grounds to different grade or year levels during breaks, in order to reduce mixing amongst different year levels.
- f. The greater the likelihood of congestion, especially amongst adults, the more strategies schools will need to consider.

## 10. Other health and safety measures

- a. Playground equipment can be used by students. However, students should practise hand hygiene before and after use.
- b. For schools in metropolitan Melbourne and Mitchell Shire, playgrounds must be closed to community use out of school hours. For all other schools, playgrounds can be made available for community use.
- c. Schools should consider the necessity of using shared equipment at this time, including loan items such as class sets. If used, strict hand hygiene should be followed before and after use. There is no requirement for books to be placed aside for a given period after use or if loaned to students.
- d. Students should bring their own water bottle for use at school as students should not drink directly from drinking fountains at this time. Taps may be used to refill water bottles.

- e. The DET Students Using Mobile Phones Policy remains in place. Remind staff and students to clean their phones regularly. Phones can be turned on with the COVID SAFE app activated immediately before and after school. Schools are managed environments which include records of student, staff and visitor attendance, which can support contact tracing.
- f. Full Health Advice is provided at Appendix 1.

## 11. Temperature checks

Based on guidance from Victoria's Chief Health Officer, in order to support community awareness of the symptoms of coronavirus (COVID-19) and to help identify children displaying symptoms, all schools located in metropolitan Melbourne and Mitchell Shire will commence temperature screening of students while the stay at home restrictions are in place. For schools outside metropolitan Melbourne and Mitchell Shire, the widespread routine use of temperature screening is not required. However, temperature screening of students from metropolitan Melbourne and Mitchell Shire should be undertaken if they are attending a school outside these areas. Further advice on these requirements is available [here](#).

## 12. Face coverings in schools

- a. For schools in metropolitan Melbourne and Mitchell Shire, all school-based staff must wear face coverings at school, and when travelling to and from school.
- b. Teachers and education support staff will not be required to wear face coverings while teaching, but those who wish to do so, can. Teachers should wear face coverings in other areas of the school when not teaching (for example, in the staffroom, on yard duty and when providing first aid or taking temperatures), and when travelling to and from school.
- c. Students who attend primary school for on-site supervision will not be required to wear a face covering. Students who are aged 12 or over by Year 6 will not be required to wear face coverings. The Victorian Chief Health Officer has advised that it is not practical to require some primary school students to wear face coverings while others are not required to.
- d. All secondary school students who are attending on-site for Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE), Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning (VCAL) or on-site supervision will need to wear a face covering, including when travelling to and from school, unless they are travelling alone in a vehicle or with members of their household.
- e. Some students and staff are exempt from these requirements. This includes students or staff who have a medical condition - including problems with their breathing, a serious skin condition on the face, a disability or a mental health condition. This includes students who attend specialist schools.
- f. Consistent with all those 12 and over in metropolitan Melbourne and Mitchell Shire, parents/carers will be required to wear face coverings whenever they leave the house, including for school drop off and pick up. If they are travelling in a car alone, or only with members of their household, they do not need to wear a mask.
- g. Students and staff who live outside metropolitan Melbourne and Mitchell Shire who visit these areas for one of the permitted reasons, including for work and to attend school, will have to wear a face covering.
- h. Face coverings are also recommended for those living outside metropolitan Melbourne and Mitchell Shire in situations where maintaining 1.5 metres of physical distance is not possible.
- i. Students who live in metropolitan Melbourne or Mitchell Shire and attend a school outside these areas are required to wear a face covering to travel to and from these areas, unless they are travelling alone in a vehicle or with members of their household. However, they are not required to wear a face covering at school.
- j. Staff living in metropolitan Melbourne or Mitchell Shire and working outside of these areas are required to wear a face covering to travel to and from these areas and while at work, unless they are travelling alone in a vehicle or with members of their household. However, while they are teaching they can take the face covering off.
- k. School staff should refer to the DET [guidance for the use of Personal Protective Equipment in education](#) to determine when additional PPE is required.

### 13. Mental health and wellbeing

- a. The mental health and wellbeing of principals, teachers, school staff and students will be an important consideration during the Return to School transition.
- b. The Department continues to provide its full suite of services to support staff mental health and wellbeing. This includes services and resources aimed at addressing individual needs, but also tools and supports to help guide staff navigate through this time. Specific examples include:
  - **for principal class employees:** [Proactive Wellbeing Supervision service](#) which has been extended to include assistant principals during 2020; the [Early Intervention Program](#) for more intensive support; and all other [Principal Health and Wellbeing services](#)
  - **for all staff:** Personalised over-the-phone and video counselling through the [Employee Assistance Program](#)
  - **for all staff and all people managers:** [Wellbeing Webinars](#) cover a range of relevant topics for the current situation for all staff and people managers.

More information and the full list of supports and services can be found on the [COVID-19 Health, Safety and Wellbeing Support for Schools](#) page.

The Regional Health and Wellbeing contact role and supports for schools will remain in place for Term 3 and 4. DET Regional staff will be available to attend schools, practising physical distancing where practical.

### 14. Other school and curriculum settings

- a. The Victorian School of Languages (VSL) and Community Language Schools (CLSs) may continue with face-to-face provision for VCE students.
- b. English language schools and English language centres will follow the arrangements for metropolitan Melbourne and Mitchell Shire or rural and regional Victoria depending on their location.
- c. MARC/MACC services can continue operations in rural and regional Victoria with the exception of schools in Mitchell Shire.
- d. Given their different operating arrangements, Flexible Learning Options (FLOs) should seek advice from their Region about their operation.
- e. Outdoor education schools and camps, leadership schools will be closed in metropolitan Melbourne and Mitchell shire. These settings can remain open outside these areas, in line with the below.

### 15. Camps, playgrounds and facilities

The following apply to schools in metropolitan Melbourne and Mitchell Shire until further notice:

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

For schools in rural and regional Victoria with the exception of Mitchell Shire:

- a. school camps and excursions can be held if they take place outside metropolitan Melbourne and Mitchell Shire
- b. playgrounds can be made available for community use
- c. community groups are permitted to use school facilities (indoor or outdoor).

### 16. School tours

Schools should not conduct on-site school tours for prospective students and their families at this time.

### 17. Cleaning

- a. Extended and increased cleaning arrangements have been introduced and will continue. This involves progressive cleaning throughout the day to ensure that risks of transmission are reduced for high-touch services.
- b. For schools under the metropolitan area-based model, the Victorian School Building Authority will ensure cleaning providers provide the extended and increased cleaning.
- c. For regional schools and metropolitan schools that are yet to transition to the area-based model, schools should arrange extended cleaning and altered schedules with their cleaning provider. Schools will be advised of additional funding for their school to undertake this cleaning.
- d. For cleaning and for personal hygiene product queries, please contact [cleaning@edumail.vic.gov.au](mailto:cleaning@edumail.vic.gov.au)

### 18. Personal hygiene products

- a. For the procurement of personal hygiene products (soap, toilet paper, hand sanitiser) schools should actively monitor cleaning and hygiene supplies and reorder in advance of needing access to additional materials.
- b. Continue to use your usual supplier; the State Purchase Contract supplier for office supplies, Complete Office Supplies (COS); or retail outlets in the first instance.

- c. If unavailable, schools can purchase products from their cleaning providers, if supplies are unavailable, schools should contact the Department at [cleaning@edumail.vic.gov.au](mailto:cleaning@edumail.vic.gov.au) who will connect schools with a supplier for toilet paper and soap or directly supply schools with hand sanitiser.
- d. See [Access to cleaning supplies and services](#) for advice on enhanced cleaning, information about personal hygiene products and [Procurement tips for high demand items](#) for advice about procurement of consumables.

## 19. School buses for on-site students

- a. In rural and regional Victoria, the School Bus Program will continue to operate as normal.
- b. "School specials" operated by Public Transport Victoria will continue to operate as normal.
- c. The Students with Disabilities Transport Program (SDTP) will continue to operate state-wide for students with a disability.
- d. Bus Operators will ensure that high touch surfaces are regularly disinfected (handrails and seating areas).

## 20. Outside school hours care

Outside School Hours Care (OSHC) and vacation care services on school sites can continue to operate with the relevant risk mitigation measures in place. Schools using staggered start/finish times should liaise with their OSHC provider about any implications for OSHC operations.

For all other queries, schools are advised to contact DETs dedicated coronavirus (COVID-19) phone advice line during business hours on 1800 338 663.

## 21. Access to devices

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

## 22. Next steps

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

## 23. Contacts

- **DET COVID-19 hotline:** DETs dedicated coronavirus (COVID-19) phone advice line during business hours on 1800 338 663 can address or appropriately refer calls on all matters
- **Staff health and safety:** Further advice and support in phone 1300 074 715 or email [safety@edumail.vic.gov.au](mailto:safety@edumail.vic.gov.au)
- **Finance:** School Financial Management Support Unit: [schools.finance.support@education.vic.gov.au](mailto:schools.finance.support@education.vic.gov.au) or (03) 7022 2222
- **Cleaning:** [cleaning@edumail.vic.gov.au](mailto:cleaning@edumail.vic.gov.au)
- **OSHC and other early childhood:** DETs dedicated coronavirus (COVID-19) phone advice line during business hours on 1800 338 663
- **Student transport:** [student.transport@edumail.vic.gov.au](mailto:student.transport@edumail.vic.gov.au) or 7022 2247.



# APPENDIX 1: HEALTH ADVICE FOR ALL VICTORIAN SCHOOLS

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

## Attendance on-site

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

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

As the main risk of transmission of coronavirus (COVID-19) in the school environment is between adults, it is important that visitors to school grounds are limited to those delivering or supporting essential school services and operations.

- All unwell staff and students must stay home.
- Parents/carers of students with complex medical needs (including those with compromised immune systems), should seek advice from the student's medical practitioner to support decision-making about whether on-site education is suitable, noting that this advice may change depending on the status of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic in Victoria. This is in line with the DET Health Care Needs policy.

- In line with other members of the community, teachers and staff may be at greater risk of more serious illness if they are infected with coronavirus (COVID-19) if they are:
  - aged 70 years and over
  - aged 65 years and over and have chronic medical conditions
  - of any age and have a compromised immune system
  - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and are aged over 50 with chronic medical conditions.

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

- Visitors to school grounds should be limited to those delivering or supporting essential school services and operations (e.g. student health and wellbeing services, specialist curriculum programs, maintenance workers).
- Additional staff, including parent volunteers, should be discouraged from attending school at this time. Activities dependent on and involving parents (e.g. specialist programs, 1:1 reading) should be cancelled.
- Parent-teacher information sessions and interviews should meet physical distancing requirements of 1.5m between adults, or else be replaced with virtual alternatives.
- Activities that involve on-site attendance by students from different educational institutions (e.g. interschool sport or interschool debating) should not take place or be replaced, where possible, with virtual alternatives, except where these relate to activities deemed essential for Victorian senior secondary certificate completion and where it cannot be delivered remotely.

## Hygiene

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

- All staff and students should undertake regular hand hygiene, particularly on arrival to school, before and after eating, after blowing their nose, coughing, sneezing or using the toilet. This should be directed or supervised by staff where required.
- Where soap and water are not readily available, hand sanitiser should be provided in every occupied room.
- It is recommended that students do not drink directly from drinking fountains at this time. Instead they should bring their own water bottle for use (and refilling) at school.
- The Department of Education and Training Students Using Mobile Phones policy remains in place. Staff and students should be reminded to clean their phone regularly.
- Where relevant, ensure the highest hygiene practices amongst food handlers where these services are operating, as per the Department of Education and Training Safe Food Handling policy. Sharing of food should not occur.

## School arrival and departure

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

- Schools should encourage staff and parents to observe physical distancing measures by not congregating in areas inside or around the school.
- Local school arrangements to practice physical distancing and minimise interaction of students and adults within the school and at school entry points may include:
  - staggered drop off and pick-up times to reduce the number of adults congregating at the school gate or outside classrooms
  - signs at the school gate to encourage spacing between adults
  - encouraging parents to enter the school grounds only when essential to do so and contacting the school by phone or email as required.
- Encourage non-contact greetings.
- Schools, except for those in metropolitan Melbourne and Mitchell Shire, should not conduct wide-scale temperature checking of students and children at this time.

## Considerations for teaching and learning environments

Maintaining a physical distance of 1.5 metres will not always be practical in education settings. Physical distancing is most important between adults.

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

- Promote fresh air flow indoors and maximise use of outdoor learning areas or environments with enhanced ventilation where possible and as practical depending on weather conditions.
- Mixing of staff and students between rooms should be avoided where possible.
- Local school arrangements to reduce mixing between students and staff from different classes or year levels outside of the learning environment may continue to be of use as precautionary measures and include:
  - staggering of break times and separating different classes or year levels when outdoors
  - considering the order and pace in which classrooms are vacated
  - organising student traffic in corridors and locker bays (e.g. dividing the corridor for traffic direction).
- Where multiple staff are required in a classroom, remind staff to maintain physical distancing from each other as much as practical.

## Considerations for offices and staff facilities

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

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

## Cleaning and facilities management

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

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

## Sport and recreation

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

- Outdoor facilities are preferred for the purpose of physical education and recreational play. Where indoor facilities are used, please limit the number of students.
- Non-contact sports should be encouraged. Hand hygiene must be practised before and after use of any sporting equipment.

## Swimming and aquatic facilities

- It is recommended that schools in metropolitan Melbourne and Mitchell Shire do not use local swimming pools outside school grounds for school swimming programs at this time.
- Schools outside these areas can use local swimming pools outside school grounds and can open their own pools for the use of community members (residing outside areas under Stage 3 restrictions) in line with guidance on community use of facilities.

- Swimming pools and aquatic facilities on school grounds can be used by schools (in all parts of Victoria), with the following safety measures in place:
  - only one class group of students should use the pool at a time
  - all students must shower with soap and water prior to using the pool
  - use of the changing facilities should be staggered to limit the number of students occupying the changing rooms at one time
  - changing facilities need to be cleaned a minimum of twice daily.
- Hydrotherapy pools on school grounds can be used for the purpose of therapeutic programs for students, with changing facilities to be cleaned a minimum of twice daily.

## Provision of routine care and first aid

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

- Standard precautions are advised when coming in to contact with someone for the purpose of providing routine care and/or assistance (for example, the use of gloves for nappy-changing, toileting, feeding).
- Standard precautions as per the Department of Education and Training Infectious Disease policy and related policies should be adopted when providing first aid. For example, use gloves and apron when dealing with blood or body fluids/substances.
- Always wash hands with soap and water or use a hand sanitiser before and after performing routine care or first aid.
- Additional Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), for example face masks, is not required to provide routine care or first aid for students who are well, unless such precautions are usually adopted in the routine care of an individual student.

## Management of an unwell student or staff member

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

- Staff and students experiencing compatible symptoms with coronavirus (COVID-19), such as fever, cough or sore throat, should be isolated in an appropriate space with suitable supervision and collected by a parent/carer as soon as possible. Urgent medical attention should be sought where indicated. It is not suitable for an unwell student to travel home unsupervised.
- Where staff or students are experiencing compatible symptoms with coronavirus (COVID-19), the important actions to follow include hand hygiene, physical distance and (where possible) putting on a face mask. See [DET guidance for the use of Personal Protective Equipment in education](#).
- In the context of schools supporting students with complex health needs, if the care of an unwell child or young person is to be prolonged (for example, because it will take some hours for a parent to collect a child) and maintaining distance is not practical when providing direct care, gloves, gown and eye protection could be considered if available.
- Face masks should not be used in situations where an individual is unable to safely or practically tolerate a mask (for example, a child with complex medical needs including existing respiratory needs, and younger children).
- Health care plans, where relevant, should be updated to provide additional advice on monitoring and identification of the unwell child in the context of coronavirus (COVID-19).
- If a staff member is unsure whether a student is unwell it is advisable in the first instance to contact the parent/carer to discuss any concerns about the health status of the student, and taking a precautionary approach, request the parent/carer to collect their child if concerns remain. A trained staff member could take the temperature of the student, where appropriate, to support decision making. Gloves should be worn for the purpose of taking a temperature.

- Staff or students experiencing compatible symptoms with coronavirus (COVID-19) should be encouraged to seek the advice of their healthcare professional who can advise on next steps. Staff and students are generally not required to present a medical certificate stating they are fit to return to an education setting after a period of illness, however staff and students should not return until symptoms resolve. Staff continue to be required to present a medical certificate in accordance with personal leave policy for periods of absence on personal leave.
- Follow cleaning guidance according to the situation of the case. If a student spreads droplets (for example by sneezing, coughing or vomiting), clean surfaces immediately with disinfectant wipes while wearing gloves.

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

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

- Contact the Department of Health and Human Services on 1300 651 160 to discuss what to do next if a student or staff member:
  - is a confirmed case
  - has been in close contact with a confirmed case.
- Schools should also inform the Department by making an IRIS incident alert.
- Department of Health and Human Services defines 'close contact' as someone who has either:
  - had at least 15 minutes of face-to-face contact with a confirmed case of coronavirus (COVID-19)
  - shared a closed space for more than two hours with someone who is a confirmed case.

Unless you have a student or staff member in one of the two above categories, you do not need to take further action, unless directed to do so.

