

School Operations Guide

Term 3, 2021 (from 28 July)

Contents

For all Catholic schools	4
Return to face-to-face learning	4
Other arrangements for Victorian border communities	4
Student attendance	4
Students who may be medically vulnerable	4
Staff arrangements	5
Vaccinations for staff in Catholic Schools	5
Staff who may be medically vulnerable	6
Other school and curriculum settings	6
VCE/VCAL/VET provision in TAFEs, non-school senior secondary providers and other training organisations	6
Community Language Schools	7
Structured workplace learning (SWL) and work experience	7
Mobile Area Resources Centres (MARC) or Mobile Art and Craft Centres (MACC)	7
Community access programs and work experience programs for students enrolled in specialist school settings	7
Outside School Hours Care programs	7
Camps, playgrounds, pools and other school facilities and activities	8
QR codes and record keeping	9
Registering for a QR code	9
Intrastate and interstate travel	10
Intrastate travel	10
Interstate travel	10
Overseas travel	11
Insurance	11
Victorian Alpine Region	11
Excursions	11
Mental health and wellbeing	13
For students	13
Resources for principals and staff	13
Health and safety advice for schools	14
COVIDSafe Plan for schools	14
Reinforce COVIDSafe behaviours	15
Stay home when unwell	15
Practise good hygiene	16
Ensure physical distancing	16
Avoid interactions in close spaces	17
Face masks in schools	17
Face masks at external premises	18
Staff and students unable to wear face masks	18
Face masks during school sport	18

More information.....	18
Create COVIDSafe spaces	19
Make hand hygiene easy	19
Keep surfaces clean.....	19
Promote outdoor air ventilation	20
Promote COVIDSafe activities.....	21
Adapt, modify or defer higher risk activities	21
Limit school access to outside visitors where possible	21
Physical activity, sports and swimming	21
Singing, brass, woodwind classes and groups	22
Provision of routine care and first aid	22
Liturgies.....	22
Reduce mixing between groups and create workforce bubbles	23
Respond to COVID-19 risk.....	25
Management of an unwell student or staff member.....	25
Managing a suspected or confirmed case of COVID-19	26
Monitoring of close contacts in schools	27
Supporting students during quarantine	27
School site closures	28
Appendix 1 – Quick reference of permitted school activities.....	29

For all Catholic schools

Return to face-to-face learning

Based on advice from the Victorian Chief Health Officer, schools in Victoria will return to face-to-face learning and teaching for all students from and including Wednesday 28 July 2021.

All students and school staff are required to attend for duty at their school in accordance with normal arrangements from and including Wednesday 28 July.

Out of School Hours Care (OSHC) programs can resume full operations on Wednesday 28 July.

Other arrangements for Victorian border communities

Students and staff who live in and are enrolled in or work in a school in a cross-border community area will be able to attend on-site.

From 11.59pm on Tuesday 27 July, the City of Wagga Wagga, Hay Shire Council, Lockhart Shire Council and Murrumbidgee Council will no longer be included in the cross-border bubble. **If you have a student in one of these four LGAs, please contact your diocesan education office.**

Student attendance

Students should attend on-site.

Students who are required to isolate or undertake home-based quarantine should be provided materials to continue their learning remotely, until such time that they are permitted to return to school.

See 'Students who may be medically vulnerable' (section below) for further information regarding attendance for students with medical vulnerabilities.

Students who may be medically vulnerable

As per the advice of the Victorian Chief Health Officer, and with COVIDSafe measures in place, schools remain safe places for staff and students. Students with medical vulnerabilities can feel reassured that they can safely learn on-site at school.

An individual assessment is always recommended and decisions regarding school attendance should be informed by the nature of a child or young person's condition, its severity and intensity of required treatment. In most cases, the presence of common conditions of childhood, such as asthma, epilepsy or Type 1 diabetes, should not preclude a student from attending face-to-face learning.

In keeping with expert public health advice, some students may be at higher risk for severe outcomes or complications of COVID-19, for example those with chronic medical conditions. Any student with a chronic medical condition should seek advice from their medical practitioner about attending school on-site at different stages in the COVID-19 pandemic.

Given most of these conditions are rare in children, it should be an uncommon event for a child to be determined by a medical practitioner to be unable to return to school due to an ongoing medical reason raising concerns about COVID-19, outside of an acute illness.

Assessments should be reviewed alongside notable changes to COVID-19 transmission in Victoria.

For additional information to support decision-making, see:

- [Asthma Australia](#)
- [Royal Children's Hospital – advice for respiratory patients](#)
- [JDRF – Coronavirus and children with T1 diabetes.](#)

Staff arrangements

School staff should continue normal duties on-site in accordance with the [Victorian Catholic Education Multi-Enterprise Agreement 2018](#) (VCEMEA 2018). Some exceptions may apply for medically vulnerable staff as outlined below. For more information, consult the [Employee Relations – Coronavirus FAQ](#) on the CECV website or contact your diocesan education office.

It continues to be the principal's responsibility to make the school-based decisions required to deliver education objectives in accordance with the [Victorian Catholic Education Multi-Enterprise Agreement 2018](#) (VCEMEA 2018).

Vaccinations for staff in Catholic Schools

As part of priority support for those living with disability, the Victorian government has made some provision for school sector employees working with highly vulnerable students with disability to access a COVID-19 vaccine at a state-run vaccination centre. Staff able to access vaccination include:

- people who are 40 years and older
- employees who now meet Phase 1b eligibility criteria, including:
 - Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA) registered nurses and allied health workers in clinical and non-clinical roles in schools and ECEC services
 - all teaching, support, and administration employees in special schools directly working with students with disability (within 1.5 metres of students for more than 15 minutes)
 - any teaching and support employees in schools and ECEC staff working directly with students (within 1.5 metres of students and children for more than 15 minutes) living with a specified underlying medical condition or significant disability requiring frequent assistance with activities of daily living e.g. toileting, feeding, mobility.

A significant disability in the context of vaccination of 'carers' in Catholic schools and ECEC services would include:

- staff directly working with students receiving either National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) or currently receiving support through the CECV contract with SCOPE.

Employees listed above are being prioritised for vaccination because they work with vulnerable children and students living with medical conditions and significant disability who need to be protected from COVID-19 infection.

Schools are requested to exercise flexibility to enable staff to access vaccination appointments.

Staff who may be medically vulnerable

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 COVID-19 if they are:

- aged 70 years and older
- aged 65 years and older and with chronic medical conditions.
- of any age and have a compromised immune system
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and are aged over 50 years and with one or more chronic medical conditions.

Staff who are medically vulnerable should seek advice from their medical practitioner in relation to their on-site attendance. Where the employee is unable to work either on site or remotely, they can access personal leave by providing a medical certificate.

Similarly, staff who are living with or caring for elderly or chronically ill relatives should seek advice from the medical practitioner of the person for whom they are caring to determine if they can attend on site or should work remotely. They should provide a medical certificate if they are seeking to access personal leave.

Other school and curriculum settings

VCE/VCAL/VET provision in TAFEs, non-school senior secondary providers and other training organisations

Students can participate in their VCE or VCAL classes, including VET studies, where these are held TAFEs, RTOs or other schools.

The following health and safety measures should be put in place to minimise risk associated with learning outside the school environment:

- Mixing of students from different educational facilities and schools should be minimised whenever practical.

- Physical distancing should be maintained whenever possible, particularly for classes that involve attendance by students from multiple institutions.

Community Language Schools

Can resume on-site operations. The additional following health and safety measures should be put in place to minimise risk associated with learning outside the school environment:

- Mixing of students from different educational facilities and schools should be minimised whenever practical.
- Physical distancing should be maintained whenever possible, particularly for classes that involve attendance by students from multiple institutions.

Structured workplace learning (SWL) and work experience

SWL and work experience placements can recommence.

However, the Department of Health has recommended that SWL and work experience placements in high risk* settings (i.e. healthcare, aged care, meat works etc) be deferred until further notice.

Students would need to be included in the density limits for the workplace and comply with any restrictions applicable to that workplace as well as the COVIDSafe Plan in place.

Students are required to follow indoor and outdoor face mask requirements of the workplace they are attending.

Mobile Area Resources Centres (MARC) or Mobile Art and Craft Centres (MACC)

MARCs and MACCS are permitted to attend schools, providing regular cleaning of shared and high-touch items is undertaken.

Community access programs and work experience programs for students enrolled in specialist school settings.

Specialist schools across Victoria can continue these programs, however programs operating in high-risk* settings should not take place at this time.

Students would need to be included in the density limits for the workplace and comply with any restrictions applicable to that workplace as well as the COVIDSafe Plan in place.

Students are required to follow indoor and outdoor face mask requirements of the workplace they are attending.

**High-risk settings are generally defined as high-risk areas of increased risk/transmission (aged care workers/healthcare settings), high-risk industries (such as meat works) where there are known cases/high levels of community transmission, or a geographical area of high risk as determined by public health (i.e. exposure sites).*

Outside School Hours Care programs

Outside School Hours Care programs can recommence for all students, following operational guidance as applies to schools where appropriate.

Camps, playgrounds, pools and other school facilities and activities

School camps and overnight stays can take place across Victoria with no travel restrictions. Bookings must be limited to single schools. Multiple schools can attend camps providing school groups remain separated and do not share common facilities at the same time. **Mixing of staff and students between different schools is not permitted.** Testing requirements are now in place for the Victorian ski fields (see 'Intrastate and interstate travel').

Outdoor education including excursions and overnight stays, for the purpose of outdoor education are permitted. Programs should only operate for staff and students from single schools. Testing requirements are now in place for the Victorian ski fields (see 'Intrastate and interstate travel').

Playgrounds remain open for school use and can be made available for community use out of school hours.

Drinking fountains can remain open.

Non-essential visitors should be excluded from school sites for this period.

Essential visitors include for example:

- Preservice teacher placements
- Health and wellbeing staff
- Parish Priests

Community groups are not permitted to use school facilities during school hours (indoor or outdoor). When used outside of school hours, a density limit of 1 person per 4 square meters must be applied to the spaces used. Some school facilities may be subject to additional requirements under the [Restricted Activity Directions](#) when open for community use, e.g. swimming pools and gyms.

School tours should not be conducted on-site for prospective students and their families at this time.

Incursions are not permitted at this time.

Excursions are permitted with students from a single school only (see guidance Page 10)

Non-essential meetings, and all school events, gatherings and assemblies should be deferred or held remotely.

Kinder to prep and Year 6 to Year 7 transition programs are not permitted at this time.

Staggered start and finish times – Schools should introduce staggered start and finish times to reduce congestion at the school gate during drop-off and pick-up times.

***NEW* Interschool activities** are permitted, with the density limit of 1 person per 4 square metres applied to any spaces and activities being used. Record keeping obligations must be adhered to by staff and students visiting from other schools. Interschool activities held off school sites (e.g. entertainment venues or community facilities) must be conducted in line with

any specific indoor and outdoor capacity limits (100 per indoor space and 300 per discrete outdoor space), density limits and any other obligations on venues including use of Service Victoria QR codes.

School bus services across the state will continue to operate as normal. Students are not required to check-in via a QR code service when travelling on private school buses or disability transport services, however school bus services **are required** to keep accurate records of students and staff (including drivers) accessing these services should this information be required for contact tracing. For more information, please see <https://www.coronavirus.vic.gov.au/school-bus-services>

QR codes and record keeping

The use of Service Victoria QR codes for electronic record keeping is now mandatory in all schools to enable the effective contact tracing of any COVID-19 cases. This requirement will continue into Term 3 until further notice.

QR code check ins **are required** to be used by:

- all visitors on school site (including contractors, external Department staff and building and maintenance staff)
- all parents who enter school buildings when on school site

QR code check ins **are not required** to be used by:

- staff
- students
- parents who come onto school grounds for drop off or pick up, but do not enter buildings.

Schools can permit parents to enter buildings on-site for student pick up and drop off providing sufficient QR code locations can be identified and utilised to ensure parents are able to check in. **Where this is not possible, parents should not be permitted to enter buildings for pick up and drop off.**

Registering for a QR code

Schools must register their schools for a QR code. The process for setting up QR codes is very simple and straightforward. The key steps are:

1. Register your school [here](#)
2. Confirm your email address by clicking on the link in the email
3. Set up a password
4. Log into the QR code service portal
5. Fill in the school's details and click 'Register'
6. Your account is now set up

Schools are reminded that existing sign in and out processes should continue to be used to record visitor attendance, in particular the purpose of visits, for legal and regulatory obligations

Further information about QR code set-up can be found at [Register to use the Victorian Government QR Code Service](#)

QR code use on school transport

Students should, where practical, check-in via a QR code service when travelling to and from school on public transport.

Intrastate and interstate travel

Intrastate travel

There are no restrictions on travel between metropolitan Melbourne and regional Victoria.

Interstate travel

Travel restrictions between states and territories and in some remote areas of Australia are in place.

These restrictions are implemented by individual state and territory governments and are subject to change at very short notice. Schools **must** refer to the [Department of Health travel advice](#) and the relevant state/territory specific restrictions before confirming travel plans or bookings.

There is a requirement to apply for a permit to enter Victoria from any location in Australia – this includes Victorians who are returning from interstate travel. The [Victorian travel permit system](#) is based on a traffic light system, which allows for areas across Australia to be designated as green, orange or red according to their COVID-19 risk, in line with public health advice.

Schools should reconsider travelling to locations currently listed as a **red zone** or **orange zone**:

- if at the time of travel, a location is listed as an **orange** or **red zone**, staff and students **should not** travel to this location.

Schools must not travel to an extreme risk zone.

Schools should also work closely with their community and insurer when determining the appropriateness of interstate travel during 2021, considering:

- uncertainty of local epidemiology
- health and wellbeing of staff and students
- risk of financial loss (see further advice in 'Insurance' below).

Overseas travel

On 25 March 2020, the Department of Home Affairs imposed a ban on Australians travelling overseas. Many other countries have also closed their borders to overseas travellers. Victorian schools **should not** make overseas travel plans and should anticipate the overseas travel ban to be in place for some time.

Insurance

In addition to following [the Department of Health travel advice](#) schools should actively manage financial risk associated with travel by ensuring that they have adequate insurance, where possible. Catholic Church Insurance (CCI) and most insurers will **not** cover for losses related to COVID-19 or government-directed travel restrictions.

Schools should always consider the terms of coverage and any exclusions or limitations before accepting insurance.

Victorian Alpine Region

School trips **must** adhere to additional requirements if attending the Victorian ski fields. Travel to regional Victorian Alpine Resorts is permitted provided visitors have had a negative COVID test within the previous 72 hours. Children under 12 years are not included. Visitors must be able to show evidence of a negative test as condition of entry into ski fields.

Alpine testing requirements

Anyone who lives within an alpine resort will be exempt from the testing requirement. Students who need to enter an alpine resort to attend school, and those transporting them, are also exempt from the testing requirement.

For more information, please see <https://www.coronavirus.vic.gov.au/travel-restrictions>.

Excursions

Excursions are permitted throughout Victoria. There are no restrictions on travel between metropolitan Melbourne and regional Victoria.

Excursions should take place with students from single schools only. There is no group size limit (but students should be in their class group) and excursions must be conducted in line with any specific capacity limits on venues that are being used.

In most cases, density limits can be removed when a venue is being accessed by staff and students from a single school only. However, schools should check with venues to confirm any additional obligations under the Restricted Activity Directions.

Collection of student contact details on excursions for contact-tracing

Excursion venues are responsible for managing record keeping for contact tracing in line with current public health directives. Venues are required to use electronic record keeping that connects with a digital system provided by Services Victoria.

An electronic or hard copy list of student names (full name required) and contact numbers **must** be provided to the venue. Students are not required to individually check-in at the venue on the day.

Schools should contact venues prior to the excursion to discuss record keeping arrangements, particularly to clarify responsibility of entering student details into the digital system.

The Department of Health has **strongly recommended** that a **contact number for each individual student** (as per the student's school file) is provided to venues for recording purposes. If providing a private contact number for a student poses a privacy risk or the contact number is unknown, the school's 24-hr contact number may be used, but this should be the exception.

The **Parent Consent form** has been updated to advise parents/carers/guardians that when required, schools will be providing excursion venues with student contact details for contact-tracing purposes.

An **attendance form for contact tracing** has been developed to assist schools in preparing this information. The list should also contain the names and contact details of the adults attending the excursion (i.e. school staff, volunteers and support staff) and these persons **must** check-in individually on the day using the venue provided systems. **Schools can opt to use their own prepared list, but excursion organisers must refer to the proforma to ensure they capture all the required information.**

Schools are reminded to keep accurate internal records of the names and contact details of staff and students who attended excursions as well as the names and addresses of the locations and times visited.

Mental health and wellbeing

The mental health and wellbeing of principals, teachers, school staff and students remains an important consideration.

The diocesan education offices of the CECV continue to provide a full suite of services to support staff mental health and wellbeing. This includes services and resources aimed at addressing individual needs, as well as tools and supports to help guide staff through this time.

For students

The [Mental health toolkit](#) has advice and resources to support student mental health and wellbeing. This includes advice on positive mental health promotion, curriculum support, how to identify and access support, as well as parent- and student-specific pages.

As part of the Mental health toolkit, the Department of Education and Training (DET) has partnered with Smiling Mind to produce [resources to support VCE and VCAL students](#) to remain positive and engaged in their education during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Additional resources are available on the CEVN website:

- [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) Wellbeing Resources](#)
- [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) Family Engagement and Support](#)
- [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) Supporting Learner Diversity](#).

Resources for principals and staff

In the Archdiocese of Melbourne, [principal wellbeing services](#) are available through Converge International for all primary and secondary school principals. Sessions for the employee assistance program have been extended and are now available from 9 am to 5 pm on weekends. Principals may also find Converge International's online magazine *Flourish* a useful resource for managing wellbeing. Work health checks will continue, with minor changes.

In the Diocese of Ballarat, principal and staff wellbeing services are available through [Converge International](#). Sessions for the employee assistance program have been extended and are now available from 9 am to 5 pm on weekends. Principals and staff may also find Converge International's online magazine *Flourish* a useful resource for managing wellbeing.

Principals in the Diocese of Sandhurst can contact [AccessEAP](#) for 24/7 employee assistance by calling 1800 818 728, making an online booking or using the EAP in Focus app.

Counselling is also available for staff from the AccessEAP employee assistance program, which is a confidential, free-of-charge service.

Health and safety advice for schools

COVIDSafe Plan for schools

COVIDSafe principles for schools should continue to be followed for on-site supervision.

The principles for maintaining a COVIDSafe school apply to all Victorian Catholic schools.

A combination of strategies is required to minimise transmission risk. No single strategy completely reduces risk and not every measure will be possible in all educational settings. Where some controls are not feasible, others should be enhanced. Strategies should also be adjusted over time in line with the changing risk of transmission in the community.

Additional measures to promote COVIDSafe activities should be implemented on school premises for students and staff continuing to receive on site supervision, including:

- limiting school access to outside visitors where possible
- reduce mixing between groups and create workforce bubbles*

The Safety Management Plan for COVID-19 (COVIDSafe Plan) applies to all schools, outlines the key health and safety risks and links to the latest guidance.

In conjunction with this Operations Guide, it sets out the approach for managing safety risks in schools in accordance with the minimum requirements for COVIDSafe Plans.

Reinforce COVIDSafe behaviours	Create COVIDSafe spaces	Promote COVIDSafe activities	Respond to COVID-19 risk
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • stay home when unwell • practise good hygiene* • ensure physical distancing (1.5 m)* • wear a face mask* • avoid interactions in enclosed spaces* 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • make hand hygiene easy • keep surfaces clean and implement enhanced environmental cleaning and disinfection • promote outdoor air ventilation and do not have air conditioners on recirculate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • move activities outdoors where possible, weather permitting • adapt, modify or defer higher risk activities • limit school access to outside visitors where possible • reduce mixing between groups • create workforce bubbles* 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • keep records and act quickly if someone becomes unwell* • use personal protective equipment • clean and disinfect appropriately if a staff member or student has been unwell while at school • manage individual risk

* These items denote Victorian government [COVIDSafe principles for business](#) and may require adaptation for the school context.

Reinforce COVIDSafe behaviours

Key behaviours required for reducing COVID-19 transmission risk include staying home when unwell, performing regular hand hygiene and, where possible, pursuing strategies to support physical distancing. Face masks are recommended when physical distance cannot be maintained.

Education settings are uniquely placed to integrate these messages into everyday learning and practice, through role-modelling and formal and informal learning opportunities.

Students and staff should continue to be vigilant and remain home if unwell.

Hand hygiene remains one of the critical measures to reduce COVID-19 transmission. Hands should be cleaned with an alcohol-based hand sanitiser or washed with soap and water for 20 seconds.

Students and staff should be encouraged to cough or sneeze into their elbow or a tissue.

Physical distancing should be encouraged where possible and density limits implemented in office spaces and areas generally accessed by the public, such as reception.

Congestion within the school and at entry points should be avoided where feasible by adjusting drop-off and pick-up processes, signage and one-way flow of individuals in more confined spaces such as locker bays and canteens.

Stay home when unwell

The most important action school communities can take to reduce the risk of transmission of COVID-19 is to ensure that any unwell staff and students remain at home and get tested, even with the mildest of symptoms.

Students with underlying conditions (such as hay fever or asthma)

If a student has persistent symptoms due to an underlying condition such as hay fever or asthma, the student should still be tested for COVID-19 if they develop symptoms that are different to or worse than their usual symptoms. Students whose symptoms are clearly typical for their underlying condition can continue to attend school.

Parents/carers should also consider getting a medical certificate from the child's treating GP to confirm that it is safe for them to attend school with persistent symptoms that may overlap with some of the symptoms of COVID-19 such as cough or runny nose.

Young children with persistent mild symptoms

Younger children (pre-school up to Grade 2) may have prolonged post-viral symptoms such as a runny nose or cough and may return to school following a negative COVID-19 test even if they are not completely free of symptoms. They will need a medical certificate from their GP to confirm they are otherwise well or have recovered from their acute illness.

Any worsening of symptoms will require review and repeat COVID-19 testing, if considered appropriate by the doctor.

Students with a negative COVID-19 test whose symptoms have completely resolved do not need a medical certificate to return to the school.

Practise good hygiene

All staff, students and visitors to schools should undertake regular hand hygiene, particularly on arrival to school, before and after eating, after blowing their nose, coughing, sneezing or using the toilet. This should be directed or supervised by staff for young students or where required.

Sharing of food is not permitted.

Use non-contact greetings (not shaking hands, hugging or kissing).

Ensure the highest hygiene practices among food handlers where these services are operating, as per [Safe Food Handling Guidance](#).

Ensure physical distancing

A variety of strategies to support physical distancing among all students and staff should be pursued, where possible.

Staff must practise physical distancing between themselves and other staff members or adults to the extent that is reasonably practicable. They should physically distance themselves from students where appropriate and feasible.

Students should practise physical distancing where possible. Maintaining a physical distance of 1.5 meters will not always be practical in the school environment and this may be particularly challenging in the younger years of primary school. In these contexts, a combination of health and safety measures should be utilised to reduce risk.

Density limits do not apply in classrooms and other spaces for the purposes of student use, including corridors and other shared areas.

Density limits of 1 person per 4 square metres apply to staff areas such as staff lunchrooms and areas accessed by the public, such as reception areas.

For public areas, signage must be displayed to indicate the maximum number of members of the public that may be present in the space at a single time.

Strategies that can be considered to support physical distancing include:

- carefully managing the movement of adults through school reception and staffrooms, and the timing of staff arrival and departure
- where multiple staff are required in a classroom, reminding staff to maintain physical distancing from each other as much as practical
- providing signage and rostering so that access to shared physical spaces and food preparation areas can be managed
- reminding students, staff and visitors, including through signage, of the importance of physical distancing where possible

- reconfiguring class spaces where possible and using all available space in the school
- marking the floor indicating physical distancing in appropriate locations (e.g. canteens)
- acting to reduce the congregation of adults around the school and reduce congestion. Schools can do this through strategies such as using multiple entry/exit points, creating spaces for egress in different areas of the school and providing appropriate signage to communicate expected behaviours
- communicating the strategies in place to parents through local signage and communications to school communities to remind staff, students and families of the need for behaviours that support physical distancing.

Avoid interactions in close spaces

Space out staff workstations as much as possible and limit the number of staff in offices. This might mean relocating staff to other spaces (e.g. the library or unused classrooms).

Consider opportunities to adapt indoor activities outdoors, for example having outdoor meetings, holding classes outside, and encouraging staff and students to eat outside.

Use signage to promote physical distancing in more confined spaces such as locker bays, changing rooms and canteens.

For activities occurring outdoors, schools should follow the outdoor activities guidance and support staff and students to use a combination of sun protection measures when UV levels are 3 or above.

Face masks in schools

Please see the [Coronavirus.vic.gov.au website](https://www.coronavirus.vic.gov.au) for the latest face mask requirements as advice may change at short notice.

As directed by the Victorian Chief Health Officer, from 11.59pm Thursday 15 July:

- School staff and secondary school students aged 12 or older must **always wear a face mask** at school, including when attending an Outside School Hours Care (OSHC) program, unless a lawful exception applies.
- Children under 12 years of age and students at primary school are not required to wear face masks when at school, or when attending an OHSC program.
- For communication purposes, teachers and education support staff are not required to wear face masks while teaching, but those who wish to do so, can. It is recommended that face masks be worn while teaching wherever practicable.
- Face masks are mandatory for all school staff and school students aged 12 or older when travelling to and from school on public transport and when in taxis or ride share vehicles.

There are a number of lawful reasons for not wearing a face mask, including for staff and students who are unable to wear a face mask due to the nature of their disability. This

includes students or staff who have a medical condition, such as a breathing problem, a serious skin condition on the face, or a mental health condition.

A face mask must cover the nose and mouth. Face shields, scarves or bandanas do not meet these requirements.

Face masks at external premises

Staff and students attending camps and excursions will be required to meet any face mask requirements of an external provider/venue, including transport providers, unless a lawful exception applies.

Staff and students unable to wear face masks

A combination of strategies are required to limit transmission of COVID-19. Where students and staff are unable to wear face masks, other transmission reduction strategies, such as physical distancing, can be enhanced, noting that any additional or enhanced strategies should be aimed at the whole school or class population.

Staff members unable to wear face masks should avoid providing supervision or care of students with COVID-19 symptoms.

Face masks during school sport

Where required, students can remove face masks when engaged in any strenuous exercise.

Schools are **strongly encouraged** to maximise the use of outdoor environments for school sport and physical activity, particularly during periods of community transmission.

More information

Schools must display information and signage at school entrances and in communal areas such as staffrooms as reminders for staff to wear face masks when not teaching.

School staff should refer to the CECV's [Guidance for the use of personal protective equipment in education](#) to determine when additional personal protective equipment (PPE) is required and for information on the correct and safe use of PPE.

Create COVIDSafe spaces

The spaces where staff and students teach, learn and play have an important role in protecting against COVID-19 transmission, particularly surface and airborne transmission.

Reducing the need to interact with high-touch surfaces, regular environmental cleaning and cleaning of high-touch surfaces and good hand hygiene can protect against surface transmission.

Promote use of hand hygiene facilities by keeping them well-stocked and in readily accessible locations, for example at the entrance to buildings. Hand sanitiser should be accessible in every occupied room, particularly where access to running water and soap is not readily available.

Outdoor air ventilation should be increased whenever possible, including in bathrooms, to dilute the concentration of an airborne virus and to filter air recirculating in a space. Wherever possible, switch air handling units with central recirculation to 100% outdoor air and avoid use of fans in shared spaces. Where this is not possible, windows should be open as much as possible. Further advice on ventilation can be found on the DH website: [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) transmission from air-circulating, wind-blowing devices and activities](#).

Make hand hygiene easy

Hand sanitiser should be made available at entry points to classrooms. Age appropriate education and reminders on hand hygiene should be provided.

If soap and water are not readily available, hand sanitiser that contains at least 60 per cent alcohol should be made accessible.

Keep surfaces clean

COVIDSafe routine cleaning arrangements should continue for all Catholic schools in Term 2. This involves daily end-of-school-day cleaning, with a particular focus on cleaning and disinfecting of high-touch surfaces, and the inclusion of some elements that were not cleaned every day prior to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

Schools should consider the necessity of using shared equipment at this time. Such items may include shared computers, class sets of teaching and learning materials, and musical instruments. If used, strict hand hygiene should be followed before and after use. 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.

Consider adjusting how staff and students interact within the built environment to reduce contact with certain surfaces. For example, a simple measure such as keeping a door open will reduce the need for multiple people to touch the door handle. Consider use of plexiglass as a physical barrier at the school reception and canteen where practical and feasible.

Promote outdoor air ventilation

Schools are strongly encouraged to increase fresh air flow into indoor spaces whenever possible and to maximise the use of outdoor learning areas or environments, particularly during periods of community transmission.

Where possible, air recirculation should be eliminated or minimised by setting air conditioning units to use external air rather than recycling.

Door jambs should be used where possible to keep air circulating and avoid the need to close and open doors.

Further advice to assist with managing ventilation is available from the DH: [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) transmission from air-circulating, wind-blowing devices and activities](#).

Promote COVIDSafe activities

Some school-based activities may need to be altered, deferred or delivered remotely to reduce COVID-19 transmission risk. Decisions regarding the types of activities that take place should consider the potential risk associated with the activity, the level of community transmission and available modifications to minimise risk.

Where appropriate and weather permitting, opportunities for outdoor learning and working should be considered as alternatives to interactions indoors due to improved ventilation.

Events subject to the [Public Event's Framework](#), should follow advice regarding their registered event. They should be planned in line with relevant restrictions in the community, adhering to indoor and outdoor patron limits as well as [density limits](#).

Large school gatherings (ceremonies, assemblies, school formals etc.) are not permitted at this time.

Adapt, modify or defer higher risk activities

Limit school access to outside visitors where possible

Visitors to school premises should be limited to essential school services and operations.

Essential visitors to school grounds must comply with density limits, face mask requirements, QR code check-ins and practise good hand hygiene.

The density limit of 1 person per 4 square metres should be applied to any spaces and activities being attended by parent/carers and other visitors. The density limit applies to all persons in the space, including students.

Physical activity, sports and swimming

Swimming pools

- **Outdoor and indoor pools can be used.**
- **There is no limit on participant numbers where there is exclusive use of a pool facility by a single school at any one time for educational purposes**
- **Where there is not exclusive use of a pool by a single school, the requirements of the Restricted Activity Directions apply. Schools should speak to swimming pool venues to determine how restrictions apply to the activity being undertaken.**

Physical education and intraschool sport

- **Outdoor and indoor contact and non-contact physical activity is permitted.**
- **Where using an external sporting facility, density limits do not apply where there is exclusive use of the venue by single schools, however schools should continue to**

apply COVIDSafe principles to decision making, including avoiding interactions in closed spaces and physical distancing where practicable.

***NEW* Interschool sport**

- **Indoor and outdoor interschool sport is permitted but is limited to the minimum number of people required to participate in and facilitate the activity. It is also subject to venue capacity limits including a density limit of 1 person per 4 square metres applies to any spaces being used. Record keeping obligations must be adhered to by staff and students visiting from other schools.**
- **Interschool sport held off school sites, such as a physical recreation facility, must be conducted in line with any specific indoor and outdoor capacity limits (100 per indoor space and 300 per discrete outdoor space). In addition to the density quotient of 1 person per 4 sqm and any other obligations on venues including use of Service Victoria QR codes**
- **Spectators are not allowed (excludes people necessary for events such as teachers, and supervising staff).**
- **Schools should also put in place health and safety controls in line with the [School Sport Victoria COVID Safe Plan](#).**

Singing, brass, woodwind classes and groups

Singing and playing wind and brass instruments can occur if Department of Health recommendations to reduce transmission risk are followed. Recommendations include moving outdoors, increasing ventilation, physical distancing of **2 metres** between performers and 5 metres between performers and the audience, reducing the number of people, or reducing the length of time an activity is conducted. Further advice on ways to reduce risk can be found in DH guidance: [COVID-19 transmission from air-circulating, wind-blowing devices and activities](#)

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 into contact with someone for the purpose of providing routine care and/or assistance (for example, the use of gloves for nappy-changing, toileting or feeding).

Standard precautions as per the DET's [Infectious Diseases policy](#) and related CECV policies should be adopted when providing first aid. For example, use gloves and an apron when dealing with blood or body fluids/substances.

Always wash hands with soap and water or use hand sanitiser before and after performing routine care or first aid.

Liturgies

Liturgies cannot be held at schools, consistent with guidance on assemblies.

Singing during the liturgy is permitted within the guidelines contained in the use of woodwind instruments, singing, voice projection and dance section of this guide.

Your diocese may have produced COVIDSafe guidelines to assist clergy and faithful with questions pertaining to specific areas of liturgy and ministry. See the following websites for more information:

- [Catholic Archdiocese of Melbourne](#)
- [Catholic Diocese of Ballarat](#)
- [Catholic Diocese of Sale](#)
- [Catholic Diocese of Sandhurst](#).

Schools should talk with their parish priests to see what is practical and pastorally helpful.

Please note, this advice for schools supersedes any advice on gathering size in archdiocesan and diocesan guidelines because it is in a school COVIDSafe contained context.

Reduce mixing between groups and create workforce bubbles

Reducing mixing between groups of students

Reducing mixing between groups of students works to limit the number of students potentially identified as close contacts in the event of an exposure at a school.

Schools should consider how student or class bubbles could be maintained, by grouping students together and limiting mixing between different groups and should be applied to the school and curriculum settings.

This will be more feasible in some settings than others, for example primary schools, with local discretion applied.

Staggered start and finish times, as well as staggered lunch breaks between groups can further reinforce this approach.

Reducing mixing between staff

Workforce bubbles, like student bubbles, will limit the number of staff potentially identified as close contacts in the event of an exposure at a school.

Schools should consider ways to cohort staff working on-site into workforce bubbles, for example: having the same group of staff working together.

Staff should not work across multiple schools where possible, noting there will be some workforces who will need to work across multiple schools (for example, health and wellbeing staff and casual relief teaching staff).

Mixing of staff should be avoided by staggering lunch breaks, with strict adherence to density limits in these spaces, including at break times.

Where multiple staff are required in a classroom, remind staff to maintain physical distancing from each other as much as practical.

Mixing of staff and students between rooms should be avoided by staggering lunch breaks.

Where multiple staff are required in a classroom, remind staff to maintain physical distancing from each other as much as practical.

Schools should consider ways to cohort staff working on site into workforce bubbles, for example having the same group of staff working on the same day.

Staff working across multiple schools should be minimised wherever possible.

Respond to COVID-19 risk

Any staff member or student who becomes unwell while at school with symptoms of COVID-19 must return home immediately and get tested, with a designated space(s) made available on school premises to support isolation where required.

Staff or students most at risk of severe illness as a result of COVID-19 infection should continue to individually assess appropriateness for onsite attendance with support from their medical practitioner, noting that these assessments should be reviewed alongside notable changes to COVID-19 in Victoria. Further information can be found in [Advice for schools and families on medical vulnerability during the coronavirus \(COVID-19\) pandemic](#).

Good record-keeping in schools, including for any visitors, enables the prompt identification of individuals who may have been in contact with a confirmed case.

PPE should be used in line with the CECV's [Guidance for the use of personal protective equipment in education](#), with staff trained to understand when and how to use PPE appropriately.

Schools must notify their diocesan education office of a suspected or confirmed case of COVID-19 in a school, providing requested information and taking required actions.

Appropriate cleaning must take place following a confirmed case on school premises.

Further information about the required steps for the management of unwell students and staff can be found in the [Managing illness in schools and early childhood services during the coronavirus \(COVID-19\) pandemic](#) fact sheet.

Management of an unwell student or staff member

It is important that any staff member or student who becomes unwell while at school gets tested and returns home. While it is unlikely that a staff member or student who is unwell with flu-like symptoms will have 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 COVID-19 symptoms, such as fever, cough or sore throat, should be isolated in an appropriate space with suitable supervision and students should be collected by a parent/carer as soon as possible. Urgent medical attention should be sought where indicated. It is not suitable for an unwell student to travel home unsupervised.
- Where staff or students are experiencing symptoms compatible with COVID-19, the important actions to follow include performing hand hygiene, maintaining physical distance and putting on a surgical face mask (both staff and student where appropriate). See the CECV's [Guidance for the use of personal protective equipment in education](#).
- If the care of an unwell child or young person is to be prolonged (for example, because it will take some hours for a parent to collect a child) and maintaining distance is not practical when providing supervision or direct care, the staff member should wear surgical

face mask, gloves, gown and eye protection. See the CECV's [Guidance for the use of personal protective equipment in education](#)

- Face masks should not be used in situations where an individual is unable to safely or practically tolerate a face mask (for example, a child with complex medical needs including existing respiratory needs). Children who are two years or younger must not wear face masks as they are a choking and suffocation risk.
- Health care plans, where relevant, should be updated to provide additional advice on monitoring and identification of the unwell child in the context of 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, to request the parent/carer collect their child if concerns remain.
- Staff or students experiencing symptoms compatible with COVID-19 should be encouraged to seek the advice of their healthcare professional who can advise on next steps.
- Where staff or students have been tested, they must isolate until they receive their test result.
- Staff and students are generally not required to present a medical certificate stating they are fit to return to an education setting after a period of illness; however, staff and students should not return until symptoms resolve. Staff continue to be required to present a medical certificate in accordance with personal leave policy for periods of absence on personal leave.
- Any areas accessed by the student should be cleaned appropriately. 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 COVID-19

Staff members who are unwell must stay home.

'Suspected case' means a person who is displaying one or more COVID-19 symptoms. The symptoms to watch out for are:

- fever
- chills or sweats
- cough
- sore throat
- shortness of breath
- runny nose
- loss or change in sense of smell or taste.

Some people may also experience headache, muscle soreness, stuffy nose, nausea, vomiting and diarrhoea.

As soon as practicable after becoming aware of a suspected case in a staff member, where that staff member has attended on a school site while symptomatic or 48 hours prior to the onset of symptoms, the principal must take the following actions:

- direct the staff member to self-isolate by travelling home immediately. If immediate travel home is not possible, the staff member must be directed to self-isolate at school, in a separate room where possible, while wearing a face covering and remaining at least 1.5 metres from any other person until they can travel home
- advise the staff member to be tested for COVID-19 as soon as practicable, and to self-isolate while awaiting the result of that test
- manage the risk posed by the suspected case, including arranging with their current cleaning service provider for additional enhanced cleaning of areas used by the staff member and other high-touch areas (see section on [cleaning](#))
- inform all staff to be vigilant about the onset of symptoms. If they become unwell, they must notify the principal, get tested and self-isolate.

Monitoring of close contacts in schools

To minimise further community spread of COVID-19, the DH has introduced a new system for the identification, notification and monitoring of close contacts (primary and secondary).

In line with this, schools will now be advised if a student at their school has been identified by the DH as a close contact of a person with COVID-19.

Close contacts are notified directly by the DH regarding requirements for quarantine and testing; the student should not attend school until they are advised by the DH that their quarantine has concluded. Students should bring a DH clearance letter as proof their quarantine has ended and they can return to school.

Schools will be asked to confirm that the student identified as a close contact is not attending school during this time. If the student is attending school, they must be sent home. The school is not required to close.

Supporting students during quarantine

Schools are asked to provide support to the close contact student and their family during the quarantine period to facilitate continued engagement in learning and address wellbeing needs.

Your diocesan education office staff will work with your school to confirm that the student is following quarantine directions, as well as provide support to the student and family as needed.

The DH has provided [guidance](#) on primary close contacts, secondary close contacts, quarantine periods and more.

School site closures

Diocesan Catholic education office staff are working closely with individual schools and the DH to manage and respond to reported cases of COVID-19 that may include exposure to the virus at a school site.

The rapid school site closure, cleaning and contact tracing process, agreed with the DH, reduces the risk of any transmission occurring at a school site and ensures that school sites can reopen, and staff and students can return to onsite learning as quickly and safely as possible.

In the event of a confirmed case, schools should prepare for the possibility that at some point they may be required to close a school site due to a person who has tested positive for COVID-19 having attended that site.

If a site closure is required, you will be informed by your diocesan education office and will be provided with full support by office staff.

Some simple steps can ensure that schools are able to manage the site closure process effectively and support continuity of learning for both students and staff.

Appendix 1 – Quick reference of permitted school activities

COVIDSafe behaviours

Key actions for schools	All Catholic schools
Temperature checks	NO
Face masks	YES – INDOORS AND OUTDOORS
Working across multiple sites	MINIMISE

Create COVIDSafe spaces

Key actions for schools	All Catholic schools
COVIDSafe routine cleaning	YES
Enhanced hand hygiene facilities	YES
Enhanced ventilation	YES
Community use of school playground	NO (unless outside of school hours)
Community use of school facilities (indoors and outdoors)	NO (unless outside of school hours)
Libraries (for borrowing and as a learning space)	YES

Promote COVIDSafe activities

Key actions for schools	All Catholic schools
Non-essential visitors	NO
Preservice teachers	YES
Health, wellbeing and inclusion visits	YES
School tours	NO
Excursions	YES See guidance page 10
Swimming and all other pool use	YES See guidance page 18
Incursions	NO
School photos	NO
Camps and overnight stays	YES See guidance on page 8
Assemblies and liturgies	NO
Kinder transition program (small group)	NO
Year 7 transition programs	NO
Sports (indoor, outdoor, contact and non-contact)	YES
All interschool activities (such as debating)	YES
Singing, brass and woodwind classes and groups	YES Following recommended health advice

Key actions for schools	All Catholic schools
Professional development and staff meetings	NO

Respond to COVID-19 risk

Key actions for schools	All Catholic schools
Keep visitor records	YES
Maintain adequate PPE supply	YES