

# School Operations Guide

Term 2, 2021 (updated 11 June)

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## For all Victorian Catholic schools

### Return to face-to-face learning

**Based on advice from the Victorian Chief Health Officer, schools in metropolitan Melbourne will return to face-to-face learning and teaching for all students from and including Friday 11 June 2021.**

Students and school staff in **all Catholic schools** across Victoria can attend for duty at their school in accordance with normal arrangements from and including Friday 11 June.

Out of School Hours care programs operating in schools can also resume full operations from and including Friday 11 June.

There are some differences in operational advice for metropolitan Melbourne and Regional Victoria. Where there are differences, these are **highlighted**.

### Other arrangements for metropolitan Melbourne and regional Victoria

Students and staff who live in metropolitan Melbourne and are enrolled in or work in a school in regional Victoria can attend on-site.

Students and staff who live in regional Victoria and are enrolled in or work in a school in metropolitan Melbourne can also attend on-site.

### Other arrangements for Victorian border communities

Students and staff who live in regional Victoria and are enrolled in or work in a school in a bordering state can attend on-site.

Students and staff who live in bordering states and are enrolled in or work in a school in regional Victoria can continue to attend on-site.

### Student attendance

Students are required to attend on-site at all Catholic schools.

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

### Outside School Hours Care programs

Out of School Hours care programs operating in schools can also resume full operations from and including Friday 11 June.

## 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.

Schools must ensure students with medical needs have an up-to-date health plans and accompanying condition-specific health management plan (such as an [Asthma Action Plan](#)), based on medical advice from the student's medical or health practitioner, and consultation with the student and parents and carers.

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).

The principal retains full authority for the management of the school workforce, and 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).

## 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

### *Tech Schools, KIOSC and Science and Mathematics Specialist Centres*

Tech Schools, KIOSC and Science and Mathematics Specialist Centres across Victoria can resume on-site learning for students from and including Friday 11 June.

Access should be limited to a single school at a time.

No mixing of students from different educational institutions should occur. Mixing of cohorts within a school should be minimised.

### *Structured workplace learning (SWL) and work experience*

#### Regional

SWL and work experience placements can recommence on-site.

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. Virtual work experience can be pursued where appropriate.

The Department of Health has recommended that SWL and work experience placements in high-risk\* settings at this time (i.e. healthcare, aged care, meat works etc) be deferred until further notice unless they are contributing to VCAL/VCE/VET or International Baccalaureate.

*\*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).*

#### Metro

SWL and work experience placements are not permitted and should be deferred, or if that is not possible, cancelled. If SWL or work experience placements are deferred or cancelled, all efforts should be made to arrange suitable alternative arrangements for students.

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

#### **Regional**

Specialist schools in regional Victoria can recommence 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.

Virtual work experience should be pursued where appropriate.

#### **Metro**

Not permitted at this time.

#### **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.

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

Students across Victoria can participate in their VCE or VCAL classes, including VET studies, in TAFEs, non-school senior secondary providers and other training organisations including where these are held in other schools. Schools should contact their RTOs to understand any changes to their current operating arrangements.

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.

### **Camps, playgrounds, pools and other school facilities and activities**

All Victorian Catholic schools:

- **Camps and overnight stays** can take place within regional Victoria or metropolitan Melbourne, providing the camping venue is limited to use by a single school only.
- **Outdoor education** including excursions and overnight stays, for the purpose of outdoor education are permitted. Programs should only operate for staff and student from single schools.
- **Excursions** are not permitted at this time (unless otherwise specified in this guide)
- **Incursions** are not permitted at this time (unless otherwise specified in this guide)

- **Interschool activities** are not permitted at this time (unless otherwise specified in this guide)
- **Playgrounds** remain open for school use and can be made available for community use out of school hours.
- **Drinking fountains** can remain open.
- **Community groups can use school facilities** when the use complies with permitted activity in the community.
- **School tours should not be conducted** on-site for prospective students and their families at this time.
- **Non-essential visitors should be excluded** from school sites for this period.
- **School events** subject to the Public Event's Framework are suspended, unless permitted via the PEF approval pathway, including school open days.
- **Non-essential meetings, gatherings and assemblies** should be deferred or held remotely.
- **School bus services** across the state will continue to operate as normal.



## 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 measures 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
- create workforce bubbles\*

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

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

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.

The COVIDSafe Plan has been updated to align with the changes to the advice set out in this Operations Guide.

Your diocesan education office's OHS team can assist in tailoring the plan to individual school needs.

Principals should consult with their local Health and Safety Representative(s) and Health and Safety Committee(s) (if applicable) to implement the health and safety guidance to the extent reasonably practicable and escalate unresolved issues via their diocesan education office.

## 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*

For younger children (in Prep to Year 2) who have had a negative COVID-19 test that was taken after they developed symptoms, the decision about return to school should be made in conjunction with the child's treating GP. If the GP is satisfied the child has recovered from their acute illness, is otherwise well and does not need a repeat COVID-19 test, the child can return even if they are not completely free of symptoms. 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 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 recommended. Where this occurs, individual portions should be encouraged alongside strict hand hygiene.

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 **should** practise physical distancing of at least 1.5m between themselves and other staff members or adults wherever possible. Staff 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 no longer apply in areas only accessed by staff (i.e. staff rooms, lunchrooms). However, staff are encouraged to continue to physical distance where possible.

[Density limits](#) of 1 person per 4 square metres apply in areas generally accessed by the public, such as school reception.

For public areas, signage must be displayed to indicate the maximum number of persons 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 Department of Health website at [www.coronavirus.vic.gov.au](http://www.coronavirus.vic.gov.au) for the latest face mask requirements as advice may change at short notice.**

- School staff and secondary school students aged 12 or older must wear a face mask indoors at school, including when attending an Outside School Hours Care (OSHC) program, unless an exception applies.
- Face masks are required to be worn outdoors at school and when attending an Outside School Hours Care (OSHC) program where physical distancing of 1.5m cannot be maintained.
- 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 OSHC program.
- Teachers and education support staff are not required to wear face masks while teaching, but those who wish to do so, can.
- Face masks are mandatory for all school staff and school students aged 12 or older when travelling to and from school.

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.

### *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 DHHS 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, and age appropriate education and reminders should be provided on hand hygiene.

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 into indoor spaces whenever possible and to maximise the use of outdoor learning areas or environments.

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 DHHS: [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.

Singing and playing wind and brass instruments must be postponed or occur remotely at this time.

Large events involving members of the wider school community (i.e. parents/carers) should be planned in line with relevant restrictions in the community, adhering to indoor and outdoor patron limits as well as density limits.

### Adapt, modify or defer higher risk activities

#### *Visitors to school premises (including interschool activities)*

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

Visitors to school grounds must comply with the physical distancing and face mask requirements set out in this School Operations Guide, and practise good hand hygiene.

To support contact tracing, schools must keep a record of all staff, students and visitors who attend on site for more than 15 minutes. Schools must record the name, contact details, date and time of attendance at school, as well as the areas of the school that the person attended. Schools can use existing mechanisms such as visitor sign-in procedures, student attendance records and staffing rosters to record this information.

Record keeping for contact-tracing purposes is **required** for school activities involving external visitors and/or the wider school community. Schools are strongly encouraged to use the free [Victorian Government QR Code Service](#) for attendees to 'Check-In' to school events and activities.

Further information is available on [Victorian Government QR Code Service](#).

#### **Physical activity, sports and swimming**

##### Swimming pools:

##### **Regional**

- Outdoor and indoor pools can be used.
- There is no limit on participant numbers where there is exclusive use by a single school at any one time for educational purposes.

##### **Metro**

- Outdoor pools only can be used.
- There is no limit on participant numbers where there is exclusive use by a single school at any one time for educational purposes.

#### Physical education and intraschool sport:

**Regional** – outdoor and indoor contact and non-contact physical activity is permitted.

**Metro** – outdoor contact and non-contact physical activity is permitted.

#### Interschool sport:

**Regional** – Indoor and outdoor interschool sport permitted but is limited to the minimum number of people required to participate in and facilitate the activity and is subject to venue capacity limits.

**Metro** – not permitted at this time (including metro schools who compete in a competition with regional schools).

#### *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, 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.

## Reduce mixing between groups and create workforce bubbles

#### Assemblies and large gatherings

Year level or whole school assemblies are permitted when attended only by staff and students from a single school, however schools may choose to defer these at this time.

### **Professional development and staff meetings**

Should be conducted online or deferred (unless essential face-to-face training for first aid, anaphylaxis, or infection control. In these instances, density limits of 1 person per 4 square metres apply).

## 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 symptoms compatible with COVID-19, such as fever, cough or sore throat, should be isolated in an appropriate space with suitable supervision and students should be collected by a parent/carer as soon as possible. Urgent medical attention should be sought where indicated. It is not suitable for an unwell student to travel home unsupervised.
- Where staff or students are experiencing 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](#).
- In the context of schools supporting students with complex health needs, if the care of an unwell child or young person is to be prolonged (for example, because it will take some hours for a parent to collect a child) and maintaining distance is not practical when

providing supervision or direct care, a surgical face mask, gloves, gown and eye protection are recommended to be worn by the staff member.

- 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.
- Cleaning guidance according to the situation of the case should be followed. If a student spreads droplets (for example by sneezing, coughing or vomiting), clean surfaces immediately with disinfectant wipes while wearing gloves.

## Required actions for suspected cases of COVID-19 in staff

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 DHHS 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 DHHS as a close contact of a person with COVID-19.

Close contacts are notified directly by the DHHS regarding requirements for quarantine and testing; the student should not attend school until they are advised by the DHHS that their quarantine has concluded. Students should bring a DHHS 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.

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

The DHHS 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 DHHS 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 DHHS, 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 Victorian Catholic schools
Temperature checks	<b>NO</b>
Face masks	<b>YES</b> <b>INDOORS</b> Always <b>OUTDOORS</b> Where physical distancing of 1.5m cannot be maintained
Working across multiple sites	<b>MINIMISE</b>

### Create COVIDSafe spaces

Key actions for schools	All Victorian Catholic schools
COVIDSafe routine cleaning	<b>YES</b>
Enhanced hand hygiene facilities	<b>YES</b>
Enhanced ventilation	<b>YES</b>
Community use of school playground	<b>YES</b>
Community use of school facilities (indoors and outdoors)	<b>YES</b> Where use complies with permitted activity in the community
Libraries (for borrowing and as a learning space)	<b>YES</b> For borrowing and as a learning space for school use only

### Promote COVIDSafe activities

Key actions for schools	All Victorian Catholic schools
Non-essential visitors	<b>ESSENTIAL VISITS ONLY</b> Including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pre-service teacher placements</li> <li>• Health and wellbeing staff</li> </ul>
Preservice teachers	<b>YES</b>
Health, wellbeing and inclusion visits	<b>YES</b>
School tours	<b>NO</b>
Excursions	<b>NO</b> Unless otherwise specified in this guide
Swimming and all other pool use	<b>LIMITED</b> See guidance above
Incursions	<b>NO</b> Unless otherwise specified in this guide
School photos	<b>NO</b>

<b>Key actions for schools</b>	<b>All Victorian Catholic schools</b>
Camps and overnight stays	<b>YES</b> See guidance above
Assemblies and liturgies	<b>YES</b> When attended by a single school only
Kinder transition program (small group)	<b>NO</b>
Year 7 transition programs	<b>NO</b>
All sporting activities (indoor, outdoor, contact and non-contact)	<b>LIMITED</b> See guidance above ( <b>pages 15</b> )
All interschool activities (such as debating)	<b>NO</b> Unless otherwise specified in this guide
Singing, brass and woodwind classes and groups	<b>YES</b> If recommendations to reduce transmission risk are followed
Professional development and staff meetings	<b>NO</b> Unless otherwise specified in this guide

### Respond to COVID-19 risk

<b>Key actions for schools</b>	<b>All Victorian Catholic schools</b>
Keep visitor records	<b>YES</b>
Maintain adequate PPE supply	<b>YES</b>