

# Tasmania's Operational Plan for Managing COVID-19 in Schools

To be in place for the first 5 weeks of Term 1\*

\* Plan to be regularly reviewed to ensure it remains contemporary, complies with Public Health advice and continues to provide the best protection for children.

# Principle 1 - ECEC services and schools are essential and should be the first to open and last to close wherever possible in outbreak situations, with face-to-face learning prioritised.

## Learners

To keep our learners and staff as safe as possible, COVID Safe measures will be in place in our schools in line with public health advice. These measures build on what schools are already doing.

COVID Safe measures include:

- Hygiene and physical distancing;
- Vaccination;
- Ventilation and use of outdoor learning environments;
- Safe site management;
- Face masks; and
- Outbreak management plans.

All students should be at school unless they:

- are unwell or have symptoms of COVID-19;
- have medical advice which states they are unable to return to school due to an ongoing medical condition; or
- have been directed to stay home by Public Health.

Schools will continue to support students and young people with disability and those who are medically vulnerable on an individual basis, working closely with parents and carers. Schools will contact families of students with disability who have complex health needs within the first teaching week to discuss updating their individualised learning plan as a priority.

Parents can contact schools to discuss their child's individual learning plan.

## Launching into Learning (LiL)

LiL will not occur for the first five weeks of Term 1 to enable LiL teachers to support teaching and learning across the school.

## Staff

The Department of Education is proactively reviewing its workforce to identify pressure points and put in place strategies to cover expected absences. This includes:

- contacting recently retired school staff
- revisiting long leave requests
- deploying staff from non-school areas, including both registered teachers and general staff; and
- using relief staff.

The Department of Education, the Tasmanian Catholic Education Office and Independent Schools Tasmania will advise schools on strategies to manage workforce absences to ensure face-to-face learning continues.

## Virtual Learning

- The DoE Virtual Learning Centre (VLC) is an online learning service accessible by families, principals, teachers and learners.
- Where possible, schools will support learners to come to school and learn under the supervision of their classroom teacher. When this is not possible, schools will communicate to parents about the resources to support learners and this may include the VLC.
- During Term 1, all learners needing access to VLC will be supported to access high quality online programs focussing on core areas of reading, writing, numbers, physical activity and wellbeing.
- All learners in Years 11 and 12 will have access to a wide range of courses through Virtual Learning Tasmania (VLT) and online tutorials in English and Maths.
- Essential communication will be provided to all staff regarding access to virtual learning resources prior to students returning.

The Department of Education is working with the Catholic and Independent school sectors to align the approach to virtual learning. A separate approach will be in place for Support Schools.

## Principle 2 - Baseline public health measures continue to apply.

[COVID Safe](#) measures will be in place across all schools in line with public health advice, with all schools actively encouraging COVID Safe behaviour.

### Attendance and Cleaning

Students, staff and visitors must stay home if unwell or if they have symptoms of COVID-19.

Students, staff and visitors must stay home if isolating if they have COVID or quarantining as a household or household-like close contact.

All schools will continue increased hygiene and handwashing. Hand washing and sanitising product are available in all schools.

All schools will continue increased COVID-19 safe cleaning including additional disinfecting of high touch point surfaces, increasing ventilation following a positive case.

### Physical Distancing

Physical distancing and density requirements help reduce the spread of COVID-19.

- All staff and visitors must stay 1.5 metres apart and comply with density requirements such as maximum room capacity advice. Staff will limit unnecessary mixing.
- COVID-safe measures will be applied in staff rooms and offices, and students will be supported to physically distance *where possible*.
- Schools will limit unnecessary mixing between class groups where this is not required for learning.

### Facemasks

[Facemasks](#) are required indoors by all staff, parents, visitors and students in secondary schools.

- Primary school students are not required to wear masks but they will be available at the school should they choose to wear them.
- Staff, parents and visitors to school sites are **required** to wear a mask indoors.
- Each school has a supply of surgical masks for staff and students.

### Ventilation

Natural airflow will be increased by opening windows and doors and learning outdoors where possible.

- Windows in Government schools have been assessed and repaired where needed to ensure they can be opened.
- All Government schools have been provided with air purifiers to assist with increased ventilation where required.
- Periodic maintenance of air conditioners and air purifiers is ongoing, including the replacement of air filters.
- Work is occurring in Government schools to identify further opportunities for outdoor learning and to enhance existing outdoor learning areas.

## Vaccination

Vaccination is the best way to reduce the severity of COVID-19 symptoms and the likelihood of contracting the virus.

- All DoE staff must be vaccinated and are supported to be vaccinated.
- A primary course involves two doses for most staff.
- All staff will be supported to receive booster doses.
- Students are strongly encouraged to be vaccinated.
- Contactors and volunteers must be vaccinated to work on Government school sites.
- Schools will not treat students differently based on their vaccination status.
- Non-government school sectors are responsible for setting their own vaccination requirements as informed by Public Health advice.

## Outbreak Management

COVID safety plans are being updated. Specific outbreak management plans for the first 5 weeks of schools are being updated in accordance with Public Health advice and communicated to schools. A class outbreak is determined when five or more cases occur in students and staff from a class within 7 days of each other with Public Health to support if and when required. In most circumstances when this occurs, staff and students from that classroom would be tested immediately and then every 2 - 3 days, quarantining only is symptomatic or positive.

## Parent, Carer and Visitor Access

Minimising the number of people who come inside school buildings helps minimise transmission.

Parents and carers must be vaccinated to attend government school sites and must wear a mask indoors and should only enter school buildings where necessary. All adults must continue to use the [Check-in TAS](#) app.

Drop off and / pick up for students will be streamlined - stop, drop and go - and schools will advise on meetings with teachers.

## Assemblies and Performances

Restrictions may apply due to Public Health requirements such as density limits. This will include limiting assemblies in Government schools in the first five weeks of Term 1. Outside learning is encouraged where possible.

## Mixing of Learner Groups

All schools are encouraged to limit mixing between different student groups where this is not required for learning purposes. Schools are encouraged to limit unnecessary mixing between staff where this is not required for learning.

## Principle 3

No vulnerable child or child of an essential worker is turned away

Term 1 is commencing on time with all schools open for face-to-face learning.

The Government is coordinating efforts across agencies to ensure that all Tasmania's children and young people are safe, well and actively engaged in learning.

The Department of Education works closely with other agencies to support vulnerable students to access, participate and engage in their learning.

School Support and Wellbeing Teams will continue to support the wellbeing of all students, with a particular focus on those students with diverse and complex needs requiring coordinated support.

It is a priority that school sites across all sectors remain open for vulnerable children and children of essential workers to attend. However, they should not attend if they are feeling unwell, have medical advice which states they are unable to return to school due to an ongoing medical condition, or they have been directed to stay home by Public Health.

Ongoing guidance and advice will be provided to schools based on Public Health advice.

## Principle 4 - Responses to be proportionate and health-risk based.

This plan applies for the first five weeks of Term 1. This will allow proportionate adjustments to be made in the second five weeks of Term 1 based on the extent of community transmission and increased vaccination rates of students.

The plan for weeks 1 to 5 of Term 1 will be communicated to learners, parents, families and staff in advance. It will include advice on when their school or learning may look different.

Communication with students and families will come from their school. For Government schools, this will be supported by DoE advice and messages.

### Back to School COVID Care Package

All learners will receive a COVID-19 Care Package to support their return to school. This will include:

- an initial two Rapid Antigen Tests (RATs) per student, to be used if symptomatic
- masks; and
- important practical information for learners and parents/carers.

These will be provided to families through their child's school before school returns.

Schools will also be supplied with Rapid Antigen Tests for use by staff if they are symptomatic.

Schools will also be provided with additional supplies of RATs for use by students and staff if they are symptomatic.

### Stay Home if Unwell

Students, staff and visitors must stay home if unwell or if they have symptoms of COVID-19.

### Confirmed Cases and Outbreak Management

Parents/carers and staff will be informed if there is a case in a class and will be asked to monitor their child for symptoms, test if needed and stay home if unwell. Unless otherwise advised, the class will remain open for learning and students who are well should continue to attend.

Specific outbreak management plans for the first 5 weeks of schools are being updated in accordance with Public Health advice and communicated to schools. A class outbreak is determined when five or more cases occur in students and staff from a class within 7 days of each other with Public Health to support if and when required. In most circumstances when this occurs, staff and students from that classroom would be tested immediately and then every 2 - 3 days, quarantining only is symptomatic or positive. Notifications to families regarding cases and outbreaks will utilise existing communication channels used by schools.

The Department has continued to support a number of students and young people with disability to continue to learn throughout the COVID pandemic, including making adjustments to learning and implementing Medical Action Plans where appropriate.

Students with disability with complex health needs will continue to be supported on an individual basis, working closely with parents and carers as necessary. This could include additional medical advice within the student's medical action plan.

## Principle 5 - Equip ECEC services and schools to respond on the basis of public health advice and with support from public health authorities where required

The Department of Education will support schools to revise their COVID plans, according to Public Health advice.

Staff, learners and their families will be provided with clear advice on what to do if they are considered a close contact in line with Public Health advice.

DoE will assist schools to distribute RATs for students for the first week of Term 1, and with further supplies for use when confirmed cases occur in a school.

A dedicated support team has been established in the Department of Health. Staff will assist DoE, CET and IST and schools to manage the distribution of RATs, testing and implementation of Outbreak Management Plans.

Confirmed cases in schools will be managed in accordance with Public Health advice.

Government schools will communicate with Early Childhood Education and Care providers who operate on school sites to ensure a co-ordinated approach to managing confirmed cases, in accordance with Public Health advice.



## Principle 6 - Wellbeing of children and education staff to be supported

The wellbeing of learners in government schools will be supported by:

- each school's Support and Wellbeing Team monitoring students' wellbeing and determining the required supports to meet each student's individual needs.
- the online *Wellbeing Check-in*.
- the Department's Professional Support Staff teams, including school psychologists, social workers, speech and language pathologists and school nurses who will continue to provide both face-to-face and online support, for students learning on site and from home as required, and
- the Virtual Learning Centre where students and families will be able to access Wellbeing resources.

Catholic and independent school sectors also have in place approaches to support the wellbeing of their students and staff.

### Staff Wellbeing/Workload

- DoE will provide clear guidance and supports for teaching and learning in different scenarios, with workload principles factored in (*Principle 1*).
- System level workforce planning will occur to support school planning to ensure we can continue to keep learners safe and learning throughout COVID-related staff shortages.
- DoE will communicate clearly with staff on expectations, processes, planning and resources related to COVID, including the resources available to support student learning and wellbeing.
- DoE will communicate leave available to support all staff through COVID-related absences.
- DoE will consistently promote staff mental health and wellbeing, with supports available. This includes guidance and strategies to support principals and line managers in schools to hold staff wellbeing check-ins/conversations and make referrals to supports as needed.

# COVID Safety in Schools Plan

To be in place for the first 5 weeks of Term 1\*



## Educators, School-based Staff and Early Childhood Education & Care Staff

- Leverage wider pool of educators (trained departmental and retired staff) to assist with teaching continuity, in the first instance and if required.
- Exemption from close contact quarantine protocols to attend work, unless symptomatic or a diagnosed case.
- Undertake Rapid Antigen Tests when symptomatic.
- Access to a supply of masks, which must be worn when teaching indoors, except if clear enunciation is required.

## Schools and Early Childhood Education & Care

- Provided a supply of masks for educators and children/students.
- Supplied with Rapid Antigen Tests (enough for two per student, per week, should they be required).
- Virtual Learning approaches in place to support students required to isolate.
- Outbreak Management Plans in place. A class outbreak is determined when five or more cases occur in students and staff from a class within 7 days of each other, with Public Health to support if and when required. In most circumstances when this occurs, staff and students from that classroom would be tested immediately and then every 2 - 3 days, quarantining only if symptomatic or positive.
- Increased ventilation.
- Outdoor learning to be optimised.
- Breaks to be staggered where required.
- Increased COVID-19 safe cleaning is in place at all schools.
- Dedicated education COVID liaison for schools, early childhood education & care to contact:  
P: 1800 816 057 E: COVID19support@education.tas.gov.au  
W: www.education.tas.gov.au

## School Sport, Activities and Excursions

- To progress as normal, with COVID safe practices in place.
- Masks are not worn when outdoors.
- Masks are not worn when undertaking vigorous physical activity indoors.

## Vulnerable students

- Schools will prepare a personalised approach to support students with disability, complex health needs or who are medically vulnerable, prior to the student commencing school, in consultation with parents/carers.

Early Childhood Education & Care

Primary School K - Year 6

Secondary School Year 7 - Year 12

Back to School COVID Care

Back to School COVID Care package provided to parents, with two tests to use if child/student develops symptoms.

Face masks

Face masks are not required for children/students.

While not mandatory, masks will be available at schools for students who choose to wear them.

Masks are mandatory for students in indoor settings and will be supplied by the schools.

Ongoing testing

Ongoing tests (up to two per child/student, per week) to be supplied by schools to students to take home if symptomatic.

Close contact definition

Children/students are not defined as close contacts in a classroom exposure unless advised by Public Health directly to the school or services.

Case notifications

If a case is detected in the classroom or services, parents and carers will be notified and asked to monitor child/student for symptoms and test if symptoms develop.

Quarantine requirements

Children/students who are close contacts of a household case, must follow the quarantine guidelines. Quarantine for 7 days and test on days 1 and 6.

COVID-19 case

If a child/student tests positive, they must quarantine for at least 7 days and return to school once symptom free.

Keep practising these COVID safe behaviours



wear masks where required



symptoms? get tested



stay home if sick



stay up to date

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