

Response protocols for COVID-19 cases

Catholic Schools NSW has established systems and protocols with NSW Health to manage and respond where there is a case of COVID-19 in the school community.

The following outlines the response protocols for schools when there is a confirmed case of COVID-19 in an educational setting.

Last updated 2 May 2022

Catholic Schools NSW has updated the confirmed case protocols in line with the Australian Health Protection Principal Committee (AHPPC) [statement on testing, tracing, isolating and quarantining in high levels of COVID-19 community transmission](#).

A report by the National Centre for Immunisation Research and Surveillance into the transmission of COVID-19 within NSW schools has found the spread of COVID-19 within NSW Schools has been very limited. Access the full [COVID-19 in schools report](#).

Research continues to show that COVID-19 is a mild illness in the vast majority of children and young people.

Under the Public Health Order, a person is required to let the school or their workplace know that they (staff) or their child (parents and carers) have tested positive for COVID-19. They must record the result via the [Service NSW app](#) or [Service NSW](#) website if this was done via a rapid antigen test (RAT).

Parents and carers are asked to select the name of the school or early childhood centre when registering a positive RAT via Service NSW.

Registering the positive RAT with Service NSW is a requirement of the Public Health Order and helps Catholic Schools NSW and NSW Health track COVID-19 in schools and provide access to additional health supports for the person as required. In line with community settings, schools are not required to conduct contact tracing to identify all contacts of the confirmed case in their school. In most cases, regular communication can be sent to the school community reminding them that there are confirmed cases of COVID-19 in the school community, ask them to monitor for symptoms and get tested if they develop even the mildest of [symptoms](#).

To minimise disruption to face-to-face learning and reduce in-school transmission of COVID-19, schools may temporarily adopt some or all additional COVID-smart measures for a short period of time as a “circuit breaker”. These additional measures may include:

- Ceasing or rescheduling large indoor gatherings (such as assemblies)
- Ceasing off-site and inter-school activities
- Mask wearing for adults and high school students
- Limiting visitors to schools
- Separating cohorts of students
- Symptomatic use of RATs
- Learning from home.

Generally, it is expected temporary measures would be introduced for a one week period (five school days), with the situation re-assessed at that point. Where additional measures are required, these will be included in updated communications provided for your school community.

Positive case reporting and case management

In summary:

- Positive COVID-19 cases must be reported to the school **if they have attended school recently (within the past 7 days)**.
- Positive RAT results must be reported through the [Service NSW website](#) or [Service SNW app](#). If you do not live in NSW but work in a NSW school, you must register your positive RAT result in line with your state or territory's local requirements and notify the school as soon as possible.
- **Positive RAT or PCR test results for all staff must be reported** as soon as possible to the school and/or the Diocesan office (systemic schools).
- **Positive RAT or PCR test results from students in specialist centres and support units where students are at greater risk of serious illness and have an individual health support plan must also be reported** as soon as possible to the school and/or the Diocesan office (systemic schools).
- **Positive RAT or PCR test results from students and staff in boarding schools or at an overnight excursion** must be reported as soon as possible to the school and/or the Diocesan office (systemic schools).
- It is recommended that students and staff that return to school after recovering from COVID-19 do not participate in rapid antigen testing for 12 weeks following release from self-isolation unless they develop new COVID-19 symptoms. This is due to NSW Health advice that people who have recovered from COVID-19 have a low risk of contracting it again in the following 12 weeks.

Different states have different reporting requirements for positive COVID-19 test results including rapid antigen tests.

Communication templates

Communication templates are available for schools to use when there are COVID-19 cases reported to the school or where there are changes required to local operations.

Actions to take when there is a confirmed COVID-19 case

The below table outlines the action required by schools where there is a confirmed case of COVID-19 reported to the school.

Person type/Cohort	Reporting protocols	Communication and management	Support
Staff member in any setting.	<p>Staff member to notify the school of a positive test.</p> <p>Staff member to notify Service NSW via app or website.</p> <p>Staff member or school to notify the Diocesan office (systemic schools)</p>	<p>Regular communication to be shared with the school community in line with community settings. Refer to the template letters available.</p> <p>Regular wellbeing checks should be completed to ensure the wellbeing of the person during this time.</p>	<p>Staff will be supported as required.</p> <p>Refer to <u>guidance from NSW Health for people who test positive for COVID-19</u>.</p> <p>Where there are operational concerns in relation to staffing, guidance has been provided below to support these decisions.</p>
Students in specialist centres or support classes who have an individual health support plan.	<p>Parent or carer to notify the school of a positive test.</p> <p>Parent or carer to notify Service NSW via app or website.</p> <p>School to notify Diocesan office (systemic schools)</p>	<p>Regular communication to be shared with the school community in line with community settings. Refer to the template letters available.</p> <p>Regular wellbeing checks should be completed to ensure the wellbeing of the person during this time.</p>	<p>School to discuss with Diocesan office (systemic schools) or Catholic Schools NSW (RI/MPJP schools) additional risk mitigation strategies that may be required to reduce the risk of transmission within the cohort.</p> <p>This will also include engaging additional</p>

Person type/Cohort	Reporting protocols	Communication and management	Support
			<p>support from NSW Health if required.</p> <p>Refer to the <u>Guidance from NSW Health</u> for people who test positive for COVID-19.</p> <p>Individual students with health support plans, at greater risk of serious illness will be supported by their health care provider.</p>
Residential student in a boarding school.	<p>School to notify parents/carer of the positive test.</p> <p>Parent or carer to notify Service NSW via app or website.</p> <p>School to notify Diocesan office (systemic schools).</p>	<p>Communication to be shared with the school community in line with community settings.</p> <p>Schools to activate their local management plan.</p> <p>Additional information to be provided to students and families on action required for residential students.</p>	<p>School to discuss with Diocesan office (systemic schools) or Catholic Schools NSW (RI/MPJP schools) additional risk mitigation strategies that may be required to reduce the risk of transmission within the cohort</p> <p>This will also include engaging additional support from NSW Health if required.</p>
Individual students who are not in an specialist centre or support unit and who do not have an individual support plan.	<p>School to notify parents/carer of positive test.</p> <p>Parent or carer to notify Service NSW via app or website.</p>	<p>Communication to be shared with the school community in line with community settings.</p> <p>Regular wellbeing checks should be completed to ensure the wellbeing of the</p>	<p>Refer to the <u>Guidance from NSW Health</u> for people who test positive for COVID-19.</p> <p>Individual students with health support plans, at greater risk</p>

Person type/Cohort	Reporting protocols	Communication and management	Support
		person during this time.	of serious illness will be supported by their health care provider.

Where RI/MPJP schools or Diocesan offices are concerned that there are an increasing number of confirmed cases in a class or cohort, support is available through Catholic Schools. This process will enable support to assess if additional risk mitigation strategies are required.

Communication

Where a staff member or parent/carer reports to the school that they, or their child has tested positive for COVID-19, communication has been developed that can be sent to the staff and school community on a regular basis. Refer to the communication templates available.

There is no need to send multiple communication in a short period where multiple cases have been reported to the school for the same cohort.

Students and staff returning to school after having COVID-19

When a staff member who recovered from having COVID-19 is released from isolation, they will receive an SMS or email from NSW Health confirming the end of their isolation period. The SMS or email is the medical clearance that they can provide to employers.

Students who recovered from having COVID-19 and are released from isolation will receive an SMS or email from NSW Health through their parents or carers, confirming the end of their isolation period. Consistent with the attendance policy, schools can view the medical clearance but are not required to confirm or monitor that the student's isolation period has been completed.

In line with the latest advice from NSW Health, masks are recommended for students and staff who have recovered from COVID-19, completed their 7-day isolation period and are no longer showing symptoms for an additional 3 days (from days 8 – 10 after receiving a positive COVID-19 result). School staff and parents and carers should refer to NSW Health's fact sheets for the latest advice on isolation rules and recovery from COVID-19. Please do not provide specific advice to parents and carers as information can change. Useful links include:

- [Testing positive to COVID-19 and managing COVID-19 safely at home](#)
- [Information to people exposed to COVID-19](#)
- [Get tested for COVID-19.](#)

Close contacts returning to school

[The announcement](#) to ease the isolation requirements for close contacts was made on 20 April 2022. This will enable staff and students who are close contacts and have no symptoms to continue to attend school if they follow guidelines agreed with NSW Health. Close contacts will not be permitted to enter an SSP or support unit (including Assisted School Travel Program) and will be supported to continue learning or working from home where possible.

Close contacts must notify the school and/or early childhood education (ECE) service provider (including their outside of school hours care provider) if they are intending to return to school. **Schools will need to maintain this record on their local management systems.**

Refer to the Guidelines for close contacts for more information.

Resources to answer parent and carer questions

NSW Health has prepared a range of factsheets to answer questions about self-isolation for close contacts and what to do if you, your child, have symptoms or test positive for COVID-19.

- [People testing positive to COVID-19.](#)
- [People exposed to COVID-19.](#)

Where required for your culturally and linguistically diverse communities we suggest you use an [interpreter](#).

School operations

Parents/carers and staff will be notified when a decision is made to cease school operations or revert to learning from home for a short period of time. Information about the operational status of the school should be disseminated using the school's communication channels.

Schools will need to prepare and have plans to continue student learning if the school is made non-operational for a short period of time.

Principals may seek advice from their Diocesan office (systemic schools) on actions required to support confirmed cases of COVID-19 and can access additional support as required from the Health, Safety and Staff Wellbeing case management team.

Cleaning

Current cleaning protocols will continue for schools.

Temporary minimum cleaning plan details include:

- Enhanced cleaning will continue.
- Day cleaning to continue.
- Toilets and ablution amenities: Cleaning these amenities will continue to ensure the safe and hygienic use of the spaces.
- Canteens, food preparation areas, kitchens, tea room and clinics: Cleaning these spaces will continue to ensure the safe and hygienic use of the spaces.
- Classrooms, offices, staffrooms, corridors, stairs, workshops, art rooms and similar spaces: High-touch surfaces will be cleaned as part of the enhanced cleaning provided daily. This includes things like desks, phones, light switches and internal/external door handles.
- All external and internal areas: Garbage and litter to be removed, as required.
- Entry to buildings or demountables: Main entries to all buildings will be checked to ensure they are without litter or debris, to avoid any trip/slip hazards.
- Carpeted floors including carpet squares, mats or similar: Litter or debris to be removed, to avoid any trip/slip hazards.
- All sealed internal hard/resilient/timber floors and all unsealed internal hard/resilient floors: Spillages to be mopped. Litter or debris to be removed, to avoid any trip/slip hazards.
- Glass cleaning: Only entry doors and high-touch accessible cabinets to be cleaned.