

Term 4 Operations Guide

Victorian Government schools

Updated: 28 October 2020



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FOR ALL VICTORIAN GOVERNMENT SCHOOLS

The term 'Third Step' used in this document refers to the steps set out in the Victorian roadmap for Reopening. As of 28 October, Victoria is in Third Step restrictions.

For further information see: [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) roadmap for reopening](#).

1 Term 4 priorities

The following priorities for students and staff will guide school operations in Term 4.

Priority 1 – Mental health and wellbeing

Our highest priority is the mental health, safety and wellbeing of every student and member of staff. Students from disadvantaged backgrounds and many students with disabilities have been disproportionately impacted across all areas of their education.

All available resources will need to be effectively mobilised to ensure support for every student, including our most vulnerable.

This means encouraging and sustaining motivation for learning and supporting the development of personal and social capabilities of students as part of the curriculum. It includes re-engaging students and families where needed and implementing targeted strategies for at-risk cohorts.

This also means ensuring support for our school staff, who have sustained efforts through multiple transitions in modes of teaching and learning delivery.

Priority 2 – Learning

Some students have been able to more quickly progress in their learning in the remote and flexible learning environment, others have maintained their rate of progress, and some have, despite their best efforts and those of their families and teachers, fallen behind.

Our priority will be to ensure those who have fallen behind can catch up and those who have progressed significantly can continue to be extended and stretched in their learning.

Student voice and student agency should inform how we provide continuity of learning and support for every student in this environment.

Literacy and numeracy across the curriculum remain a focus, with schools also adapting their teaching and learning program in Term 4 to be responsive to the needs of their students.

Priority 3 – Transitions

Term 4 is a critical period, particularly for the children moving from kindergarten into Prep, from Grade 6 into Year 7, and those in Year 12 moving into employment or further education and training. Some students with disability face a significant milestone transitioning from school to community engagement, vocational pathways and independent living.

Students in other year levels will also prepare for a change of teachers and new classmates.

A key focus of Term 4 will be to make every effort to ensure each of these end-of-year and beginning-of-year transitions occurs as successfully as possible. This includes finding contextually appropriate ways to conduct orientations and end-of-year celebrations and ensuring transition information captures additional details as necessary.

2 School operations for Term 4

Easing coronavirus (COVID-19) restrictions and transition back to on-site learning

The Term 4 Operations Guide supports schools to make an effective transition back to on-site schooling and continue to manage remote and flexible learning and on-site supervision arrangements, where relevant. The core elements of this approach are below.

5 – 9 October (first week of Term 4)

Schools in metropolitan Melbourne

Remote and flexible learning will continue for all students.

VCE and VCAL students can only attend on site for essential assessments during this week, including the General Achievement Test (GAT) on Wednesday 7 October. This includes Year 10 students studying VCE or VCAL subjects.

On-site supervision will continue to be provided in limited circumstances consistent with guidelines at Appendix 1.

Schools in regional Victoria

Students enrolled in a specialist school in regional Victoria will be able to continue to attend on site as per arrangements that applied during Term 3. These schools can offer learning materials for students who continue to learn from home.

VCE and VCAL students can only attend on site for essential assessments during this week, including the General Achievement Test (GAT) on Wednesday 7 October. This includes Year 10 students studying VCE or VCAL subjects.

From Monday 5 October students enrolled in Prep to Grade 6 in standalone primary schools will return to on-site learning. Schools have the flexibility to stagger the return of year levels between Monday 5 October and Friday 9 October, depending on local circumstances.

From Thursday 8 October students enrolled in Prep to Grade 6 in P-12 schools will return to on-site learning. Schools have the flexibility to stagger the return of year levels from Thursday 8 October to Monday 12 October, depending on local circumstances.

12 – 16 October (second week of Term 4)

Schools in metropolitan Melbourne

Students in Prep to Year 7 will return to full-time on-site schooling. Remote learning will not continue for these year levels. Schools can stagger the return of year levels during that week, with all students in Prep to Year 7 to be back on site by Friday 16 October.

Students in specialist schools return to full-time on-site schooling. Schools can offer learning materials for students who continue to learn from home. Specialist schools can stagger the return of different groups over the week.

Year 11 and 12 students will attend on-site schooling full-time, and Year 10 students enrolled in a VCE or VCAL program will attend on site for these classes.

Remote and flexible learning will continue for all students in years 8 to 10, with on-site supervision available for eligible students consistent with guidelines at Appendix 1.

For further information about continuing arrangements for remote and flexible learning, see Appendix 2.

Schools in regional Victoria

All students will return to on-site learning.

Schools have the flexibility to stagger the return of years 7 to 10 from Monday 12 October to Friday 16 October, depending on local circumstances. This decision can be made by individual schools or networks/clusters of schools.

26 October (fourth week of Term 4)

Students in years 8 to 10 attending schools in metropolitan Melbourne

Students in years 8 to 10 in metropolitan Melbourne will return to full-time on-site schooling from Monday 26 October.

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 will be able to attend on site, consistent with the arrangements above.

Students and staff who live in regional Victoria and are enrolled in or work in a school in metropolitan Melbourne will continue with arrangements applicable to metropolitan Melbourne.

3 Other school and curriculum settings

Victorian School of Languages and community language schools

The Victorian School of Languages (and community language schools where practicable) can resume on-site learning for students studying VCE/VCAL subjects from Monday 12 October, in line with other government schools.

Other year levels should continue remote learning until further notice.

The following measures should be put in place for VCE/VCAL students learning on site.

- Mixing of students from different educational facilities/schools should be minimised whenever practical.
- Use of shared equipment should be avoided where possible. Where this cannot be avoided, cleaning and disinfection between uses should be performed.
- Strict use of face masks as per current requirements.

Tech Schools, KIOSC and Science and Mathematics Specialist Centres

Tech Schools, KIOSC and Science and Mathematics Specialist Centres can resume on-site learning in the Third Step.

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.

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

MARC/MACC services can operate with enhanced cleaning of vehicles.

Shared equipment should be minimised where possible and cleaned between users.

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

Students in years 10 to 12 can participate in their VCE or VCAL classes, including VET studies, where these are held in other schools. They can also attend these classes at Registered Training

Organisations (RTOs). 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.
- Use of shared equipment should be avoided where possible. Where this cannot be avoided, cleaning and disinfection should occur between uses.
- Further strategies to reduce transmission should be emphasised, including:
 - face masks essential (unless legal exemption applies)
 - hand hygiene before, during and after classes
 - learning spaces to be cleaned between uses (see 'Cleaning and personal hygiene products' section of this Operations Guide)
 - attendance register maintained in case contact tracing is required.

4 Curriculum expectations

Remote and flexible learning

For year levels continuing to undertake remote and flexible learning, the learning program delivered for those attending on-site supervision will be the same as the learning program delivered to students undertaking remote learning.

The following continue to be the daily minimum guidelines schools are expected to meet for students in years 3 to 10 for remote learning.

- Literacy: 45 to 60 minutes.
- Numeracy: 30 to 45 minutes.
- Physical activity: 30 minutes.
- Additional curriculum areas: 90 minutes.

Where appropriate, for students with disability and students who may be ungraded, teachers will be guided by age-equivalent daily minimum guidelines, with consideration of the student's stage of learning and individual education plan.

On-site learning

It is important that schools have some increased flexibility in relation to curriculum provision in Term 4. This is in order to focus on the priorities of supporting students who need additional support to catch up, continuing to extend and stretch those students who have thrived and enabling students to make successful transitions.

For this reason, the usual requirements related to substantial attention to all eight key learning areas remain suspended for Term 4.

This enables flexibility for schools to effectively support students to catch up on learning they may have missed in the key areas of literacy and numeracy.

For year levels returning to on-site learning, the focus of curriculum planning should therefore be literacy and numeracy together with time allocated to physical activity. Schools are able to determine the extent to which other learning areas are included in the teaching and learning program at the local level.

5 Attendance

All students are expected to attend on site once their year level has returned to on-site learning.

Exceptions may exist for medically vulnerable students. It is recommended that parents/carers of students with complex medical needs seek advice from the student's medical practitioner to support decision-making about whether on-site education is suitable. See 'Students who may be medically vulnerable' section of this Operations Guide (section below).

[Attendance recording advice](#) is available on the Policy and Advisory Library (PAL). Further advice outlining the attendance responsibilities of the school and of parents and carers, and the circumstances in which schools may need to support individual students to learn from home is also available on [PAL](#).

Extended student absence during on-site learning provision

When on-site learning is permitted, schools are not expected to provide remote and flexible learning where parents or carers of students elect to keep their child at home, except where this is based on medical advice.

Where a parent or carer indicates that a student will be absent for an extended period and this is not based on medical advice, schools can make the learning materials developed for and provided in the on-site program available for use at home where this does not require additional work, preparation or production by teachers.

Students absent for an extended period will be able to submit their learning exercises and work for comment and feedback if learning materials have been provided, according to the same timelines set for those participating in on-site learning. Teachers can provide comment and feedback in the same way that they would for students participating in on-site provision.

In the case that parents or carers make a choice for students not to attend on-site learning and where this decision is not based on medical advice – teachers, and, where relevant, education support staff, will not be expected and should not be requested by parents or carers or students to provide additional advice or support to students. This includes additional advice or support about the learning materials provided. This includes by email, phone or other forms of digital communication.

Where students are absent and this is not based on medical advice, those students enrolled in VCE Units 3-4 must attend on site to complete the GAT, school-assessed coursework (SACs) and school-assessed tasks (SATs).

Schools must take steps to ensure that all vulnerable students are able to attend on site where the school identifies that is in the best interests of the child.

Any parent or carer of a child enrolled in a specialist school who wishes to keep their child at home can do so, and where possible, the school can provide learning activities for the student to undertake at home, consistent with the arrangements outlined above.

Students who may be medically vulnerable

The Acting Deputy Chief Health Officer has advised that 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 coronavirus (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 coronavirus (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 coronavirus (COVID-19), outside of an acute illness.

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

Schools must ensure students with medical needs have an up-to-date [Student Health Support Plan](#) 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.

Please see the [Health Care Needs](#) policy for further information on the student health support planning process. 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.](#)

6 Term 4 on-site arrangements – school staff

Staff in regional Victoria and in primary and specialist schools in metropolitan Melbourne will return to on-site duty as students return to on-site learning.

Until all secondary year levels in metropolitan Melbourne have returned to on-site learning, staff in secondary schools in metropolitan Melbourne will only be required to attend school at times when they are performing duties that require them to be on site.

School staff should avoid making multiple trips to and from the school site in the course of a single day and rather seek to attend on site when necessary and return home once all duties requiring on-site attendance have concluded for the day.

On-site duties may include delivery of on-site learning or supervision, and the allocation of additional classes and any other on-site duties as required, consistent with the current *Victorian Government Schools Agreement 2017*.

In implementing such arrangements, the principal, teachers and staff have a joint and shared responsibility, through local consultative arrangements, to ensure that to the fullest extent possible a fair and equitable share of the workload involved in supporting on-site learning is maintained.

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

It continues to be the principal's responsibility to make the school-based decisions required to deliver Victorian Government education objectives in accordance with the *Victorian Government Schools Agreement 2017*.

When determining the working arrangements that enable the transition back to on-site schooling, the consultative arrangements in place at each school must be used to ensure staff are consulted on, and have input into, the ways that work may be organised and allocated.

Pre-service teacher placements

Schools should continue to receive and accept applications for pre-service placements to ensure pre-service teachers are able to meet graduation requirements.

Pre-service teachers can attend on site in schools in regional Victoria and metropolitan Melbourne.

In metropolitan Melbourne, principals will need to issue a permit to any pre-service teachers attending their school for the duration of their placement.

For more information, visit the [pre-service teacher placements during coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#) web page.

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 coronavirus (COVID-19) if they are:

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

Staff in the above categories should seek advice from their medical practitioner in relation to their on-site attendance, prior to the commencement of Term 4.

Where the employee is unable to work on site they should provide a medical certificate if they are seeking to work remotely or access personal leave. Staff who are aged 70 years and older do not need to provide a medical certificate if they are seeking to work remotely.

Similarly, staff who are caring for an elderly or chronically ill relative or household member do not automatically need to refrain from working on site but should consult with the treating medical practitioner of the person for whom they are caring to seek advice about working on site. They should provide a medical certificate if they are seeking to work remotely or access personal leave.

These arrangements should be reviewed regularly at the school level during the course of the term and each time restrictions are eased further as risks of transmission and case numbers decrease (for example, the move from Second Step to Third Step).

The [Medical Advisory Service](#) is a specialised support service for principals to help them fulfil their responsibilities in relation to employee health.

Teachers working remotely

Teachers working from home can undertake a range of duties consistent with their employment. This could include the following.

- Curriculum development and planning, such as lesson plans in the relevant study area.
- Development and preparation of learning materials and assessment tasks. For example, allocate the teacher to work with a small group of on-site teachers for an ongoing focus (such as Year 8 A-D English classes preparation, correction, assessments).
- Marking of assessments and reviewing student progress.
- Facilitating small group or individual learning support to complement classroom instruction.
- Leading or co-teaching with in-classroom staff using videoconferencing and other technologies.

- Providing peer observation and feedback to other teachers.
- Coordinating professional development activities for staff.
- Support for English as an Additional Language (EAL) students, such as 1:1 work over Webex.
- Preparation, development and reviewing reporting for the end of the year.
- Preparation for 2021, such as support for school enrolments and/or planning transition programs.
- Individual or small group counselling to support subject selection, course selection or careers counselling (secondary schools).

Working from home allowance

Employees who continue to work remotely are eligible to receive the working from home allowance. The allowance is comprised of a one-off \$100 payment for home office expenses as well as \$20 per week for home office consumables and utilities. This \$20 per week will be paid on a pro-rata basis based on an employee's time fraction.

Employees on any type of leave (paid or unpaid) will not qualify for the payment, until their leave ends, and they commence or resume working remotely.

Reimbursement of travel and accommodation costs for Casual Relief Teachers (CRTs)

To increase the pool of available CRTs in regional schools, the Department is trialling a process of reimbursing regional schools for CRT costs of travel/mileage and accommodation. This trial will continue to run until 30 October 2020. It will not apply to schools within the metropolitan Melbourne area.

Schools will be responsible for the payment of the CRT's salary. This arrangement will apply to schools designated by the Department as 'regional'. A list of eligible schools is available.

Claims for reimbursement of travel/mileage and accommodation costs may be made by schools that engage CRTs either via an agency or as school council employees.

The Department has advised the agencies of the trial period, the eligible schools and the reimbursement criteria. Where the reimbursement criteria have been met, schools should lodge claims via the [Schools Targeted Funding Governance \(STFG\) Portal](#).

Health Wellbeing and Inclusion Workforces and service provision in schools

Health, Wellbeing and Inclusion Workforces will continue to provide support to schools, students, parents and carers. Return to on-site service provision is now permitted in all schools.

Schools will also continue to have access to a dedicated, area-based Health and Wellbeing Key Contact (HWKC) for the rest of the school year.

For further advice, see the [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) — Health, Wellbeing and Inclusion Workforces](#) page in PAL.

Primary School Nursing face-to-face health assessments can resume when Prep to Grade 6 students return to on-site learning (adhering to [Victorian School Nursing Program Guidelines](#) and following standard practice and infection-control procedures).

Dental services on school sites can resume ensuring standard infection-control precautions (for example, hand hygiene and use of personal protective equipment where there is the possibility of exposure/splash from blood or body fluids) for any examinations.

Work across multiple sites

Where practical, schools should seek that staff (including contractors and employees of school councils) do not work at other schools or school sites (multiple campuses) in addition to their school, or limit the number of sites at which they work, as far as possible.

Strategies may include:

- for schools with multiple campuses, limiting the number of staff that work across different campuses
- making arrangements with CRTs to reduce the number of different schools that they attend
- reducing mixing between different staff cohorts by holding virtual staff meetings or meeting in smaller groups.

If a school staff member or contractor is working at more than one site, for two or more employers:

- the staff member or contractor must provide a [written declaration](#) using the form available; they must provide this form to each employer about the work they are performing and the details of the other site at which they are working
- schools must maintain a record of all staff members or contractors who have disclosed that they are working at another site for a different employer.

7 Permit scheme for permitted workers

The permitted industry list will no longer apply when metropolitan Melbourne moves into the Third Step. There is no longer a requirement for employees who live in metropolitan Melbourne and who are attending workplaces (schools) in metropolitan areas to obtain a permitted worker permit.

Metropolitan Melbourne/regional Victoria travel for work

The boundary between metropolitan Melbourne and regional Victoria will remain in place until 8 November. For employees who live in regional Victoria and need to travel into metropolitan Melbourne for work, or who live in metropolitan Melbourne and work in a school in regional Victoria, a permit is required. **Permits issued under the previous scheme are still valid – a new metro/regional permit is only needed for new travel.**

Further information is available at:

<https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/metro-regional-work-travel-permit-coronavirus-covid-19>

There are significant penalties for employers and employees. Penalties of up to \$19,826 (for individuals) and \$99,132 (for businesses) will apply for breaches of the scheme requirements.

School principal responsibilities

Principals are responsible for issuing permits to school staff and school council employees.

Regional Directors will issue a permit to all principals.

CRT agencies are responsible for issuing permits to CRTs.

Other school visitors, such as contractors or cleaners, must seek permits from their employers to attend schools.

Employee responsibilities

All employees required to travel between metropolitan Melbourne and regional Victoria for work:

- must be able to produce the address and phone number of their school and their principal's name and contact details if asked by police during travel to and from work
- must sign the permit
- must carry their worker permit or have a digital version available on their device and should carry photo identification when travelling to and from their workplace
- may be required to show the permit
- must be aware of the restrictions in both areas

For any enquiries, contact the Schools People Services team on 1800 641 943

8 Arrangements for VCE/VCAL assessments and exams

The Victorian Chief Health Officer has endorsed on-site delivery of VCE external assessments in 2020 and associated health and safety controls.

The VCAA will provide guidance directly to schools on safely conducting examinations and assessments.

Schools should provide their cleaning service provider with a detailed schedule of essential assessments planned to be undertaken at school during Term 4. These schedules should be given to service providers with as much notice as possible and should include the approximate number of students, the areas to be occupied and the timetable.

9 Student reporting requirements

Requirements for student reports for Semester 2 are adjusted in recognition of the disruptions caused by the transition to remote and flexible learning during Semester 2.

Further advice is available at the [Assessments and student reporting during remote teaching and learning](#) page.

10 Mental health and wellbeing

The mental health and wellbeing of principals, teachers, school staff and students is a priority.

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.
- In addition, the [Quick Guide to Student Mental Health and Wellbeing Resources](#) highlights the most relevant evidence-based resources for teachers, parents and students.

For staff

The Department continues to provide its full suite of services to support staff mental health and wellbeing. This includes services and resources to address individual needs, as well as tools and supports to help guide staff through this time.

Specific examples include:

- **for principal class employees:** [Proactive Wellbeing Supervision service](#), which has been extended to include assistant principals during 2020, the [Early Intervention Program](#) for more intensive support, and all other [Principal Health and Wellbeing services](#)

- **for all staff:** personalised over-the-phone and video counselling through the [Employee Assistance Program](#)
- **for all staff and all people managers:** Wellbeing Webinars for all staff and people managers.

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

11 COVIDSafe Plan

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 for Term 4 to align with the changes to the advice set out in this Operations Guide.

The Department's [OHS Advisory Service or local Regional OHS Support Officers](#) can assist in tailoring the plan to individual school needs.

Principals must 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 eduSafe. The Department is proactively monitoring eduSafe to provide support.

Principals can also promote the [COVID-19 Health, Safety and Wellbeing Support for Schools](#) page.

Local [Regional OHS Support Officers](#) can be contacted for assistance with local consultation if required.

A [draft agenda](#) has been developed for Health and Safety Committee (HSC) meetings to assist in facilitating consultation and identifying and managing risks.

Safety information and training

All Department staff working on site in schools are required to complete the eLearn module *School infection prevention and control during coronavirus (COVID-19)* as soon as possible, before the end of Term 4.

The module will be available early Term 4 on LearnED (access through [eduPay](#)) and will take less than 20 minutes to complete.

Principals will also have the flexibility to manage and monitor completion by their staff through LearnED and manage non-completion through existing performance development plan (PDP) conversations.

In Term 4, COVIDSafe Roles and Responsibilities posters will be made available to schools in the [communications support pack](#). Posters must be displayed on the school's OHS noticeboard detailing the shared responsibility of health and safety in schools and the health and safety measures that should be applied in schools.

Required actions for suspected cases of coronavirus (COVID-19) in staff in schools

Staff members who are unwell must stay home.

'Suspected case' means a person who is displaying one or more coronavirus (COVID-19) symptom. Symptoms include fever above 37.5 degrees Celsius, night sweats, chills, acute

respiratory infection (such as cough, shortness of breath, sore throat), loss of smell, and/or loss of taste.

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

1. **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 mask and remaining at least 1.5 metres from any other person, until they can travel home.
2. **Advise the staff member to be tested for coronavirus (COVID-19) as soon as practicable, and to self-isolate while awaiting the result of that test.**
3. Manage the risk posed by the suspected case, including by **ensuring high-touch areas frequently used by the staff member have been cleaned since they were last on site.** Please contact the VSBA Cleaning team if required on cleaning@education.vic.gov.au.
4. **Inform all staff on site** (including the Health and Safety Representative) to be **vigilant about the onset of symptoms.** If they become unwell, they must notify their principal, get tested and self-isolate. A [draft email](#) and [further information on consulting with your staff](#) is available.

Required actions for multiple suspected cases of coronavirus (COVID-19) in staff in schools

There are actions principals must take if, in the past **five** days, if there have been **three** or more staff members who have either:

- developed coronavirus (COVID-19) symptoms whilst on site at school, or
- been on site at school, and within 48 hours of being on site, notified you that they have developed symptoms, and they are awaiting a coronavirus (COVID-19) test result.

In addition to the steps above in the 'Required actions for suspected cases of coronavirus (COVID-19) in staff in schools' section of this Operations Guide, principals must make an IRIS alert so the Department can provide support to conduct a risk assessment.

Principals don't need to take any further action (beyond the four required actions) until advised to do so.

HEALTH AND SAFETY MEASURES

Health and safety measures will be regularly reviewed in line with the changing context of coronavirus (COVID-19) in Victoria.

As Term 4 proceeds, based on health advice, some measures may no longer be required and/or new measures may be introduced.

These measures apply to all Victorian schools: specialist and mainstream, government, independent and Catholic.

The measures bring together Victoria's COVIDSafe principles for business while acknowledging the unique school setting as both a place of work for staff and a learning environment for children and young people, drawing on local and international literature.

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

Further advice on maintaining a COVIDSafe School and explanation of these principles can also be found at [Health and safety advice for schools in the context of coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#)

12 COVIDSafe principles for schools

Reinforce COVIDSafe behaviours*	Create COVIDSafe spaces	Promote COVIDSafe activities	Respond to coronavirus (COVID-19) risk*
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stay home when unwell* Practise good hygiene* Ensure physical distancing (1.5m) * Wear a face mask* (students 12 years and older in secondary school, and staff. Staff are not required to wear face masks while teaching, but can if they wish to do so) 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"> Limit school access to outside visitors where possible Reduce mixing between groups Create workforce bubbles* Adapt, modify or defer higher-risk activities Move activities outdoors where possible, 	<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 at school Manage individual risk

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

13 Reinforce COVIDSafe behaviours

Stay home when unwell

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

For further information for schools and to distribute to families see: [Managing illness in schools and early childhood services during the coronavirus \(COVID-19\) pandemic](#).

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. Staff should direct or supervise young students or where required.

Students should bring their own water bottle for use at school, as students should not drink directly from drinking fountains at this time. Taps may be used to refill water bottles.

Sharing of food should not occur.

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

Ensure the highest hygiene practices amongst food handlers where these services are operating, as per the Department's [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. Staff should physically distance themselves from students where appropriate and feasible.

A face mask provides protection when physical distance cannot be maintained. Physical distancing is not practical when providing direct care. In this situation a face mask together with standard precautions, including hand hygiene, are important for infection control.

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 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 quotients of one person per 4m² do not apply in classrooms and other spaces for the purposes of student use, including corridors and other shared areas.

Density quotients apply to staff areas such as staff lunchrooms and areas accessed by the public, such as reception areas.

Strategies that can be considered to support physical distancing include:

- the careful management of movement of adults through school reception and staff rooms, and 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
- signage and rostering so that access to shared physical spaces and food preparation areas can be managed
- using larger spaces such as libraries for large classes such as English or Mathematics
- reminding students, staff and visitors including through signage, of the importance of physical distancing where possible
- reconfiguring class spaces where possible, using all available space in the school
- marking the floor indicating physical distancing in appropriate locations (e.g. canteens).

Avoid interactions in close spaces

Space out staff workstations as much as possible and limit the number of staff in offices. This might mean re-locating staff to other spaces (such as the library or unused classrooms).

Consider opportunities to adapt indoor activities outdoors, for example having outdoor meetings, holding classes outside, 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 in the [Occupational Health and Safety Management System](#) and support staff and students to use a combination of sun protection measures when UV levels are 3 or above.

Face masks in schools

All school-based staff must wear face masks at school, and when travelling to and from school. Schools must ensure that staff wear face masks when required.

A face mask that covers the nose and mouth is now the only permitted type of face covering. Face shields, scarves or bandanas do not meet these requirements.

Teachers and education support staff are not required to wear face masks while teaching, but those who wish to do so, can. Teachers and education support staff must wear face masks in other areas of the school when not teaching (for example, in the staffroom, on yard duty and when providing first aid or taking temperatures), and when travelling to and from school.

Health, wellbeing and inclusion staff are required to wear face masks, unless an exemption applies, including the need for 'clear enunciation or visibility of their mouth' (for example, when undertaking a speech therapy intervention or working with individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing).

Students

Secondary school students aged 12 years and over must wear a face mask while at school and while travelling to and from school.

Students who attend primary school for on-site supervision, including students in Prep to Year 6 who attend a P-12 school, are not required to wear a face mask. Students who are aged 12 or over by Year 6 who are attending primary school are not required to wear face masks at school.

Exemptions

Some students and staff are exempt from these requirements. The same exemptions to the wearing of face masks apply in schools as when people are out in the community. This includes students who are over the age of 12 and are unable to wear a face mask due to the nature of their

disability. This also includes students or staff who have a medical condition, such as problems with their breathing, a serious skin condition on the face, a disability or a mental health condition.

Masks can also be removed during any exercise or physical activity where a person is out of breath or puffing. Examples include jogging or running or playing vigorous sport like kicking the footy at lunchtime. Individuals must carry a face mask and wear it after exercising.

Breaks

Face mask breaks are allowed for staff and students during the day, but they should be kept brief, when seated outdoors having lunch and physically distanced, and ideally used in conjunction with staggered lunch breaks to limit mixing between class groups.

Parents and carers

Parents and carers are required to wear face masks whenever they leave the house, including for school drop-off and pick-up. If they are travelling in a car alone, or only with members of their household, they do not need to wear a face mask.

More information

Schools must display information and signage at school entrances and in communal areas such as staff rooms as reminders for staff to wear face masks when not teaching. Posters are available in the [communications support pack](#).

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

Supplies

All schools have been provided with supplies of single-use face masks and reusable face masks. Single-use face masks should be made available to any person on site who requires a face mask, including students, staff and visitors. For more information see: [Face mask allocations for Term 4](#).

Managing safe school arrival and departure including multiple entries and staggered starts

To ensure consistency with physical distancing measures, students and families will not be permitted to congregate at the school gate before or after school and will be required to maintain 1.5 metres between each other as far as is practicable at the start and end of the school day.

Schools must implement actions to:

- reduce the number of adults congregating outside the school at any one time, including parents and carers at peak times such as drop-off and pick-up
- reduce the mixing amongst different year levels, especially in large secondary schools where there may be congestion at peak times, including the start and finish of the school day
- where congestion is a risk, schools must implement strategies such as multiple entry/exit points or staggered start/finish times for different year levels
 - decisions will be informed by local circumstances, school layout, design and street frontage and will differ from school to school.

Specific strategies for consideration include:

- opening as many entries and exit points to the school as is safe, and allocating staff to ensure students are safely supervised, and students and parents feel confident with the arrival/departure from school

- staggering start and finish times by groups of grades or year levels (for example, junior/middle/senior), while also enabling siblings to arrive and leave together at the same time and be safely supervised while on the school site
 - for secondary schools in metropolitan areas these strategies can also support reduced congestion at public transport hubs
- advising parents to avoid or minimise time in or around the school grounds
- liaison with local councils about desired alterations to crossing supervision.

Schools must communicate 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. Posters and a parent letter are available in the [communications support pack](#).

Temperature screening

Based on the advice of the Acting Deputy Chief Health Officer, given the current levels of community transmission in Victoria, mandatory temperature testing of all students on arrival to schools will not be required in Term 4.

However, should community transmission of coronavirus (COVID-19) increase, temperature checking may be reintroduced for some schools.

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 Department's [Infectious Diseases policy](#) and related 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 a hand sanitiser before and after performing routine care or first aid.

14 Create COVIDSafe spaces

Make hand hygiene easy

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

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

Keep surfaces clean

As per the 'Cleaning and personal hygiene products' section of this Operations Guide, extended and increased cleaning arrangements have been introduced and will continue. This involves progressive cleaning throughout the day to keep surfaces clean and reduce risks of transmission from high-touch services.

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 wiping down items where appropriate, for example using a disinfectant/detergent wipe or cloth.

There is no requirement for books to be placed aside for a given period after use or if loaned to students.

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 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.

15 Promote COVIDSafe activities

Limit school access: Visitors to schools and school tours

All schools

Visitors to school grounds must be limited to those delivering or supporting essential school services and operations (such as student health and wellbeing services including the [School Breakfast Clubs Program](#) and [Secondary School Immunisation Program](#), those conducting assessments for the *Program for Students with Disabilities* (PSD), and safety, cleaning and maintenance workers).

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.

Additional staff, including parent volunteers, must not attend school at this time.

Parent-teacher information sessions and interviews must continue to be replaced with online and video alternatives.

Schools must not conduct on-site school tours for prospective students and their families at this time. Exemptions can be considered at a local level to support essential educational planning and decision-making for students with disability or highly complex needs.

Children with disability starting school in 2021, are permitted to attend on-site for individual assessments required for enrolment and transition planning that cannot be done remotely, including for the Program for Students with Disabilities (PSD).

In order to enable school tours, the use of technology is encouraged as an alternative to on-site visits. This can include professional photography/videography of the school site out of hours, with the following health and safety measures in place:

- conducted outside of normal school hours
- minimum staff required to undertake filming/photography
- strict physical distancing observed (including during any piece to camera, voice over preferred where feasible)
- face masks to be worn where practical, including, between takes, while setting up etc.
- use of shared equipment avoided or cleaned appropriately between use
- cleaning of sites after filming
- regular hand hygiene

School photos

School photos are permitted indoors and outdoors. Masks can be removed for the short time that the photo is taken.

Where practical, the student should be facing forward when their mask is off, photos in groups should only be with the students' class group/cohort and physical distancing should still be applied where practical (such as when queuing for photos etc). Strict physical distancing does not have to be observed between students when the group photo is taken (given students are mixing with this group throughout the day) but this time should be kept to a minimum and physical distancing should be maintained between students and the photographer at all times.

If using chairs to take photos with students seated, these should be wiped down with a disinfectant wipe between uses. Photographers will need to wear masks at all times.

Also recommend photographers be assigned to a specific school (or group of schools) where practical to minimise movement across sites.

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

Kinder-to-school transition

Small group kinder-to-school transition activities are permitted in schools in both metropolitan Melbourne and regional Victoria, such as parents, educators and children meeting a Prep teacher in a school environment. Group size should not exceed 10 people and no intermixing with other students at the school should occur.

On-site visits by a Prep teacher to meet a Kindergarten teacher and children in kindergarten settings is also permitted across Victoria.

For more health advice, see: [Health and safety advice for all Victorian schools](#)

Additional funding is available in Term 4 to support children transitioning to school in 2021, in response to the ongoing impact of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. This will enable Foundation teachers to visit children and early childhood teachers and educators at kindergarten settings.

These visits will provide an opportunity for early childhood teachers to discuss their educational program and the strategies they use to support children's learning. It will also provide Foundation teachers with the opportunity to observe and interact with children in the kindergarten learning environment to support the development of continuity between this and the school learning environment.

Guidance, webinars and a template letter are available to help schools meet the needs of children transitioning to prep: [Supporting positive transitions from kindergarten to school in 2021](#) and [Guidance Foundation Teachers Transitions Visits to Kindergartens - Schools](#).

Use of school facilities and playgrounds

Playground equipment can be used by students. However, students should practise hand hygiene before and after use.

Playgrounds on school grounds can be made available for community use, if cleaned daily. It is recommended that cleaning of play equipment is undertaken before recess or the start of each school day.

Schools may approve use of outdoor facilities on school property such as ovals if the use aligns with Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) advice for the relevant activity. Use must be out of school hours. Any toilets must be cleaned before the next school day.

Reduce mixing between groups and create workforce bubbles

Creating student and staff 'bubbles', whereby student and staff groupings/cohorts are kept as static as possible with limited mixing of groups of student and staff groups, can minimise the risk of transmission between groups. It can also aid containment in the event of a confirmed case.

Schools must consider how students can be grouped together (for example, in classes or year levels) and how to best minimise mixing between different groups of staff (for example, by site layout or year level). Minimising contact between these groups can slow potential chains of transmission across the school.

Strategies that can be considered include the following.

- Scheduling break times, recess and lunch at different times for different classes or year levels, ensuring there is no intermixing between different cohorts when accessing a canteen.
- Help students understand the principle ('stay in your Grade 4A bubble', 'stay in your Grade 6 bubble').
- Allocating different areas of the school grounds to different year levels.
- Considering the order and pace in which different buildings and classrooms are vacated.
- Organising student traffic in corridors, locker bays and canteen areas (for example, dividing the corridor for traffic direction and having multiple entry and exit points).
- For secondary schools, consider having teachers move between classes rather than students (for example, the homegroup class stays in the same space(s) for viable subjects and the relevant teacher comes to them).
- Rainy-day timetables should seek to maintain students in their allocated bubbles and rooms as far as possible and avoid intermixing.
- Working with staff to only share their allocated communal facilities, staff rooms and break times with other staff in their 'workforce bubble' and encouraging use of outdoor space.
- Ensuring shared offices are only used by the staff allocated to the office (the same staff group) and using the phone or technology to engage with colleagues outside their usual 'workforce bubble'.
- CRTs should be allocated a designated space from which to work.
- 'Workforce bubbles' should most strictly be maintained where practical between different schools and multiple campuses.

Adapt, modify or defer higher-risk activities

Transitions and end-of-year events and gatherings

Face-to-face school assemblies and other non-essential large gatherings must be postponed or adapted considering use of technology.

School graduations

Year 6 and Year 12 graduations are permitted face-to-face in Victorian schools. Students from the graduating year level and staff can attend in person. Parents/carers and other family members or friends cannot attend in person but could engage via an online broadcasting of the event.

All schools are required to follow public health directions and apply the operational health and safety advice to schools during the graduation ceremony. This includes staff and secondary students over the age of 12 years wearing face masks, physical distancing and practicing hand hygiene.

Face masks can be removed briefly for photos or giving a speech. Singing and small ensemble groups (10 or less participants) performances can occur outdoors, with physical distancing of at least 5m between the performers and audience. No external performers are permitted.

Professional development

Essential face-to-face professional development can recommence for up to 10 staff from the same site. Examples of essential professional development include first aid and anaphylaxis training.

Components of the professional development that can be conducted online should still be pursued wherever possible.

Outside delivery should be pursued when possible, including encouragement of outdoor break times.

Sport and recreation

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

Limit use of changing rooms by allowing students to wear sports uniforms for the entire day, stagger use of facilities to reduce occupancy and promote hand hygiene in and around these facilities.

Outdoor facilities are recommended for physical education and recreational play.

Outdoor contact and non-contact sport can resume. Hand hygiene must be practised before and after use of any sporting equipment.

Outdoor interschool sport can also resume in line with community sport, with health and safety measures in place, see 'Interschool activities' section of this Operations Guide.

Indoor sport and recreation can resume in regional Victoria from 2 November and in metropolitan Melbourne from 9 November but must be non-contact when indoors (i.e. the activity must be done with a distance of 1.5m between participants).

As always, any future easing of restrictions remains subject to public health advice.

Swimming pool use

Swimming pools and aquatic facilities on school grounds can be used by students (in all parts of Victoria), with the following safety measures in place:

- only one class group of students should use the pool at a time
- use of the changing facilities should be staggered to limit the number of students in the changing rooms at one time

- changing facilities need to be cleaned at least twice a day
- schools with their own pool on site should be aware of [changes to the Public Health and Wellbeing Regulations](#) governing category 1 facilities (including schools) that includes a requirement to register aquatic facilities with local government
- outdoor swimming pool use in the community can occur for schools in both regional Victoria and metropolitan Melbourne. Restrictions on the number of people permitted in an outdoor community pool facility do not apply if it is being used exclusively by a single school for educational purposes.
- indoor swimming pool use (including swimming lessons) in the community is permitted for schools in regional Victoria. Restrictions on the number of people permitted in an outdoor community pool facility do not apply if it is being used exclusively by a single school for educational purposes.

Use of woodwind and brass instruments, singing, voice projection and dance

Use of woodwind instruments and singing and voice projection does entail risk of potential spread of aerosols and droplets. As such only individual tuition and small ensemble groups (10 or less participants) can be conducted and should occur outdoors, with physical distancing and other hygiene measures where possible.

In preparation for essential assessments these activities should be undertaken outside, with physical distancing and other hygiene measures where possible.

Please see the VCAA's [performance and oral language examination guide](#) for further health and safety information in the context of essential assessments.

Drama activities and dance groupwork should also be undertaken outside where safe and viable.

Note that children are able to sing 'Happy Birthday' to classmates, including in classrooms, given its short duration. This is an appropriate way to mark a significant milestone for children.

Food technology and student cooking

Food preparation can continue in schools with frequent hand hygiene and no sharing of food.

Canteens can operate with the highest hygiene practices amongst food handlers, as per the Department's [Safe Food Handling Guidance](#).

Camps and excursions

Metropolitan Melbourne

School camps and excursions in metropolitan Melbourne cannot resume at this time.

The Directions issued by the Chief Health Officer currently prevent students from moving out of metropolitan Melbourne and into regional Victoria for school camps or to attend remote campuses.

On the advice of our health experts, the 25km travel limit and the metropolitan and regional border will be removed from 11:59pm Sunday, November 8. Further advice on the resumption of school camps and excursions will be provided at this time.

Regional Victoria

Excursions and school camps can resume within regional Victoria to regional destinations only at this time. There is no group size limit however they need to be in line with any specific restrictions on venues visited and be for use by a single school at any one time.

Further advice is available on the [School Camps web page](#).

Interschool activities

Activities that involve on-site attendance by students from different educational institutions should continue to be replaced, where possible, with virtual alternatives.

Outdoor interschool sport can resume in both metropolitan Melbourne and regional Victoria in line with community sport, with the following measures in place:

- spectators to be discouraged or to be within public gathering limits
- reinforce hand hygiene before, during and after activity
- attendance register maintained to support contact tracing
- no sharing of food (such as oranges at sport)
- cleaning and disinfection of communal facilities prior to and after an interschool sport event (toilets and communal changerooms can open).

16 Respond to coronavirus (COVID-19) risk

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 coronavirus (COVID-19), there are sensible steps schools can take while a student awaits collection by a parent or carer as a precaution.

- Staff and students experiencing compatible symptoms with coronavirus (COVID-19), such as fever, cough or sore throat, should be isolated in an appropriate space with suitable supervision and students should be collected by a parent or carer as soon as possible. Urgent medical attention should be sought where indicated. It is not suitable for an unwell student to travel home unsupervised.
- Where staff or students are experiencing compatible symptoms with coronavirus (COVID-19), the important actions to follow include hand hygiene, physical distance and putting on a surgical face mask (both staff and student where appropriate). See the Department'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, the staff member should wear surgical face mask, gloves, gown and eye protection. See the Department'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 coronavirus (COVID-19).
- If a staff member is unsure whether a student is unwell it is advisable in the first instance to contact the parent or carer to discuss any concerns about the health status of the student, and taking a precautionary approach, request the parent or carer to collect their child if concerns remain.

- Staff or students experiencing compatible symptoms with coronavirus (COVID-19) should be encouraged to seek the advice of their healthcare professional who can advise on next steps.
- 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.
- Follow cleaning guidance according to the situation of the case. If a student spreads droplets (for example by sneezing, coughing or vomiting), clean surfaces immediately with disinfectant wipes while wearing gloves.

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

The Department has comprehensive procedures in place with DHHS to manage suspected or confirmed cases of coronavirus (COVID-19) in schools.

- Contact the Department by calling 1800 126 126 to report an IRIS incident alert if a student or staff member tests positive to coronavirus (COVID-19). Schools do not need to take further action, until directed to do so.
- The Department will notify WorkSafe on behalf of the affected school.
- WorkSafe may be in contact with the affected school to ensure the school is following the health and safety guidance outlined in this document and has implemented their COVID-19 Safety Management Plan. Please contact the OHS Advisory Service (1300 074 715) for support in managing occupational health and safety matters.

17 School site closures

The Department works closely with individual schools and DHHS to manage and respond to reported cases of coronavirus (COVID-19) that may include exposure to the virus at a school site.

The Department's rapid school site closure, cleaning and contact tracing process, agreed with 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 on-site 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 coronavirus (COVID-19) having attended that site.

If a site closure is required, you will be informed by your Regional Director and will be provided with full support by the Department's Regional and Area teams. You will be assigned a case manager to support you through the process. The case manager may be your SEIL or another regional staff member.

Support will include communication material to send to your school community to inform them of the closure, provide updates as required and advise when the site will reopen.

Drafting a one-page plan that considers how you will inform staff, school council, community and any organisations that use your site, such as out-of-school-hours care providers, will assist.

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

Infectious cleaning

In most cases where a school site closes due to a positive case, some or all of the school site will undergo an 'infectious clean', also known as a deep clean. This clean is arranged and paid for by the Victorian School Building Authority (VSBA) and this applies to all Victorian Government schools, both metropolitan and regional.

Once advised of the need for cleaning to occur, the VSBA will contact the principal as soon as possible to make arrangements.

The cleaning is conducted in accordance with guidelines that have been developed with DHHS.

As part of these guidelines, paper is not thrown away. If needed, to allow cleaning of high-touch surfaces, paper is packed away (by cleaners in personal protective equipment) or, for surfaces that would not normally be touched (for example, posters on the wall), paper is left in situ.

Schools should close spaces that are not needed and only use the administrative and teaching spaces required to implement any physical distancing requirements and maintain effective learning conditions.

To support the delivery of an 'infectious clean' if it should be required, it is recommended that school staff working on site:

- keep their desks neat and tidy
- file important documents before they leave each day
- take personal belongings home each day (such as jackets, shoes, hats, gloves and face masks)
- do not leave food or food containers out in the open (such as tea bags, biscuits and fruit)
- store away unused shared and loose items (such as toys, musical instruments and sporting equipment)
- keep personal cutlery in a sealed container, not left out on a workstation.

Ensuring access to technology and essential learning materials

To support continuity of engagement and learning in the event of a school site closure, staff and students should be encouraged to take their laptop, iPad or other device home each day, along with textbooks or any other essential learning materials.

Remote learning platforms (such as Seesaw and Google Classrooms) at schools should be kept up to date to support continuity of learning in the event of an extended school site closure (more than two days).

Support for contact tracing

If a school site is required to close, it is likely that the principal will be asked to support contact tracing through providing details of identified close contacts.

Easy access to class lists, records of people who have attended the site and being able to provide contact details will support this.

18 Cleaning and personal hygiene products

Extended and increased cleaning arrangements have been introduced and will continue. This involves progressive cleaning throughout the day to ensure that risks of transmission are reduced for high-touch services.

With the return of on-site learning, cleaners on site will increase from the start of Term 4.

For schools under the metropolitan area-based model, the Victorian School Building Authority (VSBA) will ensure cleaning providers provide the extended and increased cleaning.

For regional schools and metropolitan schools that are yet to transition to the area-based model, enhanced cleaning, which includes extended and increased cleaning and altered schedules, should be arranged by schools with their cleaning provider. Schools will be advised of additional funding for their school to undertake this cleaning.

Schools should contact the Department for any questions at: cleaning@education.vic.gov.au. See also the [Cleaning policy](#) on PAL.

Personal hygiene products

For the procurement of personal hygiene products (such as soap, toilet paper and hand sanitiser), schools should actively monitor cleaning and hygiene supplies and reorder in advance of needing access to additional materials.

Schools should continue to use their usual supplier: the State Purchase Contract supplier for office supplies, Complete Office Supplies (COS), or retail outlets in the first instance.

If unavailable, schools can purchase products from their cleaning providers. If supplies are unavailable, schools should contact the Department at cleaning@education.vic.gov.au who will connect schools with a supplier for toilet paper and soap or directly supply schools with hand sanitiser.

See [Access to cleaning supplies and services](#) for advice on enhanced cleaning, information about personal hygiene products and [Procurement tips for high-demand items](#) for advice about procurement of consumables. See also the [Personal Hygiene](#) policy on PAL.

Replenishment of sanitary pads and tampons

Scheduled replenishment of sanitary product dispensers in school bathrooms has resumed in all schools.

Schools may request an on-demand replenishment at any time by filling in [this online form](#).

Replenishment is occurring in line with DHHS guidelines and under COVIDSafe plans.

For more information about your school's sanitary pad and tampon replenishment schedule, please contact Asaleo Personal Care on acvicschools@asaleocare.com

For more information about the operation of the Free Sanitary Pads and Tampons in All Government Schools initiative during Term 4, please contact healthadvice@education.vic.gov.au.

Infectious cleaning, in the event of a confirmed case of coronavirus (COVID-19)

See 'School site closures' section of this Operations Guide.

19 School buses and transport

As schools resume on-site learning, all school bus services will resume with their regular timetables.

- The School Bus Program will operate as normal across regional Victoria.
- The Students with Disabilities Transport Program services (bus and taxi) will continue to operate statewide for students with disability.
- Public transport services (including school buses) will continue to operate a normal timetable, providing a reliable option for students traveling to school.

The Department and the Department of Transport continue to work closely with DHHS and transport operators to implement measures to limit the risk of coronavirus (COVID-19) so that students can feel confident travelling on school transport.

Transport operators will continue enhanced cleaning across all services to ensure that high-touch surfaces such as handrails and seating areas are regularly disinfected.

Physical distancing is to be maintained for adult bus staff (driver and other attendants) where practical.

Physical distancing should be exercised by parents and school staff at bus stops, interchanges and school bus loading areas.

Students should:

- not use transport if unwell
- practise hand hygiene before and after using transport (prior to leaving home and at the end of the school day)
- practise physical distancing at bus stops, train stations and interchange locations for other shared transport services where practical.

Students 12 years and older should wear face masks whilst travelling. Where possible, siblings should be seated together. Bus staff will not monitor the wearing of face masks or bus seating plans, but are encouraged to discuss these arrangements with schools if needed.

Schools are reminded of the 40km speed limit for school zones and school crossings.

20 Maintenance, construction and building upgrades

Updated advice will be provided shortly.

21 Outside School Hours Care

During the staged return, outside school hours care (OSHC) will be available to students attending for on-site supervision and progressively for the relevant year levels returning to on-site learning.

The OSHC provider is responsible for ensuring that students attending are eligible. Schools are able to share information with providers to help them confirm students' eligibility.

For further information, see [Outside school hours care during coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#).

22 Access to devices

Where students in government schools have been provided with a device and internet access, this must continue until the end of the year.

All school-owned devices should be returned to the school at the end of the year or on the student's last day of school, for those cohorts finishing early.

Staff and students using laptops and other portable devices should be encouraged to take them home at the end of the school day and over weekends.

23 Mobile phone policy

During the period of learning from home, students may have become used to using mobile phones during the school day.

With the return to on-site learning, it is critical that students and staff understand that the Department's [Students Using Mobile Phones Policy](#) remains in place to ensure appropriate use of technology.

The policy helps create a safe environment for students to learn without distractions or inappropriate mobile phone use (such as cyberbullying), as well as greater opportunities for social interaction and physical activity during recess and lunchtimes.

Schools are managed environments that include records of student, staff and visitor attendance, which can support contact tracing. Phones can be turned on before and after school, with the COVIDSafe app activated when school finishes.

Schools should remind staff and students to clean their phones regularly.

24 Key contacts

Schools should contact their SEIL to discuss any queries.

Staff health and safety: Local consultation must continue with staff, Health and Safety Representatives and OHS Committees (if applicable). For further advice and support contact your local [Regional OHS Support Officers](#) or the Department's [OHS Advisory Service](#) phone 1300 074 715 or email safety@education.vic.gov.au.

DET COVID-19 hotline: The Department's dedicated coronavirus (COVID-19) phone advice line on 1800 338 663 can address or appropriately refer calls, including about OSHC and other early childhood matters. This operates from 8am to 6pm, seven days a week.

International students (both onshore students and offshore students engaging in remote learning): international@education.vic.gov.au or (03) 7022 1000

Finance: schools.finance.support@education.vic.gov.au or (03) 7022 2222

Cleaning: cleaning@education.vic.gov.au

Student transport: student.transport@education.vic.gov.au or (03) 7022 2247.

APPENDIX 1 – ARRANGEMENTS FOR REMOTE AND FLEXIBLE LEARNING AT HOME

Parents and carers are responsible for students' general safety at home or elsewhere.

- Students and parents/families should be given clear information about how and when they will receive learning materials and feedback.
- Schools will create and communicate a schedule or calendar that shows what is expected of students in relation to the completion of learning tasks.
- For students with disability, students in out-of-home care and Koorie students, schools and the parents or carers should continue to work together via the [Student Support Group](#) (maintaining a current [Individual Education Plan \(IEP\)](#)) to identify and plan responses for areas of need.
- If there are medically vulnerable students in classes who may not be able to return to on-site schooling when other students have returned (based on medical advice), schools must give consideration to supporting continuity of their education.
- Principals and school staff must:
 - identify risks that are reasonably foreseeable for students who are learning at home
 - take reasonable steps that are in the school's control to prevent reasonably foreseeable harm to students
 - for more information, see fact sheet: [Child Safety, Reportable Conduct and Duty of Care in Remote Online Learning Environments](#), which provides advice to all staff about how to support child safety in remote learning environments.
 - if school staff become aware of an incident, receive a disclosure or form a reasonable belief that a child has been abused or is at risk of abuse, they must follow all normal procedures for responding to and reporting child abuse, including the [Four Critical Actions for Schools](#).

APPENDIX 2- QUICK REFERENCE OF PERMITTED SCHOOL ACTIVITIES

COVIDSafe behaviours

Key actions for schools	Metropolitan Melbourne	Regional Victoria
Temperature checks	NO	NO
Face masks	YES	YES

Create COVIDSafe spaces

Key actions for schools	Metropolitan Melbourne	Regional Victoria
Enhanced environmental cleaning	YES	YES
Enhanced hand hygiene facilities	YES	YES
Enhanced ventilation	YES	YES
Community use of school playground	YES*	YES*
Libraries (for borrowing and as a learning space)	YES	YES

*with daily cleaning

Promote COVIDSafe activities

Key actions for schools	Metropolitan Melbourne	Regional Victoria
School tours	NO	NO
Excursions	NO	YES
Community pool use (outdoor pool)	YES	YES
Community pool use (indoor pool)	NO	YES
Incursions	NO	NO
School photos	YES	YES
Camps and overnight stays	NO	YES
Assemblies (whole school)	NO	NO
Assemblies (year level)	NO	NO
Formals	NO	NO
Graduation ceremonies	LIMITED	LIMITED
Kinder transition program (Small group)	YES	YES
Year 7 transition programs	NO	NO

Non-contact sports (indoors)	NO	NO
Contact sports (indoors)	NO	NO
Contact sports (outdoors)	YES	YES
Non-contact sports (outdoors)	YES	YES
Interschool sports (Outdoor only)	YES	YES
Intraschool sports	YES	YES
Other interschool activity (such as debating)	NO	NO
Singing, brass and woodwind classes and groups	LIMITED Outdoors & 10 or less participants	LIMITED Outdoors & 10 or less participants
Swimming (school-based pool)	YES	YES
Professional development (face to face)	LIMITED	LIMITED

Respond to coronavirus (COVID-19) risk

Key actions for schools	Metropolitan Melbourne	Regional Victoria
Keep visitor records	YES	YES
Maintain adequate PPE supply	YES	YES