Operations Guide

Victorian government schools

**From 26 April 2022**

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1. COVIDSafe measures for schools

COVIDSafe measures have changed but important practices will continue to be in place across all Victorian government schools to ensure every possible effort is made to ensure staff and students are safe and that schools remain open.

The COVIDsafe measures focus on the 3Vs: Ventilation, Vaccination and Vital COVIDSafe steps.

A combination of strategies remains necessary to minimise transmission risk. No single strategy completely reduces risk and not every measure will be possible in all educational settings. Where some controls are not feasible, others should be enhanced where possible.

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1. COVIDSafe Plan

The [Safety Management Plan for COVID-19](https://www.education.vic.gov.au/hrweb/Documents/OHS/COVID19SafetyManagementPlan.docx) (COVIDSafe Plan) applies to all schools, outlines the key health and safety risks, and links to the latest guidance. Principals should ensure that staff, including new staff, are aware of their school’s COVIDSafe plan.

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

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

The Department’s [OHS Advisory Service or local Regional OHS Support Officers](https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/occupational-health-and-safety-management-system-ohsms/guidance/useful-contacts-schools) can help tailor the plan to individual school needs and link schools with health and wellbeing supports to promote mental health and wellbeing for staff and safe work practices remotely and at school sites.

Schools must ensure that a copy of their tailored COVIDSafe Plan is available to provide to any Authorised Officers or WorkSafe Inspectors who request a copy.

### Safety information and training

Any new staff or department staff working onsite in schools who have not completed the eLearn module School Infection Prevention and Control During COVID-19 must complete the module as soon as possible. Staff may complete the training again as a refresher at any time.

The module is available on LearnED via [EduPay login](https://edupay.eduweb.vic.gov.au/) and takes about 20 minutes to complete. A parallel module is [available on FUSE](https://fuse.education.vic.gov.au/?L9C5ZK) for preservice teachers, casual relief teachers and other staff working in schools who do not have eduPay access.

NOTE: All Victorian government schools are required to follow the School Operations Guide (available from [COVID-19 — School Operations](https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/covid-19-school-operations/advice)) and refer to the Department’s other Policy and Advisory Library (PAL) policies for anything not specifically covered in the School Operations Guide which provides COVID-specific school operational information. For example, it is important for schools to continue to follow all Department policies in PAL in relation to OHS, anaphylaxis management, child safety and duty of care.

1. Ventilation

For information about maximising ventilation in schools, including the appropriate use and placement of air purifiers, please see the [Department’s Ventilation and Air Purification policy](https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/ventilation-air-purification/policy) and the [How to use an air purifier fact sheet](https://edugate.eduweb.vic.gov.au/sites/i/_layouts/15/WopiFrame2.aspx?sourcedoc=/sites/i/Shared%20Documents/Coronavirus/Factsheet-How-to-use-an-air-purifier.pdf&action=default).

Schools are encouraged to use the [Promoting airflow poster](https://edugate.eduweb.vic.gov.au/sites/i/_layouts/15/WopiFrame.aspx?sourcedoc=/sites/i/Shared%20Documents/Coronavirus/Return%20to%20school/poster-promoting-airflow.pdf) in classrooms.

For further assistance, contact the [Victorian School Building Authority](https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/covid-19-school-operations/advice).

1. Vaccinations

As part of the COVID-19 vaccination roll-out, all school staff and all students aged 5 and over are eligible to receive a COVID-19 vaccine. Students are not required to be vaccinated to attend school. While vaccination is not mandatory for students, vaccinations are strongly encouraged as the best way to protect individuals, families and school communities from the spread of COVID-19.

Schools can access COVID-19 vaccine resources [here](https://edugate.eduweb.vic.gov.au/sites/i/Pages/production.aspx#/app/content/3501/support_and_service_(schools)%252Fcoronavirus_and_learning_from_home%252Fvaccination_information_for_schools%252Fcovid-19_vaccine_eligibility)

### Required vaccinations for school staff

The Victorian Minister for Health has determined that COVID-19 vaccination is mandatory for staff who work in schools. This includes principals, teachers, administration and education support staff, including casual relief teachers (CRTs), pre-service teachers, and Outside School Hours Care staff.

All staff are required to have received three doses of a COVID-19 vaccine unless a medical exemption applies.

* Staff required to be vaccinated, but unable to receive their third dose by the nominated deadline because they were recovering from a recent COVID-19 infection, have an additional four months from the end of their isolation period to receive their third dose. Staff should note that following the expiry of their temporary medical exemption, they will have a maximum of two weeks to receive their third dose. Staff should report their COVID-19 infection on eduPay.
* Staff are required to log onto eduPay to record vaccination status or to enter the date of their booking. Employees who do not update their third dose status on eduPay by the appropriate deadline will not be able to work at a school site.

The Australian Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation (ATAGI) advises that a previous COVID-19 infection is not a contraindication to COVID-19 vaccination, that vaccination can occur after a COVID-19 infection and there is no requirement to delay vaccination after recovery from acute illness.

A staff member who does not meet the vaccination requirements will not be assigned alternative duties in place of onsite duties.

Further information about vaccination requirements for school staff is available at [COVID-19 vaccinations - teaching service and school council employees](https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/covid-19-vaccinations-teaching-service-school-council-employees/).

Schools must treat healthcare information, including an individual’s vaccination status or diagnosed medical condition (such as COVID-19) in accordance with the [Schools’ Privacy Policy](https://www.education.vic.gov.au/Pages/schoolsprivacypolicy.aspx).

Further guidance on the handling of health care information can be found on PAL under [Privacy and information sharing – Health care information](https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/privacy-information-sharing/guidance/health-care-information).

### Flexible work arrangements to attend appointments

Staff can seek principal approval for flexible work arrangements to attend vaccination appointments for third doses. Staff do not have to formally take leave to attend vaccination appointments; instead, principals/managers should agree the employee can take the time off without loss of pay.

Staff can [access up to half a day’s paid release from duty](https://list.comms.educationupdates.vic.gov.au/track/click?u=770f4d1425f14b0d9936ca688e358872&id=2df9f50f51ea7764&e=a9313e1a5943460a) to attend COVID-19 vaccine appointments for third dose vaccination. Principals should put arrangements in place that maximise the opportunity for all employees to attend vaccination appointments. Schools should be flexible in enabling staff to access vaccination appointments.

Staff who have used other leave entitlements or who have taken unpaid leave to attend a vaccination appointment should be recredited their leave entitlement or paid, consistent with the entitlement to access up to half a day’s paid release from duty.

If an employee becomes unwell following a COVID-19 vaccination, they may access personal leave.

### Vaccination requirements for visitors and volunteers performing work

The third dose vaccination requirements also apply to any [visitors or volunteers performing work on school sites](https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/covid-19-vaccinations-visitors-volunteers/policy). This includes:

* a person contracted to work at an education facility and who will or may be in close proximity to children, students or staff, whether or not engaged by the education operator including casual relief teachers, NDIS providers and auditors (but does not include delivery personnel)
* Department staff who attend an education facility (such as allied health personnel)
* staff of any other entity who attends an education facility
* volunteers that attend an education facility and that work in close proximity to children, students or staff (including parent helpers)
* students on placements at an education facility

### Vaccination requirements for other visitors to schools (not performing work)

Parents, carers and other adult visitors are no longer required to show evidence of two doses of a COVID-19 vaccine if not performing work or volunteering at the school.

1. Vital COVIDSafe Steps

### Rapid antigen testing

Free rapid antigen tests will continue to be available for all staff and students in Victorian schools for the first four weeks of Term 2, 2022. Rapid antigen testing will continue to be voluntary but strongly encouraged for all primary, secondary and specialist school students and staff.

Table 1: Summary of rapid antigen testing recommendations for schools

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Category | Recommended rapid antigen testing schedule |
| Primary school staff and students | Twice weekly (school days) |
| Secondary school staff and students | Twice weekly (school days) |
| Specialist school staff and students | Five times a week (school days) |

Staff, Casual Relief Teachers (CRT), casual ES staff, pre-service teachers and ad hoc school council employed CRT who are working regularly in a school (e.g., two or three times a week) should be provided with one pack of rapid antigen tests per two weeks.

Other non-school employed staff (e.g. regular on-site contractors such as cleaners, construction workers) are not accommodated in each school’s test kit allocation. They may however be provided with tests if the school has sufficient kits available.

If staff work at multiple sites, schools should ask the staff member if they have already received a pack.

In primary and secondary schools, tests should be conducted twice weekly, on days that suit families – no particular days are prescribed, but it is suggested school encourage common days for tests to be done at home such as Monday and Wednesday, or Tuesday and Thursday, to enable common reminders to be given to students by teachers at the end of each preceding day and to families through text messages or other communication through schools’ usual communication channels. Specialist school students and staff are strongly recommended to test every school day. Families of students should be reassured that testing is voluntary. Those students unable to test despite best efforts by parents and carers can still attend school.

If staff or students receive a positive test result at any time, they must report this through the Department of Health system ([Rapid antigen tests | Coronavirus Victoria](https://www.coronavirus.vic.gov.au/rapid-antigen-tests#report-a-positive-result-on-a-rapid-antigen-test)) or via the coronavirus hotline at 1800 675 398.

Students (or their parents) must also report a positive result to their school, either through the COVID Test [portal](https://covidtest.educationapps.vic.gov.au) or by phone or written notification; this is so the school can record that they will be absent while in 7-day isolation, provide support and learning materials as needed, and let the rest of the school community know there has been a positive case onsite and that they should monitor for symptoms.

Students and staff who tested positive and completed their 7-day isolation period are not required to participate in the RAT screening for 12 weeks after their release from isolation. In addition, if a staff member or student has recovered from COVID-19, they are not required to get tested or isolate/quarantine if re-exposed to a case within 12 weeks of ending their isolation period.

Staff must report a positive result to their school using [EduPay,](https://edupay.eduweb.vic.gov.au/) on the day they receive a positive test result.

If a CRT tests positive to COVID-19, the CRT should notify the school, their employer (where it is not the school), and the Department of Health.

All students and staff who return a positive result from a rapid antigen test should also follow the latest advice at <https://www.coronavirus.vic.gov.au/rapid-antigen-tests>.

For questions regarding the delivery or supply of rapid antigen tests for your school, please contact the [Procurement Team.](https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/covid-19-school-operations/advice)

### Face masks

While recommended, face masks are not required in any school settings from 11.59pm 22 April 2022.   Any students or staff members who wish to wear a mask may do so, including those who are medically at-risk

This means students in Grades 3 to 6 and staff and visitors to primary schools are no longer required to wear face masks.

Household contacts attending school who are over 8 years of age are required to wear face masks indoors unless they have a valid exemption. See updated close contact requirements below.

Everyone including students aged 8 years and above must wear a face mask when travelling on public transport, taxis or ride share vehicles.

Face masks may used as an additional temporary risk-mitigation measure in exceptional circumstances, for example if a school experiences high levels of or prolonged transmission.

Schools have been supplied with a stock of N95 masks suitable for adults and older children; surgical masks for staff and students in secondary schools; and child-size surgical masks for students in primary schools to ensure that all staff and students who choose to wear a mask have access to a range of appropriate mask options.

Schools should continue to audit personal protective equipment (PPE) supplies to ensure adequate supplies remain available in the event of a suspected or confirmed case of COVID-19, including appropriately sized masks for younger children.

Schools can buy PPE items through the COS platform using the following codes:

* Surgical masks (SAFE2103, SAFE4053, SAFE4054, SAFE4056) and
* N95 masks (SAFE4052, SAFE4053, SAFE4054)

Alternatively, schools can buy PPE items from their own suppliers of PPE, such as pharmacies.

For more information, contact the [Schools Procurement Branch.](https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/covid-19-school-operations/advice)

### Infection prevention and control

Service Victoria QR code check-in is not required at schools. Routine school visitor record keeping arrangements will continue to apply.

All staff, students and visitors to schools should practise good 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 where required.

Schools should provide age-appropriate education and reminders about hand hygiene. If soap and water are not readily available, hand sanitiser that contains at least 60 per cent alcohol should be made accessible.

Ensure the highest hygiene practices amongst food handlers, as per the Department’s [Safe Food Handling Guidance](https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/food-handling/guidance).

### Non-classroom-based activities, including camps

Schools are encouraged to run extra-curricular and other out-of-classroom activities including camps, excursions, sport and tours.

In planning for all non-classroom based activities (such as school assemblies) and extra-curricular activities, including camps, excursions, other out-of-school activities, incursions and learning activities such as sport (including swimming), music and the arts, schools must conduct a risk assessment to consider the following:

* Limiting activity to the smallest possible cohort size (e.g. a single class group, or single school; or smallest possible group or number of schools for interschool activity)
* Holding the activity in outdoor spaces or large indoor spaces that allow greater physical distancing
* Considering the non-participation of persons (staff or students) at higher risk of severe disease from COVID-19 (e.g. who are immunocompromised or have significant co-existing medical conditions)
* Staggering of groups who participate in the activity

Prior to a student attending a camp or overnight stay, parents/carers must be informed about the COVIDSafe measures that will be in place during the camp or activity and must provide permission for their child to attend.

Parents/carers must be informed that if a confirmed or probable case is present at the camp while infectious, others attending the camp may be identified as household-like contacts. This will depend on the sleeping, living and dining arrangements in place at particular campsites. Household-like contacts are still permitted to participate in camp as long as they wear a mask when indoors (if aged 8 and above or have a valid exemption) and complete 5 rapid antigen tests within the 7 day period that would have been their quarantine period. A household-like contact attending camp during this period must notify the educational facility they are attending under these requirements.

Secondary school students are strongly encouraged to conduct rapid antigen testing at camps consistent with the twice-a-week schedule for mainstream schools and each school day for specialist schools. Secondary school students should test at home on the morning of the camp and then, if the camp is longer than three days, only once on the morning of day four.

Primary school children should test at home on the morning of the camp. Where a primary school is planning a camp of more than three days duration, advice on the conduct of rapid antigen testing should be sought through the DET COVID-19 Hotline on 1800 338 663.

For further guidance on school camps, refer to the following documents: [*Requirements for operation of school camps*](https://edugate.eduweb.vic.gov.au/sites/i/Pages/School.aspx#/app/content/3552/support_and_service_(schools)%252Fcoronavirus_and_learning_from_home%252Fschool_operations%252Frequirements_for_operation_of_school_camps)and[*RAT Guidance for staff on school camps*](https://edugate.eduweb.vic.gov.au/sites/i/_layouts/15/WopiFrame.aspx?sourcedoc=/sites/i/Shared%20Documents/rat-camp-guidance-for-staff.docx&action=default)*.*

### Maintaining physical distancing

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

Staff should practise physical distancing 1.5m 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.

Staff should reduce the use of common areas such as staff rooms.

Students should practise physical distancing where possible.

Strategies to support physical distancing include:

* rostering access to shared spaces, limiting time in these spaces and promoting breaks outdoors
* the careful management of movement of adults through all common areas, including 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
* 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, using floor markings where appropriate.
* marking the floor to indicate physical distancing in appropriate locations (e.g., canteens, staff rooms and reception areas)
* actions to reduce the congregation of adults around the school and reduce congestion. Schools can do this by using multiple entry/exit points and appropriate signage to communicate expected behaviours.
* communicate the strategies to parents with posters and communications to school communities to remind staff, students and families of the need for physical distancing. Posters and a parent letter are available in the [communications support pack](https://edugate.eduweb.vic.gov.au/sites/i/Pages/production.aspx#/app/content/3284/).

### Use of outdoor spaces

Schools are encouraged to maximise the use of outdoor spaces, including those with shade sail coverage. For activities occurring outdoors, schools should follow the Outdoor Activities guidance in the [Occupational Health and Safety Management System](https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/occupational-health-and-safety-management-system-ohsms/policy) and support staff and students to use a combination of sun protection measures when UV levels are 3 or above.

### Staff meetings and professional development

Staff meetings and professional development activities can be held face-to-face. Standard COVIDSafe measures apply, including physical distancing, limiting duration of the activity, and optimising ventilation.

### Interschool activities

Interschool activities including staff and students from different schools are permitted.

### School events

School community events are permitted.

### Use of school facilities by the community

School facilities can be used by the community, including play equipment, and for external hire.

Schools are permitted to allow external providers to use or hire school facilities.

When hiring out school facilities, vaccination information is only collected for workers and volunteers working for or on behalf of the school (see, section *vaccination requirements for visitors and volunteers performing work*).

Schools are no longer required to collect proof of vaccination from external providers who use or hire school facilities outside normal school hours e.g. those attending for the conduct of a state or federal election, or where the facility is hired, leased or operated by a community group e.g.community language schools, other community groups, for community sport.

1. Management of suspected cases of COVID-19 in schools

A ‘suspected’ case means a person who displays any [COVID-19 symptoms](https://www.coronavirus.vic.gov.au/symptoms-and-risks) who has not yet tested positive for COVID-19.

As soon as practicable after becoming aware of a suspected case in a staff member or student – and if that person has attended onsite while displaying symptoms, or 48 hours before they developed symptoms – the principal must take the following actions:

1. Follow guidance for [Management of Students Displaying COVID-19 Symptoms in Education Settings](https://edugate.eduweb.vic.gov.au/sites/i/_layouts/15/WopiFrame2.aspx?sourcedoc=/sites/i/Shared%20Documents/Coronavirus/students-with-covid-symptoms.docx&action=default).
2. Let the person know they need to follow guidelines in the [Testing Requirements Policy](https://www.health.vic.gov.au/covid-19/quarantine-isolation-and-testing-order). If applicable the affected person/s should follow the COVID-19 RAT procedure, which recommends a symptomatic person in a workplace takes a COVID-19 test.
3. Ensure appropriate records are maintained in order to support appropriate notifications if the symptomatic person becomes a confirmed case, particularly from the period commencing 48 hours prior to the onset of COVID-19 symptoms.
4. If the symptomatic person is confirmed to have COVID-19, the principal must follow the steps under the below section*, Management of confirmed cases and household contacts at school.*
5. Management of confirmed cases and household contacts at school

### Managing a confirmed case of COVID-19 in schools

Where a student or staff member is identified as a positive case, the following steps should be taken:

#### Principal actions: identification and notification

1. Parents/carers must complete the Student COVID-19 [COVID Test Portal](https://covidtest.educationapps.vic.gov.au) if a student tests positive to COVID-19 (via a PCR or rapid antigen test). Where a parent/carer informs the school by phone or written notification, the school must complete the [Schools COVID Case Management Tool](https://covid19reporting.educationapps.vic.gov.au). Schools are no longer required to make an IRIS report for positive COVID cases. An [EduSafe Plus report](https://services.educationapps.vic.gov.au/edusafeplus) is only required if the school is impacted by COVID-19 related hospitalisation or death of a member of the school community. A user guide on how to complete this report is available on the ‘Knowledge Base’ in EduSafe plus.
2. Students who report a positive result must isolate for seven days and not attend school during that period.
3. Where a student is a household contact of a positive case (that is, they have spent more than four hours with someone who has COVID-19 inside a house, accommodation, or care facility) they must inform the school. Household and household-like contacts are no longer required to quarantine as long as they take additional safety measures in the 7 days that would have been their quarantine period (see Table 1). Household contacts are required to inform the school that they are attending during the 7 day period.
4. Staff must report the result of a positive test and request leave through the [EduPay](https://edupay.eduweb.vic.gov.au/) portal. Staff who report a positive result must isolate for seven days and not attend school during that period.
5. Where a staff member is a household contact of a positive case (that is, they have spent more than four hours with someone who has COVID-19 inside a house, accommodation, or care facility) they must inform the school. Household and household-like contacts are no longer required to quarantine as long as they take additional safety measures in the 7 days that would have been their quarantine period (see Table 1). Household contacts are required to inform the school that they are attending during the 7 day period.
6. Principals must notify staff and the school community through a daily email (where applicable) when a student or staff member has (or multiple students or staff members) have returned a positive COVID-19 test result and had attended the school during their infectious period. The notification should include:

* Dates of attendance
* Affected group/cohort/year levels
* Any relevant extracurricular activities
* Advice to monitor if the person enrolled in the facility develops symptoms

The notification should be provided to all staff who attended the school during the period of attendance. For parents/carers and students, the notification can be provided to only the affected group/cohort/year level or to the whole school.

1. The [self-serve template portal](https://edugate.eduweb.vic.gov.au/sites/i/Pages/production.aspx#/app/content/3529/support_and_service_(schools)%252Fcoronavirus_and_learning_from_home%252Fcommunicating_with_parents_and_students%252Fcovid-19_communication_packages_for_schools) is available for principals to use in the event of a positive case associated with the school. Each template package will contain a message to parents/carers, a message to staff, and website/social media wording.
2. Ensure that staff or students refrain from returning to school if they remain symptomatic, unless it is known that their symptoms are ongoing, or caused by an underlying health condition or medication. Refer to any student health management plan on file.

In the event of multiple positive cases at a school, the Department of Health (DH) will work with the relevant regional office to determine the most appropriate response and any additional actions that should be taken.

Schools must treat health information, including an individual’s vaccination status or diagnosed medical condition (including positive COVID-19 test results) in accordance with the [Schools’ Privacy Policy](https://www.education.vic.gov.au/Pages/schoolsprivacypolicy.aspx). COVID-19 diagnoses and vaccination statuses are not to be shared or discussed unless the individual (or their parent/carer) provides consent, or unless schools are legally obliged or authorised to do so (for example, to comply with a Pandemic Order). Further guidance on the handling of health care information can be found on PAL under [Privacy and information sharing – Health care information.](https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/privacy-information-sharing/guidance/health-care-information)

### Cleaning following a confirmed COVID-19 case

The cleaning arrangements for all Victorian government schools will return to the business-as-usual cleaning scope on the advice of the Department of Health.

If there is an outbreak of COVID-19 the Department of Health or a Local Public Health Unit will advise schools if additional cleaning is required, based on risk assessment as part of an outbreak management plan.

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 the Department of Health.

### Student attendance

Students who are required to isolate or quarantine should be supported in the same way as students with an extended absence due to illness or injury, with learning materials provided to support their continued learning. Schools are not expected to provide a full remote learning program in these circumstances. The Department has prepared [online learning activities](https://fuse.education.vic.gov.au/?BC54J2) that may be useful in instances where families or schools are seeking additional activities and support for individual students’ learning while isolating.

### Staff leave

Infectious diseases leave for any required quarantine period may be approved in circumstances where there is evidence from a medical practitioner available in accordance with the [Infectious diseases leave](https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/infectious-diseases-leave-teaching-service/overview) policy for the teaching service, or, schools may seek advice from [Schools People Services](https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/covid-19-school-operations/advice) in circumstances where that evidence is not available. For further advice please refer to [Frequently Asked Questions - Teaching Service](https://www.education.vic.gov.au/hrweb/Documents/COVID-19-Teaching-Service-FAQS.docx).

Table 1: Summary of student and staff scenarios

| Scenario | Required actions for the staff member or student/family | Required actions for the school |
| --- | --- | --- |
| A student or staff member tests positive to COVID-19, either through RA test or PCR test | Isolate at home or in private accommodation for 7 days (inclusive of weekends) and **do not attend school** during this period.  Inform the school, that they have tested positive to COVID-19.  A negative test is not required to return to school following completion of 7 days of isolation.  Follow the [Checklist for COVID cases](https://www.coronavirus.vic.gov.au/checklist-cases). | The school must notify DET of positive student cases via the [Vic Ed COVID Tool](https://covid19reporting.educationapps.vic.gov.au).  Staff members must report a positive test result and submit a leave request via eduPay on the first day of leave See [COVID-19 Leave Management Guidance](https://www.education.vic.gov.au/hrweb/safetyhw/Pages/COVID-19.aspx) for details.  The school should notify the school community that there has been a case at the school using the [communication templates](https://edugate.eduweb.vic.gov.au/sites/i/Pages/production.aspx#/app/content/3529/support_and_service_(schools)%252Fcoronavirus_and_learning_from_home%252Fcommunicating_with_parents_and_students%252Fcovid-19_communication_packages_for_schools) available. |
| If a student or staff member tests positive through RA test, but they **don’t have symptoms or have not been in contact with anyone who has COVID-19** it is recommended getting a PCR test within 48 hours and stay isolated at all times until they receive their result.  If the subsequent PCR test is negative, the student or staff member can return to school. | No further action. |
| A student or staff member is a household contact or household-like contact\*.  *You have spent more than four hours with someone who has COVID-19 inside a house, accommodation, or care facility.*  *Contact at school is not included in this definition, unless contact has occurred in a school-based residential setting, e.g. school camp or boarding school.* | Notify the school that they are a household or household-like contact.  Follow the [Checklist for COVID contacts](https://www.coronavirus.vic.gov.au/checklist-contacts).  Household contacts are no longer required to quarantine as long as they take additional safety measures, but are **required** to:   * notify the school if returning during their 7 day period; * undertake daily rapid antigen testing five times within the 7 days; * wear a face covering when indoors (if aged 8 years and above or unless they have a valid exemption); * are not permitted to visit hospitals or care facilities unless an exemption applies.   They are **recommended** to avoid interaction with people at higher risk of severe disease from COVID-19.  If **symptomatic,** all students/staff must stay/return home, take a rapid antigen test, or get a PCR test if a rapid antigen testing kit unavailable. | No further action. |
| A student or staff member has been in contact with a case of COVID-19, including at school or at work. | If **asymptomatic,** students and staff should continue to attend school and monitor for symptoms.  If **symptomatic,** all students/staff must stay/return home, take a rapid antigen test, or get a PCR test if a rapid antigen testing kit unavailable.  On receipt of a negative test result, the student/staff member can return to school.  If staff/students are too unwell to attend school, usual leave/absence policies apply.  Follow the [Checklist for COVID contacts](https://www.coronavirus.vic.gov.au/checklist-contacts). | No further action.  The school is not required to seek rapid antigen test results from the students or staff unless a positive test is returned. |
| Staff/student has contracted COVID-19, completed their 7-day isolation period and is asymptomatic. | Staff/ students can safely return to school. They do not need to be tested if they have been re-exposed within 12 weeks of ending their self-isolation. | The school should confirm that the staff/student has completed their 7-day isolation period |
| Staff/student has completed their quarantine period as a household contact and has returned a negative test result.  However, during the quarantine period an additional member of the household has returned a positive result. | The quarantine duration for student/staff household contacts who are required to quarantine i.e. those who are not able to comply with the additional safety measures, is 7 days from the date of the first positive test of the household index case.  Household contacts are not subject to rolling quarantine periods. If the index case remains in the household, or if subsequent cases are identified within the household, the quarantine end date for the close contact is unchanged.  Staff/ students can safely return to school and do not require negative test documentation.  *Please note, if the staff or student becomes symptomatic, they should get tested and not attend school.* | No further action. |
| Staff/student with a positive RAT (probable case) who receives a **negative** PCR test **within 48 hours** after the positive RAT | Staff/student can end their period of self-isolation period. They can safely return to school.  Recommend that they notify school of negative PCR test result.  If staff/students are too unwell to attend school, usual leave/absence policies apply. | The school should notify DET of the change in status of a student via the [Vic Ed COVID Tool](https://covid19reporting.educationapps.vic.gov.au). |

2. Workforce supports

### The Department has increased support for school workforces.

### Managing COVID-19 in schools

A state-wide COVID-19 School Support and Response Team is available to support principals and schools manage COVID-19 related issues impacting on the school. The team members are recently retired experienced principals who are available to provide support to school leaders. Engagement of the team by a school will be facilitated by the region on request from a school principal.

### Staffing arrangements

It continues to be the principal’s responsibility to make the school-based decisions required to deliver education objectives, in accordance with the Victorian Government Schools Agreement 2017, including staff consultation.

Any decision to move to remote and flexible learning can only be used as a last resort and must be approved by the Regional Director or their delegate and following consultation with the Local Public Health Unit.

All school staff are expected to work onsite, except for medically vulnerable staff and staff required to quarantine.

### Managing staff absences

Schools should apply the following steps to manage staff absences.

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| * Use normal available staffing arrangements to cover staff absences. Grade splitting should be minimised to limit the mixing of students across cohorts. Where necessary as a temporary measure, classes can be combined in a large space – for example, a hall, where supervision requirements can be maintained by teachers and support staff. * Engage CRTs and utilise the ’Support Your School’ initiative applicants via the Job Opportunity Pool on [Recruitment Online](https://www.education.vic.gov.au/hrweb/careers/Pages/advacsSCH.aspx). The ‘Job Opportunity Pool’ will have individuals who can be deployed on a casual basis to assist with daily school operations, including face-to-face teaching, classroom and student support (including allied health), or administrative assistance.’ For further recruitment guidance, please refer to the help guide [here](https://edugate.eduweb.vic.gov.au/Services/HR/Documents/ROL-SYSI-Recruiter-Guide.pdf). * Reschedule staff intensive activities such as camps and excursions. |
|  |
| * Only on the advice of the Department of Health and with the approval of the Regional Director, implement short term delivery of remote and flexible learning for specified classes/year level cohorts while maintaining onsite provision of learning for vulnerable children and children of essential workers. The Department has prepared daily and weekly [Remote Learning Packs](https://aus01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fdrive.google.com%2Fdrive%2Ffolders%2F1_PLbFp3kefD5M3BuvcMdwC5SRMBIoLbr&data=04%7C01%7CMadeleine.Taylor2%40education.vic.gov.au%7C6896a1818fb8487f3f5508d9ec70dd83%7Cd96cb3371a8744cfb69b3cec334a4c1f%7C0%7C0%7C637800791767677973%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000&sdata=Bqi2K1pLBPcFdXXrGhgatHlacKYhaoeLcbEKI6Ucyxw%3D&reserved=0) for Levels Foundation-6 that may support schools to transition to remote and flexible learning. |

Schools seeking financial advice in relation to the engagement of additional support to manage workforce shortages should contact the Financial Services Division on [schools.finance.support@education.vic.gov.au](mailto:schools.finance.support@education.vic.gov.au)

### Staff who may be medically more at-risk from COVID-19

Some people are at greater risk of more serious illness with COVID-19. See [People at higher risk of coronavirus (COVID-19)](https://aus01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.health.gov.au%2Fnews%2Fhealth-alerts%2Fnovel-coronavirus-2019-ncov-health-alert%2Fongoing-support-during-coronavirus-covid-19%2Fwhat-you-need-to-know-about-coronavirus-covid-19%2Fpeople-at-higher-risk-of-coronavirus-covid-19&data=04%7C01%7CEmily.Roberts4%40education.vic.gov.au%7Ce1b6942855de4f0da94508d99cbc7ae5%7Cd96cb3371a8744cfb69b3cec334a4c1f%7C0%7C0%7C637713155593069047%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C1000&sdata=S0vpT8P7cwun00wIicCcUzJRg1r7WRO1QFca2K2XCoc%3D&reserved=0) for further information.

Employees should seek advice from their medical practitioner about working onsite and any additional booster doses of vaccine they are recommended to receive. Where the employee is unable to work onsite and wants to work remotely or take personal leave, they should provide a medical certificate.

Where an employee’s medical practitioner’s advice is that they are unable to work onsite, schools should provide remote work if:

* the employee provides a medical certificate setting out the recommendation from their medical practitioner, and;
* the principal forms a view that it is reasonable, practicable and appropriate for the employee to work remotely.

Where remote work is not available, the employee can access leave available to them or return to duty once the medical advice is that it is safe for them to do so.

Staff who are living with or caring for elderly or chronically ill relatives or household members should seek advice from the medical practitioner of the person for whom they are caring to determine if they can work onsite or should work remotely. They should provide a medical certificate if they are seeking to access personal leave. [The Medical Advisory Service](https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/medical-advisory-service/) is a specialised support service for principals to help them fulfil their responsibilities in relation to employee health.

### Students who may be medically at-risk

Schools must ensure students with medical needs have an up-to-date [Student Health](https://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/school/principals/health/studenthealthsupport.doc) [Support Plan](about:blank) and accompanying condition-specific health management plan (such as an [Asthma Action Plan](https://asthma.org.au/about-asthma/live-with-asthma/asthma-action-plan/)), based on individualised medical advice from the student’s medical or health practitioner, and consultation with the student and parents and carers.

Consideration should be given to students with disability who have other co-existing chronic conditions or immunocompromise, or where physical distancing is impractical due to increased support needs.

Please refer to the [Health Care Needs](https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/health-care-needs/policy) policy for further information on the student health support planning process. For additional information to support decision-making, refer to:

* [Asthma Australia](https://asthma.org.au/blog/should-you-be-sending-your-child-to-school-if-they-have-asthma/)
* [Royal Children’s Hospital – advice for](https://www.rch.org.au/respmed/about_us/COVID-19/#should-i-let-my-child-return-to-school) [respiratory patients](https://www.rch.org.au/respmed/about_us/COVID-19/#should-i-let-my-child-return-to-school)
* [JDRF – Coronavirus and children with T1 diabetes](https://jdrf.org.au/covid-19-and-children-with-t1d-your-questions-answered/).

1. School buses

**School bus services** will continue to operate. Bus staff, adult travellers and students **are required to wear face masks** as is the case for public transport.

School bus services **are required** to keep accurate records of students and staff (including drivers) who travel on buses. For more information, refer to  [https://www.coronavirus.vic.gov.au/school-bus-services](https://aus01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.coronavirus.vic.gov.au%2Fschool-bus-services&data=04%7C01%7CMadeleine.Taylor2%40education.vic.gov.au%7C98e1381265a444cc3f2a08d9da0625ed%7Cd96cb3371a8744cfb69b3cec334a4c1f%7C0%7C0%7C637780542206265198%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000&sdata=sN54Dro555mYVeNfKaHc5y4sLPqXK86VyeOzPvzGmkI%3D&reserved=0)

1. School boarding premises and Medium-Term Residential Programs (MTRP)

Refer to [*Advice for schools in managing the risk of COVID-19 transmission in school boarding premises and medium term residential programs*](https://www.coronavirus.vic.gov.au/managing-risk-covid-19-transmission-school-boarding-premises-and-medium-term-residential-programs) for information about boarding schools.

1. Outside School Hours Care (OSHC) programs

Outside School Hours Care programs can operate. Schools and OSHC providers will need to communicate closely regarding the status of identified confirmed case or close contacts.

The school must inform the OSHC provider when there has been a positive or probable person at the school. The OSHC provider is to advise staff and students to monitor for symptoms.

Refer to section*, Management of an unwell student or staff member at school.*

1. Students, staff and families arriving from overseas

There may be additional requirements in place for students and families who arrive from overseas (both returning local students and international students).

Refer to [Information for overseas travellers | Coronavirus Victoria](https://www.coronavirus.vic.gov.au/information-overseas-travellers) for current requirements.

1. Communicating and consulting with staff about health and safety

Principals are encouraged to continue to spend time during staff meetings ensuring all staff are fully aware of the health and safety measures that are in place. Principals should remind staff of the eLearn module School Infection Prevention and Control During COVID-19, which is available on LearnED, and encourage staff to refresh their knowledge. Principals should make sure all staff have access to a copy of the school’s COVIDSafe Plan.

Principals must consult 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 monitoring EduSafe to provide support. A [draft agenda](https://www.education.vic.gov.au/hrweb/Documents/OHS/HealthandSafetyCommitteMeetingAgenda-COVIDandreturntoschool.docx) has been developed for Health and Safety Committee (HSC) meetings to assist in facilitating consultation and identifying and managing risks.

Principals can also promote the services outlined in the [COVID-19 Health, Safety and Wellbeing Support for Schools](https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/occupational-health-and-safety-management-system-ohsms/guidance/covid-19-employee-health) page.

[Local](file://Local) [Regional OHS Support Officers](https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/occupational-health-and-safety-management-system-ohsms/guidance/useful-contacts-schools) can be contacted for assistance with local consultation if required.