

Operations Guide

Victorian government schools

From Saturday 2 October 2021



Education
and Training

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Summary of key information

The Victorian Government has announced a staged return to onsite learning in Term 4, with all students planned to return onsite by **Friday 5 November (subject to final public health advice)**.

From the start of term until the return of all students onsite, schools will operate both onsite and remote and flexible learning.

1. Staged return to onsite learning: Metropolitan Melbourne and Restricted Areas (see table below for week-by-week summary)

All dates below are subject to public health advice.

- On **Tuesday October 5**. Unit 3&4 students will attend onsite to sit the GAT
- From **October 6**, onsite learning will resume five days a week for Year 12 students, VCE units 3-4 and final year VCAL and IB students.
- From **October 18** prep students will return three days a week, Monday through to Wednesday, Year 1 and 2 students will attend on Thursday and Friday, two days a week.
- From **October 26** all school students will return at least part-time: On this date, arrangements for prep students and Year 1 and 2 students will continue; Year 3 to 4 will attend on Tuesday and Wednesday; Year 5 and 6 will attend on Thursday and Friday; Year 7 and 11 will attend five days a week; and Year 8 and 9 to attend Tuesday and Wednesday; Year 10 will attend Thursday and Friday.
- Ungraded students with disability in specialist and mainstream schools should return to onsite learning with their year level equivalent cohort.

Please refer to the schedule below for more information.

- Any variation on the approach outlined above proposed by schools, following staff consultation processes consistent with local consultative arrangements, must be put in writing and approved by the respective Area Executive Director prior to any communication with their school community. Variations are only required where there is a demonstrated need.
- Vulnerable children and children of parents or guardians who are on the authorised provider and authorised worker list can continue attending onsite.
- Remote and flexible learning will be delivered to students on the days they are not onsite.
- Schools will continue to follow the health advice to ensure staff and students are safe onsite.
- Students will return to onsite learning in a staged structure. Ventilation strategies, wearing masks and continuing to follow health advice will help maintain schools as safe places.
- OSHC (before and after school care) is open to children attending school on the relevant day for the year level AND other children eligible for onsite supervision and learning.

- All schools in metropolitan Melbourne and restricted areas will continue to provide remote and flexible learning for year levels not scheduled for onsite learning, except for students in the following categories who are eligible for onsite supervision and care:
 1. Children where both parents/carers are considered [authorised workers](#) who cannot work from home, work for an authorised provider and where no other supervision arrangements can be made:
 2. Where there are two parents/carers, both must be authorised workers working outside the home for their children to be eligible for onsite provision at school.
 3. For single parents/carers, the authorised worker must be working outside the home for their children to be eligible for onsite provision at school.
 4. Children experiencing vulnerability, including:
 - a. in out-of-home care
 - b. deemed vulnerable by a government agency, funded family or family violence service, and assessed as requiring education and care outside the family home
 - c. identified by a school or early childhood service as vulnerable, (including via referral from a government agency, or funded family or family violence service, homeless or youth justice service or mental health or other health service)
 - d. Where a parent/carer indicates that a student with a disability is vulnerable because they cannot learn from home, and/or informs the school the student is vulnerable due to family stress, the school must provide onsite supervision for that student. This may apply to students enrolled in specialist schools and
- Students living in metropolitan Melbourne but attending school in regional Victoria, or vice versa, will be able to attend onsite learning with their year level, consistent with the conditions / restrictions in place at the designated school setting.
- Staff and final year students in this situation, however, must be double vaccinated or undertake twice weekly COVID-19 PCR testing to help keep our schools safe; refer to section 12: *Testing requirements for moving between Restricted Areas and Non-Restricted Areas in Victoria.*

Return to school plan – Metropolitan Melbourne/Restricted Areas

Year levels	From Wednesday 6 October	From Monday 18 October	From Tuesday 26 October	From Friday 5 November
Prep		Monday-Wednesday	Monday-Wednesday	✓
Year 1-2		Thursday-Friday	Thursday-Friday	✓

Year levels	From Wednesday 6 October	From Monday 18 October	From Tuesday 26 October	From Friday 5 November
Year 3-4			Tuesday-Wednesday	✓
Year 5-6			Thursday-Friday	✓
Year 7			✓	✓
Year 8-9			Tuesday-Wednesday	✓
Year 10			Thursday-Friday	✓
Year 11			✓	✓
Year 12 (VCE units 3/4 and final year VCAL and IB)	✓	✓	✓	✓

Key: ✓ return to onsite five days

Vulnerable children and children of people on the authorised provider and authorised worker list are able to continue attending onsite.

Ungraded students with disability in specialist and mainstream schools return to onsite learning with their year level equivalent cohort.

2. Staged return to onsite learning: Regional Areas

All dates below are subject to public health advice

- From **Monday 4 October**, Prep to Year 2 students and students in Units 3/4 VCE and final year VCAL and IB (year 11 and 12) will continue to attend onsite full time, as was the situation at the end of Term Three.
- Final year students will sit the GAT onsite on **Tuesday October 5**.
- **On Wednesday October 6**, once the GAT is finished, all remaining Year 11s will return full-time.
- **From Monday October 11**, a staggered return begins for other year levels. Years 3-4 and 8-9 will attend on Tuesdays and Wednesdays, Years 5-6 and 10 on Thursdays and Fridays, while Year 7s will be back five days a week.

See schedule below for summary

- Ungraded students with disability in specialist and mainstream schools should return to onsite learning with their year level equivalent cohort.
- All students will resume onsite learning fulltime from 26 October, subject to public health advice.
- Remote and flexible learning will be delivered to students on the days they are not onsite.
- OSHC (before and after school care) is open to children attending school on the relevant day for the year level AND other children eligible for onsite supervision and learning.
- Any variation on the approach outlined above proposed by schools following staff consultation processes consistent with local consultative arrangements must be put in writing and approved by the respective Area Executive Director prior to any communication with their school community. Variations are only required where there is a demonstrated need.
- For years that have not yet fully transitioned to onsite learning, on the days they are not onsite under the staggered return plan, all schools in regional Victoria will continue to provide remote and flexible learning except for students in the following categories who are eligible for onsite supervision and care:
 1. Students in Prep to Year 2 and students in Units 3/4 VCE and final year VCAL and IB (year 11 and 12)
 2. Children who have been previously been attending because their parents/carers were considered [authorised workers](#)
 3. Children experiencing vulnerability, including:
 - a. in out-of-home care
 - b. deemed vulnerable by a government agency, funded family or family violence service, and assessed as requiring education and care outside the family home
 - c. identified by a school or early childhood service as vulnerable, (including via referral from a government agency, or funded family or family violence service, homeless or youth justice service or mental health or other health service)
 - d. Where a parent/carer indicates that a student with a disability is vulnerable because they cannot learn from home, and/or informs the school the student is vulnerable due to family stress, the school must provide onsite supervision for that student. This may

apply to students enrolled in specialist schools and students with a disability enrolled in mainstream schools.

a. Ungraded students with disabilities in specialist and mainstream schools return to onsite learning with their year level equivalent cohort.

- Students living in regional Victoria but attending school in metropolitan Melbourne, or vice versa, will be able to attend onsite learning with their year level, consistent with the conditions / restrictions in place at the designated school setting.
- Staff and final year students in this situation, however, must be double vaccinated or undertake twice weekly COVID-19 PCR testing to help keep our schools safe; refer to section 12: *Testing requirements for moving between Restricted Areas and Non-Restricted Areas in Victoria.*
- If you live in a regional Victoria and need to travel into metropolitan Melbourne or Restricted Areas for your work or if you live in a metropolitan Melbourne and Restricted Areas and work in a school in a regional Victoria, an [authorised worker permit](#) is required.

Return to school plan – Regional Victoria

Year levels	From Monday 4 October	From Wednesday 6 October	From Monday 11 October	From Tuesday 26 October
Prep	✓	✓	✓	✓
Year 1-2	✓	✓	✓	✓
Year 3-4			Tuesday-Wednesday	✓
Year 5-6			Thursday-Friday	✓
Year 7			✓	✓
Year 8-9			Tuesday-Wednesday	✓
Year 10			Thursday-Friday	✓
Year 11		✓	✓	✓
Year 12 (VCE units 3/4 and final year VCAL and IB)	✓	✓	✓	✓

Key: ✓ return to onsite five days

Vulnerable children and children of people on the authorised provider and authorised worker list are able to continue attending onsite. Ungraded students with disabilities in specialist and mainstream schools return to onsite learning with their year level equivalent cohort.

3. Summary of key operational requirements

Key actions for schools	Metropolitan Melbourne and Restricted Areas	Regional Victoria
Face masks (see Face Masks in Schools)	YES – INDOORS AND OUTDOORS	YES – INDOORS AND OUTDOORS
Working across multiple sites	NO	MINIMISE
Minimise cohort mixing: Stagger breaks and arrival and departure times	YES	YES
COVIDSafe routine cleaning	YES	YES
Community use of school playground / outdoors	YES For school use Community use can occur out of school hours only.	YES For school use Community use can occur out of school hours only.
Community use of school facilities (indoors)	NO	YES
Libraries (for borrowing and as a learning space)	NO	YES
Visitors to schools	ESSENTIAL VISITS ONLY Visitors to school premises should be limited to essential school services and operations	ESSENTIAL VISITS ONLY Visitors to school premises should be limited to essential school services and operations
Student placements	YES Only for final year pre-service teacher placements (see APAW list) (Placements for all students can continue to occur in the <i>remote learning</i> environment at discretion of school)	YES All student placements (permitted at discretion of school)
Health, wellbeing, inclusion visits	ESSENTIAL VISITS ONLY	YES
School tours	NO	NO
Excursions	NO	NO
Swimming and all other pool use *Please refer to page 21 for separate advice on hydrotherapy pools	NO	YES
Incursions	NO	NO

Key actions for schools	Metropolitan Melbourne and Restricted Areas	Regional Victoria
School photos	NO	NO
Camps and overnight stays	NO	NO
Assemblies (whole school and year level), formals, graduations	NO	NO
Kinder transition program	TBC	TBC
Statewide transition day	TBC	TBC
All sporting activities (indoor, outdoor, contact and non-contact)	NO	YES
All interschool activities (such as debating)	NO	NO
Singing, brass and woodwind classes and groups	NO	YES Following recommended health advice
Professional development and staff meetings (face to face)	NO Should be conducted online or deferred	NO Should be conducted online or deferred

Operational advice for schools

4. Student Attendance

All students are expected to attend onsite as their year levels return to onsite learning, unless they are formally registered as being home-schooled. Parent preference is not an approved absence reason. Schools should work closely with families that may be concerned about the return to on site learning with the support of regional staff.

Attendance, both onsite and remote, **must** be recorded and should be uploaded to CASES21 daily.

For information on recording attendance during the period of remote learning please refer to the current Attendance Recording Guide, which includes the appropriate codes and recording practices for Remote Learning and Onsite Programs. See the [Attendance PAL page](#).

Onsite supervision

For year levels that have not transitioned to being fully onsite, onsite supervision must continue to be available to all students during periods of remote and flexible learning, for students in the categories listed on pages 5 and 7, for the purpose of providing continuity of learning.

The learning program delivered onsite will be the same as the learning program delivered to students undertaking remote learning. Students attending onsite will be supervised by staff onsite but follow the teaching and learning program provided by their classroom teacher.

Students attending onsite must be supervised at all times by staff with either current Victorian Institute of Teaching (VIT) registration or a Working with Children Check. Education Support staff can provide direct support to and supervision of students, provided they have access to support from a VIT registered teacher.

Authorised worker permits for onsite supervision

Parents and carers in **metropolitan Melbourne and Restricted Areas can** request onsite supervision for their child/ren in **Category A** only if they hold an [authorised worker permit](#). Schools should make the updated [onsite attendance form](#) available to parents/carers who require onsite learning for their child/ren. **A copy of a permit/s must be submitted as soon as practicable after issuance for those seeking Category A onsite supervision.** A permit is not required for accessing onsite supervision under Category B.

In rare circumstances a parent/carer does not need a worker permit. This includes law enforcement, emergency services or health care workers who carry employer-issued photographic identification. More information is available online.

On the advice of our public health team, all workers – in Melbourne and regional Victoria – on the Authorised Worker list will require their first COVID-19 vaccine dose by 18 October in order to continue working onsite, and for their children to be eligible for on-site supervision.

The role of schools in authorised worker permit compliance

Schools are not responsible for confirming the validity of permits of Authorised Workers and will not face any penalty if they allow a student onsite in reliance of a parent's Authorised Worker status, which subsequently turns out to be false.

The onus is on the permit holder to attest to the permit conditions and eligibility, and any penalties that apply if this information is incorrect would be issued to the permit holder.

5. Remote and flexible learning programs

As not all year levels will be back onsite full-time until November 5 (pending public health advice), remote and flexible learning programs **must** be in place that ensure a learning program consistent with the guidelines below is delivered during this period to enable continued student learning growth. It is imperative that information about the planned and structured program is communicated to parents/carers. The following are the daily minimum guidelines schools are expected to meet:

For students in **Prep to Grade 2**, schools will provide learning programs that include the following as a daily minimum:

- literacy activities of about 45-60 minutes
- numeracy activities of about 30-45 minutes
- additional learning areas, play-based learning and physical activity of about 30-45 minutes.

For students in **Grades 3 to 6 and Years 7 to 10**, schools will provide learning programs that include the following, as a daily minimum:

- Literacy: 45-60 minutes
- Numeracy: 30-45 minutes
- Physical activities: 30 minutes
- Additional curriculum areas: 90 minutes

For students in the **senior secondary years**, teachers will provide learning resources and tasks that enable students to develop and demonstrate the learning outcomes defined in the relevant VCE study designs and VCAL strands.

Schools must continue to deliver the **Tutor Learning Initiative** using remote learning and should provide further extension learning activities as appropriate for individual students. Schools are encouraged to access guidance and resources on PAL [Tutor Learning Initiative 2021](#) and recorded professional learning webinars to help build or refresh skills on the [TLI Arc Channel](#) as needed.

Schools should continue to make as much use as possible of the remote delivery and wider resources available through the High Ability Program, and of the remote learning programs provided by Tech Schools, KIOSC and Science and Mathematics Specialist Centres.

Where appropriate, for students with disabilities and students in specialist schools 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.

Learning from Remote Learning: An evidence base

This guidance is framed around the nine principles for excellence in teaching and learning that are part of the Victorian Teaching and Learning Model. It is designed to help schools ensure that recommended pedagogies are evidence-based and aligned to whole-school improvement approaches. School should refer to this [guidance](#) when developing their remote and flexible learning programs.

Home provision

The parent or carer is 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 should create and communicate a schedule or calendar that shows what is expected of students in relation to the completion of learning tasks.

Please contact your SEIL or other area staff if you would like support or assistance.

6. Access to devices and internet connections

Where necessary, students should be provided with access to digital devices to enable access to learning programs being provided by the school. Schools must follow e-safety policies and procedures. The Department has reactivated all internet services that were provided and used by students during the previous remote learning period. If you have questions about internet services, or have an urgent need to access additional digital devices, please contact the team at learning.from.home.technology@education.vic.gov.au

7. Child safety in remote learning environments

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

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](#).

8. 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.

Where year levels or cohorts of students are returning to onsite learning, the school staff who teach and support those students should resume normal duties onsite in accordance with the Victorian Government Schools Agreement 2017. In metropolitan Melbourne, until 26 October, where teachers and support staff are not required onsite, they should work from home during the staggered return to onsite learning.

In Regional areas, where teachers and support staff are not required onsite, they should work from home during the staggered return to onsite learning

Some exceptions will continue to apply for medically vulnerable staff. Principals will need to ensure that there are sufficient staff onsite to run the school's teaching and learning programs. Where additional staff are required, schools are strongly encouraged to engage Casual Relief Teachers (CRTs) wherever possible.

Where additional school staff are required onsite, principals should consult their staff to identify those willing and able to work onsite. Schools should ensure staff are consulted with, and have input into, the ways work may be organised and allocated.

If it is necessary to identify which staff are to work onsite either for a specified day or days or as part of a roster to meet the above requirements, the school should follow procedures determined at the school using the school's consultative procedures.

Staff work hours at home should be consistent with the attendance arrangements already in place at each school and determined in accordance with the school's local consultative arrangements. Schools should communicate these hours of work to parents/carers and indicate that teachers and support staff are not required and will not necessarily be available to students or families/carers outside these hours.

Staff working from home, including teachers and education support staff, will not visit or work in students' homes. Working alone or in isolation from others presents risks to staff health and safety, including risks resulting from the home environment, and also risks to staff mental health.

Further guidance is available in the [COVID-19 Safety Management Plan \(COVIDSafe Plan\)](#).

For schools other than specialist schools, if it is necessary to identify which staff are to work onsite either for a specified day or days or as part of a roster to meet the above requirements, the school should follow procedures determined at the school using the school's consultative procedures or in the absence of local arrangements the following process should be used:

- a. The principal will notify all staff they are seeking volunteers to be available to work onsite for a specified day or days or as part of a roster.
- b. If there are insufficient volunteers, Casual Relief Teachers (CRTs) should be engaged. If insufficient CRTs are available, the principal should approach their Senior Education Improvement Leader (SEIL) to establish if any staff from other schools in the network are available.
- c. Where it has been identified through (a) and (b) above, that there are insufficient staff to meet the needs of the school, the principal will provide an opportunity for the employees to provide reasons why they should not be considered for work onsite for a specified day or days or as part of a roster.
- d. The principal will take into account the overall work needs of the school and the submissions from individual employees in accordance with (c) above in determining which staff will be required to work onsite for a specified day or days or as part of a roster.
- e. The principal will make every effort to ensure that an employee is not identified to work onsite where there are compelling personal compassionate grounds pertaining to that employee.

School staff working onsite to support a school's supervision program are able to have their children attend their usual school for those days they are working onsite and where no other supervision arrangements can be made.

9. Casual Relief Teacher (CRT) employment

The role of Department schools as a supportive employer continues to be critical.

On this basis, schools should continue to engage casuals (including CRTs) throughout this period as are needed, including maintaining contractual arrangements that have been made. CRTs can be valuable in supporting onsite supervision for children of authorised workers and vulnerable children. CRTs can also play role in supporting remote learning through working with small groups, preparing remote learning materials and following up attendance issues.

Where arrangements have been entered into to engage casual staff during the lockdown period, both directly or through CRT agencies, it is the expectation of the Department that those engagements will continue as arranged.

Multi campus schools should seek to minimise staff movement across campuses as far as possible.

Schools are encouraged to work in networks to minimise as far as possible CRTs working across sites.

10. GAT, assessments and exams

To access guidance on the GAT and other assessments, and to stay updated with any changes, please visit the [VCAA website](#).

11. Authorised worker permits for school staff

In Metropolitan Melbourne and Restricted Areas, a permit is still required for permitted workers to attend a workplace and travel between their home and workplace.

It is the employer's responsibility to issue a permit to employees who are required to work onsite if the employee's work is permitted and cannot be completed from home.

All employees required to travel to and from work must carry their worker permit or have a digital version available on their device. There are significant penalties for employers and employees. Penalties of up to \$21,808 (for individuals) and \$109,044 (for businesses) will apply for breaches of the scheme requirements.

School staff (including principals, teachers and education support staff) as authorised workers for the purpose of access to early childhood services

School staff are [authorised workers](#) (working onsite or from home), and are able to continue to send their children to early childhood services, where no other supervision arrangements can be made.

For single parents/carers, the person must be an [authorised worker](#) (working onsite or from home), work for an authorised provider and where no other supervision arrangements can be made.

For dual parents/carers, only one person is required to be an authorised worker to access early childhood services.

Schools should provide eligible school staff with permits as needed, as permits are required at early childhood services.

If school staff had a previous APAW permit issued in 2021 prior to 11:59pm on Sunday 22 August 2021 for onsite work, this may be used for access to childcare. Those who do not have an existing permit or are undertaking authorised work from home must obtain a new APAW permit that can be sited by their childcare provider to confirm eligibility.

School principal responsibilities

Principals are responsible for issuing permits to school staff and school council employees who are required to attend schools for supervision, critical incidents and assessments that can't be done remotely.

Regional Directors can issue permits to all principals to attend onsite. Casual relief teacher agencies are responsible for issuing permits to casual relief teachers who are not employed through school council.

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

Permits for school staff

For school staff permits, principals should determine those staff who will be required onsite.

If asked by the police the purpose of their travel, school staff can either:

- Provide the details of their school, including location, phone number and principal name and contact details OR
- Show the unsigned/partially complete form if available (electronic or hardcopy) OR
- Provide the completed form if available (electronic or hardcopy).

Once school staff arrive at the school, the principal should finalise the form (where incomplete) for school staff attending onsite for future use.

Permits should only be issued to staff who need to attend onsite.

CRTs will need a permit. If they come from an agency, they will be given the form. If you employ them directly, you will need to send them the form and follow the steps as above.

Principals can issue permits for **final year** pre-service teachers working at their school where required.

To complete a permit for school staff:

- download it from the [Authorised worker permit webpage](#)
- complete the permit, including the employee's details and their expected work hours. Ensure an employee's expected work hours, place of work and permitted activity are correctly described on the permit
- ensure the staff member is aware of their responsibilities
- sign it and seek the employee's signature.

The permit cannot be altered once it is complete, however it can be replaced as required.

Employee responsibilities

Employees:

- should be able to produce the address and phone number of their school and their principal's or employer's name and contact details if asked by police during travel to and from work
- must sign the permit
- may be required to show their worker permit to prove they are a permitted worker who can be travelling to and from work
- must carry their worker permit and photo identification when travelling to and from their workplace.

12. Testing requirements for moving between Metropolitan Melbourne (including Restricted Areas) and Regional Victoria

Any staff and final year students moving between of metropolitan Melbourne/ Restricted Areas or regional Victoria (excluding Restricted areas) will need to be double vaccinated or undertake COVID-19 testing within 72 hours after attending onsite (no more than twice in 7 days). Staff do not need to wait for a test result to work. This includes all workers, including direct employees, sub-contractors, volunteers and Casual Relief Staff.

Testing is an important health and safety measure. While the testing obligations under the CHO directions are the responsibility of individual staff members in their individual capacity, schools have an important role in working with staff who cross boundaries of restricted areas to ensure that

schools remain safe and healthy working environments. Schools should consider whether there are reasonably practicable steps that should be taken, based on their own staffing profiles, to assist staff meeting their testing obligations under the restrictions. These may include:

- Communicating with staff about testing requirements;
- Requesting information about employees' testing;
- Schools are encouraged to exercise flexibility and use local arrangements to support staff in completing testing. If appropriate in the circumstances, or if concerned about non-compliance by staff, giving directions to employees not to attend work unless evidence of testing is produced.

As has been the case throughout the pandemic, if any staff present symptoms of COVID-19 they should not attend onsite and get tested and isolate immediately.

13. Cross-border communities

Schools in cross-border community areas (NSW and South Australia) should stay updated with the [latest advice for their border bubble](#).

Persons (including staff, student, and families) aged 18 years and older must abide by evidence of current address requirements. A declared [extreme risk zone](#) within the cross-border community area should prompt review of potential permit requirements affecting staff and student movement to and from school. Staff and students must follow local restrictions.

NSW parents/carers working in NSW providing an Authorised Worker Permit to Victorian School

NSW parents and carers also need to complete a Victorian Authorised Worker Permit to attest that they **are permitted to leave home and attend work in NSW**, and essentially be classified as an Authorised Worker for the purposes of accessing childcare or onsite supervision in Victorian ECEC or schools.

An Authorised Worker whose **employer's work premise is interstate**, or who is self-employed, a sole trader, an independent contractor or sub-contractor, **may issue themselves with an Authorised Worker Permit, signed as both the employer and worker.**

The onus is on the permit holder to attest to the permit conditions and eligibility, and any penalties that apply if this information is incorrect would be issued to the permit holder.

14. QR Codes and visitors to schools

The use of Service Victoria QR codes for electronic record keeping is now mandatory in all schools to enable the effective contact tracing of any COVID-19 cases.

	Who needs to check in?	Who doesn't need to check in?
All visitors on school site (including contractors, external Department staff and building and maintenance staff)	✓	
All parents who enter school buildings when on school site	✓	
Staff		✓
Students		✓
Parents who come onto school grounds for drop off or pick up, but do not enter buildings.		✓

Schools can permit parents to enter buildings onsite for student pick-up and drop-off providing sufficient QR code locations are available for parents to check in. Where this is not possible, parents should not be permitted to enter buildings for pick-up and drop-off.

Further information about QR code set-up can be found at [Register to use the Victorian Government QR Code Service](#)

Visitors to schools

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

Principals are best placed to make decisions regarding what visitors are essential to the operation of their school, noting the following:

- Within metropolitan Melbourne and other Restricted Areas, schools should review the Authorised provider and authorised worker list when making decisions regarding the suitability of any staff or workers coming onsite (other than those directly involved in the care and supervision of students).
- Within regional Victoria (excluding Restricted Areas), schools should review the Authorised provider and authorised worker list when making decisions regarding the suitability of staff or workers that reside in metropolitan Melbourne (other than those directly involved in the care and supervision of students). Only workers or volunteers permitted under the Authorised provider and authorised worker list to work in metropolitan Melbourne are able to travel to regional Victoria for work purposes and they must be tested.
- Allied health professionals can provide urgent or essential services onsite at all schools where telehealth services are not clinically appropriate, within the context of current advice available at [HWIW service provision in Victorian government schools](#).

- Students may attend onsite to participate in essential assessments (where telehealth is not clinically appropriate) that are required to inform enrolment, learning and support decisions. This includes future students beginning school in 2022. A parent/guardian may attend onsite with their child where essential (e.g. for a young child with disability).

Essential visitors to school grounds must comply with density limits, face mask requirements, QR code check-ins and practise respiratory etiquette and good hand hygiene.

The density limit of one person per four square metres should be applied to any spaces and activities being attended by parent/carers and other visitors. The density limit applies to all persons in the space, including students.

15. Playgrounds and school facilities

Playgrounds

Playgrounds are open for school use and are available for community use after school hours only, in line with community settings.

Use of school facilities by community and sports groups

Use of school facilities by community and sport groups, such as ovals and pools, is permitted in regional Victoria (excluding restricted areas) if the use aligns with Department of Health restrictions for the relevant activity, including the application of required density limits. Use of facilities during school hours should ensure there is no mixing between those using school facilities and school staff and students (e.g. a swim school's exclusive use of a school pool and changeroom). Also see 'use of school facilities' advice regarding cleaning requirements. Use of school facilities by community and sports groups is not permitted in metropolitan Melbourne and other Restricted Areas.

Outdoor markets are permitted to operate on school grounds across Victoria outside school hours with continued adherence to strict guidelines and controls in place, including:

- Mandatory electronic check-in of all attendees
- Prominent signage displaying Victorian Government QR code system at all points of sale
- Face masks required in indoor and outdoor settings, unless an exception applies
- Density quotient, that takes into account stalls, roaming space, and stall holders and organisers in attendance
- Cleaning and disinfection requirements before and after market operations, this includes high touch point areas e.g. poles and bathroom facilities, where applicable
- Adherence to COVIDSafe Plans including providing hand hygiene stations, physical distancing measures.
- Markets operate for selling of produce and take away only, no consumption onsite

In addition, the following additional controls are in place to further mitigate risk of transmission:

- Stall holders should be kept to the minimum required to operate
- At least 1.5m between stalls
- All school buildings, toilets and playgrounds are closed to the public
- Cordon off the market area

More information is on the APAW list here: [Authorised provider and authorised worker list | Coronavirus Victoria](#)

The School Breakfast Clubs Program (SBCP) and the Secondary School Immunisation Program are essential services that can be delivered onsite in all schools.

School bus services across the state will continue to operate as normal. Students are not required to check-in via a QR code service when travelling on private school buses or disability transport services, however school bus services **are required** to keep accurate records of students and staff (including drivers) accessing these services should this information be required for contact tracing. For more information, please see <https://www.coronavirus.vic.gov.au/school-bus-services>

16. Interschool activities, school sport and use of pools

All interschool activities should be deferred or held remotely.

Swimming pools

Swimming and all other pool use **in metropolitan Melbourne and other Restricted Areas** cannot occur at this time

Hydrotherapy pools can be accessed for the purpose of the provision of hydrotherapy services subject to the requirements of the Directions. Group hydrotherapy services are not permitted.

Outdoor pools can be used **in regional Victoria (excluding Restricted Areas)**:

- There is no limit on participant numbers where there is exclusive use of a pool facility by a single school at any one time for educational purposes
- Where there is not exclusive use of a pool by a single school, the requirements of the Restricted Activity Directions apply. Schools should speak to swimming pool venues to determine how restrictions apply to the activity being undertaken.

Physical education and intraschool sport

Outdoor physical activity is permitted across Victoria.

Outdoor and indoor physical activity is permitted **in regional Victoria (excluding Restricted Areas)**.

Where using an external sporting facility **in regional Victoria (excluding Restricted Areas)**, density limits do not apply where there is exclusive use of the venue by single schools, however schools should continue to apply COVIDSafe principles to decision making, including avoiding interactions in closed spaces and physical distancing where practicable.

17. Camps and excursions

Camps, excursions and incursions for Victorian schools cannot take place at this time.

18. School events, gatherings, and assemblies

School events, gatherings, assemblies, and non-essential meetings should be deferred or held remotely.

19. Singing, brass and woodwind classes

Singing and playing wind and brass instruments can occur in regional Victoria (excluding Restricted Areas) if Department of Health recommendations to reduce transmission risk are followed. Recommendations include moving outdoors, increasing ventilation, physical distancing of two metres between performers and five metres between performers and the audience, reducing the number of people, or reducing the length of time an activity is conducted. Further advice on ways to reduce risk can be found in DH guidance: [COVID-19 transmission from air-circulating, wind-blowing devices and activities](#).

Singing, brass, woodwind classes and groups in metropolitan Melbourne and other Restricted Areas must be postponed or occur remotely during this time, unless for the purpose of essential VCE/VCAL assessment where VCAA guidance should be followed.

20. Other school and curriculum settings

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

Students in their final year of schooling can participate in their VCE or VCAL classes, including VET studies, where these are held at TAFEs, RTOs, non-school senior secondary providers, or schools.

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.

School Based Apprenticeships and Traineeships (including Head Start)

Students undertaking School Based Apprenticeships and Traineeships (SBATs) including Head Start Apprenticeships and Traineeships (HSATs) may continue their employment if it is on the [Authorised Providers and Authorised Workers list](#), and they have an [Authorised Worker Permit](#). Advice on authorised industries can be found [here](#).

Tech Schools, KIOSC and Science and Mathematics Specialist Centres

Tech Schools, KIOSC and Science and Mathematics Specialist Centres can resume onsite learning for **Prep to Grade 2 and for students completing Year 12 (inclusive of all VCE Units 3/4 students, and final year VCAL and IB students) in regional Victoria (excluding Restricted Areas)**.

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 must be minimised.

Tech schools in metropolitan Melbourne and other regional Victoria must continue to provide remote and flexible learning.

Community Language Schools and Victorian School of Languages

Due to current public health advice to limit interschool mixing, language classes must continue with remote and flexible learning in metropolitan Melbourne and regional Victoria.

Structured workplace learning (SWL) and work experience

Advice for regional Victoria (excluding Restricted Areas)

Structured Workplace Learning (SWL) and work experience placements can take place in **regional Victoria (excluding Restricted Areas)**, for all students who reside in regional Victoria (excluding Restricted Areas) regardless of whether the student has resumed onsite learning at school.

However, the Department of Health has recommended that SWL and work experience placements in [high-risk settings](#) (such as healthcare, aged care, meat works) be deferred until further notice unless they are required for assessment within the VCAL/VCE/VET or International Baccalaureate.

Students undertaking a School Based Apprenticeship or Traineeship are able to attend their place of employment, if on the [Authorised Providers and Authorised Workers list](#).

Students must be included in the density limits for the workplace and comply with any restrictions applicable to that workplace as well as the COVIDSafe Plan in place.

Directions on required COVID-19 vaccination

[Directions on mandatory COVID-19 vaccination](#) now apply to residential aged care workers, construction workers, school and early childhood staff. These directions also apply to students undertaking Structured Workplace Learning and work experience.

For more information, see: https://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/Pages/coronavirus_swl.aspx

Advice for metropolitan Melbourne and other Regional Victoria

For students who reside in metropolitan Melbourne and other Restricted Areas, all SWL and work experience placements must continue to be deferred, or if that is not possible, cancelled. If SWL or work experience placements are deferred or cancelled, all efforts should be made to arrange suitable alternative arrangements for students. For SWL or work experience placements that count towards VCE or VCAL units, all efforts should be made to arrange suitable alternative arrangements for students so these can occur at a later time.

Only students undertaking a School Based Apprenticeship or Traineeship are able to attend their place of employment, if on the [Authorised Providers and Authorised Workers list](#).

Directions on required COVID-19 vaccination

[Directions on mandatory COVID-19 vaccination](#) now apply to residential aged care workers, construction workers, school and early childhood staff. These directions also apply to students undertaking Structured Workplace Learning and work experience.

For more information, see: https://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/Pages/coronavirus_swl.aspx

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

MARCs and MACCS are permitted to attend schools **regional Victoria (excluding restricted areas)**, providing regular cleaning of shared and high-touch items is undertaken. Staff who live in **metropolitan Melbourne and other Restricted Areas** are not permitted to travel to regional Victoria for the sole purpose of operating a MARC or MACC as they are not listed under the [Authorised Providers and Authorised Workers list](#).

MARCs and MACCS are not permitted to attend schools **in metropolitan Melbourne and other Restricted Areas**.

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

Schools should refer to [Advice for schools in managing the risk of covid-19 transmission in school boarding premises and medium term residential programs](#) for further information regarding attendance at boarding premises.

22. Outside of School Hours Care (OSHC) Programs

Outside School Hours Care programs can operate for students eligible for onsite supervision across Victoria in line with the return to school plan. There should be no mixing of children from different schools.

Keeping COVIDSafe at school

23. Understanding COVID-19

As COVID-19 is a new virus, new scientific research is regularly emerging. Currently, the World Health Organization suggests that COVID-19 can be transmitted by contact with droplets or airborne aerosols from an infected person, and contaminated surfaces. Airborne aerosols are tiny particles that float in the air. This understanding may change as more research emerges and more is learned about COVID-19.

Droplet transmission

A person can be infected with coronavirus (COVID-19) by touching respiratory droplets such as saliva or tears from an infected person. These are spread through coughing, sneezing, kissing, talking or singing.

These droplets can enter your mouth, nose or eyes and cause infection. This can happen by having close face-to-face contact, being within 1.5 metres of someone with coronavirus (COVID-19), or by touching a contaminated surface before touching your face.

Airborne transmission

Saliva or tears from an infected person can stay in the air after they cough, sneeze, talk or even sing. This means that coronavirus (COVID-19) can be spread through these tiny infectious particles suspended in the air.

Sometimes, the virus can remain in the air for some time in settings such as in indoor spaces with poor ventilation.

Contaminated surfaces transmission

Coronavirus (COVID-19) can spread when secretions or droplets from an infected person land on surfaces. The virus can live on surfaces for hours or days, depending on the temperature, humidity, type of surface, and how much of the virus is present.

If you touch an infected surface, you could become infected by then touching your nose, mouth or eyes. You could also spread the virus from one surface to another and infect other people.

For more information on the science behind COVID-19 see [Facts about coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#).

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

24. 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 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 and in linking schools with health and wellbeing supports to promote mental health and wellbeing for staff, and safe work practices remotely and at school sites.

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.

25. Students who may be medically vulnerable

As per the advice of the Victorian Chief Health Officer, COVIDSafe measures have been put in place to ensure that schools are as safe as possible for all children including those with medical vulnerabilities, however independent medical advice should always be taken on an individual basis.

An individual assessment is always recommended and decisions regarding school attendance should be informed by the nature of a child or young person's condition, its severity and intensity of required treatment. In most cases, the presence of common conditions of childhood, such as asthma, epilepsy or Type 1 diabetes, should not preclude a student from attending face-to-face learning.

In keeping with expert public health advice, some students may be at higher risk for severe outcomes or complications of COVID-19, for example those with chronic medical conditions. Any student with a chronic medical condition should seek advice from their medical practitioner about attending school onsite at different stages in the COVID-19 pandemic. Given most of these conditions are rare in children, it should be an uncommon event for a child to be determined by a medical practitioner to be unable to return to school due to an ongoing medical reason raising concerns about COVID-19, outside of an acute illness.

Assessments should be reviewed alongside notable changes to COVID-19 transmission in Victoria and where eligible students have received a COVID-19 vaccination.

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.](#)

26. Staff who may be medically vulnerable to COVID-19

Advice from the Victorian Chief Health Officer is that, as with other members of the community, teachers and other school staff may be at greater risk of more serious illness if they contract COVID-19 if they are:

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

Employees in the above categories should seek advice from their medical practitioner in relation to their onsite attendance. Where the employee is unable to work onsite, they should provide a medical certificate if they are seeking to work remotely for this purpose or to access personal leave. These arrangements should be reviewed regularly during the Term.

For employees in the above categories where the employee's medical practitioner's advice is that they remain unable to work onsite, continued provision of remote work will be available where:

- 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 should seek advice from the medical practitioner of the person for whom they are caring to determine if they can attend onsite or should work remotely. They should provide a medical certificate if they are seeking to access personal leave. The Medical Advisory Service is a specialised support service for principals to help them fulfil their responsibilities in relation to employee health.

27. Mental health and wellbeing

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

For students

- Wellbeing check-ins - In addition to recording student attendance, schools must have in place processes and procedures to ensure that student wellbeing check-ins take place each day, on a group and/or individual basis.
- 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

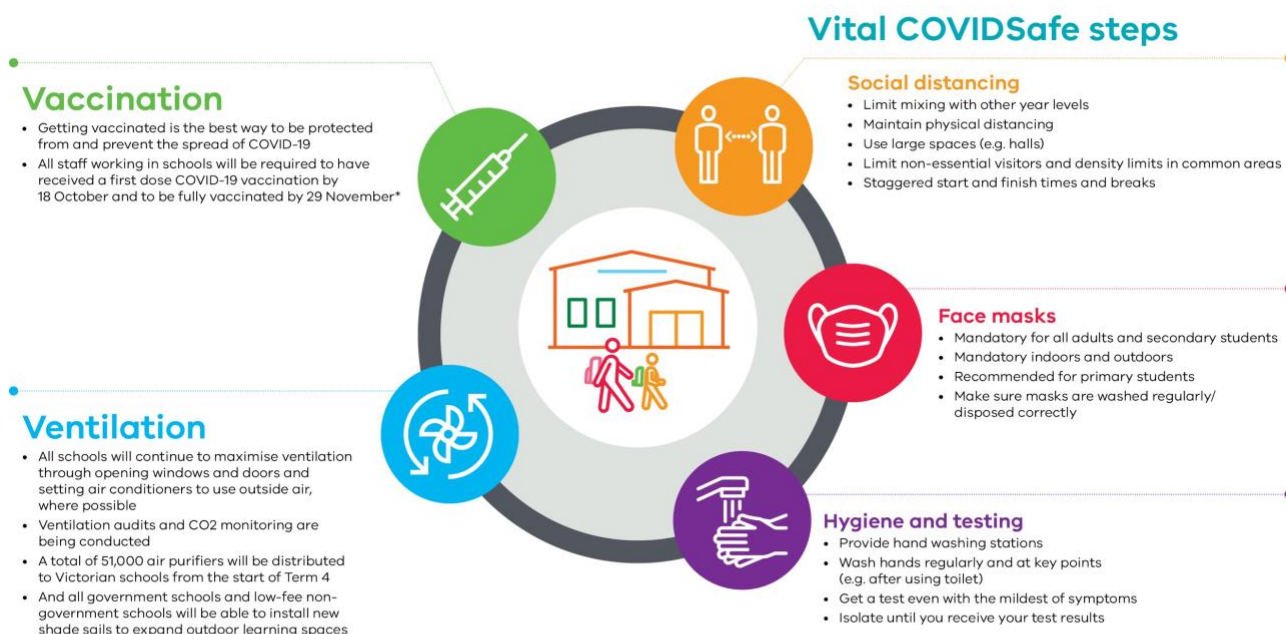
The Department has a range of services available to support staff mental health and wellbeing. This includes services and resources to address individual needs, as well as tools and supports to help guide staff through this time. More information and the full list of supports and services can be found on the [COVID-19 Health, Safety and Wellbeing Support for Schools](#) page, and the [Safety Management Plan for COVID-19 \(COVIDSafe Plan\) includes guidance on which supports might be appropriate to respond to particular circumstances or risks.](#)

Specific examples include:

- **for principal class employees (including assistant principals):** [Proactive Wellbeing Supervision service](#), 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](#); and tailored support to develop a wellbeing plan through the [myWellbeing service](#)

- for all staff and all people managers: through the [Staying Safe and Well Webinars](#).

Three Vs: Ventilation, Vaccination and Vital COVIDSafe Steps



28. Staff and student vaccinations

As part of the COVID-19 vaccination roll-out, all school staff and all students aged 12 and over are now eligible to receive a coronavirus (COVID-19) vaccine.

Information about vaccines and eligibility can be found on the coronavirus.vic.gov.au website.

Required vaccinations for school staff

The Victorian Chief Health Officer has determined that COVID-19 vaccination will be 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 Out of School Hours Care staff.

All staff who work in schools will be required to have a first dose of a COVID-19 vaccine by 18 October 2021 or be able to produce evidence of a vaccination booking within the following seven days.

All staff are required to be fully vaccinated by 29 November 2021 unless a medical exemption applies. They will be required to show evidence of their vaccination status.

Getting vaccinated is the best way to protect yourself, your colleagues and students and keep the whole school community safe. Getting vaccinated will help slow the spread of COVID-19 and prevent future outbreaks in our schools.

Further details in relation to processes for checking vaccination status, and in relation to other adults attending onsite will be provided soon. Vaccination is not mandatory for students, however in alignment with health advice, vaccinations are strongly encouraged as the best way to protect individuals, families and school communities from further outbreaks and the spread of COVID-19.

Flexible leave arrangements to attend appointments

Flexible work arrangements can be accessed with the approval of the principal. Formal leave arrangements are not necessary to attend vaccinations appointments, rather an agreement between employee and manager to take time off without loss of pay. Staff can access up to half a day's paid release from duty to attend COVID-19 vaccine appointments. Principals should put arrangements in place that maximise the opportunity for all employees get the vaccine and schools are requested to exercise flexibility to enable staff to access vaccination appointments.

Staff are requested to make appointments at times that minimise disruption to the educational program of the school and supports for students. Prior to their first appointment eligible employees should discuss attendance with their principal/manager. School-based employees are not required to access unpaid leave to access COVID-19 vaccination services.

Within this framework, and where full school operations are able to be maintained, schools are encouraged to exercise flexibility and use local arrangements to support eligible staff to access COVID-19 vaccination services.

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

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

For further information about how staff will be supported to receive a COVID-19 vaccination, contact the Schools People Services general HR phone line: 1800 641 943.

Community vaccination pop-up clinics

To support the uptake of vaccinations, 70 school-based vaccination pop-up clinics are being established in areas that need them most and where barriers to vaccination may exist.

The pop-up clinics are providing access to COVID-19 vaccines in targeted areas for all eligible students, their families, staff and the local community. Approximately 70 school sites will be used across a range of Local Government Areas. The Department will contact selected schools directly.

29. Ventilation

Ventilation

Schools are required to increase fresh air flow into indoor spaces (including shared spaces, staff areas and thoroughfares) whenever possible. Staff and students should maximise the use of outdoor learning areas or environments wherever possible, including as an alternative to staff areas.

Natural ventilation

- Keep all windows, doors and vents open as much as possible.
- Keep these openings clear of any obstruction to air flow.
- Door jambs should be used to keep doors open.

- Aim to open windows and vents that are higher or towards the ceiling during poor or windy weather.
- Keep exhaust fans are to be used as much as possible.
- Take measures to maintain thermal, noise and other comfort, such as flexible uniform and seating arrangements.

Mechanical ventilation

- Air recirculation should be eliminated or minimised by setting air conditioning units to use external air rather than recycling, where possible.
- Demand-controlled ventilation controls that reduce air supply based on occupancy or temperature should be disabled.
- Air conditioning filters should be maintained according to maintenance plans, checked and cleaned with appropriate PPE.
- An additional measure schools may consider to further increase the utility of mechanical ventilation, where available and practicable, is to run systems when rooms are unoccupied, and ideally two hours before and after use of a space.

Use of fans

- Fans are only to be used with other natural and mechanical methods in place.
- Fans should not be used if a person with respiratory symptoms is in the room.
- If used, ceiling fans can be operated on the winter setting (where possible) and lowest speed.
- Other fans, such as pedestal fans, should not be directed to blow air from one person directly past another and should be set to the lowest speed.

Bathrooms, kitchens, and thoroughfares (hallways, corridors)

- All available mechanical and natural ventilation options in bathrooms and kitchens should be operated for as much of the day as possible.
- Maximise natural and/or mechanical ventilation in thoroughfares and minimise gathering in these spaces.
- The use of enclosed spaces with little or no ventilation should be minimised, and limit numbers in the space.

Poor outdoor air quality

- Monitor the VicEmergency App for risk warnings and advice on thunderstorm asthma, smoke and other events reducing outside air quality.
- Action to protect students during periods of poor outdoor air quality (such as smoke, thunderstorm asthma events) takes priority.
- Take steps to close windows and doors, set air conditioners to re-circulate air, and enhance other COVID safe behaviours and controls, including cohorting, reduced class density and staggering classes, face masks until risk is reduced as advised by public health or emergency services (through the VicEmergency App).

For further details on how to maximise ventilation see [PAL](#)

- Minimise using spaces that can't be ventilated with fresh outdoor air.

- Schools are encouraged to avoid or reduce the use of spaces that can't be ventilated with fresh outdoor air, including spaces with windows that don't open or open to environments with poor air quality or other pollutants. [Rotate the use of spaces that can be well ventilated if required.](#)

Maximise the use of outdoor learning areas or environments

- Schools are encouraged to maximise the use of outdoor learning areas and environments.
- Prefer the use of an outdoor space over an indoor space as much as practicable.

Air purifiers

The Department is delivering air purifier units (model Samsung AX7500) to schools. User manuals will be delivered with each unit and should be kept in the same room as each unit for reference. A copy can also be [downloaded from the Samsung website.](#)

Air purifiers are advised to be prioritised for higher risk areas. These areas include where high levels of mixing of staff and reduced mask use when eating, higher levels of exertion and increased aerosol projection, and areas of lower ventilation and possible exposure to illness. For example, sick bays, staff rooms, canteens, school receptions and student centres, gymnasiums and music rooms.

See [PAL](#) for further detail how to use and where to place air purifiers.

30. Vital COVIDSafe Steps

Social distancing

Limit mixing

Multi-campus schools should seek to minimise staff movement across campuses as far as possible.

Schools are encouraged to work in networks to minimise as far as possible CRTs working across sites.

Staff in Non-restricted Area regional schools should also avoid working across multiple sites as much as practical, noting there will be some workforces who will need to work across multiple schools (i.e. health and wellbeing staff and casual relief teaching staff).

Professional development and staff meetings must be conducted online or deferred (unless essential face to face training for first aid, anaphylaxis, or infection control. In these instances, density limits of one person per four square metres apply).

Maintain 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 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 as far as possible the use of common areas such as staff rooms. Staff should eat and drink outside wherever possible and practicable.

Students should practise physical distancing where possible. Maintaining a physical distance of 1.5 metres 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.

Strategies that can be considered to support physical distancing include:

- rostering access to shared spaces, limiting time in these spaces and promote 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
- signage and rostering so that access to shared physical spaces and food preparation areas can be managed in line with density limits and to reduce congregation in entry and exits
- 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 indicating 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 through strategies such as the use of multiple entry/exit points, creating spaces for ingress and egress in different areas of the school and appropriate signage to communicate expected behaviours.
- 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](#).

Use large spaces (e.g. halls)

Space out staff workstations as much as possible and limit the number of staff in offices according to the density quotient. 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 holding classes outside. Staff rooms should be closed except for access to tea/coffee/food making facilities. Where possible, staff to rest, eat and meet in outdoor areas only.

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.

Limit non-essential visitors and apply density limits in common areas

Density limits do not apply in classrooms and other spaces for the purposes of student use, including corridors and other shared areas.

Density limits of one person per four square metres apply to staff areas such as staff lunchrooms and areas accessed by the public, such as reception areas.

For public areas, signage must be displayed to indicate the maximum number of members of the public that may be present in the space at a single time.

Staggered start and finish times and breaks

Stagger drop off and pick up times (noting operations of school hours should be not disrupted)

Use of multiple entry and exit points to prevent concentrations of students and minimise parents onsite.

31. Face masks

Please see [coronavirus.vic.gov.au](https://www.coronavirus.vic.gov.au) for the latest face mask requirements.

For all school settings, the Victorian Chief Health Officer:

- Directs school staff and secondary school students aged 12 or older must always wear a face mask indoors and outdoors at school, including when attending an Outside School Hours Care (OSHC) program, unless a lawful exception applies.
- Directs school staff and secondary school students aged 12 or older must always wear a face mask when travelling to and from school on public transport, taxis or ride share vehicles.
- Directs school staff to wear a face mask while teaching wherever practicable, except where removal of a face mask is necessary for effective communication.
- Strongly recommends children under 12 years of age and students at primary school wear face masks when at school, attending an OSHC program, or when travelling to and from school on public transport, taxis or ride share vehicles.

There are a [number of lawful reasons for not wearing a face mask](#), including for staff and students who are unable to wear a face mask due to the nature of their disability, medical or a mental health condition.

A face mask must cover the nose and mouth. Face shields, scarves or bandanas do not meet these requirements. Refusal to wear a mask is breach of the Victorian Chief Health Officer Directions.

Staff and students unable to wear face masks

- Enhance other strategies to limit transmission aimed at the whole school or class, including reduced class density, outdoor learning and ventilation.
- Staff members unable to wear face masks due to a valid exception should avoid providing supervision or care to students with COVID-19 symptoms.

Encouraging and motivating mask use in schools

- Model correct and positive mask wearing. Face mask compliance amongst staff, parents, carers and visitors is vital for encouraging students to wear face masks. Communicate to staff and visitors their responsibility and obligation to affirm a safe and positive environment for students when on school premises.
- Reinforce key messages about the importance of face masks, why they are importance and how they contribute to reducing risk of COVID-19 transmission. Use posters, photos, videos, creative projects, social media and other activities to [promote and model mask wearing by other](#) staff, students and community members.
- Motivate and praise students who wear face masks correctly. Ask staff and students why they don't want to wear masks. Think about sensory or discomfort issues as a reason for refusal, and consider adjustments to help improve fit or comfort, such a providing a surgical mask where available.

- Engage, confirm with, and support students and their families with lawful exceptions for mask wearing, including those with disability, medical or a mental health condition.

Face mask supplies in schools

- Review their PPE supplies and ensure adequate supplies remain available in the event of a suspected or confirmed case of COVID-19, including appropriately sized masks for younger children.
- Encourage students, staff and contractors/visitors to bring their own face mask, and provide enough single-use face masks available for staff, students or visitors who do not have their own or for masks that get damaged/soiled or require replacement.
- Single use disposable masks will be allocated to all schools for Term 4. Schools should expect to receive a delivery of between 500 and 3,000 masks over the coming weeks, depending on school size.
- Schools can buy PPE items through the COS platform using the following codes:
 - Surgical masks (SAFE2103, SAFE4053, SAFE4054, SAFE4056) and
 - KN95 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 by email: schools.procurement@education.vic.gov.au

More information

- Schools must display information and signage at school entrances and in communal areas such as staff rooms encouraging staff and students to wear masks wherever they are required, including where physical distancing of 1.5m cannot be maintained. 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.

32. Hygiene and testing

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 where required.

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 per cent alcohol should be made accessible.

Sharing of food is not permitted.

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](#).

Safety information and training

Any Department staff working onsite in schools who did not complete the eLearn module School Infection Prevention and Control During COVID-19 in Term 4, 2020, **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](#) and will take about 20 minutes to complete. A parallel module is now also [available on FUSE](#) for preservice teachers, casual relief teachers and other staff working in schools who do not have eduPay access.

Principals should review completion records through LearnED and manage non-completion through existing performance development plan (PDP) conversations. Should managers or principals need help to monitor staff progress and completion rates, a short [LearnED LMS for Managers](#) module, including a number of detailed [Quick Reference Guides](#), is available.

Keep surfaces clean

COVIDSafe routine cleaning arrangements will continue for all Victorian government schools in Term 4. This involves daily end-of-school-day cleaning, with a particular focus on cleaning and disinfecting of high-touch surfaces, and the inclusion of some elements that were not cleaned every day prior to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Schools should consider the necessity of using shared equipment at this time. Such items may include shared computers, class sets of teaching and learning materials, and musical instruments. If used, strict hand hygiene should be followed before and after use. Risk can be further minimised with users wiping down items where appropriate, for example using a two in one disinfectant/detergent wipe.

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

Stay home when unwell and get tested

The most important action school communities can take to reduce the risk of transmission of COVID-19, is to ensure that any unwell staff and students remain at home and get tested, even with the mildest of symptoms. Everyone should consider their health before they start work or attend school and ensure that they are free from coronavirus symptoms and have not had contact in the past 14 days with a person confirmed to have coronavirus or a person suspected to have coronavirus.

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

33. Management of an unwell student or staff member at school

It is important that any student (or staff member) who becomes unwell with COVID-19 symptoms while at school gets tested and returns home.

The symptoms to watch out for are:

- fever
- chills or sweats
- cough
- sore throat
- shortness of breath

- runny nose
- loss or change in sense of smell or taste

Some people may also experience headache, muscle soreness, stuffy nose, nausea, vomiting and diarrhoea.

Schools should refer to the following guidance (updated June 2021), which sets out actions required to safely isolate individuals prior to being collected and returning home:

- [Personal protective equipment guide](#) for education settings
- [Management of students displaying COVID-19 symptoms](#) in education settings

This guidance should also be followed in a situation where a student (or staff member where appropriate) is made aware while at school that they are required to get tested, isolate and/or quarantine following public health advice.

Staff or students experiencing COVID-19 symptoms should be advised to get tested and stay home until they receive a test result. See [Managing illness in schools and early childhood services during the COVID-19 pandemic](#).

Health care plans, where relevant, should be updated to provide additional advice on monitoring and identification of the unwell child in the context of COVID-19.

Staff and students are 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. If they have been tested for COVID-19, they must also wait for a negative test result. Staff continue to be required to present a medical certificate in accordance with personal leave policy for periods of absence on personal leave.

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

Everyone should consider their health before they start work or attend school and ensure that they are free from coronavirus symptoms and have not have contact in the past 14 days with a person confirmed to have coronavirus or a person suspected to have coronavirus. Staff members must stay home when unwell or if they may have been exposed to coronavirus in the past 14 days

‘Suspected case’ means a person who is displaying one or more symptoms of COVID-19.

Some people may also experience headache, muscle soreness, stuffy nose, nausea, vomiting and diarrhoea.

As soon as practicable after becoming aware of a suspected case in a staff member, 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. **Advise 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 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 onsite, including areas used by the staff member e.g. their workspace AND any high-touch surfaces likely to have been frequented by the staff member. Please contact the VSBA School Cleaning unit if required on cleaning@education.vic.gov.au

4. **Inform all staff onsite** (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.

Managing a confirmed case of COVID-19

The Department has comprehensive procedures in place with the Department of Health to manage suspected or confirmed cases of 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 COVID-19. Schools do not need to take further action, until directed to do so; Regional staff will contact you to advise next steps including any communication support
- The Department will notify WorkSafe on behalf of the affected school in the event of a confirmed case of a staff member.

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.

Infectious cleaning

In most cases where a school site closes due to a positive case, some or all of the school site will undergo a deep clean, also known as an infectious clean. The Department of Education and Training arranged and paid for this clean for all Victorian Government schools, both metropolitan and regional.

Once advised of the need for cleaning to occur, the Victorian School Building Authority (VSBA) will contact the principal as soon as possible to make arrangements. The cleaning is conducted in accordance with the [Cleaning and Disinfection Guidelines](#), approved by the Department of Health.

As part of the Guideline, paper, soft toys, shared stationary (any porous items considered high touch that cannot be laundered) are not thrown away. If needed, to allow cleaning of high-touch surfaces, these items are placed in storage bags and quarantined onsite in a lockable secure area for 14 days. For surfaces that would not normally be frequently touched, such as posters on the wall, it will be 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 required, it is recommended that school staff working onsite:

- 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.

See the [Cleaning and Disinfection Guidelines](#) for advice on cleaning and disinfection when a confirmed case of COVID-19 has been identified in a Victorian Government School.

34. Contacts

- **DET COVID-19 hotline:** DET's dedicated COVID-19 phone advice line Mon-Fri (8:30am-5:00pm) and Sat-Sun (10.00am-3.00pm) on **1800 338 663** can address or appropriately refer calls on all matters.
- **Staff health and safety:** Further advice and support in phone 1300 074 715 or email safety@edumail.vic.gov.au
- **Finance:** School Financial Management Support Unit: schools.finance.support@education.vic.gov.au or (03) 7022 2222
- **Cleaning:** There will be no change to the current cleaning arrangements in schools. For cleaning information or advice, please contact cleaning@education.vic.gov.au
- **OSHC and other early childhood:** DETs dedicated COVID-19 phone advice line during business hours on 1800 338 663
- **Student transport:** student.transport@education.vic.gov.au or 7022 2247
- **SEILs:** Schools should contact their SEIL to discuss any queries. Local consultation should continue with staff, Health and Safety Representatives and OHS Committees (if applicable). For further advice and support in phone 1300 074 715 or email safety@education.vic.gov.au
- **Media unit:** Call (03) 8688 7776 for support with media matters