

Operating guidelines and Q&As for schools

Effective 29 April 2022

This document has been prepared for use by WA Public Schools and is provided to Independent Schools for their information and use in decision-making processes.

This document is uncontrolled and some information relating specifically to Department of Education operational processes has been removed prior to distribution.

Not all COVID-19 information is covered in this document.

Schools are safe and open for learning

Keeping our schools open and providing face-to-face learning to students is important to their learning, social and emotional development, and physical and mental wellbeing. One purpose of current public health and social measures is to keep schools open and functioning in the Western Australian community.

These guidelines have been developed for schools as we transition towards living with COVID-19. If conditions change the Chief Health Officer will advise schools to adjust settings.

Schools are encouraged to keep their school community informed through general messaging and updates where appropriate. For example, information in a school newsletter or through normal communication channels.

There is no requirement for schools to notify families of every positive case.

Definitions

For the purposes of implementing these guidelines, the following definitions apply:

- **Vaccination requirement** means staff to be double dose vaccinated against COVID-19, effective from 12.01 am on 31 January 2022 and have a third dose (booster) of vaccine within one calendar month of becoming eligible, unless the staff member has an approved exemption.
 - [Education Worker \(Restrictions on Access\) Directions \(No. 5\)](#)
 - [Booster Vaccination \(Restrictions on Access\) Directions \(No. 2\)](#)
 - [Proof of Vaccination Directions \(No. 5\)](#).
- **Ad hoc basis** means attendance at any education facility or facilities no more than once a week.
 - *Note: A person who attends multiple education facilities in a week, but does not visit the same education facility twice, does not attend on an ad hoc basis. For example, a tradesperson who works at school A on Monday and then works at school B on Wednesday of the same week must comply with the vaccination*

requirements in these directions. Therefore, regular basis means more than once per week (either within one site or across multiple school sites).

- **School sites (education facility)** include:
 - a school, including Statewide Services (33 Giles Avenue, Padbury)
 - a community kindergarten
 - a boarding premises (boarding/residential facilities).

Close contact

A **close contact** is defined as:

- a household member or intimate partner of a person with COVID-19 who has had contact with them during their infectious period
- someone who has had close personal interaction with a person with COVID-19 during their infectious period, where they spent greater than 4 hours of cumulative contact with them in a residential setting in any 24-hour period, (i.e. a home, accommodation facility) where masks have been removed by both people during the period of contact
- someone who is directed by WA Health that they are a close contact.

Asymptomatic close contacts are not required to isolate but do have to follow testing and mask wearing requirements. Refer to the [WA Government](#) information on close contacts.

Testing and isolation protocols

Students and staff who are symptomatic must stay home and test for COVID-19.

Refer to the WA Government's [testing and isolation protocols](#) for details on testing and isolation requirements for students and staff who have tested positive for COVID-19 or been identified as close contacts.

Q. Can asymptomatic close contact students return to school?

Yes. Parents must inform the school of the child's close contact status. Students who return to school must follow the requirements set out by the [WA Government](#) including mask wearing (Year 7 and above) and daily RATs.

Vaccination requirement

All staff working at a school site and visitors on a regular basis are required to meet the vaccination requirement.

Masks

The indoor mask mandate is no longer in place. Masks are encouraged where physical distancing is not possible. Staff and students may also choose to continue to wear a mask.

Masks are required for staff and students (Years 7 and over) in the following situations:

- when on public transport, passenger transport (including school bus services) and ride-share
- if identified as an asymptomatic close contact and attending school.

Q. Do students need to wear masks while on a bus, for example travelling to excursions or swimming?

Students in Years 6 and below are no longer required to wear a mask. Students in Years 7 and over (other than those with an approved exemption) are required to wear a mask while travelling on public transport, as well as school owned and chartered vehicles.

School attendance

Where students are unable to attend onsite learning, schools should record attendance based on the following codes:

- Any symptoms (Notified sick) – N code.
- When remote learning is offered:
 - E code (approved education activity) with record of participation.
 - U code (unexplained absence) with no record of participation (update to an X code if the reason for the absence is subsequently determined to be unacceptable).

You are advised to use the:

- Y code when a student is isolating, and it is not practicable to provide remote learning, or when there is an enforced school closure.

Q. When do I need to provide work for students who are not at school?

Schools need to provide work for students who need to stay at home due to isolation requirements (E or Y attendance code). Schools are not required to provide work to students who are being kept at home by parents/carers (U attendance code, update to X code if the reason for the absence is subsequently determined to be unacceptable).

School activities during school hours – offsite and onsite

- **All school activities can resume in-line with normal operations** but must continue to promote and practice good hygiene principles.
 - **Choir and orchestra** rehearsals and performances can occur, with size limits removed.
 - **Assemblies** can occur with no capacity or cohort restrictions.
 - Face to face **staff meetings and professional development** can occur.
 - **Learning programs** where students attend alternative school sites such as PEAC can continue onsite and offsite.
 - **Professional learning activities and conferences** can proceed (including those involving staff from multiple schools).
 - Schools may host international students.
 - Offsite venues are encouraged to have a COVID-19 Safety Plan in place, but these are no longer mandatory.
 - **Excursions** can continue in compliance with venue-based requirements.
- Proof of vaccination requirements for entry into venues has been removed, excluding high risk settings.
- Before approval for off-site activities is made, as part of the excursion risk assessment documents, schools should consider the COVID Safety Plan of the venue, if they have one.

Q. Can university practicums continue on school sites?

Yes. Pre-service teachers are required to meet vaccination and sign-in requirements.

Q. Are therapy pools able to be used?

Yes.

Infrequent special events – offsite and onsite

Large one-off events can occur in line with public health and social measures.

- **Onsite and off-site school balls** can occur in line with public health and social measures.
- **Camps** can recommence. Refer to [Guidelines for camps](#) – COVID-19 considerations.

- **International travel** is not to be undertaken by Public School staff unless it is demonstrated that such a function could not be undertaken by existing Western Australian Government overseas offices.
- **Interstate travel** is allowed if it is in line with core business and approved by the Principal.

Q. Under what conditions can staff travel interstate to attend conferences?

Staff may attend a conference if it is considered essential for the operation of the school, cannot be undertaken online and has been approved by the Principal.

Q. Under what conditions can overnight intrastate travel be approved?

Intrastate travel for staff is allowed if it is in line with core business and public health and social measures.

Work placement

- Schools should conduct work placement risk assessments to ensure employers comply with WA COVID-19 Health guidelines.
- Students are not required to be vaccinated unless they are on a work placement where they will need to comply with the requirements of that workplace.
- Student work placements, simulated work placements and work experience will be required to follow any public health restrictions applicable to their work placement site.

School canteens

School canteens can open, and parents/carers and community volunteers can continue to assist in school canteens.

- Regular cleaning is to be undertaken.
- Schools should review and update as needed their school risk assessment procedures to include COVID-safe principles.
- School canteens are encouraged to maintain a COVID-19 Safety Plan.
- Mandatory requirement that all schools confirm and record regular ancillary worker (such as canteen volunteer more than once a week) compliance of COVID-19 vaccination status.

Health and hygiene

Arrangements to continue to reduce direct contact, enhance personal hygiene practices, and strengthen cleaning regimes in schools are to be encouraged.

Each person has a responsibility to protect themselves and others. This is achieved through the ongoing promotion of the following good hygiene principles and practices:

- staff, students, and parents must stay home when sick
- avoiding unnecessary physical contact and physical greetings (e.g. handshakes, hugs)
- covering mouth and nose when coughing and sneezing, using a flexed elbow or tissue and disposing of tissues appropriately
- washing hands regularly for 20 seconds with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand rub, including prior to meal breaks
- supplies of soap and other cleaning agents are available for all schools.
- posters and visible messaging regarding hand washing and cough-sneeze hygiene should be displayed in schools.

Ventilation

Schools should follow the ventilation guidelines as approved by the Chief Health Officer. The guidelines have recently been updated to include advice for cold weather.

Cleaning for all schools

Cleaning guidelines are based on, and continuously reviewed in line with, advice from WA Health.

- Cleaning of high-touch surfaces, including classrooms, meeting rooms and washroom/toilets should be completed at a minimum on a daily basis.
- Playgrounds and play equipment should be cleaned once a week.
 - Hand hygiene before and after use of equipment should be encouraged.
- Schools are to ensure water bubblers have good water pressure, handles are cleaned daily and when used to fill water bottles, students do not make contact with their mouths.
- Bin waste removal after school daily.
- Computer keyboards and mice, printers, photocopiers and telephones cleaned once a day.

Visitors on school sites

Schools should continue to display appropriate signage regarding COVID-19 safe practices and expectations for all visitors at school sites.

Parents/carers on school sites

Parents/carers are allowed on school sites in line with normal school operations.

Parents/carers who are regular volunteers, more than once a week, must be vaccinated in accordance with the Education Worker (Restrictions on Access) Directions No. 5.

Ancillary Workers (regular contractors, volunteers and third-party providers including medical or allied services practitioners/therapists) on school sites

Ancillary workers are allowed on school sites and to access school facilities.

- In accordance with the *Disability Standards for Education 2005*, schools are required to take reasonable steps to facilitate the provision of support services, such as therapy.
- Schools can continue to make local decisions regarding the provision of services, on their site/s.
- When considering use of school facilities and resources, principals consider their duty of care of students and staff. These considerations continue alongside COVID-19 practices such as:
 - suitability of, and access to, the facilities to be used
 - cleaning of all facilities used for meetings
 - cleaning of equipment used for the purposes of therapy
 - use of PPE and good hygiene practices.
- Where modifications are required to the existing provision of services, schools must consult with parents about these modifications and limit the disruption caused by the modification.
- Principals should continue to liaise with providers to ensure understanding of, and compliance with, school policies and processes.
- Families may be referred to the NDIS COVID support line on 1800 800 110.

Entry requirements:

- Mandatory requirement that all public education facilities confirm and record non-employee compliance of COVID-19 vaccination status.
- All visitors to school sites must sign-in as per the school's Visitors and Intruders on School Premises Policy.

Non ancillary workers attending on an ad hoc basis

Are allowed on school sites if they:

- sign in, as per the school's Visitors and Intruders on School Premises Policy.
- show compliance of COVID-19 vaccination, if required. Schools are required to confirm and record non-employees (such as contractors) compliance of COVID-19 vaccination.

Third Party user - facility access

- Groups using the facility under third party agreements including community and non-community use, outside of school hours care (OSH), school uniform shop and canteen (not P&C) and playgroups are included in this category and can resume normal operations on school sites.
- Third party users can use school premises in accordance with vaccination mandates, where applicable.

Co-located/shared sites

- Co-located school sites include those that share grounds with other educational facilities such as universities and education support schools, centres or programs.
- Principals should communicate relevant information for continued operation as safe learning environments.

Shared or joint-use facilities – under agreements between the School and other party

Shared or joint use facilities must follow requirements related to:

- COVID-19 vaccination for non-employees, such as contractors
- testing and isolation protocols.

Principals with shared facilities can contact AISWA for specific advice if needed.

Immunocompromised students

- As per AHPPC guidelines, with COVID-19 safety planning and procedures in place and health systems ready to quickly identify and respond to cases, schools remain safe.
- Ensure documented plans for immunocompromised students are managed in accordance with their needs and are supported either through the school in which they are enrolled.
- School staff should provide additional support for students who cannot attend school due to them, or a family member, having an immune compromised medical condition during COVID-19.
- Immunocompromised students should be supported through remote learning plans to ensure continuity of learning if required.

Medically vulnerable and immunocompromised staff

- All employees, even those at high risk, can attend work with appropriate controls in place such as a COVID-19 action plan developed in consultation with the employee's medical practitioner.
- The School may decide on alternative work options for medically vulnerable staff.

School bus services

Maintain clear communication with bus operators to support safety and continuity in their service.

Mask wearing remains in place for travel on public transport (exemptions apply in line with Directions). Staff and students are personally responsible for the provision of masks.

Schools should be aware that school buses are unable to transport students when they have symptoms, or they are supposed to be isolating. Schools need to plan for alternative arrangements in these instances. Planning may include:

- updating existing parent/carer contact details with an indication of their ability to provide transport for the student
- collecting emergency contact details of significant others who could assist in providing transport if needed
- ensuring plans are in place if a parent or emergency contact is unavailable.

Travel to remote Aboriginal communities

Under the WA Government's [Remote Aboriginal Communities Directions](#), the only people who can enter a remote Aboriginal community are residents of those communities and those who are:

- providing essential services and supplies
- going to work or school there
 - entering for family or cultural reasons
- delivering a community program or activity
- entering in an emergency.

These people cannot enter a community if they have COVID-19 or symptoms of COVID-19, or if they are waiting for a test result or have been in contact with someone who has COVID-19.

COVID-19 support contacts

For further information relating to these guidelines please see below.

COVID-19 Support Team	covid@ais.wa.edu.au
Phone support (8:30 am – 4:30 pm weekdays)	9441 1600
Positive COVID-19 Cases	covidpositive@ais.wa.edu.au
Phone support (8:30 am – 4:30 pm weekdays)	9441 1600