



COVID-19: High Caseload Environment FAQ for Schools

General questions

Who does the schools settings high caseload environment apply to?

The revised setting applies to all Western Australian public schools and boarding/residential facilities, and early childcare centres throughout the State.

All staff and students are required to follow the defined testing and isolation protocols issued for school-based close contacts that apply in a high COVID-19 caseload environment.

Why have we moved to a high caseload environment?

The Chief Health Officer has determined that further measures should be introduced to respond to an increased risk of COVID-19.

Keeping our schools open and providing face-to-face learning to students is important to their learning, social and emotional development, physical and mental wellbeing. The purpose of these revised measures is to keep schools open and functioning in a high COVID-19 caseload environment in the Western Australian community.

The new high-caseload testing and isolation requirements, and the school-specific close contact definition, will reduce the need for students or staff to require long periods of isolation and quarantine.

Do the vaccination mandates still apply?

Yes. The Chief Health Officer issued [Education Worker \(Restrictions on Access\) Directions \(No. 4\)](#) and the [Booster Vaccination \(Restrictions on Access\) Directions \(No. 2\)](#) and these requirements remain applicable to Education Workers and Ancillary Workers entering an Education Facility.

Close contacts

When am I considered to be a close contact?

You are considered a close contact if you are:

- A household member or intimate partner of a person with COVID-19 who has had contact with them during their infectious period; or
- Someone who has had close contact with a person in their infectious period, including:
 - At least 15 minutes face-to-face contact where a mask was not worn by the exposed person and the person with COVID-19;
 - Greater than two hours within a small indoor space or classroom environment, where masks have been removed for this period by the exposed person and the person with COVID-19 (note: others wearing masks in this scenario would not be a contact);
 - someone who is directed by WA Health that they are a close contact.

If someone in my household is a close contact, do I need to isolate?

No. Only close contacts of a positive case need to self-quarantine. People should take extra precautions and have no interaction with close contacts. If the close contact you live with becomes positive, then you must get tested and isolate as per instructions from WA Health.

Parents and visitors to the school site

Are parents allowed on school sites?

Parents and carers are not allowed in the classroom, including to volunteer. Meetings between parents or carers are to be held over telephone or electronically, where practicable.

Parents and carers remain able to volunteer in roles outside of the classroom that are essential for the operations of the school, including the canteen and uniform shop and for drop-off/pick-ups in outdoor settings only. Parents and carers are to follow WA Government mask wearing mandates and maintain physical distancing from other adults.

Gatherings of parents on school sites are to be avoided.



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Are visitors allowed on school sites?

Visitors are allowed on school sites if they have signed in, as per the [Visitors and Intruders on Public School Premises Policy](#), and shown compliance of COVID-19 vaccination. Schools are required to maintain a contact register for all visitors and are encouraged to use the Service WA/Safe WA app. Visitors are to follow WA Government mask wearing mandates.

Can the P&C and school council/board meet on school sites?

Online meetings are to be conducted where possible..

Can schools continue third-party arrangements for use of facilities?

Schools can continue third-party arrangements if users adhere to health directions.

On-site activities

Can schools continue to hold assemblies?

Schools **cannot** hold face-to-face assemblies indoors. Assemblies are to be held outside and limited to a class size or small group within a year group. This includes assemblies held in areas that are not fully enclosed, such as undercover areas.

In-school indoor events with more than a class size of attendees to be held online, outdoors or postponed (e.g. choir or orchestra).

Are parents allowed at assemblies?

No.

Are libraries to stay open?

Yes, library access should be managed. See further ideas on [cohorting and contact minimisation in schools](#).

Are swimming programs allowed to continue on-site?

Yes.

Can we conduct whole-school events like carnivals, school balls and interschool competitions on-site?

Infrequent special events can continue provided physical distancing recommendations, mask mandates and venue rules are complied with, and if the venue/organiser has an up-to-date COVID-19 Safety Plan that it continues to implement.

School balls on school sites

The Chief Health Officer advised that school balls could continue offsite because venue-based proof of vaccination requirements apply. They do not apply at schools.

If schools wish to hold their school balls on site, an exemption will be considered provided the school ensures that all attendees over 16 are fully vaccinated and compliant with any other public health and social measures in place at the time (including mask mandates).

Sporting events on school sites

Generally, in venues where community sports are played, the ventilation is good, and the venue is large. Spectators must adhere to mask mandates in line with public health directions and should physically distance from each other. This protocol has been extended to schools.

Can parents/carers attend sporting events on a school site, indoors e.g. indoor courts?

Yes. The same conditions apply in schools as for community sports.

Parents and spectators can watch indoor sport in large venues on school site where ventilation is good, occupancy limits for the venue (if inside) are observed and physical distancing is in place. Spectators must adhere to mask mandates in line with public health directions.

Can parents attend sporting events on a school site in outdoor areas e.g. ovals?

Yes. Spectators need to wear masks on school grounds unless physical distancing can be maintained.



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Onsite choir and orchestra practise and performance indoors

The act of singing and the function of playing certain wind and brass instruments require blowing out air which increases the risk of potential transmission. Due to the nature of an instrument, a mask may not be able to be worn. e.g. clarinet, flute.

Choirs and orchestras can continue to practise indoors on a school site with a single class size, so long as the intermingling of cohorts is avoided.

A school choir or orchestra can practise outdoors.

Can we continue to have students from different classes together for learning programs?

Schools, where practicable, should avoid having students from different year levels together in learning activities. This does not apply to timetabled split classes or multi-age groups. See further ideas on [cohorting to limit mingling of groups](#).

Can specialist programs like music lessons occur on-site?

Yes.

Can university practicums continue on school sites?

Yes, they are required to meet vaccination and sign-in requirements.

Indoor and outdoor interschool sporting events

Can schools participate in offsite indoor and outdoor interschool sport carnivals?

Yes, infrequent special events such as interschool sport carnivals can continue provided mask requirements and venue rules are complied with, and the venue has COVID-19 safe plans in place.

Indoor sporting facilities where community sport is usually played is considered an appropriate venue due to their size and ventilation.

Can parents and spectators watch indoor or outdoor interschool sport carnivals?

Yes, parents and spectators can watch indoor or outdoor interschool sport carnivals where ventilation is good, occupancy limits for the venue are observed and physical distancing is in place.

Parents and spectators must adhere to mask mandates in line with public health directions and should physically distance from each other.

Off-site Activities

Can camps go ahead?

Overnight camps are to be postponed or cancelled.

The Chief Health Officer has advised that camps present an increased risk of spread to students particularly due to shared sleeping arrangements. It is not reasonable to expect students to wear masks while they are sleeping and sharing facilities including bedrooms and bathrooms while on school camps.

Our priority is the continuity of learning. A positive case at camp has the potential to impact a number of students, school staff and camp staff because of the close living arrangements, interrupting continuity of learning.

Can we undertake off-site activities?

Yes, provided physical distancing recommendations, mask mandates and venue rules for proof of vaccination are followed, and the venue/organiser has COVID-19 safe plans in place.

Are swimming programs allowed to continue off-site?

Yes.

Can student work placements continue?

Yes. Students are required to follow any public health restrictions related to their work placement site, including any vaccination requirements.



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School canteens

Can canteens continue to remain open?

School canteens can open, and parents/community volunteers can continue to assist in school canteens. Vaccination requirements and mask mandates must be adhered to.

Health and hygiene

Are school cleaners required to clean throughout the school day?

Cleaning guidelines are based on, and continuously reviewed in line with, advice from the Health Department and address cleaning of high-touch surfaces at a minimum of once a day, but are not required during the school day.

Immunocompromised students

Are medically vulnerable and immunocompromised students able to learn from home?

Ensure individual care plans for vulnerable students continue to be managed in accordance with their needs.

Schools can access support from the School of Special Educational Needs: Medical and Mental Health (SEEN: MMH) for students who cannot attend school due to a medical condition.