

# High caseload environment (Level 1) - frequently asked questions for schools

As from 8 February 2022

## General questions

### 1. Who does the schools and childcare 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.

### 2. 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.

### 3. 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.

## Staff testing and isolation

### 4. What leave is available for staff who need to isolate and/or are confirmed as COVID-19 positive?

Refer to [Manage workforce absences due to COVID-19](#) on Ikon for the latest information.

### 5. Are school staff considered to be critical workers?

The critical worker definition does not apply to a high caseload environment. Critical workers are included in the very high caseload environment protocols – Western Australia is not currently in that environment.

Staff will only be considered to be critical workers in a very high caseload environment.

## Close contacts

### 6. 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:
  - face-to-face contact for 15 minutes or more with an infectious person, where a mask was not worn by the exposed person or the person with COVID-19;
  - sharing a small indoor space or a classroom environment for more than two hours with an infectious person, where masks have been removed for this period; or
  - someone who is directed by WA Health that they are a close contact.

### 7. 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.

## Staff on a school site

### 8. Can we have whole-staff meetings or professional learning?

They should be held online or in small teams.

### 9. Can we use the staff room?

Staffroom facilities may be used as needed, however staff are required to maintain physical distancing where practicable. Staff lunch breaks should be held in learning areas, outdoors or other appropriate rooms where possible.

### 10. Can staff gather together at break times?

Staff can gather together if adhering to physical distancing and mask mandate requirements where practicable. They can gather while eating and drinking but should limit the amount of time together.

## Parents and visitors to the school site

### 11. 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.

## 12. 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.

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

Online meetings are to be conducted where possible. Face-to-face meetings may occur following WA Government mask wearing mandates and when maintaining physical distancing from other adults.

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

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

## Student learning during isolation

### 15. I have a number of students isolating due to being a close contact of a COVID-19 confirmed positive case. Do I provide work for those students?

Schools should have planned for this scenario in their [Remote Learning Plans and in their School Planning Frameworks](#).

Schools will provide remote learning to students during their isolation period. Schools should refer to the [guiding principles of remote teaching and learning](#) when making a decision about delivery of educational programs to these students. See the [Connected Learning Hub](#) for additional supports.

### 16. What attendance code should I use for students who are isolating and are not consistently engaging in the learning program?

Use the:

- E code when students participate in remote learning, and a teacher has a record of this participation.
- Y code when a student is isolating, and it is not practicable to provide remote learning.
- U code on days where the student has not provided a record of participation in remote learning.

## On-site activities

### 17. 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).

## 18. Are parents allowed at assemblies?

No.

## 19. Are libraries to stay open?

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

## 20. Are swimming programs allowed to continue on-site?

Yes.

## 21. 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 can only be held offsite.

## 22. Can we continue to have all students together at break times?

Schools should avoid having all students together at break times where possible, by doing the following:

- Restricting year groups to certain buildings of the school and play areas.
- Timetable modifications, e.g. different break times, different drop-offs and pick-up times.

## 23. 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 advice on cohorting to limit mingling of groups [insert link].

## 24. Can specialist programs like music lessons occur on-site?

Yes.

## 25. Can university practicums continue on school sites?

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

## Off-site Activities

### 26. Can camps go ahead?

Camps are to be postponed or cancelled.

### 27. 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.

### 28. Are swimming programs allowed to continue off-site?

Yes.

### 29. 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.

## School canteens

### 30. 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

### 31. Do primary school students need to wear a mask?

No, at this stage the mask wearing mandate only applies to secondary students.

However, other students can wear a mask if parents choose. An extension of the mask requirement will apply to students from Year 3 onwards, once WA experiences further widespread community transmission upon advice from the Chief Health Officer.

### 32. What do I do if a person refuses to wear a mask?

The WA Government mask mandate outlines the requirements around wearing masks. Refer to Mandatory use of face masks in schools [insert link] for guidance.

### 33. Where do I access additional alcohol-based rub and cleaning agents?

Schools should continue to use their current ordering and procurement processes. The Department will continue to support any school experiencing supply issues. Call the COVID-19 Hotline on 1800 882 345.

### 34. 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.

## Medically vulnerable and immunocompromised staff

### 35. Are medically vulnerable and immunocompromised staff able to work from home?

All employees, even those at a higher risk, are able to attend work on-site. These staff should work with their general practitioner and principal to develop a COVID-19 action plan.

## Medically vulnerable students

### 36. 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 (SSEN: MMH) for students who cannot attend school due to a medical condition.