

# Operating Guidelines for Western Australian Public Schools

## Based on public health and social measures (high caseload setting) – Level 1

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### Schools are safe and open for learning

In line with the latest advice from the Chief Health Officer, arrangements have been reviewed with the following instructions.

### Definitions

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

- **Vaccination requirement** means staff to be double dose vaccinated against COVID-19 from 12.01am on 31 January 2022 and have a third dose (booster) vaccine within one month of becoming eligible, or by 5 February 2022.
- **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; and
  - a boarding premises (boarding/residential facilities).
- **Close contact** in a high caseload environment includes:
  - 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.

### Vaccination requirement

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

## Public school attendance

The Australian Health Protection Principal Committee (AHPPC) encourages all students and staff who are well to attend school, including those with health conditions.

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

- Any symptoms – N code (Notified sick).
- When remote learning is offered:
  - E code (approved education activity) with record of participation.
  - U code (unexplained absence) with no record of participation.
- If a school is required to close and it is not practicable to commence remote learning:
  - Y code (isolation requirement or enforced school closure).

## School activities

- School activities must promote and practise good hygiene principles.
- Schools should limit in-school gatherings of students and staff to class groups or small groups within a year level.
  - In-school indoor events with more than a class size of attendees to be held online, outdoors or postponed (e.g. choir or orchestra).
  - Assemblies are to be held outside and limited to a class size or a small group within a year group.
  - Staff meetings, including collaborative planning meetings, should be held online or in learning area teams.
  - Staff lunch breaks should be in learning area facilities wherever possible.
- The following additional measures are to be applied where practicable:
  - Cohorting to limit mingling of groups.
  - Physical restrictions, such as restricting year groups to certain buildings of schools and play areas.
  - Timetable modifications, for example, different break times (for staff and students) and different drop-off and pick-up times.
- Compliance with mandatory vaccination requirements are to be adhered to according to the site and age of the students.
- Playgrounds and play equipment should be cleaned once a week.
  - Students should be encouraged to wash hands after use of playground/play equipment.
  - Where contextually appropriate, playground areas should be timetabled for use.

## Offsite activities

Before approval for off-site activities is made, as part of the excursion risk assessment documents, ensure the business or venue has an up-to-date COVID-19 Safety Plan that it continues to implement.

- Activities must adhere to any additional public health and social measures in place.
- Excursion providers and external staff associated with excursions **are not** required to be vaccinated unless otherwise mandated.
  - Schools should include considerations around COVID-19 in their risk analysis excursion documentation, including but not limited to:
    - hygiene facilities;
    - medical; and
    - planning.
- **Camps** are to be postponed.

- **Infrequent special events** can continue provided physical distancing requirements, mask mandates and venue rules are complied with, and COVID-19 Safety Plans are in place, including:
  - School balls, when held offsite.
  - Interschool outdoor events.
  - Excursions.
- **Swimming programs** can continue.
- **School balls:** where school balls are held at a venue which requires persons 16 years or older to be vaccinated, school students are required to comply.
  - Proof of vaccination required for events held external to school sites with more than 500 patrons.
  - Schools to develop their own risk assessment plans in respect to COVID-19.
- **Interschool events:** outdoor interschool events are permitted.
  - Spectators **are not** required to be vaccinated.
- **Interstate or international travel** is not to be planned or undertaken.

## School canteens

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

- Regular cleaning undertaken.
- Schools should review and update as needed their school risk assessment procedures to include COVID-safe principles.
- School canteens may continue to be an exception from the requirement for a COVID Safety Plan.
- Mandatory requirement that all public education facilities confirm and record non-employee (such as contractor) 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;
- adults maintain physical distancing from other adults, where practicable;
- 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;
- disposing of tissues appropriately;
- washing hands regularly for 20 seconds with soap and water or an alcohol-based sanitise, including prior to meal breaks;
- supplies of soap and other cleaning agents are available for all schools. The Department will continue to support any school that experiences supply issues; and
- [posters](#) and visible messaging regarding handwashing and cough-sneeze hygiene should be displayed in schools.

## Masks

- Staff and secondary students must wear a mask at all times in regions where mandated unless:
  - the person has a physical, developmental or mental illness, condition or disability which makes wearing a face covering inappropriate;
  - communicating with a person who is deaf or hard of hearing and visibility of the mouth is essential for communication;

- the person is engaged in physical activity, including physical education classes and organised sport;
- the person is consuming for drink or medicine provided, they do not need to be seated; and/or
- staff are providing teaching or instructions to students; however staff are encouraged to wear masks even when teaching, where practicable.
- The mask mandate will apply to Years 3 and above in the future, with masks recommended for Kindergarten to Year 2 upon advice from the Chief Health Officer.
- Adults, including parents and carers, must wear a mask on school sites in regions where a mask mandate is in place, even when outdoors unless physical distancing can be maintained. Exemptions and exceptions continue to apply.

## Ventilation

Schools are to adhere to the Department's ventilation operating guidelines as approved by the Chief Health Officer.

- Use fresh air and well-ventilated spaces where possible.

## Cleaning for all schools

- Cleaning guidelines are based on, and continuously reviewed in line with, advice from the WA Health.
- Cleaning of high-touch surfaces, including classrooms, meeting rooms and washroom/toilets should be maintained 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 where 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.
- High-use equipment (e.g. sporting gear) to be cleaned after use.

## Visitors on school site

Must comply with the health and hygiene conditions previously outlined for staff. In addition:

- Parents/carers are allowed on school sites for the purpose of drop-off/pick outside only and to volunteer in roles outside of the classroom that are essential for the operations of the school, including the canteen and uniform shop.
- Gatherings of parents/carers on schools sites should be avoided.
- Parents/carers and others are not allowed in classrooms.
- Parent-teacher interviews are restricted to telephone or online only.
- Display appropriate signage regarding expectations and restrictions for all visitors at school sites.
- There is a mandatory requirement that all public education facilities confirm and record non-employees (such as contractors) compliance of COVID-19 vaccination.
- All visitors will sign in, as per the [Visitors and Intruders on Public School Premises policy](#).
- Maintain a contact register for all visitors and are encouraged to use the ServiceWA/SafeWA app.
- Follow mask wearing requirements, outlined above.

## Work placement

- Schools should conduct work placement risk assessments to ensure employers comply with WA COVID-19 Health guidelines.
- Continue to confirm that work environments have COVID-19 Safety Plans in place.
- Students aged 16 and above on work placement or experience are required to show proof of vaccination, at a rural or remote resources industry site or a remote operating centre, or as required by relevant Direction.
- Student work placements, simulated work placements and work experience will be required to follow any public health restrictions applicable to their work placement site.

## Immunocompromised students

- Ensure individual care plans for vulnerable students continue to be managed in accordance with their needs.
- School staff can access support from the School of Special Educational Needs: Medical and Mental Health (SSEN: MMH) for students who cannot attend school due to them, or a family member, having an immune compromised medical condition during COVID-19.
- Vulnerable public school students will be supported remotely if school attendance is not possible, either through the school in which they are enrolled or the Schools of Special Educational Needs.
- Additional provisions will be in place for vulnerable students including modified educational planning and specialised equipment for children in education support settings.

## Medically vulnerable and immunocompromised staff

- All employees even those at high risk are able to attend work with appropriate controls in place. This can include preparing a COVID-19 action plan with an employee's medical practitioner.

## 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.

For more information visit: <https://www.wa.gov.au/government/covid-19-coronavirus/covid-19-coronavirus-remote-aboriginal-communities-travel>

## Co-located sites

- Co-located school sites include those that share grounds with other educational institutions such as universities.
- Individuals who work in a co-located facility and enter the school site on a regular basis are required to meet vaccination mandate requirements.
- Individuals who work in a co-located facility and enter the school site on an ad hoc basis are not required to be vaccinated.

## Shared facilities

- Principals with shared facilities should contact the Department for advice regarding vaccination requirements.

## Data

To assist in the review of these guidelines, particular workforce and student data will be required. Wherever possible these data will be sourced centrally, however there may be information required from schools. Schools will be informed on how data will be collated, and the frequency of data required.

## Community based close contact testing and isolation protocols

<p><b>Confirmed positive case</b></p>	<p>Isolate for a minimum of 7 days</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• At Day 7, if symptoms are present remain in isolation until symptoms clear.</li> <li>• If no symptoms after Day 7, leave isolation and no testing is required.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Symptomatic close contact</b></p>	<p>Isolate for 7 days from date of contact with positive case, and:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Take a PCR or RAT test as soon as symptoms develop: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ If positive – refer to ‘Confirmed positive case’. You must report your positive RAT to WA Health via <a href="http://www.healthywa.wa.gov.au/ratregister">www.healthywa.wa.gov.au/ratregister</a>.</li> <li>○ If negative– stay in isolation, and, if you used a RAT, take a second RAT in 24 hours and remain in isolation. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ If then positive – refer to ‘Confirmed positive case’. You must report your positive RAT to WA Health via <a href="http://www.healthywa.wa.gov.au/ratregister">www.healthywa.wa.gov.au/ratregister</a>.</li> <li>▪ If negative - and no new household members have tested positive - take a RAT again on Day 7, before ending isolation if a negative result is returned.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p><b>Asymptomatic close contact</b></p>	<p>Isolate for 7 days from date of contact with positive case:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If symptoms develop, refer to ‘Symptomatic close contact.</li> <li>• If still asymptomatic, take a RAT on Day 7. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ If positive – refer to ‘Confirmed positive case’. You must report your positive RAT to WA Health via <a href="http://www.healthywa.wa.gov.au/ratregister">www.healthywa.wa.gov.au/ratregister</a>.</li> <li>○ If negative - and no new household members have tested positive - self-isolation ends after Day 7, and people should monitor for symptoms.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p><b>Symptomatic but not a close contact</b></p>	<p>Get a PCR test immediately and isolate until result returned:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If positive – refer to ‘Confirmed positive case’.</li> <li>• If negative – not required to isolate but should stay home where possible until symptoms clear.</li> </ul> <p>If you take a RAT because a PCR test is unavailable:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If positive – refer to ‘Confirmed positive case’. You must report your positive RAT to WA Health via <a href="http://www.healthywa.wa.gov.au/ratregister">www.healthywa.wa.gov.au/ratregister</a></li> <li>• If negative – continue to isolate and repeat RAT in 24 hours - if negative after this follow-up test, you are not required to isolate but should stay home until symptoms clear.</li> </ul>