
Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to outline to parents, carers and students how our school will be managing risk and other operational matters relating to COVID-19 during, 2021.

Westgarth Primary School is committed to providing a safe learning and working environment for our students and staff. We ask for all members of the school community to follow this policy to enable us to provide the safest possible environment during this time. We all have a role to play in reducing the risks relating to COVID-19 in Victoria.

Background

Westgarth Primary School is following the advice for schools from the Department of Education and Training which can be found on the Department's website at: [COVID-19](#).

Scope

This policy applies to everyone in the Westgarth Primary School community engaging in on-site learning or visiting school grounds. This includes all members of staff (principals, teachers and education support staff), all parents/carers who interact with the school and all students. It also includes visitors to the school. Information specific to staff only and not directly relevant to students and their families is not included in this policy. Any additional information for staff only is available on the Department's [School Operations Guide \(staff login required\)](#)

Details

On-site learning

Health and safety at school

Our school follows the Department and Victorian Chief Health Officer's advice and requirements in relation to health and safety. The health and safety measures relating to students are outlined below. These health and safety measures are regularly reviewed in line with the changing context of COVID-19 in Victoria. As a result, as Term 1 proceeds, some measures may no longer be required and/or new measures may be introduced.

Unwell students (including students who have been tested)

- Unwell students **must** stay home.
- Where students have been tested for COVID-19 they are required to isolate at home and must not attend school until they are both symptom free and have received their results (provided the result is negative).

Managing unwell students at school

- Students experiencing compatible symptoms with COVID-19, such as fever, cough, sore throat, shortness of breath, runny nose, or loss or change of sense of smell or

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taste, will be isolated in an appropriate space with suitable supervision and collected by a parent/carer as soon as possible. Urgent medical attention will be sought where needed. Unwell students will not be permitted to travel home unsupervised. NOTE: For some people COVID-19 symptoms may also include headache, muscle soreness, stuffy nose, nausea, vomiting and diarrhoea.

- Health care plans, where relevant and required, will be updated to provide additional advice on monitoring and identification of the unwell child in the context of COVID-19.
- If a staff member is unsure whether a student is unwell in the first instance we will contact the parent/carer to discuss any concerns about the health status of the student, and we will take a precautionary approach, requesting the parent/carer to collect their child if concerns remain. A trained staff member may take the temperature of the student, where appropriate, to support decision-making. Gloves will be worn for the purpose of taking a temperature.
- Parent/carers of students experiencing compatible symptoms with COVID-19 will be encouraged to seek the advice of their healthcare professional who can advise on next steps. Students should not return until symptoms resolve.

Students with underlying conditions (such as hay fever or asthma)

- If a student has persistent symptoms due to an underlying condition such as hay fever or asthma, the student should still be tested for COVID-19 if they develop symptoms that are different to or worse than their usual symptoms.
- Parents/carers should also consider getting a medical certificate from the child's treating GP to confirm that it is safe for them to attend school with persistent symptoms that may overlap with some of the symptoms of COVID-19 such as cough or runny nose.

Young children with persistent mild symptoms

- For younger children (in grades Prep to 2) who have had a negative COVID-19 test that was taken after they developed symptoms, the decision about return to school should be made in conjunction with the child's treating GP. If the GP is satisfied the child has recovered from their acute illness, is otherwise well, and does not need a repeat COVID-19 test, the child can return even if they are not completely free of symptoms. Any worsening of symptoms will require review and repeat COVID-19 testing, if considered appropriate by the doctor.
- Students with a negative COVID-19 test whose symptoms have completely resolved do not need a medical certificate to return to the school

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Managing a suspected or confirmed case of COVID-19

The Department has comprehensive procedures in place with the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) to manage suspected or confirmed cases of COVID-19 in schools. In accordance with these procedures:

- We will inform the Department's Incident Support and Operations Centre if a student (or staff member) tests positive to COVID-19.
- The Department will then notify WorkSafe on our behalf.
- The school will be advised by DHHS if a student at our school has been identified as a close contact of a person with COVID-19.

Close contacts are contacted directly by DHHS regarding quarantine and testing; the student should not attend school until they are advised by DHHS that their quarantine has concluded. Students should bring a copy of the clearance message (text, email or letter) they receive from DHHS indicating that their quarantine period has ended when they return to school. Schools will be asked to confirm to DHHS that the student is not attending school during this time. If the student is attending school, we are required to send the student home immediately.

Face masks

As the requirements for face masks may change at short notice, our school will always follow the advice on the Victorian Government's COVID-19 website at:

<https://www.coronavirus.vic.gov.au/face-masks-study-and-school>

As at 11.59pm 3 February 2021, the Victorian Chief Health Officer has directed that:

- Face masks must be worn by individuals aged 12 or over when on public transport and school buses – unless you have a lawful exemption.
- Individuals aged 12 or over must carry a face mask at all times.
- All visitors to school sites aged 12 or over must wear a face mask when indoors
- School staff are not required to wear face masks while teaching or caring but those who wish to do so can. Staff must wear face masks in indoor areas of the school when not teaching or caring.
- For primary schools: Primary school students are not required to wear a face mask at school or outside school hours care programs but those who wish to do so can.
- While it is no longer mandatory to wear face masks at school, they are recommended for use by staff and secondary school students when physical distancing of 1.5 metres cannot be maintained. We will ensure this recommendation is followed, noting that exemptions regarding face masks continue to apply such as students who are over the age of 12 and are unable to wear a mask due to the nature of their disability. A face mask must cover the nose and mouth. Face shields, scarves or bandanas do not meet these requirements.

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We will support students wearing face masks in hot weather by encouraging the following steps to improve comfort:

- keeping hydrated with water
- using a single-use mask, or a reusable face mask made from 100 per cent cotton, for increased breathability
- washing the reusable mask frequently to maintain effectiveness and bringing a spare so students can change their masks if it gets damp or wet
- taking mask breaks throughout the day when in settings that do not require them to be worn

Physical distancing

- Wherever possible we will encourage and support physical distancing of students however the Department and Victorian Chief Health Officer has acknowledged that physical distancing in schools is practicably difficult to achieve and has not mandated this practice.
- Parents are asked to observe physical distancing requirements (1.5 metres) whenever dropping off or collecting students from school and must not congregate at the school gate.
- Signage will indicate where there are limitations on the maximum number of members of the public that may be present in the space at a single time.
- Density limits do not apply to classrooms and other spaces for the purposes of student use, including corridors and other shared areas.

School arrival and departure arrangements for Term 1

In line with Department advice, the standard school arrival and departure time will remain in place for all students. Students are to arrive at school by 8.55am and depart from school at 3.45pm.

However, to continue to support physical distancing at our school we have arranged for the following entry/exit points:

- Years P-2 to enter and exit through the three Brooke Street gates and Years 3-6 students enter and exit via the three Clarke Street gates including the bike shed gate.

Hand, food and drink hygiene

- Hand sanitiser will be available at all entry points to classrooms and students will be educated on the importance of this health and safety measure.
- All people on school grounds must undertake regular hand hygiene, particularly on arrival to school, before and after eating, after blowing their nose, coughing, sneezing or using the toilet.

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- Where shared equipment is necessary, students will be required to exercise strict hand hygiene before and after use.
- School water fountains and taps have been reopened for normal use.
- Students will be encouraged not to share their food. Where sharing of food occurs we will encourage individual portions alongside strict hand hygiene.

Air ventilation

- Wherever possible, we will increase fresh air into indoor spaces and maximise the use of outdoor learning areas and environments. This will include setting air conditioning units to use external air rather than recycling and keeping doors open with door jambs to keep air circulating.

Temperature checks

- Mandatory temperature testing of all students is no longer required.

Mobile phones

- The Department and school's mobile phone policies continue to apply and we ask that students clean their phones regularly.

Health, Wellbeing and inclusions Workforces at school

- Health and wellbeing staff (such as Student Support Services, Koorie Engagement Support Officers, Visiting Teachers and school nurses) will continue to provide support to students as required.

Record keeping for contact tracing

- To support contact tracing, we are required to keep a record of the name, contact details, date and time of attendance of all staff, students and visitors who attend on-site for more than 15 minutes.
- We are also required to record the areas of the school the person attended.

COVID-19 Safety Management Plan

- Our school follows and implements the Department's COVID-19 Safety Management Plan, available at: [COVID19 Safety Management Plan](#).

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Attendance

Normal attendance notification requirements apply for all students. Please refer to our school Attendance Policy for further information.

Attendance and students who may be medically vulnerable

- The Victorian Chief Health Officer has advised that given the current low risk of COVID-19 transmission in the school community, students with medical vulnerabilities can feel reassured that they can safely attend learning on school sites. 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 on site 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.
- Our school will review assessments relating to attendance alongside notable changes to COVID-19 transmission in Victoria.

Student absence due to border restrictions

- Where students are unable to attend school because they are prohibited from returning to Victoria due to being in a designated 'Red Zone' or because they are undertaking home-based quarantining after visiting a Red Zone, we will provide schools materials to support students to continue their learning remotely via nominated Websites activities until such time as they are permitted to return to school. The school will not be able to offer 'live teaching' in this instance. Please contact either the Principal; or nominee for further support and advice on how we can support your child in these circumstances.

Our school records student attendance in accordance with the Department's Attendance Policy.

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Access to devices

Where students have been loaned a device during remote and flexible learning, students may now permanently retain that device. Where students have already returned their loaned device Westgarth Primary School will offer to return that device to them for permanent use.

School assemblies, graduations and other school gatherings

Face to face assemblies may now resume without limits, provided the assembly has no external guests.

If an assembly or other event is held **with external guests** (parents/carers/visitors) then we are required to have an overall attendee limit (inclusive of guests, staff and students) based on available floor space of the venue; with the density limit of one person per two square metres applied.

If an event is held exclusively with students and staff **from a single school**, density limits do not apply to the venue or dancefloor, regardless of whether the event is held at school or at a hospitality venue, entertainment facility or community facilities

Camps and excursions

Excursions are now permitted across Victoria provided they are conducted in line with specific capacity limits on venues that are being used.

School camps are also permitted across Victoria.

Our school will follow DHHS advice on high-risk locations (when community transmission is occurring in areas of Victoria) and defer or make alternative arrangements for camps or excursions planned for these areas.

Sport and recreation

Based on the Department and Victorian Chief Health Officer advice and requirements as at 20 January 2021:

- Indoor and outdoor contact and non-contact sport are now permitted, including interschool sports.
- Playground and sports equipment can be used by students. However students must practise hand hygiene before and after use.
- Playgrounds are available for community use.
- Swimming pool use in the community can occur. Further information about our Term 1 swimming activities has been communicated to the relevant year levels.

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Instrumental classes and music activities

All music activities and instrumental classes are now permitted without specified limits. For wind instruments our schools follows the DHHS health and safety advice at [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) transmission from air-circulating, wind-blowing devices and activities.](#)

Kitchen Garden

Food preparation can continue with frequent hand hygiene and no sharing of food

Visitors (including interschool activities)

Limitations on who can visit school premises no longer apply but our school must comply with density limits of one person per two square metres when external guests are in attendance. This density limit applies to all persons in the space, including students.

To support contact tracing we are required to keep a record of all visitors who attend on-site for longer than 15 minutes. Our school uses the COMPASS to assist with record keeping requirements. Visitors to school grounds must comply with physical distancing and face mask requirements and practise good hand hygiene.

Outside school hours care

Outside School Hours Care will be available for students in accordance with their usual process, following public health directions and applying the operational health and safety advice to schools.

Communication between parents/carers and our school

Parents and carers are encouraged to contact the school office on 94815577 to discuss any concerns or areas of need in regards to their child's learning, health, wellbeing or access to teaching and learning resources.

Cleaning and facilities management

At our school we follow the Department's requirements relating to school cleaning and undertake daily end-of-school-day cleaning and disinfecting of high-touch surfaces.

Further information and resources

- [DET Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) website:](#)

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- <https://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/Pages/coronavirus-advice-schools.aspx>
 - DHHS Coronavirus (COVID-19) website:
 - <https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/coronavirus>
 - DET Infectious Diseases Policy:
 - <https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/infectious-diseases/policy>
 - DET Health Care Needs Policy:
 - <https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/health-care-needs/policy>
 - Talking to your child about COVID-19:
 - <https://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/about/departments/covid-19/talking-to-your-child-during-coronavirus.docx>
 - Department of Education and Training COVID-19 Advice Line – 1800 338 663
 - Department of Health and Human Services Coronavirus hotline – 1800 675 398 (24 hours, 7 days a week)

Review

This policy was last updated on 22 February, 2021 and [will be reviewed on a regular basis as the situation changes]

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