



ACT Public Schools COVID-19 Management Plan



This plan is subject to public health advice at the time. The **health and safety** of students, staff and their families are the priority.

ACT public schools will deliver on-campus learning with the following COVID Smart measures in place to minimise transmission of COVID-19 onsite.

All schools should regularly review, and update where required, their COVID-19 Safety Assurance Plan. Our approach is informed by the [National Framework for Managing COVID-19 in Schools and Early Childhood Education and Care Settings](#), and the latest advice on winter season preparedness from the [Australian Health Protection Principal Committee](#). Consistent with the *Managing COVID-19 Exposures Policy*, the intent of this plan is to eliminate or minimise the risk of harm from COVID-19 as far as reasonably practicable, and to maximise learning and development, including through face-to-face learning where possible.

National Guiding Principles of Management COVID-19 in Schools	Principle 1: ECEC and Schools are essential and should be the first to open and last to close wherever possible in outbreak situations, with face-to-face learning prioritised	Principle 2: Baseline public health measures continue to apply (<i>such as hand washing, face masks, physical distancing, ventilation, staying home if unwell, and encouraging vaccination</i>)	Principle 3: No vulnerable child or child of an essential worker is turned away (<i>including localised school planning to ensure a minimum offering is available for these children</i>)	Principle 4: Responses will be proportionate and health risk-based (<i>informed by health advice, practical implementation requirements, and the individual profile of different education settings</i>)	Principle 5: Equip ECEC services and schools to respond on the basis of public health advice and with support from public health authorities where required (<i>including data collection and sharing between education and public health authorities</i>)	Principle 6: Wellbeing of children and education staff to be supported (<i>including addressing workforce shortages where possible, and consistent and timely communication</i>)
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Baseline public health measures for all schools	<p>The following measures will be in place in all ACT Public Schools. These measures will be reviewed from time to time based on advice from ACT Health.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vaccination – All students (ages 5 and over) and all staff are strongly encouraged to be up-to-date with their COVID-19 vaccination. • Household Contacts – Staff and students are required to follow the Public Health (Diagnosed People and Household Contacts) Emergency Direction 2022 when they are deemed a household contact. Asymptomatic household contacts are exempt from quarantine requirements and therefore are allowed to attend their place of work or study on the basis that they comply with risk mitigation strategies outlined in the Direction. • Check in requirement – Timely and accurate student attendance (roll marking) is to be completed for each class. • Physical distancing – Physical distancing should be maintained on school sites where possible. Density quotients no longer apply. • Staying home when sick and hygiene requirements – Staff, students and visitors must not attend school campuses if they are unwell and will be sent home if they any have symptoms of COVID-19. All staff, visitors and students should at all times maintain appropriate hand and respiratory hygiene. • Minimising mixing - Where learning cohorts are mixed, schools should consider additional mitigations such as minimising the length of time or the number of students or staff participating in organised indoors activities together. The usual COVID Smart behaviours should be encouraged, including physical distancing where possible, practicing good hand and respiratory hygiene practices, and staying home if unwell. • Masks – In line with the ACT Public Service WHS arrangements, all staff and visitors must continue to wear masks at ACT Public Schools when indoors and when physical distancing of 1.5 meters cannot be maintained e.g. when providing personal care to a student, when working in close contact with other staff or students, or when travelling to excursions. However, masks are not required when teaching where physical distancing can be maintained, when outdoors, or when eating and drinking. Wearing of masks by staff under these circumstances is considered a reasonable WHS precaution to minimise the risk of COVID-19 transmission. Students are not required to wear masks on school sites, however students in years 7-12 are encouraged to wear a mask at school when indoors and when physical distancing cannot be maintained. Children in years 3-6 are welcome to wear masks where it suits them, however children in preschool to year 2 should not wear masks as they are likely to be worn incorrectly and may present a choking hazard. • Cleaning – COVID-Safe cleaning practices will be in place in line with the AHPPC endorsed Information about cleaning and disinfection for schools. This includes routine and regular daily cleaning with escalation to enhanced cleaning where cases have been identified. • Ventilation – All ACT public schools have Indoor Air Quality (IAQ) plans in place to increase fresh air circulation. Mechanical ventilation and outdoor areas for learning will continue to be used where appropriate, balanced against weather and temperature considerations. • Rapid antigen tests – Schools have access to Rapid Antigen Tests (RATs) for distribution as needed. Staff and students who are symptomatic should not attend the school to collect a RAT. Those staff and students are encouraged to access testing through one of the ACT’s COVID-19 testing facilities.
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Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supporting Students – Schools will continue to support learning from home for students who are medically vulnerable to COVID-19, which is supported by a medical certificate. All students continue to have access to school psychologists via telehealth or in person. Vulnerable children and children of essential workers will continue to have access to onsite supervision during periods of remote learning (<i>Principles 3 and 6</i>). • Supporting Staff – School staff are essential workers. All staff have access to wellbeing supports. Teachers will not be required to deliver remote and on campus learning to the same class at the same time. Staff can attend professional learning and development opportunities on site or off site. • Workload reduction strategies – Schools will be supported to implement a range of measures to reduce workloads for school based staff as required. These will be communicated to schools as and when required and will be term based strategies.
Responding to COVID-19 exposures onsite	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Notification – The Public Health (Diagnosed People and Household Contacts) Emergency Direction 2022 requires a person who is diagnosed with COVID-19 to take reasonable steps to advise school that they have tested positive for COVID-19. This is only required where a person attended the school during their infectious period (two days prior to symptom onset or two days prior to testing, whichever is earliest). Schools will continue to receive notifications of positive cases from staff and students which will be recorded on the Intake Form. Staff and students who are either diagnosed with COVID-19 or have had an exposure to COVID-19 should comply with the public health advice relating to notification, isolation and quarantine requirements. • Risk Assessment – Schools will undertake risk assessments to identify any high risk school exposures. The Education Directorate COVID Response Team will then determine an appropriate course of action which may include seeking advice from ACT Health. • Communication – Schools will communicate to their school communities that a positive case has been onsite. Staff and students who are affected should comply with the appropriate public health advice, dependent on their exposure level. Staff and students who are not directly affected can continue attending school unless they have symptoms of COVID-19. • Additional COVID-19 Safety Measures – The Education Directorate COVID Response Team will continue to routinely liaise with ACT Health regarding situations where there are high numbers of COVID-19 positive cases in schools. Additional risk mitigation strategies may be implemented, based on ACT Health advice (outlined below). • Reporting – The Education Directorate will continue to report data on positive COVID-19 cases at ACT Public Schools on the Directorate’s website.
Additional COVID-19 safety measures	<p>When there are high numbers of COVID-19 exposures at an ACT Public School, consideration will be given to whether any of the following additional COVID-19 Safety Measures should be reintroduced, with authorisation by the Education Directorate COVID Response Team. These measures aim to limit the potential for further transmission and will generally be limited to a short period of time (e.g., 1-2 weeks).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Additional testing recommendations – to test before returning to school and again in 48 hours. • Masks – Students in Years 7-12 may be asked to wear a mask when indoors and when physical distancing of 1.5 meters cannot be maintained. • Limiting parents and carers on site – Parents and carers may be asked not to attend a school site without an appointment. • Cancelling permitted activities – Any of the permitted activities outlined below, may be cancelled or rescheduled to another date. • Cohorting – It may be necessary to cohort a particular class or year level so that they don’t mix with other students or staff across the school. • Remote learning – Some or all students may need to return to remote learning. This measure will be limited as much as possible and may also be enacted in response to workforce shortages arising from COVID-19.
Facilities & hire	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School canteens and uniform stores can operate online and counter sales, with COVID Safety business checklists in place. • P&C run fundraisers can go ahead on school sites with appropriate risk mitigation measures and COVID-19 Safety Assurance Plans in place. There should only be a minimum number of volunteers (visitors to the school) necessary to coordinate fundraisers on site during school hours. Where fundraisers involve other visitors, they should be held outside of school hours with reference to COVID Safe Events Guidance. • Hiring a school facility – For a hirer to access a public school facility they must have a COVID-19 Safety Assurance Plan which must include adhering to physical distancing and hygiene requirements. Private events held at a school facility must also comply with any applicable public health restrictions for events. • End of Year events such as formal and graduations can go ahead with limited parent attendance. Parents and carers are permitted to attend events that are outdoors, outside of school hours, or ticketed events. Parents and carers are unable to attend events such as school assemblies that are held indoors and during school hours, schools should consider providing live streams or recordings to families. While on site, parents and carers must follow COVID Smart measures at all times. This includes physical distancing, hygiene practices and staying away if unwell. Parents and carers are required to wear a mask while on school site indoors and physical distancing cannot be maintained.

Visitors	<p>Parents and carers on school sites</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents and carers can attend outdoor areas of the school site for drop off and pick up, or when attending a permitted activity as outlined below. • Parents and carers can enter school classrooms or indoor settings with an appointment, including to access enrolment support, or when attending a permitted activity (see below). Parents and carers can book an appointment with their school. • P&C meetings may be held on school sites, as agreed with the Principal. • Parents and carers must follow COVID Smart measures (physical distancing, hygiene practices, staying away if unwell). • Parents and carers are required to wear a mask while on school site indoors and physical distancing cannot be maintained. <p>ESO staff on school sites</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ESO staff who provide a support service are permitted to enter the school site. This includes allied health staff and other school support services. • ESO staff visits can resume by appointment where agreed to by the School Principal. • All staff must follow COVID safe measures (physical distancing, hygiene practices, staying away if unwell). <p>Essential visitors, volunteers, and VIPs on school sites</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Essential visitors are permitted to attend school sites. Essential visitors are considered to be anyone who provides a critical service to a student or staff member, including allied health. Student placements are also allowed. • Volunteers are permitted to attend school sites. Volunteers are considered to be anyone who provides a critical service to the school community, including canteen and uniform stores, parent volunteers, P&C meetings and P&C fund fundraisers. • VIPs are permitted to attend school sites by appointment following the usual approval processes. • Essential visitors, volunteers and VIPs must follow COVID safe measures (physical distancing, hygiene practices, staying away if unwell).
Permitted Activities	<p>The following are permitted activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extracurricular activities, incursions on school sites, and local excursions • Interstate and overnight excursions involving individual classes, year groups or school sports groups. COVID Safety Assurance Plans must be in place and a risk assessment must be uploaded to the Student Administration System (SAS) prior to any overnight or interstate excursion. For interstate school excursions, the plan should outline how they will manage a child or staff member who develops symptoms of COVID-19, or has a positive COVID-19 test, while interstate. Parents must be available to pick up children who become unwell while away. • Work experience placements and VET training on and off school sites. • Information nights and transition visits. • Mixed cohort dance groups, school choir, bands, or orchestras. • School assemblies, performances, concerts and graduations. • Interschool activities such as sport, art, music and similar activities on and off school sites. • School sporting team training and participation in community and interschool sporting competitions. • Swimming and athletics carnivals. • Parents and carers can attend permitted activities where they are outdoors, outside of school hours, or ticketed. Parents and carers must follow COVID Smart measures at all times on school sites (physical distancing, hygiene practices, staying away if unwell). Parents and carers are required to wear a mask while on school site indoors and physical distancing cannot be maintained. • Events on school sites that involve the general public can only be held outside of school hours, must have a COVID-19 Safety Assurance Plan in place, with reference to the COVID Safe Events Guidance. <p>*International excursions are not permitted at this time.</p>
Assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assessments will be undertaken as per normal processes as much as is practicable.