A roadmap for ACT public schools has been released based on the ACT Government’s COVID-19 recovery plan.

The roadmap sets out a planned further easing of restrictions on school activities and parent/carer engagement.

[The ACT Education Directorate COVID-19 Easing of Restrictions Roadmap  (239kb)](https://www.education.act.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0003/1563141/Roadmap-for-Public-Schools-CHO-approved.pdf)

The Frequently Asked Questions below provide more detail about the arrangements for learning in ACT public schools during Term 3.

**Schooling**

**Are things ‘back to normal’ in schools?**

No. The pandemic is not over and restrictions are still in place.

However, in line with the easing of restrictions more broadly across the ACT, there is a planned further easing of restrictions on a range of school activities. Key changes can be found in the COVID-19 Easing of Restrictions Roadmap document.

**What onsite activities does the easing of restrictions allow in Term 3?**

**The roadmap** for ACT public schools spells out a number of onsite activities that can take place from term 3 (with appropriate physical distancing and hygiene measures in place). This includes:

* Parent teacher interviews
* Small assemblies
* School discos
* School celebrations
* School and P&C fundraising events

For more information, please review [The ACT Education Directorate COVID-19 Easing of Restrictions Roadmap  (239kb)](https://www.education.act.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0003/1563141/Roadmap-for-Public-Schools-CHO-approved.pdf).

**What will the student attendance requirements be in Term 3?**

**Students are now expected to return to on-campus learning and normal attendance requirements apply, unless a student is considered vulnerable to COVID-19.**

**All unexplained absences should be reported to your school.**

**I have a medically vulnerable child, should I keep them home?**

**The ACT Chief Health Officer has advised that parents are responsible for seeking medical advice from their GP about the suitability of on-campus learning for their children.**

Students with chronic health conditions or compromised immune systems, as verified by a GP, are allowed to remain studying/working from home. If you would like to discuss your child’s circumstances and school attendance in more detail, please contact your school in the first instance.

**What do I do if my child is anxious about COVID-19?**

We are mindful that children may experience increased anxiety during this time. The wellbeing of our students and their families is important. The Education Directorate has compiled a range of useful [wellbeing resources](https://www.education.act.gov.au/support-for-our-students/covid-19-wellbeing-support-resources-for-students-and-families) for students and families.

**How will schools respond if there is a confirmed case of COVID-19 at a school?**

The Education Directorate has established procedures in place to respond to a confirmed or suspected case in an ACT public school. This includes working with the Chief Health Officer to determine risks and may include full or partial closure of an individual school in the case of localised infection, through to system wide return to remote learning if community restrictions are reinstated. The ACT’s significant investment and planning for remote learning will enable flexibility to respond to any return to community restrictions if required.

The Education Directorate will also work closely with schools to review these arrangements in the months ahead to ensure effective implementation and management of COVID-19 related risks.

**How does social distancing work in schools?**

Based on the advice of the ACT Chief Health Officer, schools have been limiting the gathering of adults on school sites throughout Term 2. Each school is different and has applied this principle to the operation of their school accordingly.

From the start of Term 3, p**arents and volunteers can attend school sites with physical distancing and hygiene measures in place and adhered to at all times**. **Schools should keep a record of all on-site visitors and continue to follow all relevant visitor related policies and procedures where appropriate.**

**Do I need to keep my kids at home if they’re sick?**

Yes. If your child has any kind of illness, even if it is just a runny nose, they must not come to school. If a child in an ACT public school is unwell, their parents will be asked to collect them. Schools will be stricter in implementing these rules than you perhaps are used to, but it is for the health and safety of everyone in our school communities.

**My child is in an LSU, LSUA and/or another disability support program. How is schooling working for them?**

If your child is in an LSU, LSUA and/or another disability support program and you have any concerns regarding their education we recommend you make contact with your school to discuss in the first instance. Alternatively, you can contact the Education Directorate on 6205 5429.

**How will you address racism related to COVID-19?**

Racism is always inappropriate in ACT public schools. Racist comments or behaviours would be addressed by schools in the same manner as any other time.

**Who can I talk to if I have further questions or specific requirements for my child?**

We understand that this is a challenging time for families. If you have further questions or would like to discuss their individual circumstances, please contact your child’s school in the first instance.

**Health and hygiene measures**

**What health and hygiene measures are in place at schools?**

The ACT Chief Health Officer has worked with the Education Directorate on ensuring our schools are safe places for students to learn and for staff to work.

The [advice from the ACT Chief Health Officer](https://www.education.act.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0009/1544409/CHO-advice-on-ACT-schools.pdf) includes advice on physical distancing measures for adults, managing risks to vulnerable populations in schools, hygiene measures, environmental cleaning, management of suspected and confirmed cases and the provision of routine and emergency first-aid care.

Basic hygiene, including good hand and respiratory hygiene measures, remains an effective way to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

**Are schools being cleaned more often?**

Yes. The ACT Government employs a dedicated school cleaning workforce to clean every school. Cleaning services have been extended to deliver dedicated hygiene cleaning activities throughout each school day. The Government has recruited additional school cleaners through the Jobs for Canberrans program to deliver this important service for our schools and community.

**How are schools boosting their cleaning and hygiene practices?**

The school cleaning plan for Term 3 will continue to include day cleaning, incorporating the High Frequency Touchpoint Protocol developed in accordance with advice from the ACT Health Directorate and World Health Organisation Guidelines. This protocol identifies what needs to be cleaned, the frequency of cleaning and what equipment and cleaning products will be required. It includes an emphasis on the cleaning of high frequency touch points such as taps, handrails and door handles and surfaces such as staff desk top computers and desks. Under the protocol, student desks will be cleaned on a daily basis by the School Cleaning Services as part of the out of hours cleaning work.

**Do schools have enough sanitiser and soap?**

Yes. The Education Directorate has ensured we have ongoing supplies of soap and hand sanitiser in our schools. Hand sanitiser will be available in key locations throughout all schools, so every student and staff member has access to them.

Parents should also encourage their children to wash their hands before they arrive at school.

**Are schools conducting temperature checks?**

No. The advice of the Australian Health Protection Principal Committee (AHPPC) and the ACT Chief Health Officer is that regular temperature checking of students won’t be conducted in schools as there is limited evidence to suggest this is of value.

**Are teachers wearing face masks?**

No. Teachers are not required to wear face masks. Good hygiene practices and environmental cleaning are more important measures for reducing risk of COVID-19 transmission.

**If I am a teacher and I have a child at home sick, can I still go to work?**

As long as you are not sick, or showing any signs or symptoms of sickness, you can go to work. Any person experiencing COVID-19 symptoms (fever, cough, sore throat and shortness of breath) should be tested immediately.

**Remote learning and student support**

**Is remote learning continuing?**

Yes, for those who need it. Students and teachers with chronic health conditions or compromised immune systems will be allowed to remain studying/working from home.

Please contact your school or classroom teacher to discuss how this will work in your school in more detail.

**How can students access support services?**

School psychologists provided psychological services throughout the remote learning period and are continuing to do so now schools have returned to on-campus learning.

To meet the expected increase in need, the ACT Government has also invested in the increased provision of mental health services through headspace and other community organisations.

The Student Wellbeing Telehealth Support Service (SWTSS) was established during the remote learning period and is being delivered by a team of psychologists and senior psychologists from the ACT Education Directorate. This central telehealth service continues to operate as schools are returning, in addition to psychologists in schools.

This team assists students and families via Google Meet video-calls or over the phone with appointments made via an online booking form or a phone booking system.

This service offers students and their families psychological support for issues related to both wellbeing and learning. It is not intended to provide crisis support or replace any usual therapeutic services accessed by students.

School psychologists allocated to schools will continue to provide assistance to their school community in addition to SWTSS team.

Appointments can be made through an [online booking form](https://tinyurl.com/actedutelehealthservice) or by calling 6205 1559 and speaking to our booking officer. Appointments will be available between 9:00am and 4:30pm.

This is not a crisis service and the team will refer students to appropriate emergency services where appropriate.  Usual referral sources such as Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS), headspace or their GP will continue to apply as required.

**Who do I call for help/questions?**

If you ever need any help or have questions, please contact your child’s school.

**Excursions, sport, and work experience**

**Are school excursions allowed?**

Yes, with limitations. The ACT Chief Health Officer has provided the Education Directorate with the following advice regarding excursion, in line with the easing of restrictions across the community:

* Excursion groups must not exceed 100 people (this number includes adults).
* Galleries, museums, national institutions and historic sites remain limited to hosting organised groups of 20 people (excluding the tour guide) as per [ACT Health advice](https://www.covid19.act.gov.au/faqs/faqs-changes-to-restrictions). This advice may change as restrictions are eased further.
* Physical distancing for adults and hygiene requirements must be adhered to at all times.
* Interstate excursions can go ahead where they form a necessary part of a student’s education program (for example, College outdoor education programs). This includes overnight excursions.
* Schools must adhere to the specific COVID-19 rules within the state they are travelling and should undertake a risk management assessment based on the conditions within that state.

In order to proceed with an excursion, schools must receive a copy of the excursion provider’s COVID safety plan to ensure they have appropriate health and hygiene measures in place in line with Australian Health and Protection Principal Committee (AHPP) recommendations.

As community restrictions regarding COVID-19 change, the restrictions around excursions may also change.

**Can excursions to Birrigai go ahead?**

All overnight excursions at Birrigai can go ahead, with physical distancing restrictions for adults and hygiene requirements must be adhered to at all times.

**Can incursions go ahead?**

Yes, schools are permitted to host onsite incursions as long as they maintain the social distancing and hygiene measures required for adults as per the advice from the Australian Health Protection Principal Committee (AHPPC). Schools should keep a record of all on-site visitors and continue to follow all relevant visitor related policies and procedures where appropriate.

**Are overseas excursions able to go ahead?**

No. The pandemic is not over and restrictions around international travel are still in place.

As a result of the ongoing development of the COVID-19 situation internationally, all overseas school excursions have been cancelled for 2020. Families should work with their schools to facilitate any necessary refunds through the normal processes.

**Can students do work experience?**

Yes. Work experience opportunities can be supported in the local community. Schools must receive a copy of the work experience provider’s COVID safety plan to ensure they have appropriate health and hygiene measures in place in line with Australian Health and Protection Principal Committee (AHPP) recommendations.

**Are school sports and physical education being undertaken at schools?**

Health and PE will continue to be delivered at the discretion of each school in a safe way to meet curriculum needs.

**Will interschool sport competitions or sports carnivals be allowed?**

Yes, with limitations. Interschool sport can take place within the ACT region with groups of under 100 (including adults). Social distancing and hygiene measures required for adults as per the advice from the Australian Health Protection Principal Committee (AHPPC) must be maintained.

As community restrictions regarding COVID-19 change, the restrictions around interschool sport competitions and sports carnivals may also change.

**Assemblies, performances and end-of-year activities**

**Can school assemblies resume?**

Assemblies, gatherings and performances can resume with limitations:

* Audience must not exceed 100 adults (or 1 person per 4m2, whichever is less)
* Each family group must sit 1.5 metres apart
* Hand sanitiser should be provided on entry/exit
* Schools should consider how they will ensure that no more than 100 adults will gather in each indoor or outdoor space, including waiting in foyers/entrance ways to school halls.
* Schools will be informed of changes to audience numbers as restrictions are eased more broadly by the ACT Government.

**Can school discos and celebrations resume?**

Onsite school discos and celebrations can go ahead with no restrictions on student numbers. The number of adults attending should be determined in line with physical distancing requirements (100 adults or 1 adult per 4 square metres, whichever is less).

**Are graduations and school formals taking place in 2020?**

As restrictions ease across the ACT, schools have begun initial planning for graduations, formals and other end of year activities.

The Education Directorate will continue to be guided by ACT Health advice and as such it is important that the community be aware that should the COVID-19 situation change – for example, should restrictions need to be tightened - the advice around graduations, formals and other end of year activities may also change.

We acknowledge the considerable amount of forward planning that goes into these kinds of events, as well as the sense of excitement that students and families have about them. As such we will endeavour to provide updated advice at the earliest possible convenience for parents, carers, families and schools.

The current advice for school formals is that planning of these events can proceed. Hospitality venues are currently allowed to cater to groups of up to 100 (excluding wait staff). School communities should be mindful that it cannot be guaranteed what level the restrictions will be at across the ACT when these events will occur. As such, schools should work with venues to negotiate cancellation terms in order to ensure that refunds can be provided to families if the event cannot go ahead due to COVID-19 restrictions.

The current advice for graduation ceremonies and end-of-year concerts is that these activities can go ahead, with some restrictions. The number of adults in attendance must fall in line with broader ACT Government restrictions and physical distancing requirements. Currently, audience numbers will be capped at 100 (1 adult per 4 square metres) and there must be 1.5 metres between each group in an audience. School communities should be mindful that it cannot be guaranteed what level the restrictions will be at across the ACT when these events will occur.

Updated advice will be provided to schools as further announcements are made by the ACT Government.

**Enrolments for 2021**

**Are 2021 enrolments open?**

Enrolments are now open for all students from Preschool to Year 12 for next year.

Your local public school has a place for your child to learn, develop and reach their potential. Every student from Kindergarten to Year 12 is guaranteed a place in their local public school (determined by Priority Enrolment Area). To find your local school, look at the map on the [Priority Enrolment Area page](https://www.education.act.gov.au/public-school-life/enrolling-in-a-public-school/priority_placement_areas).

All of our preschools offer high-quality early childhood education. Each four-year-old child in the ACT is guaranteed a place in a public preschool. However, due to capacity constraints at some sites, children are not guaranteed a place at the preschool of your preference. If you do not receive an offer for your preferred preschool, the Directorate will find you a place at the nearest preschool with capacity to your home. This will not affect your right to a place at your local public school for kindergarten.

Many of our schools, particularly high schools and colleges, hold open nights or information sessions for families to have a look around the school and chat to teachers and current students. Due to COVID-19 restrictions, that can’t happen at the moment. Families can check out their local school’s website or social media channels to get more information. Many schools have created videos to give families a taste of what they are all about. Alternatively, give your local school a call – see [Public Schools in the ACT](https://www.education.act.gov.au/public-school-life/public-schools-in-the-act/primary_schools_act_government) for contact information.

For more, check out the [Enrolling in a public school](https://www.education.act.gov.au/public-school-life/enrolling-in-a-public-school) section of this website.

**School playgrounds and facilities**

**Can children use the playground at their school?**

Students attending school will be allowed on the playgrounds on school sites.

Schools will ensure that playgrounds are regularly cleaned and checked as part of their normal school operations.

**Can the broader community use the playground at their local school?**

Yes, school playgrounds can be used outside of school hours as a community outdoor facility.Users should follow broader ACT Government guidelines including adhering to physical distancing requirements and maintaining personal hygiene, including regular handwashing.

**How will canteens operate safely and hygienically during this period?**

The operation of canteens will be up to each individual school. However, should a school canteen be in operation, it is expected to operate in line with the following guidelines:

* ­Good hygiene: canteen staff washing hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds before drying with paper towel.
* Canteen staff to cover mouth and nose when coughing and sneezing with a tissue, or cough into your elbow, disposing of the tissue into a bin and then washing your hands immediately afterwards.
* Canteen staff should avoid touching face and hair.
* Canteens to ensure hand washing facilities are not obstructed and have sufficient paper towel and soap.
* Handwashing facilities must only be used for hand washing.
* Canteen staff to ensure gloves are changed regularly and hands are washed between glove changes.
* ­If a canteen staff member is unwell, they are expected to stay at home and avoid social activities. Canteen staff will be made aware of the criteria for getting tested for COVID-19, available on [the ACT COVID19 website](https://www.covid19.act.gov.au/protecting-yourself-and-others/getting-tested).
* Frequent cleaning and sanitising of all benches and surfaces are to be maintained (benches, handles, fridge and cool room handles etc), condiments such as sauce bottles, salt and pepper shakers.
* Additional signage to be placed in key areas, including above the hand wash facility, with correct procedures.
* Canteens to be stocked with hand sanitiser, clearly labelled for public use only at points of entry.

**What are the guidelines for hiring school facilities in Term 3?**

Community groups and organisations with existing hire/licence agreements can be allowed to resume the use of school facilities (in line with requirements below). Requests from new community groups will be considered in line with the current policy and capacity of the School Cleaning Services to undertake additional cleaning.

The following requirements must be adhered to by hirers:

* Schools must provide hirers with the fact sheets on physical distancing and hygiene requirements for adults within school facilities.
* Schools must work with the School Cleaning Service to ensure appropriate cleaning arrangements are in place for any after hour or weekend community hirers before activities resume.
* Sports hirers must adhere to the requirements outlined below, including providing a “Return to Play in a COVID-safe Environment” plan. ACT Sport and Recreation have produced a framework for the “Return to Play in a COVID-safe Environment” which can be accessed via their website at[https://www.sport.act.gov.au/](https://www.sport.act.gov.au/about-us/covid19-news).
* All indoor gatherings (including sports and recreation, language schools and religious ceremonies) can have a maximum of 100 people (or 1 person 4m2, whichever is less).

**ACT Government Guidelines - *from 19 June 2020:*** [Step 2.2 Return to Sport & Recreation and Swimming Pools: Information for clubs, organisations and participants](https://www.covid19.act.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0008/1561553/Industry-FAQ-Sport-Rec-and-pools-19-June-2020-Step2.2.pdf)

* *Indoor sports (including martial arts and dance)* Activities can resume in groups of up to 100 participants/players, including coaches, referees, trainers and spectators in indoor spaces (including pools).
* The one person per 4 square metre rule will continue to apply in enclosed spaces. This applies to all community participants (juniors and seniors) as it is outside of school hours and public health directions apply.
* An enclosed space is one that is covered and more than 75% enclosed, where walls prevent lateral airflow.
* Use of communal facilities, such as canteens and change rooms, is now allowed. A risk assessment for these activities should be outlined in the COVID-safe plan.

**How have community use fees changed in Term 3?**

The ACT Government is committed to supporting community groups to remain viable during this period. One way this is being done is through the waiving of all hirer fee until 30 September 2020.

Please contact your local school to discuss this matter in more detail.

**School-based apprenticeships**

**What happens if my child is doing a school-based apprenticeship?**

Many school-based apprentices are employed in occupations that will continue to provide essential services to our local community and, where an employer is able to maintain their employment arrangements, Australian School Based Apprenticeships can continue, including during school holidays and/or pupil free days.

* To assist students, parents, carers and the broader school community, the following answers have been compiled into frequently asked questions around school-based apprenticeships.
* Stop handshaking as a greeting
* Physical distancing measures (1.5 metres) and frequent hand washing is strongly encouraged
* Hold meetings via video conferencing or phone call
* Defer large meetings
* Hold essential meetings outside in the open air if possible
* Promote good hand and sneeze/cough hygiene and provide hand sanitisers for all staff and workers. Take lunch at your desk or outside rather than in the lunchroom
* Clean and disinfect high touch surfaces regularly
* Consider opening windows and adjusting air conditioning for more ventilation
* Limit food handling and sharing of food in the workplace
* Reconsider any non-essential business travel
* Promote strictest hygiene among food preparation (canteen) staff and their close contacts
* Consider if large gatherings can be rescheduled, staggered or cancelled.
* Businesses across all sectors may be facing challenging circumstances as a result of COVID-19. Many school-based apprentices are employed in occupations that will continue to provide essential services to our local community and, where an employer is able to maintain their employment arrangements, ASbAs can continue, including during school holidays and/or pupil free days.
* Australian Apprenticeship obligations remain unchanged and school-based apprentices should be supervised at all times by a qualified or appropriately experienced supervisor.
* When in their ASbA workplaces, it is critical secondary school students and their work colleagues continue to practice good personal hygiene and social distancing.  The following guidance has been issued by the Australian Government Department of Health for the consideration of employers and employees in all Australian workplaces:
* Stay at home if you are sick

**What happens where workplaces are impacted by COVID-19?**

Where an ASbA workplace is shut-down as a result of COVID-19, or an individual within the workplace tests positive for COVID-19 and the student must self-isolate as a result, the student or their parent/guardian must inform the school Principal and Skills Canberra.

Employers and students are also encouraged to contact the ACT Wage Entitlement Information Service or the FairWork Ombudsman to ensure all employment obligations are met. Contact the Skills Canberra Wage Entitlement Information Service Ph: 6205 8555 Ph: 1300 278 681 Email: skills@act.gov.au Email: apprenticeship@canberrabusiness.com

Skills Canberra will work with individual students and their employers to initiate any variation to the student’s national training contract arrangements, if necessary.

The Education Directorate will work closely with the student’s school and the ACT BSSS to support the school study program of any student impacted as a result of any required variation. For further information, please contact the ACT Education Directorate on 6205 5268 or at VETforSS@act.edu.au