

# School Operations Guide

Term 4, from Monday 1 November



*catholic education commission of victoria ltd*  
ACN 119 459 853

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## Summary of key information

All Victorian students will return to full onsite learning from Monday 1 November.

A permit is no longer required for those moving between metropolitan Melbourne and regional Victoria for the purpose of permitted education.

## Summary of key operational requirements

Key actions for schools	Phase C
Face masks (see Face Masks in Schools)  Recommended for students in Prep to Year 2.	<b>YES</b>  (Refer to page 21 for details regarding different year levels)
Working across multiple sites	<b>YES</b>  However, it is recommended to minimise wherever possible
Minimise cohort mixing: Stagger breaks and arrival and departure times	<b>Recommended</b>  There are no prescribed requirements, however schools must take step to minimise wherever possible.
COVIDSafe routine cleaning	<b>YES</b>  Deep cleaning not required
Community use of school facilities	<b>YES</b>  Refer to page 8 for additional requirements
Visitors to schools	<b>YES</b>  Yes, consistent with vaccination requirements and other health and safety controls.
Student placements for all years	<b>YES</b>
Learning Diversity (health, wellbeing, inclusion) visits	<b>YES</b>
School tours	<b>YES</b>

School tours must align with public gathering limits and density requirements.		
Excursions		YES
Swimming and all other pool use		YES
Incursions		YES
	Yes, consistent with vaccination requirements and other health and safety controls.	
School photos		YES
	Yes, consistent with vaccination requirements and other health and safety controls.	
Camps and overnight stays		YES
Assemblies, liturgies and other events exclusive to staff and students from single school only		YES
	Outdoors where possible, must align with public gathering limits, density and vaccination requirements see page 9	
Kinder transition program		YES
	There is no requirement for parents to be vaccinated for this purpose.	
Statewide transition day		YES
All interschool activities (such as debating)		YES
Singing, brass and woodwind classes and groups		YES
	Following recommended health advice	
Professional development and staff meetings (face to face)		YES
	Should be conducted online where practicable.	

## Operational advice for schools

### Student attendance

All students are expected to attend onsite as their year levels return to onsite learning, unless they are formally being home-schooled. Parent preference is not an approved absence reason. Schools should work closely with families that may be concerned about the return to on site learning with the support of regional staff.

Attendance, both onsite and remote, must be recorded daily.

### Staffing arrangements

It continues to be the principal's responsibility to make the school-based decisions required to deliver education objectives in accordance with the [Victorian Catholic Education Multi-Enterprise Agreement 2018](#) (VCEMEA 2018).

Teachers and support staff will be expected to work onsite, except for medically vulnerable staff and staff required to quarantine.

All teachers and support staff who perform work at Victorian Catholic schools are required to comply with the vaccination directions outlined in the [COVID-19 Mandatory Vaccination \(Specified Facilities\) Directions \(No 10\)](#) and as amended.

A teacher or support staff member who does not meet the vaccination requirements will not be assigned alternative duties in place of onsite duties.

### VCE/VCAL assessments and exams

To access guidance on the GAT and other assessments, and to stay updated with any changes, please visit the [VCAA website](#).

## QR Codes and visitors to schools

The use of Service Victoria QR codes for electronic record keeping is now mandatory in all schools to enable the effective contact tracing of any COVID-19 cases.

	Who needs to check in?	Who doesn't need to check in?
All visitors on school site (including contractors, diocesan education office staff and building and maintenance staff)	✓	
All parents who enter school buildings when on school site	✓	
Staff		✓
Students		✓
Parents who come onto school grounds for drop off or pick up, but do not enter buildings.		✓

Schools can permit parents to enter buildings onsite for student pick-up and drop-off providing sufficient QR code locations are available for parents to check in. Where this is not possible, parents should not be permitted to enter buildings for pick-up and drop-off.

Further information about QR code set-up can be found at [Register to use the Victorian Government QR Code Service](#).

### Visitors to schools

Visitors to school grounds must comply with vaccination requirements, density limits, face mask requirements, QR code check-ins and practise respiratory etiquette and good hand hygiene.

The [density limit](#) of one person per four square metres should be applied to any spaces and activities being attended by parent/carers and other visitors. The density limit applies to all persons in the space, including students.

## Playgrounds and school facilities

### Playgrounds

Playgrounds are open for school use and community use.

### Use of school facilities by community and sports groups

Use of school facilities by community and sport groups, such as ovals and pools, is permitted if the use aligns with the [Open Premises Directions](#) for the relevant activity, including the application of required density limits. Use of facilities during school hours should minimise mixing between those using school facilities and school staff and students (e.g. a swim school's exclusive use of a school pool and changeroom). Also see 'use of school facilities' advice regarding cleaning requirements.

The **Secondary School Immunisation Program** is an essential service that can be delivered onsite in all schools.

**School bus services** across the state will continue to operate as normal. Students are not required to check-in via a QR code service when travelling on private school buses or disability transport services, however school bus services **are required** to keep accurate records of students and staff (including drivers) accessing these services should this information be required for contact tracing. For more information, please see <https://www.coronavirus.vic.gov.au/school-bus-services>.

## Interschool activities, school sport and use of pools

All interschool activities can resume.

### Swimming pools

Hydrotherapy, indoor and outdoor pools can be used across Victoria.

- There is no limit on participant numbers where there is exclusive use of a pool facility by a single school at any one time for educational purposes
- Where there is not exclusive use of a pool by a single school, the requirements of the [Open Premises Directions](#) apply. Schools should speak to swimming pool venues to determine how the Directions apply to the activity being undertaken.

### Physical education and intraschool sport

Where using an external sporting facility, use of facility must align with the [Open Premises Directions](#). Density limits do not apply where there is exclusive use of the venue by single schools, including school pools and gyms, however schools should continue to apply COVIDSafe principles to decision making, including avoiding interactions in closed spaces and physical distancing where practicable.



## Camps and excursions

Camps, excursions, and incursions for Victorian schools can resume. Camp providers can now take multiple-school bookings, however these should be minimised wherever possible.

## School events, gatherings, and assemblies

**Outdoor events are strongly encouraged.**

Assemblies and other events exclusive to staff and students from single school can resume.

Formals, graduations, liturgies and other ceremonies (including events held off school premises and/or with parents/carers and other guests) can resume from Phase C, however they must align with community settings.

With regard to liturgies, schools should talk with their parish priests to see what is practical and pastorally helpful.

Indoor events will remain subject to the obligations such as caps and density quotients. All eligible adults must be fully vaccinated.

Outdoor events can be held with up to 500 people, with a density quotient of one person per two square metres applied.

## Singing, brass and woodwind classes

Singing and playing wind and brass instruments can occur under Department of Health recommendations if recommendations to reduce transmission risk are followed.

Recommendations include moving outdoors, increasing ventilation, physical distancing of two metres between performers and five metres between performers and the audience, reducing the number of people, or reducing the length of time an activity is conducted. Further advice on ways to reduce risk can be found in DH guidance: [COVID-19 transmission from air-circulating, wind-blowing devices and activities](#).

## Other school and curriculum settings

### VCE/VCAL/VET provision in schools, TAFEs, non-school senior secondary providers and other training organisations

Students can participate in their VCE or VCAL classes, including VET studies, where these are held at TAFEs, RTOs, non-school senior secondary providers, or schools.

The following health and safety measures should be put in place to minimise risk associated with learning outside the school environment:

- Mixing of students from different educational facilities and schools should be minimised whenever practical.
- Physical distancing should be maintained whenever possible, particularly for classes that involve attendance by students from multiple institutions.

Students enrolled in a VET/VCAL subject of non-school senior secondary provider are not required to be vaccinated to attend onsite learning.

### ***School Based Apprenticeships and Traineeships***

Students undertaking School Based Apprenticeships and Traineeships (SBATs) including Head Start Apprenticeships and Traineeships (HSATs) may continue their employment.

### **Structured workplace learning (SWL) and work experience**

Students can participate in Structured Workplace Learning (SWL) and work experience placements. Students who reside in metropolitan Melbourne are permitted to travel into regional Victoria for this purpose, and vice versa.

However, the Department of Health has recommended that SWL and work experience placements in [high-risk settings](#) (such as healthcare, aged care, meat works) be deferred until further notice unless they are required for assessment within the VCAL/VCE/VET or International Baccalaureate.

Students must be included in the density limits for the workplace and comply with any restrictions applicable to that workplace as well as the COVIDSafe Plan in place.

For more information, see:

[https://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/Pages/coronavirus\\_swl.aspx](https://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/Pages/coronavirus_swl.aspx)

### **Directions on required COVID-19 vaccination**

[Directions on mandatory COVID-19 vaccination](#) now apply to authorised workers, residential aged care workers, construction workers, workers in health care settings, school and early childhood staff. These directions also apply to students undertaking Structured Workplace Learning and work experience.

### **School boarding premises and Medium-Term Residential Programs (MTRP)**

Schools should refer to the Department of Education and Training's website page [Advice for schools in managing the risk of covid-19 transmission in school boarding premises and medium term residential programs](#) for further information regarding attendance at boarding premises.

### **Outside of School Hours Care (OSHC) Programs**

Outside School Hours Care programs can operate for students eligible for onsite supervision across Victoria. OSHC programs can operate for students from multiple schools, it is recommended that mixing between students from different schools is minimised where practical.

# Keeping COVIDSafe at school

## Understanding COVID-19

As COVID-19 is a new virus, new scientific research is regularly emerging. Currently, the World Health Organization suggests that COVID-19 can be transmitted by contact with droplets or airborne aerosols from an infected person, and contaminated surfaces. Airborne aerosols are tiny particles that float in the air. This understanding may change as more research emerges and more is learned about COVID-19.

### *Droplet transmission*

A person can be infected with coronavirus (COVID-19) by touching respiratory droplets such as saliva or tears from an infected person. These are spread through coughing, sneezing, kissing, talking or singing.

These droplets can enter your mouth, nose or eyes and cause infection. This can happen by having close face-to-face contact, being within 1.5 metres of someone with coronavirus (COVID-19), or by touching a contaminated surface before touching your face.

### *Airborne transmission*

Saliva or tears from an infected person can stay in the air after they cough, sneeze, talk or even sing. This means that coronavirus (COVID-19) can be spread through these tiny infectious particles suspended in the air.

Sometimes, the virus can remain in the air for some time in settings such as in indoor spaces with poor ventilation.

### *Contaminated surfaces transmission*

Coronavirus (COVID-19) can spread when secretions or droplets from an infected person land on surfaces. The virus can live on surfaces for hours or days, depending on the temperature, humidity, type of surface, and how much of the virus is present.

If you touch an infected surface, you could become infected by then touching your nose, mouth or eyes. You could also spread the virus from one surface to another and infect other people.

For more information on the science behind COVID-19 see [Facts about coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#).

A combination of strategies is required to minimise transmission risk. No single strategy completely reduces risk and not every measure will be possible in all educational settings. Where some controls are not feasible, others should be enhanced. Strategies should also be adjusted over time in line with the changing risk of transmission in the community.

## COVIDSafe Plan

The Safety Management Plan for COVID-19 ([COVIDSafe Plan](#)) applies to all schools, outlines the key health and safety risks and links to the latest guidance.

In conjunction with this Operations Guide, it sets out the approach for managing safety risks in schools in accordance with the minimum requirements for COVIDSafe Plans.

The COVIDSafe Plan has been updated to align with the changes to the advice set out in this Operations Guide.

Your diocesan education office's OHS team can assist in tailoring the plan to individual school needs.

Principals should consult with their local Health and Safety Representative(s) and Health and Safety Committee(s) (if applicable) to implement the health and safety guidance to the extent reasonably practicable and escalate unresolved issues via their diocesan education office.

### Students who may be medically vulnerable

As per the advice of the Victorian Chief Health Officer, COVIDSafe measures have been put in place ensure that schools are as safe as possible for all children including those with medical vulnerabilities, however independent medical advice should always be taken on an individual basis.

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.

Assessments should be reviewed alongside notable changes to COVID-19 transmission in Victoria and where eligible students have received a COVID-19 vaccination.

Schools must ensure students with medical needs have an up-to-date health plans and accompanying condition-specific health management plan (such as an [Asthma Action Plan](#)), based on medical advice from the student's medical or health practitioner, and consultation with the student and parents and carers.

For additional information to support decision-making, see:

- [Asthma Australia](#)
- [Royal Children's Hospital – advice for respiratory patients](#)
- [JDRF – Coronavirus and children with T1 diabetes](#)

## Staff who may be medically vulnerable to COVID-19

Advice from the Victorian Chief Health Officer is that, as with other members of the community, teachers and other school staff may be at greater risk of more serious illness if they contract COVID-19 if they are:

- aged 70 years and older
- aged 65 years and older and with chronic medical conditions.
- of any age and have a compromised immune system
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and are aged over 50 years and with one or more chronic medical conditions.

Staff who are medically vulnerable should seek advice from their medical practitioner in relation to their on-site attendance. Where the employee is unable to work either on site or remotely, they can access personal leave by providing a medical certificate.

Similarly, staff who are living with or caring for elderly or chronically ill relatives should seek advice from the medical practitioner of the person for whom they are caring to determine if they can attend on site or should work remotely. They should provide a medical certificate if they are seeking to access personal leave.

Employees in the above categories should seek advice from their medical practitioner in relation to their on-site attendance. Where the employee is unable to work on-site, they should provide a medical certificate if they are seeking to work remotely for this purpose or to access personal leave. These arrangements should be reviewed regularly during the Term.

Employees in the above categories who remain unvaccinated, or following an employee receiving a COVID-19 vaccination in circumstances where the employee's medical practitioner's advice is that they remain unable to work on site, continued provision of remote work will be available where:

- the employee provides a medical certificate setting out the recommendation from their medical practitioner, and
- the principal forms a view that it is reasonable, practicable and appropriate for the employee to work remotely.

Staff who are living with or caring for elderly or chronically ill relatives should seek advice from the medical practitioner of the person for whom they are caring to determine if they can attend on site or should work remotely. They should provide a medical certificate if they are seeking to access personal leave.

## Mental health and wellbeing

The mental health and wellbeing of principals, teachers, school staff and students remains an important consideration.

The diocesan education offices of the CECV continue to provide a full suite of services to support staff mental health and wellbeing. This includes services and resources aimed at addressing individual needs, as well as tools and supports to help guide staff through this time.

### For students

**Wellbeing check-ins** - In addition to recording student attendance, schools **must** have in place processes and procedures to ensure that student wellbeing check-ins take place each day, on a group and/or individual basis.

The [Mental health toolkit](#) has advice and resources to support student mental health and wellbeing. This includes advice on positive mental health promotion, curriculum support, how to identify and access support, as well as parent- and student-specific pages.

As part of the Mental health toolkit, the Department of Education and Training (DET) has partnered with Smiling Mind to produce [resources to support VCE and VCAL students](#) to remain positive and engaged in their education during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Additional resources are available on the CECV website:

- [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) Wellbeing Resources](#)
- [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) Family Engagement and Support](#)
- [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) Supporting Learner Diversity](#).

### Resources for principals and staff

In the Archdiocese of Melbourne, [principal wellbeing services](#) are available through Converge International for all primary and secondary school principals. Sessions for the employee assistance program have been extended and are now available from 9 am to 5 pm on weekends. Principals may also find Converge International's online magazine *Flourish* a useful resource for managing wellbeing. Work health checks will continue, with minor changes.

In the Diocese of Ballarat, principal and staff wellbeing services are available through [Converge International](#). Sessions for the employee assistance program have been extended and are now available from 9 am to 5 pm on weekends. Principals and staff may also find Converge International's online magazine *Flourish* a useful resource for managing wellbeing.

Principals in the Diocese of Sandhurst can contact [AccessEAP](#) for 24/7 employee assistance by calling 1800 818 728, making an online booking or using the EAP in Focus app.

Counselling is also available for staff from the AccessEAP employee assistance program, which is a confidential, free-of-charge service.

## Staff and student vaccinations

As part of the COVID-19 vaccination roll-out, all school staff and all students aged 12 and over are now eligible to receive a coronavirus (COVID-19) vaccine.

Information about vaccines and eligibility can be found on the [coronavirus.vic.gov.au](https://coronavirus.vic.gov.au) website.

### Required vaccinations for school staff

The Victorian Chief Health Officer has determined that COVID-19 vaccination will be mandatory for staff who work in schools. This includes principals, teachers, administration and education support staff, including casual relief teachers (CRTs) and pre-service teachers.

All staff who work in schools will be required to have a first dose of a COVID-19 vaccine by 18 October 2021 or be able to produce evidence of a vaccination booking within that week.

All staff are required to be fully vaccinated by 29 November 2021 unless a medical exemption applies. They will be required to show evidence of their vaccination status.

Getting vaccinated is the best way to protect yourself, your colleagues and students and keep the whole school community safe. Getting vaccinated will help slow the spread of COVID-19 and prevent future outbreaks in our schools.

Further details in relation to processes for checking vaccination status, and in relation to other adults attending onsite will be provided soon. Vaccination is not mandatory for students, however in alignment with health advice, vaccinations are strongly encouraged as the best way to protect individuals, families and school communities from further outbreaks and the spread of COVID-19.

### Community vaccination pop-up clinics

To support the uptake of vaccinations, 70 school-based vaccination pop-up clinics are being established in areas that need them most and where barriers to vaccination may exist.

The pop-up clinics are providing access to COVID-19 vaccines in targeted areas for all eligible students, their families, staff and the local community. Approximately 70 school sites will be used across a range of Local Government Areas.

## Ventilation

Schools are required to increase fresh air flow into indoor spaces (including shared spaces, staff areas and thoroughfares) whenever possible and to maximise the use of outdoor learning areas or environments.

### Natural ventilation

Keep all windows, doors and vents open as much as possible.

Keep these openings clear of any obstruction to air flow.

Door jambs should be used to keep doors open.

Aim to open windows and vents that are higher or towards the ceiling during poor or windy weather.

Exhaust fans are to be used as much as possible.

Take measures to maintain thermal, noise and other comfort, such as flexible uniform and seating arrangements.

### Mechanical ventilation

Air recirculation should be eliminated or minimised by setting air conditioning units to use external air rather than recycling, where possible.

Not all mechanical systems can operate using outside air (for example, most split systems). Air conditioners that are unable to bring in outside air should not be considered as providing mechanical ventilation.

Demand-controlled ventilation controls that reduce air supply based on occupancy or temperature should be disabled.

Air conditioning filters should be maintained according to maintenance plans, checked and cleaned.

Turn on mechanical ventilation, where available and practicable, is to run systems during school hours including when rooms are unoccupied, and if possible ideally 2 hours before and after the use of a space. Where available, timers can be used to manage operation.

### Use of natural and mechanical ventilation at the same time

Natural and mechanical ventilation should be used together as much as practical and possible.

Air conditioners may be used to provide thermal comfort, however if they cannot use outside air, then they need to be used with other ventilation strategies.

Using more than one ventilation method creates greater opportunity to create a comfortable learning environment and maximising ventilation.



## Use of fans

Fans are only recommended to be used with other natural and mechanical methods in place.

Ceiling fans should be operated on the winter setting (where possible) and lowest speed.

Other fans, such as pedestal fans, should not be directed to blow air from one person directly past another and should be set to the lowest speed.

## Bathrooms, kitchens, and thoroughfares (hallways, corridors)

All available mechanical and natural ventilation options in bathrooms and kitchens should be operated for as much of the day as possible.

Maximise natural and/or mechanical ventilation in thoroughfares and minimise gathering in these spaces.

The use of enclosed spaces with little or no ventilation should be minimised.

## Poor outdoor air quality

Action to protect students during periods of poor outdoor air quality (such as smoke, thunderstorm asthma events) takes priority.

Monitor the VicEmergency App for risk warnings and advice on thunderstorm asthma, smoke and other events reducing outside air quality.

Take steps to close windows and doors, set air conditioners to re-circulate air, and enhance other COVID safe behaviours and controls, including cohorting, reduced class density and staggering classes, face masks until risk is reduced.

Further advice on how to maximise ventilation will be provided separately.

Minimise using spaces that can't be ventilated with fresh outdoor air.

Schools are encouraged to avoid or reduce the use of spaces that can't be ventilated with fresh outdoor air, including spaces with windows that don't open or open to environments with poor air quality or other pollutants. [Rotate the use of spaces that can be well ventilated if required.](#)

## Maximise the use of outdoor learning areas or environments

Schools are encouraged to maximise the use of outdoor learning areas and environments.

Prefer the use of an outdoor space over an indoor space where, whenever, and as much as practicable.

## Air purifiers

The Victorian Government is delivering air purifier units (model Samsung AX7500) to most Catholic schools. User manuals will be delivered with each unit and should be kept in the same room as each unit for reference. A copy can also be [downloaded from the Samsung website.](#)

Air purifiers are advised to be prioritised for higher risk areas. These areas include where there are high levels of mixing of staff and reduced mask use when eating, higher levels of exertion and increased aerosol projection, and areas of lower ventilation and possible exposure to illness. For example, sick bays, staff rooms, canteens, school receptions and student centres, gymnasiums and music rooms.

# Vital COVIDSafe Steps

## Social distancing

### *Limit mixing*

It continues to be recommended that staff should avoid working across multiple sites as much as practical, noting there will be some workforces who will need to work across multiple schools (i.e. health and wellbeing staff and casual relief teaching staff).

Professional development and staff meetings can resume, however online and remote options are still preferred where practicable.

### *Maintain physical distancing*

A variety of strategies to support physical distancing among all students and staff should be pursued, where possible.

Staff must practise physical distancing 1.5m between themselves and other staff members or adults to the extent that is reasonably practicable. Staff should physically distance themselves from students where appropriate and feasible.

Staff should reduce as far as possible the use of common areas such as staff rooms. Staff should eat and drink outside wherever possible and practicable.

Students should practise physical distancing where possible. Maintaining a physical distance of 1.5 metres will not always be practical in the school environment and may be particularly challenging in the younger years of primary school. In these contexts, a combination of health and safety measures should be utilised to reduce risk.

Strategies that can be considered to support physical distancing include:

- rostering access to shared spaces, limiting time in these spaces and promote breaks outdoors.
- the careful management of movement of adults through all common areas, including school reception and staff rooms, and timing of staff arrival and departure
- where multiple staff are required in a classroom, reminding staff to maintain physical distancing from each other as much as practical
- signage and rostering so that access to shared physical spaces and food preparation areas can be managed in line with density limits and to reduce congregation in entry and exits
- reminding students, staff and visitors including through signage, of the importance of physical distancing where possible
- reconfiguring class spaces where possible, using all available space in the school, using floor markings where appropriate.
- marking the floor indicating physical distancing in appropriate locations (e.g. canteens staff rooms and reception areas).

- actions to reduce the congregation of adults around the school and reduce congestion. Schools can do this through strategies such as the use of multiple entry/exit points, creating spaces for ingress and egress in different areas of the school and appropriate signage to communicate expected behaviours.
- communicate the strategies in place to parents through local signage and communications to school communities to remind staff, students and families of the need for behaviours that support physical distancing.

### Use large spaces (e.g. halls)

Space out staff workstations as much as possible and limit the number of staff in offices according to the density quotient. This might mean re-locating staff to other spaces (such as the library or unused classrooms).

Consider opportunities to adapt indoor activities outdoors, for example holding classes outside. Staff rooms should be closed except for access to tea/coffee/food making facilities. Where possible, staff to rest, eat and meet in outdoor areas only.

Use signage to promote physical distancing in more confined spaces such as locker bays, changing rooms and canteens.

For activities occurring outdoors, schools should support staff and students to use a combination of sun protection measures when UV levels are 3 or above.

### Limit public access

Density limits do not apply in classrooms and other spaces for the purposes of student use, including corridors and other shared areas.

Density limits of one person per four square metres apply to staff areas such as staff lunchrooms and areas accessed by the public, such as reception areas.

For public areas, signage must be displayed to indicate the maximum number of members of the public that may be present in the space at a single time.

### Staggered start and finish times and breaks

Stagger drop off and pick up times (noting operations of school hours should be not disrupted)

Use of multiple entry and exit points to prevent concentrations of students and minimise parents onsite.

## Face masks

Please see [coronavirus.vic.gov.au](https://coronavirus.vic.gov.au) for the latest face mask requirements.

For all school settings, the Victorian Chief Health Officer:

- Directs school staff and secondary school students to wear a face mask indoors at school, including Outside School Hours Care (OSHC) programs, unless a lawful exception applies.
- Directs primary school students in Year 3 and above to wear a face mask indoors at school, including Outside School Hours Care (OSHC) programs, unless a lawful exception applies.
- For composite classes that include students in and above Grade 3 and below Grade 3, those below Grade 3 are strongly encouraged to wear masks.
- Directs school staff and students aged 12 or older must always wear a face mask when travelling to and from school on public transport, taxis or ride share vehicles.
- Directs school staff to wear a face mask while teaching wherever practicable, except where removal of a face mask is necessary for effective communication.
- Strongly recommends students in Prep to Grade 2 to wear a face mask indoors at school or OSHC program.
- Strongly recommends school students aged under 12 to wear a face mask when travelling to and from school on public transport, taxis or ride share vehicles.

There are a [number of lawful reasons for not wearing a face mask](#), including for staff and students who are unable to wear a face mask due to the nature of their disability, medical or a mental health condition. Parent/carers of a student/s who meet the criteria for an exception must provide their approval in writing for their child/ren to not wear a mask to the school.

Outside of lawful exceptions, schools must treat any deliberate and persistent non-compliance with the face masks direction as a serious matter. Usual school procedures for dealing with non-compliance with school rules should be followed.

A face mask must cover the nose and mouth. Face shields, scarves or bandanas do not meet these requirements.

### Staff and students unable to wear face masks

Enhance other strategies to limit transmission aimed at the whole school or class, including reduced class density, outdoor learning and ventilation.

Staff members unable to wear face masks should avoid providing supervision or care of students with COVID-19 symptoms.

## Encouraging and motivating mask use in schools

Model correct and positive mask wearing. Face mask compliance amongst staff, parents, carers and visitors is vital for encouraging students to wear face masks. Communicate to staff and visitors their responsibility and obligation to affirm a safe and positive environment for students when on school premises.

Reinforce key messages about the importance of face masks, why they are important and how they contribute to reducing risk of COVID-19 transmission. Use posters, photos, videos, creative projects, social media and other activities to promote and model mask wearing by other staff, students and community members.

Motivate and praise students who wear face masks correctly, particularly students with difficulties for short periods of time to feel comfortable. Ask staff and students why they don't want to wear masks. Think about sensory or discomfort issues as a reason for refusal, and consider adjustments to help improve fit or comfort, such as providing a surgical mask where available.

Engage, confirm with, and support students and their families with lawful exceptions for mask wearing, including those with disability, medical or a mental health condition.

## Hygiene and testing

### Practise good hygiene

All staff, students and visitors to schools should undertake regular hand hygiene, particularly on arrival to school, before and after eating, after blowing their nose, coughing, sneezing or using the toilet. Staff should direct or supervise young students where required.

Hand sanitiser should be made available at entry points to classrooms. Age-appropriate education and reminders about hand hygiene should be provided. If soap and water are not readily available, hand sanitiser that contains at least 60 per cent alcohol should be made accessible.

Sharing of food is not permitted.

Use non-contact greetings (not shaking hands, hugging or kissing).

Ensure the highest hygiene practices amongst food handlers where these services are operating, as per the Department of Education and Training's [Safe Food Handling Guidance](#).

### Keep surfaces clean

COVIDSafe routine cleaning arrangements will continue for all Victorian Catholic schools in Term 4. This involves daily end-of-school-day cleaning, with a particular focus on cleaning and disinfecting of high-touch surfaces, and the inclusion of some elements that were not cleaned every day prior to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Schools should consider the necessity of using shared equipment at this time. Such items may include shared computers, class sets of teaching and learning materials, and musical instruments. If used, strict hand hygiene should be followed before and after use. Risk can be

further minimised with users wiping down items where appropriate, for example using a two in one disinfectant/detergent wipe.

Consider adjusting how staff and students interact within the built environment to reduce contact with certain surfaces. For example, a simple measure such as keeping a door open will reduce the need for multiple people to touch the door handle. Consider use of plexiglass as a physical barrier at school reception and canteen where practical and feasible

## **Stay home when unwell and get tested**

The most important action school communities can take to reduce the risk of transmission of COVID-19, is to ensure that any unwell staff and students remain at home and get tested, even with the mildest of symptoms. Everyone should consider their health before they start work or attend school and ensure that they are free from coronavirus symptoms and have not had contact in the past 14 days with a person confirmed to have coronavirus or a person suspected to have coronavirus.

## **Management of an unwell student or staff member**

Everyone should consider their health before they start work or attend school and ensure that they are free from coronavirus symptoms and have not have contact in the past 14 days with a person confirmed to have coronavirus or a person suspected to have coronavirus. Staff members must stay home when unwell or if they may have been exposed to coronavirus in the past 14 days.

It is important that any student (or staff member) who becomes unwell with COVID-19 symptoms while at school gets tested and returns home.

The symptoms to watch out for are:

- loss or change in sense of smell or taste
- fever
- chills or sweats
- cough
- sore throat
- shortness of breath
- runny nose

Some people may also experience headache, muscle soreness, stuffy nose, nausea, vomiting and diarrhoea.

Staff or students experiencing COVID-19 symptoms should be advised to get tested and stay home until they receive a test result.

Health care plans, where relevant, should be updated to provide additional advice on monitoring and identification of the unwell child in the context of COVID-19.

Staff and students are not required to present a medical certificate stating they are fit to return to an education setting after a period of illness, however staff and students should not return until symptoms resolve. If they have been tested for COVID-19, they must also wait for a negative test result. Staff continue to be required to present a medical certificate in accordance with personal leave policy for periods of absence on personal leave.

### **Managing a confirmed case of COVID-19**

To better support schools to manage COVID-19 cases, the CECV has been working with the Department of Education and Training (DET) and the Department of Health (DH) to revise and streamline how COVID-19 cases will be managed in schools.

Please contact your diocesan education office for the protocols that apply in your diocese.

### **Managing a confirmed case of COVID-19 where the confirmed case has attended a VCE exam**

Your diocesan education office has communicated the arrangements for managing a confirmed case of COVID-19 where the confirmed case has attended a VCE exam. Please refer to those arrangements.