

School Operations Guide

Term 2, from Tuesday 26 April

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COVIDSafe measures for schools

COVIDSafe measures have changed but important practices will continue to be in place across all Victorian government schools to ensure every possible effort is made to ensure staff and students are safe and that schools remain open.

The COVIDSafe measures focus on the 3Vs: Ventilation, Vaccination and Vital COVIDSafe steps.

A combination of strategies remains necessary 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 where possible.

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. Principals should ensure that staff, including new staff, are aware of their school's COVIDSafe plan.

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 staff can help tailor the plan to individual school needs and link schools with health and wellbeing supports to promote mental health and wellbeing for staff and safe work practices remotely and at school sites.

Schools must ensure that a copy of their tailored COVIDSafe Plan is available to provide to any Authorised Officers or WorkSafe Inspectors who request a copy.

Vaccinations

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

Information about vaccines and eligibility can be found on the [Coronavirus Victoria website](#).

Required vaccinations for school staff

The Victorian Minister for Health has determined that COVID-19 vaccination is mandatory for staff who work in schools. This includes principals, teachers, administration and education support staff, including casual relief teachers (CRTs), pre-service teachers, and Outside School Hours Care staff.

All staff are required to have received three doses of a COVID-19 vaccine unless a medical exemption applies.

- Staff required to be vaccinated, but unable to receive their third dose by the nominated deadline because they were recovering from a recent COVID-19 infection,

have an additional four months from the end of their isolation period to receive their third dose. Staff should note that following the expiry of their temporary medical exemption, they will have a maximum of two weeks to receive their third dose. Staff should report their COVID-19 infection to their school.

- Staff are required to log onto eHR or PRS to record vaccination status or to enter the date of their booking.

The Australian Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation (ATAGI) advises that a previous COVID-19 infection is not a contraindication to COVID-19 vaccination, that vaccination can occur after a COVID-19 infection and there is no requirement to delay vaccination after recovery from acute illness.

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.

Schools must treat healthcare information, including an individual's vaccination status or diagnosed medical condition (such as COVID-19) in accordance with your schools' Privacy Policy.

An individual's COVID diagnosis or vaccination status is not to be shared or discussed unless the individual (or their parent/carer) provides consent, or unless schools are legally obliged or authorised to do so (for example, when requested by the Department of Health).

Leave to attend vaccination appointments will not be deducted from personal leave. Staff scheduling these appointments should consult with their principal where this will require time away from school. Principals are asked to continue to provide staff with the flexibility to access vaccination appointment attendance. In the event an employee has an adverse reaction to a dose of COVID-19 vaccine, any leave required must be taken as personal leave.

Vaccination requirements for visitors and volunteers performing work

The third dose vaccination requirements also apply to any visitors or volunteers performing work on school sites. This includes:

- a person contracted to work at an education facility and who will or may be in close proximity to children, students or staff, whether or not engaged by the education operator including casual relief teachers, NDIS providers and auditors (but does not include delivery personnel)
- Diocesan education office staff who attend an education facility (such as allied health personnel), except where you are advised that equivalent processes exist at a diocesan level.
- staff of any other entity who attends an education facility
- volunteers that attend an education facility and that work in close proximity to children, students or staff (including parent helpers)
- students on placements at an education facility

Vaccination requirements for other visitors to schools (not performing work)

Parents, carers and other adult visitors are no longer required to show evidence of two doses of a COVID-19 vaccine if not performing work or volunteering at the school.

Vital COVIDSafe steps

Rapid antigen testing

Free rapid antigen tests will be made available for all staff and students in Victorian schools for the first four weeks of Term 2 2022. Rapid antigen testing will be voluntary for all primary, secondary and specialist school students and staff.

Table 1: Summary of rapid antigen testing recommendations for schools

Category	Recommended rapid antigen testing schedule
Primary school staff and students	Twice weekly (school days)
Secondary school staff and students	Twice weekly (school days)
Specialist school staff and students	Five times a week (school days)

Staff, Casual Relief Teachers (CRT), casual staff and ad hoc employed CRT who are working regularly in a school (e.g. two or three times a week) should be provided with one pack of rapid antigen tests per two weeks.

Other non-school employed staff (e.g. regular on-site contractors such as cleaners, construction workers) are not accommodated in each school's test kit allocation. They may however be provided with tests if the school has sufficient kits available.

If staff work at multiple sites, schools should ask the staff member if they have already received a pack.

In primary and secondary schools, tests should be conducted twice weekly, on days that suit families – no particular days are prescribed, but it is suggested school encourage common days for tests to be done at home such as Monday and Wednesday, or Tuesday and Thursday, to enable common reminders to be given to students by teachers at the end of each preceding day and to families through text messages or other communication through schools' usual communication channels. Specialist school students and staff are strongly recommended to test every school day. Families of students should be reassured that testing is voluntary. Those students unable to test despite best efforts by parents and carers can still attend school.

If staff or students receive a positive test result at any time, they must report this through the Department of Health system ([Rapid antigen tests | Coronavirus Victoria](#)) or via the coronavirus hotline at 1800 675 398.

Students (or their parents) must also report a positive result to their school by phone or written notification; this is so the school can support them, record that they will be absent while in 7-day isolation, and let the rest of the school community know there has been a positive case onsite and that they should monitor for symptoms.

Students and staff who have tested positive for COVID-19, have completed their 7-day isolation period and are subsequently asymptomatic do not need to undertake surveillance testing for eight weeks.

Staff must report a positive result to their school on the day they received a positive test result.

If a CRT tests positive to COVID-19, the CRT should notify the school, their employer (where it is not the school), and the Department of Health.

All students and staff who return a positive result from a rapid antigen test should also follow the latest advice at <https://www.coronavirus.vic.gov.au/rapid-antigen-tests>.

Information about how to do a test, including a how-to video translated into 33 languages, is available [online](#).

Face masks

While recommended, face masks are not required in any school settings from 11.59pm 22 April 2022. Any students or staff members who wish to wear a mask may do so, including those who are medically at-risk

This means students in Grades 3 to 6 and staff and visitors to primary schools are no longer required to wear face masks.

Household contacts attending school who are over 8 years of age are required to wear face masks indoors unless they have a valid exemption. See updated close contact requirements below.

Everyone including students aged 8 years and above must wear a face mask when travelling on public transport, taxis or ride share vehicles.

Face masks may be used as an additional temporary risk-mitigation measure in exceptional circumstances, for example if a school experiences high levels of or prolonged transmission.

Infection prevention and control

Service Victoria QR code check-in is not required at schools. Routine school visitor record keeping arrangements will continue to apply.

All staff, students and visitors to schools should practise good 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.

Schools should provide age-appropriate education and reminders about hand hygiene. If soap and water are not readily available, hand sanitiser that contains at least 60 per cent alcohol should be made accessible.

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

Non-classroom-based activities, including camps

Schools are encouraged to run extra-curricular and other out-of-classroom activities including camps, excursions, sport and tours.

In planning for all non-classroom based activities (such as school assemblies) and extra-curricular activities, including camps, excursions, other out-of-school activities, incursions and learning activities such as sport (including swimming), music and the arts, schools must conduct a risk assessment to consider the following:

- Limiting activity to the smallest possible cohort size (e.g. a single class group, or single school; or smallest possible group or number of schools for interschool activity)
- Holding the activity in outdoor spaces or large indoor spaces that allow greater physical distancing
- Considering the non-participation of persons (staff or students) at higher risk of severe disease from COVID-19 (e.g. who are immunocompromised or have significant co-existing medical conditions)
- Staggering of groups who participate in the activity

Prior to a student attending a camp or overnight stay, parents/carers must be informed about the COVIDSafe measures that will be in place during the camp or activity and must provide permission for their child to attend.

Parents/carers must be informed that if a confirmed or probable case is present at the camp while infectious, others attending the camp may be identified as household-like contacts. This will depend on the sleeping, living and dining arrangements in place at particular campsites. Household-like contacts are still permitted to participate in camp as long as they wear a mask when indoors (if aged 8 and above or have a valid exemption) and complete 5 rapid antigen tests within the 7 day period that would have been their quarantine period. A household-like contact attending camp during this period must notify the educational facility they are attending under these requirements.

Secondary school students are strongly encouraged to conduct rapid antigen testing at camps consistent with the twice-a-week schedule for mainstream schools and each school day for specialist schools. Secondary school students should test at home on the morning of the camp and then, if the camp is longer than three days, only once on the morning of day four.

Primary school children should test at home on the morning of the camp. Where a primary school is planning a camp of more than three days duration, advice on the conduct of rapid antigen testing should be sought from your diocesan education office.

Maintaining physical distancing

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

Staff should 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 the use of common areas such as staff rooms.

Students should practise physical distancing where possible.

Strategies to support physical distancing include:

- rostering access to shared spaces, limiting time in these spaces and promoting 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
- 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 to indicate 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 by using multiple entry/exit points and appropriate signage to communicate expected behaviours.
- communicate the strategies to parents with posters and communications to school communities to remind staff, students and families of the need for physical distancing.

Use of outdoor spaces

Schools are encouraged to maximise the use of outdoor spaces, including those with shade sail coverage. For activities occurring outdoors, schools should ensure support staff and students use a combination of sun protection measures when UV levels are 3 or above.

Staff meetings and professional development

Staff meetings and professional development activities can be held face-to-face. Standard COVIDSafe measures apply, including physical distancing, limiting duration of the activity, and optimising ventilation.

Interschool activities

Interschool activities including staff and students from different schools are permitted.

School events

School community events are permitted.

Use of school facilities by the community

School facilities can be used by the community, including play equipment, and for external hire.

Schools are permitted to allow external providers to use or hire school facilities.

When hiring out school facilities, vaccination information is only collected for workers and volunteers working for or on behalf of the school (see, section *vaccination requirements for visitors and volunteers performing work*).

Schools are no longer required to collect proof of vaccination from external providers who use or hire school facilities outside normal school hours e.g. those attending for the conduct of a state or federal election, or where the facility is hired, leased or operated by a community group e.g. community language schools, other community groups, for community sport.

Management of suspected cases of COVID-19 in schools

A 'suspected' or 'symptomatic' case means a person who displays any [COVID-19 symptoms](#).

As soon as practicable after becoming aware of a suspected case in a staff member or student – and if that person has attended onsite while displaying symptoms, or 48 hours before they developed symptoms – the principal must take the following actions.

1. Let the person know they need to follow guidelines in the [Testing Requirements Policy](#). If applicable the affected person/s should follow the COVID-19 RAT procedure, which recommends a symptomatic person in a workplace takes a COVID-19 test.
2. Ensure appropriate records are maintained in order to support appropriate notifications if the symptomatic person becomes a confirmed case, particularly from the period commencing 48 hours prior to the onset of COVID-19 symptoms.
3. If the symptomatic person is confirmed to have COVID-19, the principal must follow the steps under the below section, *Management of confirmed cases and household contacts at school*.

Management of confirmed cases and household contacts at school

Updated approach to managing a confirmed case of COVID-19 in schools

Where a student or staff member is identified as a positive case, the following steps should be taken:

Principal actions: identification and notification

1. Parents/carers should inform the school by phone or written notification. Principals should then follow the process put in place by their diocesan education office.
2. Students who report a positive result must isolate for seven days and not attend school during that period.
3. Where a student is a household contact of a positive case (that is, they have spent more than four hours with someone who has COVID-19 inside a house, accommodation, or care facility) they must inform the school. Household and household-like contacts are no longer required to quarantine as long as they take additional safety measures in the 7 days that would have been their quarantine period (see Table 1). Household contacts are required to inform the school that they are attending during the 7 day period..
4. Staff must report the result of a positive test and request leave (see the Staff Leave section for more information). Staff who report a positive result must isolate for seven days and not attend school during that period.
5. Where a staff member is a household contact of a positive case (that is, they have spent more than four hours with someone who has COVID-19 inside a house, accommodation, or care facility) they must inform the school. Household and household-like contacts are no longer required to quarantine as long as they take additional safety measures in the 7 days that would have been their quarantine period (see Table 1). Household contacts are required to inform the school that they are attending during the 7 day period.
6. Principals must notify staff and the school community through a daily email (where applicable) when a student or staff member has (or multiple students or staff members) have returned a positive COVID-19 test result and had attended the school. The notification should include:
 - Dates of attendance
 - Affected group/cohort/year levels
 - Any relevant extracurricular activities

The notification should be provided to all staff who attended the school during the period of attendance. For parents/carers and students, the notification can be provided to only the affected group/cohort/year level or to and can be provided the whole school.
7. Ensure that staff or students refrain from returning to school if they remain symptomatic, unless it is known that their symptoms are ongoing, or caused by an underlying health condition or medication. Refer to any student health management plan on file.
8. New self-serve templates for principals to use in the event of a positive case associated with the school are now available. Each template package will contain a message to parents/carers, a message to staff, and website/social media wording.

In the event of multiple positive cases at a school, the Department of Health (DH) will work with the relevant regional office to determine the most appropriate response and any additional actions that should be taken.

Schools must treat health information, including an individual's vaccination status or diagnosed medical condition (including positive COVID-19 test results) in accordance with your schools' Privacy Policy. COVID-19 diagnoses and vaccination statuses are not to be shared or discussed unless the individual (or their parent/carer) provides consent, or unless schools are legally obliged or authorised to do so (for example, to comply with a Pandemic Order).

Student attendance

All students are expected to attend onsite unless they are formally registered as being home-schooled. Parent preference is not an approved reason for students to be absent due to COVID-19.

Students who are required to isolate or quarantine should be supported in the same way as students with an extended absence due to illness or injury, with learning materials provided to support their continued learning. Schools are not expected to provide a full remote learning program in these circumstances.

School Cleaning Arrangements

The cleaning arrangements for all Victorian Catholic schools will return to the business-as-usual cleaning scope for Term 1 2022.

Cleaning following a confirmed COVID-19 case

The Department of Health (DH) does not consider deep cleaning as the primary or immediate infection prevention and control measure following a confirmed case or outbreak in schools.

If there is an outbreak of COVID-19 from the beginning of Term 1 2022, the Department of Health or a Local Public Health Unit will advise schools if additional cleaning is required, based on risk assessment as part of an outbreak management plan.

Table 1: Summary of student and staff scenarios

Scenario	Required actions for the staff member or student/family	Required actions for the school
A student or staff member tests positive to COVID-19, either through RA test or PCR test	<p>Isolate at home or in private accommodation for 7 days (inclusive of weekends) and do not attend school during this period.</p> <p>Inform the school, that they have tested positive to COVID-19.</p> <p>A negative test is not required to return to school following completion of 7 days of isolation.</p> <p>Follow the Checklist for COVID cases.</p>	<p>The school must report positive student cases via the process established by the diocesan education office.</p> <p>Staff members must report a positive test result and submit a leave request.</p> <p>The school should notify school community that there has been a case at the school using the communication templates available.</p>
	<p>If a student or staff member tests positive through RA test, but they don't have symptoms or have not been in contact with anyone who has COVID-19 it is recommended getting a PCR test within 48 hours and stay isolated at all times until they receive their result.</p> <p>If the subsequent PCR test is negative, the student or staff member can return to school.</p>	<p>No further action.</p>
A student or staff member is a household contact or household-like contact*. <i>* You have spent more than four hours with someone who has COVID-19 inside a house, accommodation, or care facility.</i>	<p>Notify the school that they are a household or household-like contact.</p> <p>Follow the Checklist for COVID contacts.</p> <p>Household contacts are no longer required to quarantine as long as they take additional safety measures, but are required to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> notify the school if returning during their 7 day period; 	<p>No further action.</p>

Contact at school is not included in this definition, unless contact has occurred in a school-based residential setting, e.g. school camp or boarding school.

- undertake daily rapid antigen testing five times within the 7 days;
- wear a face covering when indoors (if aged 8 years and above or unless they have a valid exemption);
- are not permitted to visit hospitals or care facilities unless an exemption applies.

They are **recommended** to avoid interaction with people at higher risk of severe disease from COVID-19.

If **symptomatic**, all students/staff must stay/return home, take a rapid antigen test, or get a PCR test if a rapid antigen testing kit unavailable.

A student or staff member has been in contact with a case of COVID-19, including at school or at work.

If **asymptomatic**, students and staff should continue to attend school and monitor for symptoms.

If **symptomatic**, all students/staff must stay/return home, take a rapid antigen test, or get a PCR test if a rapid antigen testing kit unavailable.

On receipt of a negative test result, the student/staff member can return to school.

If staff/students are too unwell to attend school, usual leave/absence policies apply.

Follow the [Checklist for COVID contacts](#).

No further action.

The school is not required to seek rapid antigen test results from the students or staff unless a positive test is returned.

Staff/student has contracted COVID-19, completed their 7-day isolation period and is asymptomatic.

Staff/ students can safely return to school. They do not need to be tested if they have been re-exposed within 12 weeks of ending their self-isolation.

The school should confirm that the staff/student has completed their 7-day isolation period

<p>Staff/student has completed their quarantine period as a household contact and has returned a negative test result.</p> <p>However, during the quarantine period an additional member of the household has returned a positive result.</p>	<p>The quarantine duration for student/staff household contacts who are required to quarantine i.e. those who are not able to comply with the additional safety measures, is 7 days from the date of the first positive test of the household index case.</p> <p>Household contacts are not subject to rolling quarantine periods. If the index case remains in the household, or if subsequent cases are identified within the household, the quarantine end date for the close contact is unchanged.</p> <p>Staff/ students can safely return to school and do not require negative test documentation.</p> <p><i>Please note, if the staff or student becomes symptomatic, they should get tested and not attend school.</i></p>	<p>No further action.</p>
<p>Staff/student with a positive RAT (probable case) who receives a negative PCR test within 48 hours after the positive RAT</p>	<p>Staff/student can end their period of self-isolation period. They can safely return to school.</p> <p>Recommend that they notify school of negative PCR test result.</p> <p>If staff/students are too unwell to attend school, usual leave/absence policies apply.</p>	<p>The school should notify their diocesan education officer of the change in status of a student.</p>

Workforce supports

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 on site, 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 order outlined in the [COVID-19 Mandatory Vaccination \(Specified Facilities\) Order \(No. 2\)](#) 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.

Staff who may be medically more at risk from COVID-19

Some people are at greater risk of more serious illness with COVID-19. See [People at higher risk of coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#) for further information.

Employees should seek advice from their medical practitioner about working onsite and any additional booster doses of vaccine they are recommended to receive. Where the employee is unable to work onsite and wants to work remotely or take personal leave, they should provide a medical certificate.

Where an employee's medical practitioner's advice is that they are unable to work onsite, schools should provide remote work if:

- 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.

Where remote work is not available, the employee can access leave available to them or return to duty once the medical advice is that it is safe for them to do so.

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

Students who may be medically at-risk

Schools must ensure students with medical needs have an up-to-date health plan and accompanying condition-specific health management plan, based on individualised medical advice from the student's medical or health practitioner, and consultation with the student and parents and carers.

Consideration should be given to students with disability who have other co-existing chronic conditions or immunocompromise, or where physical distancing is impractical due to increased support needs.

For additional information to support decision-making, refer to:

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

School buses

School bus services will continue to operate. Bus staff, adult travellers and students **are required to wear face masks** as is the case for public transport.

School bus services **are required** to keep accurate records of students and staff (including drivers) who travel on buses. For more information, refer to <https://www.coronavirus.vic.gov.au/school-bus-services>.

Outside School Hours Care (OSHC) programs

Outside School Hours Care programs can operate. Schools and OSHC providers will need to communicate closely regarding the status of identified confirmed case or close contacts.

The school must inform the OSHC provider when there has been a positive or probable person at the school. The OSHC provider is to advise staff and students to monitor for symptoms.

Refer to section, *Management of an unwell student or staff member at school*.

Students, staff and families arriving from overseas

There may be additional requirements in place for students and families who arrive from overseas (both returning local students and international students).

Refer to [Information for overseas travellers | Coronavirus Victoria](#) for current requirements.

Ventilation

Schools are required to increase fresh airflow into indoor spaces (including shared spaces, staff areas and thoroughfares) whenever possible and to maximise the use of outdoor learning areas or environments. Please direct any enquiries to airpurifier@macs.vic.edu.au.

Natural ventilation

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

Keep these openings clear of any obstruction to airflow.

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, to run systems during school hours including when rooms are unoccupied, and ideally two 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 provides greater opportunity to create a comfortable learning environment and maximises 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 or 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 recirculate air, and enhance other COVIDSafe behaviours and controls, including cohorting, reducing class density and staggering classes until the risk is reduced.

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

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.

Prioritise 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 lower ventilation and possible exposure to illness. For example, sick bays, staffrooms, canteens, school receptions and student centres, gymnasiums and music rooms.

Cleaning and maintenance of air purifiers

Each school is responsible for the general maintenance and cleaning of their air purifiers.

There are 3 elements of the purifier that require cleaning and/or replacement:

1. Surface: schools should clean the surface of the device regularly in line with the manufacturer's guidance. Contract cleaners should treat the air purifiers in a similar way to other electrical items, which normally includes dusting.
2. Pre-filters: each air purifier has 2 pre-filters which are visible once the front cover of the device is unclipped. Schools should clean the pre-filter every 5 to 6 weeks when the purifier is being used every weekday – or twice per term. For further information please see below.
3. HEPA filters: each air purifier has 2 HEPA filters which are visible once the front cover of the device is unclipped. The device will alert when the HEPA filters require replacement. This is estimated to be approximately every 6 to 12 months. Schools should undertake the filter change when this occurs. Replacement HEPA filters will be provided to schools. For further information please see below.

As with all electrical equipment, air purifiers also require testing and tagging.

Single-use surgical masks and gloves are recommended to be worn when cleaning pre-filters or replacing HEPA filters, for general hygiene purposes. Hand hygiene should be performed after cleaning and maintenance.

It is recommended that air purifier maintenance is undertaken in a well-ventilated space, if possible.

No action is required to the cleaning of the pre-filter or replacement of the HEPA filter if confirmed COVID-19 cases have been in the room where an air purifier has been running.

Cleaning the pre-filters

The pre-filters should be cleaned every 5 to 6 weeks when the purifier is being used every weekday (or twice per term) – for example, this could be done mid-term and towards the end of term. Note that this is based on the expected usage profile in a school setting and is different to the recommendation of every 2 weeks in the manufacturer's manual, which is based on 24/7 usage, and has been confirmed with the manufacturer.

Removing the pre-filter does not require tools – the pre-filters clip into the device in front of the HEPA filter. For further information on how to remove the pre-filter for cleaning, please refer to the user manual.

There are 3 ways to clean a pre-filter:

1. Pre-filters can be cleaned with a duster or soft brush to remove dust. This is recommended to be undertaken outside.
2. Pre-filters can be vacuumed to remove dust. This can be done within the immediate vicinity of the air purifier unit. Where possible, it is preferable to use a vacuum cleaner equipped with a HEPA filter, but this is not a necessity.

3. Pre-filters can be washed with water. It is important that pre-filters are completely dry before being re-inserted into the air purifier. This prevents the HEPA filter from getting wet which can damage the filter's integrity. To speed up drying time, it is recommended that filters are initially manually dried with an absorbent cloth (such as a microfibre cloth) and left to air dry (away from direct sunlight) before being reinstalled into the device.

Replacing the HEPA filter

Replacement of the HEPA filter should occur when the device alerts. Both HEPA filters in the device should be replaced at this time.

Replacement of filters does not require tools, they clip into the device behind the pre-filter (the pre-filter must be removed before replacing the HEPA filter). For further information on how to replace the HEPA filter, please refer to the user manual.

It is recommended that used HEPA filters are placed in a sealed bag and then disposed of in general waste.

Replacement HEPA filters are being provided to schools with deliveries to continue throughout Term 1 2022.