



For parents and carers 6 May 2020

When do students return to school?

From **Monday 11 May 2020**, Queensland school students in Kindy, Prep, Year 1, Year 11 and Year 12, will be able to return to school and Community Kindergarten.

In other year levels, children of essential workers and vulnerable children will continue to be able to attend school for supervised remote learning.

Students in Years 2–10, including siblings of students returning to school, will continue with the home-based learning model. If Queensland's low transmission rates of the coronavirus continue, students in Years 2–10 will be able to return to school from **Monday 25 May 2020**. Confirmation of this next step will be made by the Queensland Government by 15 May 2020.

Is it expected that children in Prep, Year 1, Year 11 and Year 12 attend school from 11 May 2020?

Yes. Schools will resume regular teaching and learning for students in these year levels as part of the phased return to school.

It is acknowledged that some parents of Prep, Year 1, Year 11 and Year 12 students may still wish to keep their children home from school due to concerns about COVID-19 and student health concerns. This is an acceptable decision and your child won't be marked as being absent, rather that they are learning from home.

In these cases, parents and carers remain responsible for their children. This includes ensuring their children stay at home and continue their learning by accessing material that has been provided by their school.

As is currently the case, parents will be required to communicate with the school about their child's absence from school. This includes when a parent chooses to keep their child at home due to concerns about COVID-19 as well as when a child is ill. When you contact the school with this information you may also wish to discuss any support you may need to assist you with your child's learning at home.

Parents and carers of students with health support needs are encouraged to consult their health practitioner when deciding if their child should attend school.

Why aren't all students returning to school on May 11?

As part of the easing of restrictions applied under the COVID-19 response, schools will commence a phased return to regular schooling.

We want to take the earliest possible action to allow students to resume on-site learning and early years students (Kindy, Prep and Year 1) and students in their senior years (Years 11 and 12) have been identified as the first cohorts to return to back to school.

Research clearly shows that the early years of schooling are when the building blocks for learning occurs. By allowing our young children to return to Kindy, Prep and Year 1 we can continue to provide them with the teaching and learning that enables them to grow into capable and confident young people.

We also know that the senior years of schooling are important as young adults make decisions about the pathways they will take after school. In addition, 2020 is the first year of Queensland's new Senior Assessment and Tertiary Entrance (SATE) reforms and it is important that our senior students continue their learning at their school during this significant year.

Children of essential workers and vulnerable children from other year levels will continue attending school sites as they have done since the commencement of Term 2.

Is it safe for students and staff to attend school?

The decision for a staged return to school is informed by advice provided by the Australian Health Principal Protection Committee (AHPPC) and discussions with Queensland Health about a phased return to regular schooling.

Schools are identified as safe places for students and present low risk in relation to the spread of COVID-19. The AHPPC (the joint committee of all the various state and federal Chief Medical Officers), updated health advice for schools on 24 April, clarifying guidelines for reducing the risk of transmission of COVID-19 within schools.

It notes that there is very limited evidence of transmission between children in the school environment; population screening overseas and Australia has shown very low incidence of positive cases in school-aged children aged between 5 and 18 years of age.

Staff will still be expected to adhere to the venue density guidelines, given the greater risk of transmission amongst adults.

While the AHPPC notes that the 'venue density rule' of no more than one person per four square metres, or maintaining 1.5m between students during classroom activities is not appropriate or practical for students in classrooms or corridors, our schools will seek to maintain and enhance practicable measures that encourage social distancing in schools wherever possible.

The following measures will continue to be in place in schools:

- students and staff who are unwell must not attend school and must be tested if they have flu-like symptoms
- physical distancing of 1.5 metres is required by all adults
- adults must not gather in and around school grounds, car parks, school gates and outside classrooms
- parents should use stop, drop and go or similar facilities rather than walking their children into school
- students will engage in regular effective handwashing and hygiene protocols, including regularly washing hands with soap and water or using hand sanitiser and covering coughs and sneezes
- increased cleaning frequencies of high-touch surfaces such as light switches and door handles
- technology such as video conferencing used for gatherings, meetings and assemblies
- school swimming pools remain closed and excursions, camps, trips and interschool activities are postponed at this time.

Schools may look to implement additional strategies including:

- using larger, alternative locations or classrooms within the school
- designating drop-off/pick-up points for parents in spacious areas
- making use of outdoor learning spaces
- staggering lunch breaks, start and finish times and other activities to reduce the volume of movement.

Should I download the government tracking app?

The Australian Federal Government has released an app called COVIDSafe to assist health authorities in contact tracing for identified cases. This tool forms an integral part of health authorities' strategy to be able to quickly contain community transmission that may flare as restrictions are gradually lifted, until such time, or if, a vaccine can be developed.

When installed on your smart device, the COVIDSafe app recognises other devices with the app via Bluetooth, and notes the time, distance and duration of the contact. This will then allow health authorities to notify you if you have been in contact with a confirmed case. The app does not collect your location.

Information is stored on your phone and is deleted on a 21-rolling day cycle, to allow for the COVID-19 incubation period and the time it takes to get tested. Users will be prompted to delete the app and all data at the end of the pandemic.

To reduce the risk of transmission within our schools and the broader community, Cairns Catholic Education is strongly recommending that all staff, students, parents and caregivers with mobile phones to download the app to assist the health authorities in controlling COVID-19. For more information on the app, and the download link, please visit the official government website [here](#).

Will school routines change with some students returning?

Schools will continue to actively manage routines and protocols in and around the school site. Social distancing and physical distancing measures remain in place and it is important that schools continue to practise these measures.

Schools will continue to manage timetable arrangements locally. Changes are likely to be made to previous schedules during Weeks 4 and 5 as school staff deliver both home-based learning to Years 2-10 and on-site delivery to the year levels returning to school on May 11. Schools will communicate with parents regarding any changes to their usual routines.

Do I have to teach my child at home?

Learning from home has been a new experience for teachers as it is for families. While students are learning from home, parents are not asked to take over the role of teachers, although there are certainly opportunities to assist. Teachers and school staff continue to deliver lessons and be responsible for the curriculum.

Naturally, Prep and Year 1 students require more assistance and supervision than older students and some parents may breathe a sigh of relief to have their littlies back to school from May 11!

We appreciate that many parents have felt overwhelmed with the reality of their child learning from home. We offer this gentle reminder that you are not required to be an expert or an educator. Your role, as it has always been, is to be a parent and to partner with us to support your child's learning.

We have put together resources to assist with your own and your child's wellbeing throughout this coronavirus pandemic, as well as a list of support services. You will find them on the [Cairns Catholic Education](#) website.

This is a journey with no expectation for it to be perfect and we thank you for your support as we work through this together. Do not hesitate to contact your child's teacher/s or principal if you need assistance.

Is fee relief available?

We know many families are facing very stressful financial circumstances at present – job losses, reduced working hours, and impacts on businesses.

You will have received information that we have extended our fee relief for Term 2 to 100% of the tuition fee for families on means tested health care cards including the two new categories of Jobseeker and Farm Households. Further information on [fee relief](#) is available on the Cairns Catholic Education website. Please aim to present your concession card by Week 4 for Term 2 concessions or contact your school to arrange the discount. If the issue of the card is delayed your school can apply the discount retrospectively. Proof the digital version of the card from the MyGov app or a printed confirmation page from Centrelink will also be accepted.

If you do not have a relevant health care card but are experiencing financial stress, please talk to your school Principal – fee relief is available for those in need.

If I haven't been affected financially, why don't I get a discount too?

For those families with ongoing employment and regular incomes we ask that you continue paying your fees so that our schools can continue to operate, and we can prioritise our support for those most in need. One of the founding beliefs of Catholic schools is to reach out to the disadvantaged. This is the way that Catholic schools respond to a crisis in their communities.

If my children are learning from home, why do I have to pay school fees?

Schools continue to be responsible for the curriculum and deliver lessons, just in a different way. Schools still have the full range of costs, in fact more so with heightened levels of cleaning and hygiene measures required for those who need to be at school and increased ICT and connectivity costs. We have also ensured that all staff are still employed.

Staff have worked harder than ever to prepare for the online and remote delivery of learning. Some are involved with the delivery of those lessons and staying in contact with students online and others are involved with the supervision of students who are engaging in remote learning at school.

Unlike childcare fees, the government has not made non-government schools fee free. The government funds about 80% of school costs. Fees provide the other 20% of funding required to operate our schools. It is important that those who can continue to pay their fees do so, so that we can continue to operate our schools and provide support to those in need.

Will I get an adjustment of Term 2 levies for cancelled events/activities?

Your school or college is reviewing events/activities that were planned for Term 2 to determine if they will be cancelled or deferred to later in the year. The cost or a portion of the cost of these activities is included in a levy to families. Where the activity scheduled for Term 2 has been cancelled and not deferred to a later term, an adjustment will be made to the levy amount invoiced in Term 2. Further advice will be forwarded by schools and colleges to families.

Should levies cause financial difficulties, please refer to the question about fee relief and contact your principal to discuss. Families seeking fee concessions are reminded to present their HCC concession card (if they have one) or advise the school that a hardship concession is required, prior to Week 4, when Term 2 invoices will be issued.

How do I keep informed?

Cairns Catholic Education's website has a dedicated [coronavirus page](#) as a central hub for resources and links to official advice. We are continually adding resources to the [Continuity of Learning page](#) that links from the coronavirus page. We also have an [Emergency Communications Facebook page](#) to help keep parents informed, in addition to the letters you have been receiving from our Executive Director, and communications from your school.

During the period of remote learning from home, we are publishing a weekly digital edition of Raise magazine with information for families on how we can work together to continue our children's education and manage the threat of COVID-19. You will find [all editions of Raise](#) on our website.

There will be an opportunity for you to ask questions and share your experiences – we are sure that many of the best suggestions about how to adjust to our new reality will come from our families.

We value our partnership with you – we will stay in touch.

How secure are our on-line communications and meetings?

Every form of online existence poses some degree of risk; however, Cairns Catholic Education's IT team is diligent in the extensive range of security protocols it implements across the system, with the safety and security of all in the Cairns Catholic Education system of highest priority.

As one of the video conferencing apps used by students and staff, Zoom security measures have been bolstered to reduce the risk of unauthorised access and its use is monitored to ensure it is used responsibly.

Cairns Catholic Education has confidence in the tight security measures implemented around Zoom and all the devices and technologies used in Catholic schools and reassures parents that they can also. Read more [here](#).

How are teachers coping with the quieter school environment?

They hate it! They are so missing the laughter, the energy, the joy that students bring to our schools. They are looking forward to having students in their classrooms again.