



**Catholic
Education**
Diocese of Cairns

Learning with Faith and Vision

COVID-19 Operating guidelines for Cairns Catholic Education

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1 INTRODUCTION

These operating guidelines are designed to support school leaders in determining what best reflects the interests of their staff, students and community, in line with the Queensland Government's [Roadmap for easing restrictions](#).

As we continue to navigate a changing COVID-19 landscape, principals will need to make decisions that are appropriate to their local context, while aligning with Queensland Health advice.

1.1 KEY MESSAGES

Until the pandemic has been declared as over:

- All adults in schools must following the physical distancing rules as outlined by the Queensland Government which includes staff to staff.
- Frequent washing of hands and the use of hand sanitizer should be available and used regularly.
- Queensland Government directives and guidelines remain the minimum standard and where possible and/or practical, standards above these minimum standards are encouraged.
- COVID 19 Plans should be updated according to Queensland Government advice or directives.
- If students are unwell or show symptoms of cold or flu, then they must not come to school or if already at school, parent or caregivers should be contacted to take the student home.
- If staff are unwell or showing signs of cold or flu, then they must not come to work.

2 STUDENTS

All students, even those who may be 18 years or older, remain subject to the operating guidelines in place for all students.

Some medically vulnerable students may need to learn at home, and adjustments will need to be in place to support these students to continue their learning in consultation with parents and carers.

2.1 UNWELL STUDENTS

If students are unwell or show symptoms of cold or flu, then they must not come to school; or if already at school, parent or caregivers should be contacted to take the student home. Parents should be encouraged to take the student for a COVID test if flu like symptoms are evident. Students can return to school once symptoms subside, or they present with a doctor's certificate or a negative COVID-19 test.

Students staying home when sick is likely to have a positive impact on attendance levels, as a reduced incidence of an illness in the school translates into a reduced likelihood of other students being away sick. So rather than being a competing priority, these two-work hand in hand. Ensuring students stay at home when sick should not just be considered a COVID response, but rather a logical step to improve the wellbeing and academic performance of our students.

It should also be noted that the requirement for students to stay at home is a legal directive, and alternative measures such as wearing of face masks etc. is not considered a suitable option.

2.2 STUDENT SAFETY AND WELLBEING

Schools are required to monitor student attendance and respond in accordance with normal policy and procedures. After a period of home learning, where schools identify students who have not returned to on-site learning, it is important for schools to follow-up with parents or carers to discuss reasons the student has not returned and to implement supports to ensure attendance as per the [CES Directive for Unexplained absences](#).

Concerns about children at risk of significant harm should continue to be reported to Child Safety in accordance with Cairns Catholic Education [student protection requirements](#).

3 PRINCIPALS

During a period of home learning, principals should engage additional relief staff to help support any teaching staff absence, and to assist with supervision needs arising due to vulnerable staff working off-site.

Following a period of home learning, schools should use available staff and funding to support the return to regular school-based teaching and learning and to support staff workload management and wellbeing.

When determining the working arrangements for the return to school-based learning, coordination, communication and consultation mechanisms are important to ensure working arrangements are consistent with medical advice, while ensuring appropriate physical distancing between staff, parents, carers and other adult visitors is applied. The arrangements should be reviewed in conjunction with medical advice.

It is important for principals and leadership teams to actively support and manage arrangements for vulnerable staff.

4 STAFF

Continued staff commitment and flexibility is key to supporting COVID safe learning environments.

We repeat our ongoing advice that if you develop cold or flu like symptoms you must not attend work, and should seek testing as soon as possible, in accordance with Queensland Health advice. We remind you also that [additional leave provisions](#) are in place to support you in managing health issues for yourself or family. Please be assured your school and Catholic Education Services will respond to your particular needs and concerns in a compassionate and supportive manner.

Staff who are vulnerable should discuss options with their principal to allow working from home, where possible.

The current Australian Health Protection Principal Committee (AHPPC) advice defines vulnerable people as:

- First Nation staff 50 years and older with one or more chronic medical conditions
- people 65 years and older with chronic medical conditions. The most current definition of 'chronic medical condition' is on the Department of Health website
- people 70 years and older
- people with compromised immune systems (see Department of Health website).

Other staff who may be medically vulnerable, including those with chronic health conditions, should seek their own medical advice and provide this to their principal so appropriate arrangements can be put in place.

Staff hours of work will be consistent with the attendance arrangements already in place at each school and determined in accordance with the school's local arrangements and industrial agreements.

Business managers, administrative staff, science technicians, teacher aides and other support staff will continue to perform their roles to ensure the effective functioning of the school while practising physical distancing measures.

4.1 UNWELL WORKERS

Current Queensland Health advice requires workers not to come to work if they are unwell, and a responsibility is also put upon an employer to not allow unwell workers to attend work. This is further legislated in the WHS Act 2011 (Qld.).

If staff are presenting with flu like symptoms, they should get tested for COVID-19, in accordance with state recommendations. Unwell staff can return to work once symptoms subside, or they present with a doctor's certificate confirming that they are no longer contagious.

If a staff member has hay-fever, allergies or other conditions that are not contagious but may present as flu-like symptoms, they will need to obtain a medical certificate stating that they are able to continue work. Medical certificates for hay-fever etc. may be considered perpetual exemptions, however staff should monitor their condition and see their GP if their symptoms worsen or change.

5 ATTENDANCE AND ROLL MARKING

Normal roll marking arrangements are required.

Where a student has compromised immunity or other medical advice to remain at home or absent from the learning program, schools will continue to use Code F to record the status of children as learning at home.

Same day student absence notification remains in effect. Schools should notify parents or carers of an unexplained absence of their child as soon as practicable on the day of the student's absence (allowing time for parents to respond prior to the end of that school day). Please refer to [eMinerva – Marking Attendance](#).

If a parent or carer chooses to keep their child at home or out of the learning program without a reasonable excuse, schools should implement the usual student absence procedures.

6 BOARDING SCHOOL STUDENTS

Catholic Education operated residential boarding facilities are open for all students, having satisfied risk assessment requirements. Decisions for students to return to residential boarding facilities must be made in conjunction with parents or carers.

Boarding students who reside in designated Indigenous communities and have not yet returned to their boarding facility, will continue to have their learning program provided by the school at which they are usually enrolled. These students may continue to access their local school where there is a documented agreement signed by both principals.

6.1 BOARDING SCHOOL QUARANTINE

Depending on the local situation, boarding schools are in the rare position as possibly being used as quarantine sites for students who are unable to travel in the event of an outbreak. Given the implications

and measures required to manage this, each boarding facility has its own plan in place, which has been approved by Tropical Public Health.

7 SITE ACCESS

As schools are not classified as a [restricted business](#), they are not required to collect contact tracing information of people who attend the school during normal school activities, including school assemblies where parents may attend. However, it is important that normal sign in procedures for parents, volunteers, contractors, and other persons coming on site be maintained, in line with student protection requirements.

7.1 PICK UP AND DROP OFF

At the direction of principals, parents may be allowed onsite to collect their children at pick up and drop off times. Schools still have a responsibility here to ensure there is ample space for physical distancing. Other factors such as student protection, general site security and traffic considerations should also be assessed in determining whether parents will be allowed onsite.

Where schools make the decision to allow parents onsite at these times, allocation of gathering areas and entry points, as well as physical distancing signage may assist in managing COVID requirements.

8 CONTRACTORS AND EXTERNAL WORKERS

Schools will need to ensure any contractor, supplier or external support worker entering the school to undertake work or provide services complies with the on-site health and safety measures outlined within the school's COVID-19 plan.

Contractors may also need to supply schools with their own COVID plans on a case by case basis. For example, a delivery service person may follow the schools COVID-19 measures, but a tutor will need to have a documented plan on how they will deliver their services. Communication is key, and these plans should be discussed with providers.

All persons coming onto site will need to continue to sign in as per normal school procedures.

9 CURRICULUM AND SUPERVISION

Students unable to participate in the site-based learning program due to medical, self-quarantine or lockdown reasons should be supported by their school, just as they would in the case of any extended student medical absence.

This includes students where a medical practitioner has advised in writing the student should not attend school as parents or other family members have medical conditions that place them at risk.

Schools can determine the most appropriate approach, taking into account the expected duration of absence, the student's learning needs, available tools and resources, and the school's established approach to supporting continuity of learning.

10 SCHOOL ASSEMBLIES AND OTHER SMALLER GATHERINGS

Whole of school physical assemblies and other school gatherings may be held with the principal ensuring that physical distancing requirements are maintained for all adults and other COVID-19 control measures are implemented. Outdoor, undercover areas are recommended where possible, to promote natural ventilation.

All adults must always aim to maintain physical distancing from each other.

Where a smaller number* of parents or members of the school community parents are invited to a school event, they will need to sign in, and comply with normal physical distancing rules. Where there is a larger number* of parents or others invited, or an open invitation to all parents or to friends, family or others, this would be classified as a public event, and the [section on presentations and public events](#) should be adhered to.

*The discernment between a larger and smaller amount of people is subjective, and schools will need to make a decision as to whether this threshold has been met. Obviously with more people on site, the higher the risk, and this would be the deciding factor.

11 OUTDOOR PUBLIC EVENTS (INCLUDING FETES AND SCHOOL SPORTS)

Outdoor public events no longer require a COVID Safe Plan. This also means that occupancy density requirements are no longer required. CES still require schools to collect [contact tracing](#) information for outdoor public events. Physical distancing should still be promoted to the extent possible.

12 INDOOR PUBLIC EVENTS

Schools may have indoor public events, providing they have completed the [COVID Safe Event Checklist](#). There is currently no limit on the number of patrons, this will be governed by the one person per 2 square metre rule. Schools are no longer required to abide by an industry plan either, just the checklist. Events which are held for staff, students and specific parents only will not require a COVID Safe Event Checklist, but where there is an open invitation to parents and the public, then the Checklist will be required. These latter events and all other public events should be ticketed to ensure that venue density rules may be managed appropriately.

Where a COVID Safe Event checklist is being used, an [event Statement of Compliance](#) will need to be signed and displayed at the event.

12.1 TICKETING EVENTS

As there are requirements to limit persons to one per 2m², schools will need to ensure that attendee numbers do not exceed venue density rules. This may best be achieved by ticketing events. This will also save people being turned away at the entrance when occupancy capacities have been reached.

For events where only parents and family members or friends are invited, there are existing EdSmart templates in place to manage this. Please email [Alison Forster](#) for access to this.

For other events which are open to the public, other ticketing systems such as [Trybooking](#) should be used.

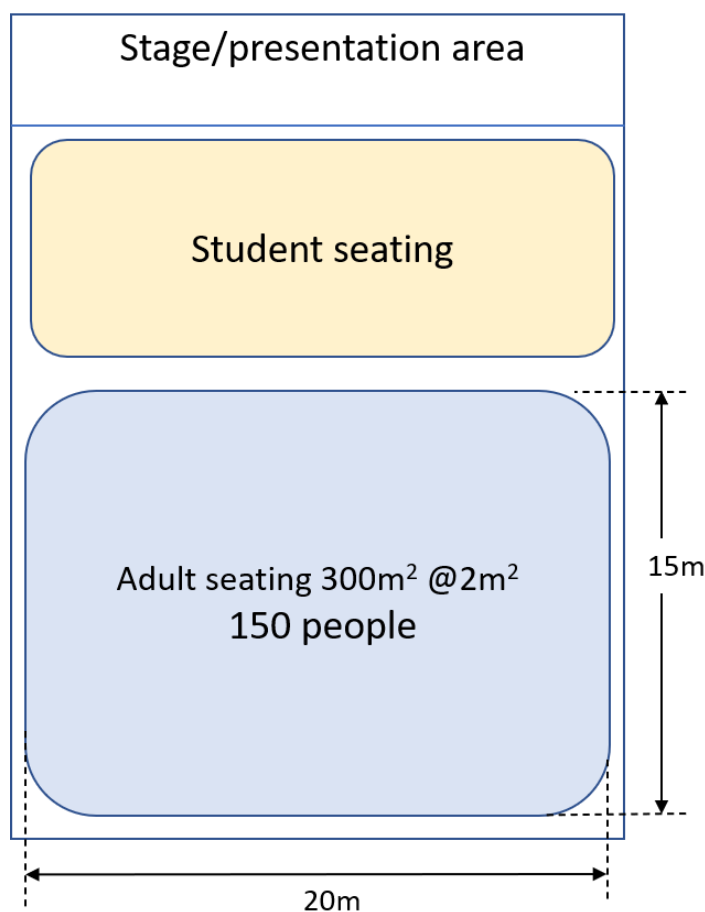
Ticketing for events is not required when it is known that venue density will not be an issue.

12.2 VENUE DENSITY RULES

For indoor events (and in line with normal staff practices), schools will need to adhere to the 2m² per person rule. As an example, a hall which measures 20m x 15m would be 300m², and divided by 2m², this would allow 150 people. This number would include students if they are not segregated from adults.

To better ensure occupancy limits are not exceeded, schools should ensure that all events with an open invitation to parents or the public are ticketed. This will ensure we do not exceed venue density requirements, and also that we won't need to turn people away at the door.

To maximise occupancy for an event, schools may first allocate space in their indoor/outdoor area for students, and the residual area can have the 2m² rule applied to determine occupancy limits, such as the example below. This will allow a much greater number of persons in total, whilst still complying with venue density requirements.



12.3 SERVING OF FOOD

There are currently no restrictions relating to serving of food, and self-serve buffets are permissible. Regular food safe procedures should still be adhered to.

12.4 RECORDING OF DETAILS FOR CONTACT TRACING

As schools are not classified as a [restricted business](#), they are not required to collect contact tracing information of people who attend the school during normal school activities such as assemblies and presentations. However, it is important that normal sign in procedures for parents, volunteers, contractors and other persons coming on site be maintained, in line with student protection requirements.

Where schools are hosting public events, recording of contact tracing information will be required, in line with the [COVID Safe Event Checklist](#).

It is recommended that all schools use the [Check In Qld](#) app to obtain contact tracing details for persons coming onto site or attending events.

13 EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

Emergency evacuation drills such as fire evacuation, bomb threats and lockdowns may continue to be conducted every term, with staff practicing physical distancing from each other.

14 EXCURSIONS AND CAMPS

Note: CES currently has a ban in place for all interstate travel. Camps and excursions outside of the Cairns region should be minimised and focus on areas that have a history of low to no COVID community transmission. If an excursion is scheduled for an area in which there is a current public health or contact tracing alert, please contact your DSE to confirm that it is safe to travel. This is mainly an effort to assist Public Health in their contact tracing efforts by reducing the movement of large groups.

Schools will need to continue to have risk management plans (such as CARAs) in place for excursions as per normal, however these should now include COVID measures. The key things here are ensuring that plans detail:

- environmental cleaning duties/frequencies
- a procedure to ensure unwell students or staff do not attend
- a procedure to determine how to deal with students or staff who develop flu like symptoms during excursions

These may easily be included in [CARA documents](#) being used for the excursions. There is no expectation or requirement to complete a separate COVID management plan for excursions or camps.

It is recommended that schools engage with excursions/camping venue and service providers as early as possible to determine requirements and any limits on numbers. Please see for the [External Providers](#) section below for further details.

14.1 BUSSING AND TRANSPORT

See [School Transport](#)

14.2 EXTERNAL PROVIDERS

Venue and service providers are no longer required to hold Industry COVID plans, however schools should still discuss how COVID measures will be shared between parties, including cleaning, venue density etc. Schools will need to follow the provider's COVID measures.

For external providers using school facilities, please see [here](#).

Note: Students are not required to provide contact tracing details during school group events. For example, a group of 100 students attend a theatre which requires contact tracing via the Check in Qld App. Adult staff

and volunteers will need to complete contact tracing details for themselves, but the students are exempt under section 11 of the *Restrictions on Businesses, Activities and Undertakings Direction (No. 23)*.

15 HEALTH SUPPORT PROCEDURES

All Cairns Catholic Education schools must continue to implement student health plans.

Advice from the Chief Health Officer indicates staff should undertake a visual assessment of the student to ensure there are no visible signs of being unwell prior to any procedure being undertaken:

- if the student appears unwell, do not continue with the procedure, follow existing guidance for unwell students/COVID-19 suspected cases, and advise parents as soon as possible
- where a student appears well, carry out the procedure with the Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) as per the table below.

Where a student has excess saliva, a risk assessment should occur in each case (as it should each time there is a procedure) to ensure that the risk of body fluid exposure is minimised and correct PPE is used (for example the addition of a gown if it is required).

It is always important to ensure that [hand hygiene](#) is carried out at the correct points of the procedure as per the [5 moments of hand hygiene](#).

Queensland Health advice has been used to inform the PPE as outlined in the table below.

Specialised health procedure	PPE
Blood glucose measurement	Gloves
Insulin pen injection or needle and syringe	Gloves
Enteral feeding	Gloves
Nasogastric feeding	Gloves
Colostomy/ileostomy care	Gloves. Plastic apron if risk of splashes (staff may choose)
Clean intermittent catheterisation	Gloves. Plastic apron if risk of splashes (staff may choose)
Continuous oxygen administration	Gloves
Administration of buccal midazolam	Gloves
Cleaning of soiling	Gloves and plastic aprons
Use of asthma reliever medication with spacer	Nil unless coughing then gloves, mask goggles/face shield*

Oral and nasal suctioning	Gloves Long sleeved fluid resistant gown mask Goggles/face shield
Tracheostomy care	Gloves Long sleeved fluid resistant gown mask Goggles/face shield

During COVID-19, this additional PPE should be considered for asthma if the student is coughing.

Schools should purchase PPE from their regular suppliers. If regular supplies are not available, then please contact the [CE WHS Manager](#).

16 INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC PROGRAM, ENSEMBLES, CHOIRS AND OTHER PERFORMANCES

Instrumental music programs, ensembles, choirs (including use of choir risers) and other stage performances can revert to pre-COVID operations. Physical distancing etc. of performers is no longer required, however physical distancing requirements are still in place for audiences and should be strictly observed.

Pre-COVID cleaning procedures for shared wind instruments should be strictly observed.

17 INTERNATIONAL TRAVEL

There is a Federal Government ban on overseas travel from Australia. You cannot leave Australia unless you get an [exemption from the Department of Home Affairs](#).

18 MEETINGS WITHIN THE SCHOOL

Physical meetings, including staff meetings and P&F meetings, can occur within school grounds, including indoor and outdoor areas, providing that all relevant public health measures are adhered to (1.5m physical distancing, 2m² per person, limits on numbers with regards to current state government requirements). Schools should still allow for persons to attend meetings electronically if they wish.

As these are not public events, COVID sign in is not required, but normal school sign in procedures will apply.

19 STAFF AND STUDENT PHOTOS

19.1 STUDENTS AND CLASS PHOTOS

Due to the relaxed restrictions for students regarding physical distancing, student and class photos may continue as per normal school operations.

19.2 STAFF PHOTOS

Staff group photos may be taken with staff less than 1.5m from each other, with the aim to keep the time to less than 15 minutes. Similar to the 100% occupancy rule for ticketed seated events, the photo itself will serve as a guide for accurate close contact tracing, should it be required.

20 ON-SITE HEALTH AND SAFETY MEASURES

Under the Queensland Chief Health Officer Directive, any student who is unwell must not attend school and students should remain at home until well. The school must ask parents/carers to collect their child from school if they are unwell.

Schools are required to maintain appropriate health and hygiene measures:

- Frequent [handwashing and hand sanitising](#), particularly before and after eating, and after going to the toilet.
- Regular cleaning protocols, with a mid-week COVID clean.
- physical distancing of adults.

Queensland Health [advise](#) it is safe to use water fountains and bubblers. However, schools should encourage students to bring water bottles for personal use.

20.1 CLEANING

Schools are able to return to their normal pre-COVID cleaning regimes, with a mid-week [COVID clean](#) to be undertaken. A mid-week clean will allow an adequate amount of protection, with the 48-hour weekend period effectively eliminating any potential COVID.

Disinfectants used for COVID cleans will need to be either a bleach solution as per the [COVID cleaning guide](#), or a disinfectant [approved for COVID use](#) by the Therapeutic Goods Administration. The preference is still for a quaternary ammonium compound based disinfectant such as [Sigura hospital grade disinfectant](#), due to its longer surface protection, and non-hazardous nature.

20.2 PLAYGROUND CLEANING

Playgrounds may revert back to pre-COVID cleaning regimes, and daily inspections for general cleanliness and foreign bodies etc. should continue.

20.3 MANAGEMENT OF SUSPECTED CASES

If an outbreak should occur within one of our workplaces, Tropical Public Health would take a leading hand in organising the response, including appropriate communication, contact tracing, and guidance on the resumption of activities. Despite this, it is important that school follow particular protocol where there is a suspected case.

Usually where there is a confirmed case of coronavirus, the school will be contacted in the first place by Queensland Health or a branch of it. Where there is a confirmed case of COVID-19 in a school environment, and Queensland Health has not provided advice, then the Principal or their delegate should contact the National Coronavirus Helpline (1800 020 080) which operates 24 hours a day, 7 days a week for further advice, as well as enacting their Critical Incident Plan

If a student or staff member is unwell, they should not attend school or should leave to go home. If they are a suspected COVID-19 case, they should self-quarantine and seek testing in accordance with Qld Health [here](#). Schools should not conduct COVID-19 testing themselves.

Staff, children, or young people at school experiencing symptoms compatible with COVID-19 (fever, cough or sore throat) should be isolated in an appropriate space with suitable supervision and collected by a parent/carer as soon as possible. In this situation, where staff, children or a young person are experiencing symptoms compatible with COVID-19, such persons should continue to practise hand hygiene and physical distancing.

All children and young people with a health care plan should ensure this is up to date and that, if required, it provides additional advice on monitoring and identification of the unwell child in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. It is important that schools also follow situationally appropriate environmental cleaning. For example, if a child spreads droplet (by sneezing or coughing), clean surfaces with disinfectant wipes immediately.

Schools and their communities will continue to be supported by Queensland Public Health in the event of an outbreak in their immediate or nearby areas. This will include detailed information and specific advice on additional measures to take beyond this guidance.

20.4 CONFIRMED CASE MANAGEMENT

The Public Health Unit will directly contact a school to confirm the presence of a confirmed COVID-19 case and will advise of any additional measures such as self-quarantine/contact tracing. Schools should continue to report any confirmed COVID-19 cases to their DSE immediately.

As per previous communications and in accordance with health authority advice, schools may be closed for a short time if there is a confirmed case. This time will be used to support contact tracing and specialist cleaning as required. What we have learnt from other schools having to shut down is that the length of closure is dependent upon the level of contact tracing required. Schools which do not strictly adhere to physical distancing for staff, may need all staff to isolate, leaving the school with no staff for the duration of the quarantine period. To avoid this scenario and to assist with contact tracing, schools must:

- Ensure physical distancing between staff is strictly adhered to
- Ensure timetables and staff calendars are accurate
- Encourage all staff and students to download the [Australian Federal Government COVIDSafe app](#).

In the event of a confirmed case, schools will also need to alert the school community effectively, so it is also important to ensure that all student contact details are correct. Where a closure is required, CES has sourced specialised cleaners to undertake COVID cleaning for the school. This cleaning will be undertaken in consultation with the cleaners, the school, CES and Qld Health.

20.5 HYGIENE SUPPLIES

Schools should actively monitor cleaning and hygiene supplies and reorder in advance of needing additional materials. Most suppliers are back in stock of hygiene, cleaning and PPE supplies, but if schools are stuck, then please contact the [CES WHS Manager](#).

20.6 USE OF SHARED EQUIPMENT OR LOANED RESOURCES

Shared student equipment such as ITD resources and sports equipment used within the school, or equipment loaned to students to take home may resume regular pre-COVID cleaning regimens. Shared items for staff should continue to be wiped down with alcohol wipes or similar.

20.7 LIBRARY BOOKS AND SCHOOL READERS

Whilst public health in Australia has not released any official stance on library books and other library resources, the British Columbia Centre for Disease Control has stated the following.

"There is no evidence that the COVID-19 virus is transmitted via textbooks, paper or other paper-based products," reads the [BC CDC website](#). *"Laminated or glossy paper-based products (e.g., magazines and children's books) and items with plastic covers (e.g., DVDs) can be contaminated if handled by a person with COVID-19; however, the risk of transmission between users of borrowed items is very low."*

Given this, cleaning for student books, readers, magazines and other glossy or plastic media may revert to pre-COVID cleaning protocols. Whilst ALIA still has a 24-hour resting period for books, this is a national guideline that includes adults, and does not reflect the local context of Far North Queensland or lower risk factors of children.

21 OUTSIDE SCHOOL HOURS CARE AND CHILDOOD & EARLY LEARNING

Like our schools, our sister Out of School Hours Care and CELC sites continue to operate. As we often have shared sites and shared concerns with regards to managing COVID. It is recommended that schools, OSHC and CELEC work together to ensure approaches to COVID management are consistent and effective. Ideally COVID plans will be shared, reviewed and amended to ensure consistency.

22 CURRICULUM SUPPORT (EXTERNAL AGENCIES)

External agencies supporting the curriculum may operate and principals should negotiate suitable arrangements with the provider of the relevant agency. All persons entering the school to support the curriculum must comply with the on-site health and safety measures outlined in these guidelines. This includes not attending the site if unwell, maintaining physical distancing requirements and practicing good health and hygiene.

23 CHURCH AND PARISH BUILDINGS

Currently our churches are operating under an approved Industry COVID Plan, which requires a number of things, including retaining a record of attendees to the site. Where churches and parish buildings are used for school student activities (not open to the public), then the normal church COVID plan does not apply. Regardless, schools should communicate with their local parish to ensure that appropriate measures are in place when using parish building, including provision of cleaning after use. Note that adults, including parents and caregivers, attending such activities would still be subject to distancing requirements and the Industry COVID Plan.

The [section on venue density](#) will provide some guidance on maximising space to allow physical distancing for adults.

24 SCHOOL SPORTS

School sports and physical education can resume normal operations. Inter school sporting events can also operate as per normal, and should comply with rules for outdoor public events, where parents or the public have been invited.

25 SCHOOL TRANSPORT

Transport arrangements will continue to operate for students including specialist school transport for students with disability.

Seating arrangements for buses may return to normal. Cleaning protocols for buses should comply with the [cleaning section here](#).

26 USE OF FACILITIES AND SCHOOL AMENITIES

Principals may negotiate the use of their facilities for external users. There are currently no requirements for the external party to provide a COVID Industry plan as has been required previously. Negotiations should include cleaning requirements, and confirmation that the organisers will adhere to all Qld Health requirements. This is best confirmed in writing, including email.

Where indoor school facilities will be used for a public event by an external party, a copy of their COVID Safe Event Checklist must be provided to the school. The provider should use the school's QR code, as the code is specific to the venue, rather than the company or organiser.