



## Questions and Answers for Catholic School Communities

### Start of Term 1 (Weeks 1 & 2)

**What is the formal start date of the 2022 academic school year in Queensland?**

The formal start date for all Catholic Schools in the Diocese of Cairns is Monday 7 February, except for Year 11 and 12 students who will go to remote learning on Monday 31 January 2022 for one week.

Each school and college will notify parents as to the exact details of student attendance.

Catholic Schools will be open for vulnerable students and students of essential workers,

For P-12 – Tuesday 25 January

**Will vulnerable students and students of essential workers be able to attend school?**

Yes. Students experiencing vulnerability and those whose parents are [essential workers](#) will be able to attend school and will be provided supervision on school sites with a skeleton staff.

Students will not be attending formal lessons with their class teachers. Formal learning for students in Prep to Year 10 will commence on Monday 7 February, while students in Years 11-12 will commence remote learning on 31 January for one week. Vulnerable students and children of [essential workers](#) will have their on-line learning supervised at school if parents want to send them.

	<b>Week 1 Tuesday 25 Jan to 28 Jan</b>	<b>Week 2 Monday 21 Jan to 4 Feb</b>	<b>Week 3 Monday 7 Feb to 11 Feb</b>
<b>P-Year 10</b>	Supervision only of vulnerable students and children of essential workers	Supervision only of vulnerable students and children of essential workers	Return to face-to-face learning
<b>Year 11 and 12</b>	Supervision only of vulnerable students and children of essential workers	Online/remote learning and face to face supervision of learning for vulnerable students and children of essential workers	Return to face-to-face learning



## Why is formal schooling for younger students not starting until 7 February 2022?

The Chief Health Officer has determined that the impacts of COVID-19 are highly likely to affect the Queensland workforce, including school staff, during the anticipated peak of the Omicron wave in late January.

## What is the definition of an essential worker?

An essential worker is someone who provides essential services and is unable to work from home. This includes but is not limited to doctors, nurses and other front-line medical staff, retail workers, haulage drivers, school staff and emergency services personnel.

The aim of the government strategy is to give parents/caregivers more time for children to be vaccinated and not have students return to school when it is anticipated that there will be a peak of COVID cases.

## Will vacation care be offered during these two weeks?

No. There will be no vacation care. However, before and after school care will continue to operate as normal unless Queensland Health advises otherwise or if the service is impacted by workforce capacity. Please contact your provider directly.

## Will school staff continue to work during these two weeks?

Yes. The pupil free staff professional development days will be 17-21 January and Monday 24 January. From Tuesday 25 January, principals will work with staff to ensure adequate supervision only of students on site. From 31 January to 4 February online or remote learning and teaching for all Year 11 and 12 will commence. School staff will either be working to ensure supervision of students, preparing for the return of students to face to face or on-line learning, teaching Year 11 and 12 students via remote or online learning, or participating in professional learning activities. Your school or college will provide further details.

## Will all students have to wear masks in schools?

All persons going onto school grounds will need to wear a mask, in line with government requirements, and should carry a mask with them at all times. Primary school students do not need to wear a mask, regardless of their age. They can choose to wear a mask if they wish.

All high school students, including those who are under 12 years of age, need to wear a mask unless they are seated indoors or outdoors or are able to maintain a 1.5 metre distance from others. Wearing of masks going from class to class will be critical. All secondary students must carry a mask with them at all times. Further information on masks can be found on the [Queensland Health website](#).

## Who needs to be fully vaccinated by 23 January?

Anyone who works or volunteers in a school will need to be fully vaccinated by midnight 23 January. This includes teachers, teacher aides, educators, and all support staff.



Visitors to schools and colleges, including parents, do not need to be vaccinated.

### Do students have to be vaccinated to attend school?

No. Students of all ages are able to attend school regardless of their vaccination status.

However, Queensland's Chief Health Officer and other medical experts have stated that vaccinations are the best way to protect yourself and your family from COVID-19.

We encourage parents/caregivers to discuss vaccination with their GP if they have concerns.

Vaccinations are now available for all students age 5 and above. Families should visit the Queensland Health website to locate a [Vaccination Centre](#) closest to them.

### Will parents be able to enter school sites during these two weeks?

Yes. Parents are able to access the school, though mask wearing mandates and other COVID measures such as contact tracing must be followed.

In Week 1 and 2 however, only parents or careers of vulnerable students or essential workers should need to come to site to drop off and collect their students.

It may be necessary for other parents to go to school, for meetings or interviews but this should be kept to a minimum in week 1 and 2.

Schools and colleges will communicate if parents need to collect materials.

### Will all Catholic schools be open?

Yes, Catholic schools will be open for vulnerable students and students of essential workers to be supervised. However, this will depend on the impact of COVID-19 on the school workforce. Principals will communicate regularly with their school community.

### Should I be concerned about the impact of students missing out on two weeks of education?

Our teachers are highly skilled at delivering the curriculum across the school year and students will not miss out on any essential content due to the delayed start of term. For years our teachers have received professional learning on how to differentiate learning and teaching and have been implementing this for many years.

### Will remote learning take place during these two weeks?

Remote learning for students in Years 11-12 will commence on 31 January. Formal Face to face schooling for all other students will commence Monday 7 February.



## Return to school (Week 3 and onwards)

### What are schools doing to limit transmission of COVID-19?

Schools will continue to ensure that they meet all Queensland Health Directions and advice where appropriate. Existing COVID-19 cleaning regimens and hygiene measures will remain in place. The advice we have received, is that vaccination still remains the best way of reducing transmission and associated health risks, and from the beginning of Term 1, all of our workers and volunteers will be fully vaccinated, in line with state mandates. Parents are strongly encouraged to ensure their children (aged 5 and over) are vaccinated also.

Schools will also be ensuring ventilation is adequate to reduce the risk of airborne COVID-19 transmission in schools, in accordance with federal guidelines. This includes a first focus on maximizing natural ventilation, followed by mechanical ventilation.

### What will happen in the event of confirmed cases of COVID-19 in a school?

Schools will follow the advice and requirements of Queensland Health and will work with the school community to ensure the health, safety and wellbeing of staff, students and visitors are prioritised. At this stage with the current requirements for close contacts, the likelihood of a full or partial school closure is unlikely.

### A student in my child's class has tested positive. What do I need to do?

Public Health has confirmed that the definition of close contact would not normally extend to classmates, so your child can continue to attend school. If your child experiences any COVID-19 symptoms, no matter how mild, keep your child at home, call your doctor or 13HEALTH (13 43 25 84) and get tested.

If a child is showing signs of illness at school, the school will contact the parent or carer to immediately collect the student.

### What happens if my child's teacher is unwell or a vulnerable worker?

Schools will manage staffing as they normally do. If teachers are unwell or unable to work, or are required to isolate or quarantine, principals will engage supply teachers as required. All our schools and colleges have planned for a variety of scenarios.

### Is it mandatory for all workers in all education settings to be vaccinated?

Yes, as of 11.59pm 23 January 2022, mandatory COVID-19 vaccinations will be required for all people working or delivering a service at a school or early childhood education and care setting. This includes contractors, volunteers, regulators and auditors. Visit the [mandatory vaccinations page](#) for more information.



### As a parent, do I need to be vaccinated to go into the school?

No. If you are a parent or carer visiting the school or meeting with someone, then you do not need to be vaccinated. If you are attending the school providing a service, including working as a volunteer, then you will need to be vaccinated. Mask wearing requirements will apply, however.

### Are contractors and other visitors allowed on school sites?

Contractors, service providers, volunteers and other visitors are welcome on Catholic school sites. However, adults are kindly reminded to wear a mask and follow any COVID safety measures on site.

All workers, service providers and volunteers are required to be fully vaccinated to work in a school, and must present proof of vaccination upon entry (normally through the Check In Qld App)

All visitors must follow any [Chief Health Officer directives](#) such as wearing face masks if required.

Parents and carers may be asked to check in for contact tracing purposes. All other visitors must adhere to school visitor and sign-in arrangements.

Please do not visit a school if you are sick, are experiencing [COVID-19 symptoms](#) or have been [directed to isolate or identified as a close contact](#).

### Will schools be using the Check In Qld app?

Yes. Use of the Check in Qld App, will allow schools and colleges to manage access when it comes to service providers and volunteers who are required to be vaccinated. Schools will still be utilizing their regular school sign in registers to satisfy student protection as well as health and safety requirements. With this in mind, if you are visiting the school, you will need to use the Check In Qld app, as well as sign in as per normal. Schools and colleges will communicate requirement to parents.

### What if I am finding it hard to follow a family court order or agreement?

Things might happen during the COVID-19 pandemic that make it very hard to follow the orders. For example, a child might have to go into self-isolation, or the orders might be about pickups from school, and schools could be temporarily closed.

If it is safe to do so, you should talk to the other parent to try to find solutions that are safe and will work for everyone, including the children.

If agreement can be reached, then this will need to be provided in writing, signed by all adults named on the orders, to the school or college.

If an agreement cannot be reached, then you should seek appropriate legal advice. Coming to an agreement and/or seeking advice will be important so as not to breach either court orders or health directives, especially if parents or children are required to isolate or quarantine.



## Wellbeing and support

### How can I support my family in the event of a confirmed case of COVID-19 at our school?

This is a difficult time for our communities affected by a confirmed case of COVID-19. Please remember to look out for each other, and to show courtesy and respect toward others. For further information you can contact Centacare or other agencies including your doctor.

For information on COVID-19 including home quarantine, testing locations and COVID-19 vaccinations, please visit the [Queensland Health website](#).

### What if my child requires health support at school?

Health support will continue to be provided to students attending school. As well as practicing and promoting high standards of hygiene, schools will ensure that staff use personal protective equipment (PPE) for specialised health procedures as advised by Queensland Health. Please discuss any concerns with your school.

### What if my child has a medical condition or is medically vulnerable?

Students who are unable to attend school due to medical reasons will be supported by their school, just as they would in the case of any extended medical absence. Please discuss any concerns with your school.

### What support is available for student wellbeing?

School staff will continue to be alert to the wellbeing needs of students. If parents are concerned about their child's wellbeing, they should contact the class teacher and support can be organised.

Resources to support students' wellbeing, including advice to parents and carers for students during the pandemic are available from your school or college.

### What support will my child receive if they are required to quarantine or isolate?

Please contact your child's school to enquire about the assistance available based on your child's specific requirements. They will support students to ensure continuity of learning for those impacted by COVID-19. It is important to remember, however, that medical advice should be followed, and students will not be expected to undertake schoolwork if they are unwell. Notify your child's class teacher if they are not well enough to undertake schoolwork.

### How will schools help my child if they fall behind during the COVID-19 pandemic?

COVID-19 has disrupted many aspects of life and this is likely to impact students in different ways.

Teachers are highly skilled at using a differentiated approach to meet the learning needs of a range of students, and this will continue to be a particular area of focus.



If you have specific concerns about your child's progress or any particular learning challenges that have arisen, please raise them with your child's classroom teacher.

### What about students in Senior Secondary years?

The Queensland Curriculum and Assessment Authority (QCAA) will continue to monitor the impact of COVID-19 on [senior secondary schooling](#) and share relevant information, as required.

Catholic schools will continue to work with QCAA and provide advice to schools regarding senior secondary schooling as it becomes available.

## School activities

### Can school sports and competitions take place?

With the advice we have now, school sports (held on school site) should be able to go ahead with no significant changes from last year once face to face learning commences on 7 February.

Given the rapidly changing COVID situation, any inter-school events or competitions scheduled for the initial weeks of school will be subject to a risk assessment, bearing in mind the Health Directives and Orders at the time.

### Are rehearsals and performances allowed for instrumental music programs, ensembles and choirs?

These will not commence until 7 February. After that, schools are able to conduct instrumental music programs, ensembles and choir rehearsals, provided COVID-safe measures are in place and depending on any new directions or orders.

### Can school functions be held?

Initial school focus will be on continuing education by reducing transmission within school. With this in mind, some events such as assemblies may be subject to strong COVID measures, particularly where parents or other external parties are involved. The school will provide further advice on these events, pending an assessment of the risks and controls. For each event schools and colleges will assess risks and ensure they are compliant with Queensland Health requirements.

### Can community groups use school facilities?

Principals may negotiate the use of their facilities for external users in line with government requirement and as long as the external user is operating in accordance with Queensland Government [COVID Safe Businesses](#).

Any decision will be at the discretion of the principal.

*Catholic Education Services wish to acknowledge the work and guidance of Education Queensland and Queensland Catholic Education Commission in the design of these Questions and Answers*

