



**Catholic
Education**
Diocese of Cairns

Learning with Faith and Vision

COVID-19 Operating guidelines for Cairns Catholic Education

Effective 2nd September 2022



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1 INTRODUCTION

These guidelines have been developed to assist schools in managing general school operations, as we start to see a lifting of COVID-19 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. Where there is doubt regarding specific situations, please continue to liaise with the school's DSE and the WHS Manager.

1.1 KEY MESSAGES

For the immediate future, schools will need to be mindful of a number of measures, designed to limit the impact of COVID-19 on our students, staff, community and school operations.

- Many students and staff will get COVID-19, and staff unavailability will continue to be an issue. Flexibility, agility and understanding will be key.
- If students are unwell or show symptoms of cold or flu, they must not come to school, regardless of if they have a negative RAT (Rapid Antigen Test) result. If the student is unwell at school, the parent caregivers should be contacted to take the student home.
- If staff are unwell or showing signs of cold or flu, they must not come to work, even if they have a negative RAT result.
- Whilst excursions and international travel are now a green light, additional care must be taken in the planning phase, particularly in regards to isolation protocols.

2 STUDENTS- COVID POSITIVE, CLOSE CONTACTS AND UNWELL

All students, even those who may be 18 years or older, remain subject to the operating guidelines in place for all students. Whilst there is a mandate for all workers to be vaccinated, this does not apply to 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 COVID POSITIVE

- To assist the school in managing cases within the school community, parents and carers are required to notify the school if their child tests positive for COVID.
- Students must complete the mandatory five-day isolation* period before returning to school.
- No negative RAT is required to return to school after the seven days isolation.
- Students aged 12 years or older must wear a mask for seven days after completing their isolation period.

** Five days isolation is 5 x 24 hours, so if you test positive at 11am on a Wednesday morning, you cannot leave isolation until after 11am the following Monday.*

2.2 CLOSE CONTACTS

- Students who are close contacts are not required to quarantine if they remain symptom free.

- The parent should notify the school that their child is a close contact, so arrangements can be made for any vulnerable students or staff.
- Close contacts should undertake a RAT on days 0, 2, 4 and 6.
- Close contacts must also quarantine if they develop flu like or gastrointestinal symptoms*, regardless of a negative test.
- Close contacts aged 12 years and older must wear a mask for 7 days when at school.

*Primary school aged children are just as likely to develop gastrointestinal symptoms as they are flu-like symptoms, if they contract the Omicron COVID-19 variant.

2.3 UNWELL STUDENTS

If students are unwell or have flu-like or gastrointestinal symptoms, they must not come to school; or if already at school, the students should be kept in a safe and comfortable area away from others, and the parent or caregivers should be contacted to take the student home. If the student has flu like symptoms, they school may offer the parent or carer a RAT to take home and administer to the child. This will be dependent upon school stock, and whether the parent wishes to take a RAT kit.

Please note: Students who return a negative RAT result still must not attend school if they are unwell.

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.

3 STAFF- COVID POSITIVE, CLOSE CONTACTS AND UNWELL

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 COVID related absences 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.

3.1 COVID POSITIVE OR QUARANTINED STAFF

- To assist the school in managing cases within the school community, all staff are required to notify the school if they test positive for COVID.
- Without exception, staff must complete the mandatory five-day isolation* period before returning to school.
- No negative RAT is required to return to work after the seven days isolation.
- Staff must wear a mask for seven days after completing their isolation period.

** Five days isolation is 5 x 24 hours, so if you test positive at 11am on a Wednesday morning, you cannot leave isolation until after 11am the following Monday*

3.2 CLOSE CONTACTS

- Staff who are close contacts are not required to quarantine if they remain symptom free.
- Staff should notify their line manager before returning to work if they are a close contact.
- Close contacts should undertake a RAT on days 0, 2, 4 and 6.
- Close contacts must quarantine if they develop flu like or gastrointestinal symptoms, regardless of a negative test.
- Close contacts must wear a mask for 7 days when at work.

3.3 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.).

Please note: Staff who return a negative RAT result still must not attend school if they are unwell or are under a quarantine or isolation requirement.

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.

4 BOARDING SCHOOL STUDENTS

Due to their discrete needs, boarding colleges will be subject to additional requirements regarding screening and testing of students, as well as managing confirmed cases and close contacts. The three key documents for boarding colleges are:

- [COVID-19 Operating Guidelines](#) (this document): used to manage most regular COVID requirements within the school setting.
- [Boarding- Preparing and managing COVID-19](#): Document released by EQ in early Feb, to be used for determining and managing confirmed COVID cases, as well as close contacts.
- [Managing a quarantined boarding facility](#): Further details on managing students in isolation or quarantine, including laundry, food and PPE requirements.

5 EXCURSIONS AND CAMPS

Despite the easing of restrictions, there are still some control measures and requirements that schools will need to be mindful of.

5.1 LOCAL EXCURSIONS (NOT INCLUDING CAMPS/OVERNIGHT STAYS)

Local excursions may resume, and regular risk management should include:

- Screening for unwell students and staff prior to departure
- Increased hygiene requirements
- Isolation and parent communication procedures for students who develop flu-like or gastrointestinal symptoms whilst on excursion

- Discussion with venue providers where relevant, to eliminate interaction with public.

5.2 CAMPS AND OVERNIGHT STAYS (LOCAL)

Camps and excursions with overnights stays may resume, however there is often an increased risk due to the communal hygiene facilities and sleeping arrangements. Locally held excursions allow a parent or carer to pick up their child if they develop any symptoms. Risk management should include:

- Screening for unwell students and staff prior to departure
- Increased hygiene requirements
- Discussion with venue providers where relevant, to eliminate interaction with public.
- Parent permission should include an agreement for the parent to pick up their child should they develop symptoms

5.3 INTERSTATE AND NON-LOCAL EXCURSIONS OR TRIPS

Interstate and non-local excursions and trips have a much higher risk associated with them, particularly in regard to isolation requirements for any person who tests positive for COVID. Risk management should include health screening for unwell staff and students prior to departure.

- Staff and students who are unwell but have not been tested for COVID should isolate from others but can still travel.
- Where staff or students have taken a RAT and it is positive, they will need to undertake the mandatory five days isolation
- Prior to the excursions, there must be a documented agreement between parents and the school in regard to covering costs for student isolation and supervision in the event that they test positive for COVID.
- This may include an agreement that a parent will fly to the destination and undertake isolation with their child and pay for any hotel expenses and travel costs.
- Parents may organise with parent volunteers (if any) for the volunteer to undertake the isolation period with the student to provide supervision.
- At direction from the parent, a student may undertake isolation at a friend or family members house in the area. The student will need to be picked up by the friend or family in a private vehicle.
- It is **not recommended** that staff provide supervision for students in isolation. Where this absolutely must occur, at least two staff members must be in isolation with the student to comply with student protection requirements. Staff must be willing, and there has to be a clear agreement on who will cover costs associated hotel expenses, food, travel etc.

Any interstate or non-local travel must be discussed with the relevant Director of School Effectiveness at the planning phase, and again in the weeks prior to the event taking place.

6 STAFF TRAVEL

Staff travel to Brisbane and interstate may go ahead, but staff should be aware that should they test positive to COVID whilst away, then they will need to cover any additional costs associated with their isolation, including food, hotel expenses and additional travel arrangements.

Principals and line managers may exercise some flexibility on a case-by-case basis, factoring in whether virtual attendance is available in lieu of travel, and the importance of the need to attend (mandatory CPD vs general meeting). This should always be discussed and agreed upon prior to travel.

7 VACCINATION REQUIREMENTS

Vaccination requirements are no longer required for workers entering our schools, so staff, contractors, visitors and volunteers are no longer required to show evidence of being vaccinated. Due to this, Check In Qld app sign in is no longer required either.

All persons should still follow normal school sign in procedures to satisfy WHS and students protection requirements.

8 SITE ACCESS

There are no requirements to limit site access, so assemblies, visitors, guest speakers and pick up and drop off procedures can all return to pre-COVID operations.

9 MEETINGS WITHIN THE SCHOOL

There are now no COVID specific measures required.

10 SCHOOL ASSEMBLIES AND LARGER GATHERINGS

There are now no COVID specific measures required.

11 PUBLIC EVENTS (INDOOR OR OUTDOOR)

There are now no COVID specific measures required.

12 SERVING OF FOOD

There are now no COVID specific measures required.

13 EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

There are now no COVID specific measures required.

14 SCHOOL SPORTS

There are now no COVID specific measures required.

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.

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

16 INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC PROGRAM, ENSEMBLES, CHOIRS AND OTHER PERFORMANCES

Instrumental music programs may proceed as per normal.

Normal cleaning procedures for shared wind instruments should be strictly observed.

17 CLEANING

Disinfectants used for COVID cleans will need to be either a bleach solution 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.

Schools are able to return to their normal pre-COVID cleaning regimes, with a mid-week COVID clean of high touch surfaces (desks, doorhandles, handrails etc.) to be undertaken, if using a quaternary ammonium compound based disinfectant. A mid-week clean with these products will allow an adequate amount of protection, with the 48-hour weekend period effectively eliminating any potential COVID surface contamination.

If using other [approved disinfectants](#), then disinfecting of high touch surfaces should occur daily.

17.1 PLAYGROUND CLEANING

There are now no COVID specific measures required.

18 USE OF SHARED EQUIPMENT OR LOANED RESOURCES

There are now no COVID specific measures required.

19 LIBRARY BOOKS AND SCHOOL READERS

There are now no COVID specific measures required.

20 CHURCH AND PARISH BUILDINGS

In consultation with the parish, schools may use parish buildings and operate under normal school rules. Where use of the parish building includes the public (including parents and carers), then use should be dictated by whatever rules the parish has in place.

21 SCHOOL TRANSPORT

There are now no COVID specific measures required.

22 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 plan as has been required previously.

External parties are exempt from school vaccination requirements, providing that the use of the school facilities occurs outside of designated school hours.