



**Catholic
Education**
Diocese of Cairns

Learning with Faith and Vision

COVID-19 Operating guidelines for Cairns Catholic Education

Effective 17th October 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 regard to isolation protocols.

2 STUDENTS- COVID POSITIVE, CLOSE CONTACTS AND UNWELL

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 should stay at home to isolate until they no longer have [acute respiratory symptoms](#).
- Students aged 12 and over should wear a mask for 7 days after testing positive to COVID-19, if they are indoors and unable to physically distance.
- No negative RAT is required to return to school.

2.2 CLOSE CONTACTS

- The parent should notify the school that their child is a close contact, so arrangements can be made for any vulnerable students or staff.
- Students aged 12 and over must wear a mask for 5 days after the infected person received a positive test, if they are indoors and unable to physically distance.

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.

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 limiting transmission and protecting vulnerable persons, staff are required to notify the school if they test positive for COVID.
- Staff should at home to isolate until they no longer have [acute respiratory symptoms](#).
- Staff must wear a mask for 7 days after testing positive to COVID-19, if they are indoors and unable to physically distance.
- No negative RAT is required to return to work.

3.2 CLOSE CONTACTS

- Staff should notify their line manager before returning to work if they are a close contact.
- Staff must wear a mask for 5 days after the infected person received a positive test, if they are indoors and unable to physically distance.

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.).

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

Boarding students who test positive to COVID must isolate until they no longer have acute respiratory symptoms. Management of isolation should continue as per before, in line with guidance [here](#).

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 [acute respiratory symptoms](#) or gastrointestinal symptoms whilst on excursion
- Discussion with venue providers where relevant, to minimise 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.
- Best value economy class air fares and hotel bookings must include consideration of cancellation/re-scheduling fare conditions.
- Schools must make plans for the isolation of students or staff who develop [acute respiratory symptoms](#). As this will just be for the duration of the acute symptoms, it may not be necessary to have a formal agreement for parents to travel and collect their child. However, hotel and flights need to remain flexible to allow for last minute travel and

accommodation changes. Where a student needs to isolate with staff, there must be a minimum of two staff members.

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 INTERNATIONAL EXCURSIONS

International or overseas excursions may go ahead, and must follow normal procedures as per the [Overseas Excursions guideline](#). Additionally, the following measures must be observed and adhered to:

The Principal or person responsible for the risk management of the excursion must meet with the Manager of WHS to complete the risk assessment prior to the submission of documentation to the Executive Director.

- Staff and students are not permitted to countries where there is a mandatory COVID isolation period as an entry requirement (most countries still have a mandatory or recommended isolation period for a confirmed COVID infection).
- Only destinations where there is a Level 1 or 2 [Smartraveller](#) travel advisory in place will be considered.
- Testing and isolation procedures vary between countries, so the relevant public health requirements must be researched, understood, and factored into risk management plans.
- All risk management plans are to be completed with full details of COVID-19 related plans while in destination and transiting countries.
- Complete relevant entry declarations and abide by current Queensland public health directions and advice.
- Entry requirements into destination country and return into Australia (such as mandatory vaccinations, visas) must be adhered to.
- Best value economy class air fares must include consideration of cancellation/re-scheduling fare conditions.
- Only COVID safe hotels or similar accommodation overseas will be permitted – no homestays.

Even where these conditions have been met, schools must be aware of the extreme difficulty in managing travel if the group is impacted by COVID as below, and plan accordingly.

6.1 MANAGING ISOLATION FOR INTERNATIONAL VISITS

International travel presents a high risk, particularly regarding isolation requirements for any person who tests positive for COVID. Risk management should include health screening for unwell staff and students prior to departure. Some countries do not require mandatory RAT testing if you are symptomatic, and in these countries, testing is at the discretion of the school and parent. Staff and students who are mildly unwell but have not been tested for COVID should isolate from others where possible but can still travel.

- Where staff or students have taken a COVID test and it is positive, they will need to abide by any relevant isolation and notification processes for the country they are in.

- Where isolation is required, this will normally be best managed by having staff enter isolation with the student, or having staff stay in a room next to the student (dependent upon age and maturity of the student, and parental permissions).
- Where staff are to remain in isolation with the student/s, there must be no less than 2 staff members of the same gender as the student.
- 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, unless this is covered by travel insurance. For example, there may be student and staff isolation costs (or excess insurance fees) for accommodation, food, and possible alterations to travel arrangements, so an agreement on who bears the cost should be made clear and agreed upon.

6.2 ISOLATION IMPACTS TO ITINERARIES AND SUPERVISION

Where isolation is required, the following will need to be considered and planned for:

- If staff are in isolation either for COVID or to supervise COVID positive students, there will still need to be enough available staff to meet staff to student supervision ratios.
- Isolation periods may range from a few days to a week or more. This will no doubt affect the rest of the group, where an itinerary requires further travel during this time. Plans will need to consider how this will affect the group:
- Does the unaffected group continue with their plans, or change plans to wait for the staff and students to come out of isolation?
- Do staff and students in isolation catch up with the group, or travel home after isolation?
- Will insurance cover alterations to accommodation and flights.

Due to the many difficulties in managing this, many schools may wish to wait until their destination country does not have mandatory COVID isolation rules or choose a destination that does not require COVID isolation.

7 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.

8 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.



9 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.

10 MEETINGS WITHIN THE SCHOOL

There are now no COVID specific measures required.

11 SCHOOL ASSEMBLIES AND LARGER GATHERINGS

There are now no COVID specific measures required.

12 PUBLIC EVENTS (INDOOR OR OUTDOOR)

There are now no COVID specific measures required.

13 SERVING OF FOOD

There are now no COVID specific measures required.

14 EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

There are now no COVID specific measures required.

15 SCHOOL SPORTS

There are now no COVID specific measures required.

16 HEALTH SUPPORT PROCEDURES

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

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

17 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.

18 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.

18.1 PLAYGROUND CLEANING

There are now no COVID specific measures required.

19 USE OF SHARED EQUIPMENT OR LOANED RESOURCES

There are now no COVID specific measures required.

20 LIBRARY BOOKS AND SCHOOL READERS

There are now no COVID specific measures required.

21 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.

22 SCHOOL TRANSPORT

There are now no COVID specific measures required.

23 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.