



Coronavirus (COVID-19)

WA EDUCATION POSITION AND UPDATE

Number 8

This page was last updated and is current as at **Friday 20 March, 1.25pm** and will be updated every Monday, Wednesday and Friday. Additional updates will be provided as required.

Blue text: Information which has been edited to provide greater clarity, or updated to reflect an update in Department of Health wording.

Purple text: New information since the 18 March update (update 7).

Black text: is information that was included in previous editions, and has been reinserted.

Key messages

While the Department of Health advises that the risk of transmission in Western Australia remains low; they are monitoring the situation and we are acting on their advice to take any necessary precautions for schools and our staff. The current focus is on minimising and preventing transmission and making sure that our school system is prepared for a possible case.

It is important that as a school community we apply a common sense, factual and practical approach to COVID-19. Responses to questions from students, parents and the wider community need to be consistent and only provide information which we know to be factual and is provided through the Department of Health, or the information on these WA schools advice pages.

Continuity of teaching and learning and school operations

As the COVID-19 situation evolves, you should continue your contingency planning for operations. Plans for the continuity of learning and teaching are also essential and we will provide you with resources to assist with curriculum delivery to minimise disruption to student learning. Our priority is to support Year 11 and 12 students. In doing so we will bolster teaching and learning services, and print hard copy resources to assist schools who may not have online access.

COVID-19 Curriculum continuity guidelines

We know schools are making preparations for continuity of teaching and learning in the event of a significant disruption to student learning, including the potential for a temporary school closure. To support schools, curriculum resources will be available on a public website as of Monday 23 March. This will be available for both staff and parents to use.

Guidelines and suggestions to support these preparations have been developed.

New Directions to protect remote Aboriginal communities from COVID-19

In response to the State's pandemic response plan, access in and out of remote Aboriginal communities will be restricted. It also enforces the self-isolation measures that many communities are already observing.

Under the Directions, any person outside the boundary of a remote Aboriginal community must not enter the boundaries of the community. A person within a remote Aboriginal community must also remain within the boundaries of that community.

These Directions apply to each remote Aboriginal community across the State.

The Department is working with the Department of Premier and Cabinet to explore exemptions for Department staff and children and young people who reside in the community. More information will be provided shortly.

Attendance at school

On Sunday 15 March, the Prime Minister introduced measures placed on international arrivals into Australia. This means a mandatory 14 day self-isolation requirement will be placed on all international arrivals into Australia effective from 16 March, 2020. This also applies to all parents/carers, contractors, visitors and volunteers on school sites.

Who cannot attend school

Students or staff cannot attend school and need to self-isolate if they have:

- a) returned from overseas travel, they must self-isolate for 14 days from the date of return to Australia;
- b) been informed by public health authorities that they have been in close contact with a confirmed case and they must isolate themselves for 14 days after the date of last contact with the confirmed case;
- c) been tested for COVID-19 and are awaiting results should follow the advice of the Department of Health and stay away from school.

The above also applies to all parents/carers, contractors, visitors and volunteers on school sites.

Parents/carers and staff should notify their school or line manager if the student or staff member will be away for the isolation period and confirm the date in which they were last overseas, or have been advised by the Department of Health to isolate.

Recording student absences

Schools should continue to record all student absences relating to COVID-19 as a Reasonable absence (code R). This includes:

- students who are self-isolating due to Department of Health advice;
- families keeping children home due to perceived and possible increased risk relating to children and family members who are in a higher risk category (e.g. diabetes, compromised immune systems); and
- families keeping their children at home due to the perceived risk that they are safer at home, rather than in a school setting due to possible transmission of the virus.

Students whose parents have chosen to keep them home, without seeking medical advice, may not be provided curriculum work and activities. The priority for staff is to maintain focus on classroom learning programs. In the event of a temporary school closure, further advice will be provided.

International travel

School Excursions

All international school excursions are banned. Please refer to [submit a Travel Claim](#) for information on processes to take if you need to cancel an excursion.

Student exchanges and study tours into WA schools

Student exchanges and study tours into WA schools are postponed until further notice.

Non-work travel advice

The [Smartraveller](#) level advice for all Australian's travelling overseas has been upgraded to a level 4 – 'do not travel overseas at this time'. This is the highest level of advice (level 4 of 4).

Employees should consider the latest [Smartraveller](#) advice about travel before proceeding to travel overseas or making a booking.

Staff work related travel

All government funded non-critical international travel for public sector employees and ministerial staff is banned until further notice, effective immediately. For critical travel that cannot be avoided, staff should check the [Smartraveller](#) website prior to travelling to ensure that they have the latest information and can make informed decisions.

Front line services and mass gatherings

On Wednesday, 18 March the Australian Government announced that all organised, **non-essential mass gatherings attended by more than 100 people for indoor events and more than 500 people for outdoors events** must be cancelled from Wednesday 18 March 2020.

On Friday, 20 March the Australian Government announced further measures relating to gatherings of fewer than 100 people in an enclosed space. The Government is now recommending four square metres per person. This does **not** apply to schools.

Please refer to the [**advice regarding mass gatherings to support principal decision-making.**](#)

Please refer to [Healthy WA](#) for more information on the Prime Minister's announcement.

The announcement was very clear that there is no need for school closures. However, schools need to review their schedule of activities.

Principals are requested to review their forward activity schedule to minimise the need for large gatherings and postpone any that meet these criteria until further notice. Please look at Term 1 and Term 2 events at this stage.

Capital and maintenance works

To clarify the advice regarding what capital and maintenance works at your school can proceed, your decision should be guided by a common sense approach and what is required. Schools can continue with current plans for school maintenance and improvements. These are not limited to just Priority 1 Maintenance works.

It is important that principals contact any contractor who is engaged in any capital works or stimulus maintenance package work to ensure they are advised of social distancing and hygiene measures as required. All external personnel must follow self-isolation requirements and the advice issued by the Department of Health in relation to COVID-19.

If principals are considering to not proceed with any stimulus package, capital or maintenance works undertaken by the Department of Finance's contractors, please contact the Department of Education's Capital Works and Maintenance directorate or your Program Manager from Building Management and Works, prior to deciding whether or not they should progress.

Pre-service teachers and School Psychologists undertaking practicums

Public school settings provide pre-service teachers and school psychologists with access to quality mentors and a rich diversity of students that best prepare them for a career in teaching. Completion of a successful practicum is a graduation requirement across all universities and essential to developing a continued supply of teachers and school psychologists for our schools.

Universities have advised us that they have implemented a process to ensure pre-service teachers comply with the most current advice on COVID-19 restrictions. With this in mind, principals are asked to continue to provide pre-service teachers and school psychologists with practicum placement opportunities. This is in line with the recent **advice regarding mass gatherings to support principal decision-making.**

Advice from School Curriculum and Standards Authority (SCSA)

A letter was sent from SCSA to all principals on Tuesday 17 March 2020. It provided advice regarding Year 11 and 12 curriculum and assessments. Please ensure you are familiar with this information and contact SCSA for more information if needed on info@scsa.wa.edu.au

Communications support

Principals need to report all positive confirmed COVID-19 cases in the community (parents/carer or siblings) to Marcia Czerniak at marcia.czerniak@education.wa.edu.au. You must contact Marcia before sending any information out to parents/carers – support will be provided for this.

We have developed [materials](#) to assist you in responding to questions from members of your school community. We will continue to update these materials as new information arises.

Public schools should contact the Department of Education Media Team on 9264 5821 for advice before responding to COVID-19 media queries.

If you would like support to communicate with parents/carers about COVID-19, you can contact the coronavirus support team and principal advisors.

Temporary school closure

If a WA school has to close due to a confirmed case, it will be on advice from the WA Health Department's Chief Health Officer.

The Chief Health Officer will, if there has been a positive COVID-19 test result in your school, close your school temporarily while assessment and tracing of exposure is conducted. A thorough school clean will then be carried out to make the school safe for the return of students and staff.

In this situation the Department of Education, AISWA, or CEWA will work with individual school principals to provide direct advice and support regarding the closure process and communication.

[Information for principals](#) has been developed to assist in their planning, should there be a confirmed case of COVID-19 in their school community. Principals should consider the temporary school closure planning checklist now, and determine how the steps would work in their particular school.

If you have a staff member or student who has been tested for COVID-19, please email coronavirussupport@education.wa.edu.au. This will assist our support planning.

Hand sanitiser recipe

The World Health Organisation published on their website how to make your own hand sanitiser. Please keep in mind the following OH&S guidelines:

- To avoid contamination with spore-forming organisms, disposable bottles should preferably be used.
- To prevent evaporation, containers should have a maximum capacity of 500 ml.
- The production or re-filling unit should follow norms on how to clean and disinfect the bottles (e.g. autoclaving, boiling, or chemical disinfection with chlorine). Autoclaving is considered the most suitable procedure.
- Reusable bottles should never be refilled until they have been completely emptied and then cleansed and disinfected.
- Bottles should be thoroughly washed with detergent and tap water to eliminate any residual liquid. If they are heat-resistant, bottles should be thermally disinfected by boiling in water.
- Production and storage facilities should be ideally air-conditioned or cool rooms. Open flames and smoking must be strictly prohibited in production and storage areas.
- While sterile distilled water is preferred for making the formulations, boiled and cooled tap water may also be used as long as it is free of visible particles.

Further reading and safety advice can be sought from the [WHO guidelines](#).

Support and advice

The WA education coronavirus support centre has been established to provide coordinated support across Department of Education, Catholic Education Western Australia, and Association of Independent Schools of Western Australia.

Further information is available at www.healthywa.wa.gov.au/coronavirus or the healthdirect helpline on **1800 020 080** for more information on the virus and its symptoms.

- [Information for parents and schools](#)
- [Information for employees](#)
- [Advice for schools about self-isolation requirements](#)

Hygiene and cleaning

Cleaning guidelines

Cleaning guidelines have been developed based on advice from the WA Department of Health, in consultation with the United Worker's Union.

These [guidelines](#) must be followed by any staff undertaking cleaning duties in schools and other workplaces.

Important information about COVID-19 Testing from the WA Chief Health Officer, Dr Andrew Robertson

“Employers should not send their staff or students to be tested for COVID-19 to either COVID Clinics or GPs unless they are currently experiencing symptoms and meet the testing criteria.

To be eligible for testing people must:

- be currently experiencing symptoms such as fever, cough or sore throat AND have
- returned from overseas travel in the last 14 days
- OR be currently experiencing symptoms, and be a contact of a confirmed case

- OR be currently experiencing symptoms and believe they have been in close contact with a person infected with COVID-19.

There is no point testing someone if they do not have symptoms. This uses valuable resources – personal protective equipment and pathology testing supplies – that are in short supply world-wide and need to be used responsibly for those patients who meet the criteria.

Employers should not send their staff to COVID Clinics or GPs for medical clearances or certificates. We implore Western Australians to be vigilant, but not alarmed.”

Additional COVID-19 information, including FAQs is available at
https://healthywa.wa.gov.au/Articles/A_E/Coronavirus

How can I protect myself and others against COVID-19?

- Frequently washing your hands for at least 20 seconds with soap and water, or using an alcohol-based hand gel
- Refraining from touching mouth and nose
- If coughing or sneezing, covering your nose and mouth with a paper tissue or flexed elbow.
- Dispose of the tissue immediately after use and perform hand hygiene and
- Avoiding close contact with anyone if you, or they, have a cold or flu-like symptoms (maintain a distance of at least 1 metre).

How is COVID-19 spread?

COVID-19 is most likely to spread from person-to-person through:

- direct close contact with a person while they are infectious;
- close contact with a person with a confirmed infection who coughs or sneezes; or
- touching objects or surfaces (such as door handles or tables) contaminated from a cough or sneeze from a person with a confirmed infection, and then touching your mouth or face.

Most infections are only transmitted by people when they have symptoms. These can include fever, a cough, sore throat, tiredness and shortness of breath.

Preventing the spread of COVID-19

There are practical and proportionate steps that can be taken to prepare in advance of COVID-19 and precautions that can be put in place to slow its transmission.

The Department of Health promotes regular and thorough hand-washing through:

- putting alcohol based hand rub (ABHR) dispensers in prominent places around schools/workplaces and make sure these dispensers are regularly refilled;
- displaying posters promoting hand-washing, see
<https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/advice-for-public>

- There is also a [poster](#) developed by the Kimberley Aboriginal Medical Service who are following state and national public health guidelines for responding to COVID19. The poster will be of particular value for schools to use, not just in the Kimberley but in other schools with significant enrolments of students from Aboriginal communities.
- combining this with other communication measures such as offering guidance from occupational health and safety officers, briefings at meetings and information to promote hand-washing;
- making sure that staff, contractors and students have access to places where they can wash their hands with soap and water;
- ensuring rubbish bins are accessible; and
- ensuring staff have access to cleaning and disinfectant agents to enable cleaning of staff facilities and work stations.

Staff and students should:

- wash hands with soap and running water when hands are visibly dirty;
- wash hands with soap and water and use alcohol based hand rub (ABHR), before and after eating or prior to food preparation;
- wash hands with soap and water after going to the toilet;

- avoid using handkerchiefs;
- cough and sneeze with a tissue or bent elbow, dispose of used tissues immediately, and use ABHR or soap and water;
- avoid touching eyes, mouth and nose;
- wash hands with soap and water or ABHR when caring for the sick;
- if unwell, avoid contact with others;
- make sure workplaces are clean and hygienic, surfaces (e.g. desks and tables) and objects (e.g. telephones, keyboards) need to be wiped with disinfectant regularly; and
- wash hands or use ABHR after handling animals or animal waste.

Cleaning and sanitising products

A supply of soap or another cleansing agent must be available in all schools and students should be given developmentally appropriate instruction for effective hand washing.

Should Department of Education schools have difficulty purchasing cleaning and sanitising products such as hand soap, sanitiser or toilet paper from their regular CUA supplier or other authorised supplier, they may purchase the products from any supplier that has the items in stock.

Schools are encouraged to continue to source supplies from CUA and non-CUA suppliers in reasonable quantities. We have been advised by CUA suppliers that they are working to fill all back orders although the timeline is unclear. Current indicators are that hand sanitisers will be available in 3 to 4 weeks' time.

In the meantime, the Department is working to secure additional supplies of hand sanitiser and schools will be updated with any further developments.

Schools are reminded that whilst the availability of hand sanitisers is beneficial, hand washing with soap and water remains an effective method of sanitising. Should you have any concerns about your soap supply please contact us – buying@education.wa.edu.au or 9264 5567

Should you have any concerns about the supply of toilet paper and tissues, please contact buying@education.wa.edu.au or 9264 5567.

Face masks

WA Health does not recommend the use of face masks for the general public to prevent the risk of contracting COVID-19. See the Australian Government fact sheet 'Information on the use of surgical masks' for further information, available at:

<https://www.health.gov.au/resources/publications/novel-coronavirus-COVID-19-information-on-the-use-of-surgical-masks>

COVID-19 symptoms

Most people infected with COVID-19 experience mild symptoms and recover. However, some go on to experience more serious illness and may require hospital care. Risk of serious illness rises with age: people over 40 seem to be more vulnerable than those under 40. People with weakened immune systems and people with conditions such as diabetes, heart and lung disease are also more vulnerable to serious illness.

People with COVID-19 may experience:

- fever;
- flu-like symptoms such as coughing, sore throat and fatigue; or
- shortness of breath.

Staff with COVID-19 symptoms

If a student or employee has travelled overseas in the past 14 days AND has respiratory symptoms such as a sore throat, cough, shortness of breath or fever, they should call their GP or call the Coronavirus Health Information Line on 1800 020 080 and advise them of their symptoms and travel history.

If a student or employee is attending a GP or requires urgent medical assistance at an emergency department, they should telephone ahead and tell them that they have been to overseas and are unwell. This will prevent other people at the health service potentially being exposed.

If a student or employee has serious symptoms, such as difficulty breathing, call 000 for urgent medical help. Students and staff should advise their principal or line manager if they develop symptoms and are being tested for COVID-19, particularly if they have been in the workplace or at school. Public health authorities may contact the Department of Education in the event an employee or student is confirmed to have COVID-19.

If a student or employee does have COVID-19 symptoms and has had possible exposure to the virus, they should not attend school or work until they have medical confirmation that they do not have the virus.

The Department of Education, Catholic Education Western Australia, and the Association of Independent Schools of Western Australia will continue to respond as a collaborative team to advice from the WA Department of Health and provide updated advice to schools and staff as appropriate.



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