



# Coronavirus (COVID-19)

## WA EDUCATION POSITION AND UPDATE

### Number 5

This page was last updated and is current as at **Friday 13 March, 9:15am** and will be updated every Monday, Wednesday and Friday by 9.30am. 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 11 March update (update 4).

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 preparation in advance of COVID-19 and precautions that can be put in place to slow its transmission.

Western Australians should remain alert, but not be alarmed.

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.

The Department of Health has a snapshot on the current situation in Western Australia [here](#).

## Attendance at school

### Who cannot attend school

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

- left or transited through **mainland China** in the last 14 days, they must isolate themselves for 14 days from the date of leaving mainland China;
- left or transited through **Iran** on or after 1 March, they must isolate themselves for 14 days after leaving Iran;
- left or transited through the **Republic of Korea**, on or after 5 March, they must isolate themselves for 14 days after leaving the Republic of Korea;
- left or transited through **Italy**, on or after 11 March, they must isolate themselves for 14 days after leaving **Italy**. People who left or transited through Italy prior to 11 March, should monitor symptoms and seek medical attention should they feel unwell; and
- been informed by public health authorities that they have been in close contact with a confirmed case of coronavirus, they must isolate themselves for 14 days after the date of last contact with the confirmed case.

Students or staff who have been tested for COVID-19 should follow the advice of the Department of Health and stay away from school whilst awaiting results.

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 in mainland China, Iran, the Republic of Korea or Italy, or have been advised by the Department of Health to isolate.

A medical certificate is not required to return to school. Schools should record the student absence as a Reasonable absence (code R).

Staff who are required to isolate and are well, may work from home and not take leave. Where a staff member is required to isolate in a WA public school due to the above, the staff member will [not be charged](#) to the schools one line budget.

### Who can attend school

Students or staff who have travelled to or transited through other countries (excluding China, Iran, Republic of Korea and Italy) can attend school. If students or staff display symptoms (see information below) they should not attend school and seek medical advice.

All returned travelers who have travelled in or transited through “higher risk” countries or a country considered to pose a “moderate risk” of transmission in the last 14 days should self-monitor for symptoms and immediately isolate themselves if they become unwell.

Higher Risk	Moderate Risk
<b><i>Must isolate for 14 days prior to attending</i></b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Mainland China</li><li>• Iran</li><li>• Republic of Korea</li><li>• Italy</li></ul>	<b><i>Can attend school, but self-monitor</i></b> All other countries

The most up to date list can be accessed at:

<https://www1.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/ohp-covid-19-countries.htm>

## International travel

### *School Excursions*

All international school excursions in Western Australian schools have been banned (this now includes the USA and Canada) until further notice, except for travel to New Zealand (providing it does not transit through Asia).

For public schools who have cancelled an international or interstate excursion due to COVID-19, they can claim non-refundable losses through the Department’s Travel Cover. The cover is based on the school having appropriate approval for the excursion and having collected the mandatory insurance payment of \$75 or \$25 when receiving the initial payment for the excursion from the parents.

If you wish to [submit a Travel Claim](#) a representative of the school will need to provide:

1. Formal documentation from your travel agent or associated travel companies with itemised costs and expenses including the non-refundable portions of the trip;
2. The [Travel Claim Form](#) (the claim will be on behalf of all Department insured attendees on the trip); and
3. The [spreadsheet](#) providing the details of all Department insured attendees on the trip.

Once you have completed the above you can send the information to [Legalservices@education.wa.edu.au](mailto:Legalservices@education.wa.edu.au) for processing with the Government Insurance Division. A lump sum payment will be made to the school for payment to the individual attendee.

Details about arrangements for collection of the insurance travel fee and payment of any compensation will be included on IKON next week.

### *Student exchanges and study tours into WA schools*

Principals make decisions with regard to staff and students visiting Western Australian schools from overseas. There are no additional restrictions other than those already put in place by Australian Border Force and Department of Health. We will keep you informed if any additional restrictions are implemented.

### *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 [Smart Traveller](#) website prior to travelling to ensure that they have the latest information and can make informed decisions.

### *Non-work travel advice*

The Commonwealth Government (Border Force) have updated travel restrictions to visitors from South Korea, Iran, mainland China and Italy. Visitors who are not Australian citizens or permanent residents, or their dependents will not be allowed entry into Australia. The Commonwealth Government has also advised that visitors from Italy will also be subject to enhanced health screening and temperature testing arrangements.

We will continue to closely monitor new information and travel advice, and provide updates as they become available.

## **Communications support**

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

We have developed [materials](#) to assist you in responding to questions from members of your school community.

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

## **Will my school close if there is a confirmed staff or student case?**

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 may, if there has been a positive COVID-19 test result in your school community, 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, you should consider now how you would communicate with your parents and staff (during or after the school day) if your school is required to close.

It would be appreciated if you email [coronavirussupport@education.wa.edu.au](mailto:coronavirussupport@education.wa.edu.au) where a student or staff member is tested. This will assist our support planning.

The Department of Education is developing materials to support schools to maintain continuity of student learning in the event of school closures. The first priority is online resources for Year 12 ATAR courses. SIDE materials and additional support for Connect will also be available. Further information will be provided in future updates.

## 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](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](mailto: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 or transited through China, Iran, Republic of Korea or Italy 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 China, Iran or Republic of Korea 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.

## Front line services and mass gatherings

There is not yet any health basis for public sector workers to step away from front line (public facing) duties or for agencies to cancel mass gatherings.

## Support and advice

Further information is available at [www.healthywa.wa.gov.au/coronavirus](http://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](#)

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.

The support centre may be contacted by principals and senior staff for education advice, via email on [coronavirussupport@education.wa.edu.au](mailto:coronavirussupport@education.wa.edu.au)

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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