



Coronavirus (COVID-19)

WA EDUCATION POSITION AND UPDATE

Number 4

This page was last updated and is current as at Wednesday 11 March, 9:00am 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 9 March update (update 3).

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:

- a) 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;
- b) left or transited through **Iran** on or after 1 March, they must isolate themselves for 14 days after leaving Iran;
- c) 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;
- d) left or transited through **Italy** in the last 14 days, they must isolate themselves for 14 days from the date of leaving **Italy**;
- e) 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
<p>Must isolate for 14 days prior to attending</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mainland China • Iran • Republic of Korea • Italy 	<p>Can attend school, but self-monitor</p> <p>All other countries</p>

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 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.

Communication

Public schools should contact the Department of Education Media Team on 9264 5821 for advice before responding to 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 (Phil White on 9264 4075, Ed Black on 9264 4074 and Jordana Yearsley on 9264 4079).

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. In this situation the principal will receive direct advice and support regarding the closure process and communication from the coronavirus support team.

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 where a student or staff member is tested. This will assist our support planning.

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>
- 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. The Department is working with CUA suppliers through the Department of Finance to confirm the on-going availability of these products and will provide further updates once the status is known. If you have any difficulty in sourcing the products from available suppliers, please contact Commercial Services on 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 or Republic of Korea 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 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

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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