



Coronavirus (COVID-19)

WA EDUCATION POSITION AND UPDATE

Number 7

This page was last updated and is current as at **Wednesday 18 March, 1.20pm** 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 16 March update (update 6).

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.

Western Australians should remain alert, but not be alarmed. The Department of Health has a snapshot on the current situation in Western Australia [here](#).

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 15 March, 2020. This also applies to all parents/carers, contractors, visitors and volunteers on school sites.

Students or staff cannot attend school or work and need to self-isolate if they have also 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. Students or staff who have tested for COVID-19 should follow the advice of the Department of Health and stay away from school whilst awaiting results.

Students whose parents have chosen to keep them home, without seeking medical advice, will 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.

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 from a WA public school is required to isolate themselves, the staff member will [not be charged](#) to the schools one line budget.

Further information on managing workforce issues arising from COVID-19 will be provided in the coming days.

International travel

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).

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.

Non-work travel advice

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. Please refer to the updated [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

If principals are aware of a confirmed case in the community (eg. parent/carer) and feel they need to send out a message to parents/carers, you must contact Marcia Czerniak from Public Relations and Marketing at Marcia.czerniak@education.wa.edu.au before sending out any communications.

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, 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.

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 ramp up teaching and learning services, and print hard copy resources to assist schools who may not have online access.

Support and advice

Further information is available at www.healthy.wa.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.

For education advice please contact one of the coronavirus support centre principal advisors:
Jordana Yearsley 9264 4075
Phil White 9264 4079
Edd Black 9264 4074
E: 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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Education

