



Coronavirus (COVID-19)

WA EDUCATION POSITION AND UPDATE

Number 11

This page was last updated and is current as at **Friday 27 March, 12:00pm** 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 25 March update (update 10).

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

Key messages

The Department is working closely with the Department of Health, particularly Dr Andrew Robertson, the WA Chief Health Officer. We will continue to follow their expert advice.

On 26 March the State Government announced all public schools in Western Australia will remain open until the end of term, Thursday 9 April. In the final two weeks schools will operate differently from usual. From Monday 30 March to Friday 3 April all children who attend school will be taught as normal. The following week (6 - 9 April) teachers will prepare teaching programs for Term 2 and during this time students who attend school will be supervised.

The Minister for Education and Training reiterated that continuity of education for as long as possible is best, but families are now encouraged to keep their children at home.

Learning programs for final week of Term 1

- Coordinated learning programs cease on Friday 3 April for students.
- From 6 - 9 April students attending school will be supervised but will not be provided with an individualised learning program.
- Schools are not expected to provide work for students who are not in attendance for the balance of Term 1.

Recruitment process

As of today (Friday 27 March), staffing flexibilities have been introduced to streamline recruitment and selection processes. Please see the updates in the workforce and cleaning sections of today's update.

Review of non-essential functions

Thank you to principals and school communities who have provided the Director General with feedback on non-essential functions that could be cancelled or postponed for Semester One, 2020. Semester One Public School Reviews have been postponed and the completion of 2019 School Annual Reports are now optional.

Principals should have now provided feedback relating to non-essential functions. Unions and Associations have also been invited to provide the Director General with feedback relating to non-essential functions. A review of school functions is now underway and updates on endorsed non-essential functions will be published in these updates.

Border controls - international and interstate travel

All travel in and out of Western Australia has been banned as of 1.30pm on Tuesday 24 March 2020.

- Unless exempted, arrivals from interstate by road, rail, air and sea will be ordered to self-isolate for 14 days.
- Exemptions will apply to essential services and essential workers, including health and emergency services, defence and policing, mining industry workforces, flight crews and freight of essential goods, via ports and trucks – with strict guidelines in place to monitor and manage this.
- There will also be exemptions granted on compassionate grounds and where people live near border communities.

Staff work related travel

All government funded non-critical international, interstate and intrastate 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.

COVID-19 curriculum support 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. The [curriculum support guidelines](#) will assist schools with this important work.

We are working to provide online access to resources for parents, carers and students. This will be through the [Learning at home](#) website. The website is now available and resources will continue to be added over the coming weeks.

Our teachers should continue to use [Connect](#) as their primary source of teaching resources. The materials published on the [Learning at home](#) website will also be available on [Connect](#).

Student wellbeing website

Given the extensive media coverage, some children are already aware of the impact of the virus and will pick up on the concerns and anxiety of others. This could be through listening and observing what is happening online, at home and school.

The [Learning at home](#) website provides advice and resources for parents and carers, educators and students. This includes a wide range of resources and information related to the impact of COVID-19 on students' health and wellbeing and the impact on families. It also includes vital information for schools to understand how they can best support students and families to access services and information. The website will continue to be updated over the coming weeks.

Our educators should continue to access the support of school psychologists, school chaplains and Schools of Special Educational Needs.

A Student Wellbeing Response, Recovery Advisory Team has been established to identify and respond to emerging issues for educators and support staff. The team can be contacted on **6206 2098** or at covid19.studentwellbeing@education.wa.edu.au. Please visit the information on [Support for parents and carers](#)

Parents are advised that, if they need urgent mental health advice and support for themselves or their child, there is a 24 hour crisis support line 1800 048 636.

COVID-19 guidelines for school psychologists and lead school psychologists

These guidelines for school psychologists and lead school psychologists were released 25 March 2020.

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.

Further information relating to the guidelines is available [here](#). The implications for education will be communicated directly to Remote Community school principals and Regional Executive Directors.

As of Friday 27 March, Greg Robson (previously RED Kimberley) will be joining our Incident Management Team. Greg brings a wealth of knowledge and experience and will be working with Kevin O'Keefe to lead our response to, and support of, Remote Community Schools.

Attendance at school

The State Government recognises there will still be families who need to send their children to school to continue their learning prior to the end of term. These may include:

- children of parents and carers who need their children to attend school to maintain employment
- children who live in families with aged relatives
- children where it is safer for them to be at school.

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) returned from interstate travel, from 1.30pm on Tuesday 24 March, they must self-isolate for 14 days from the date of return to Western Australia
- c) 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
- d) 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

We remind schools that the use of a Reasonable absence (code R) is used in the case of:

- students who are self-isolating due to Department of Health advice
- families keeping children home due to increased risk relating to children and family members who are in a higher risk category (e.g. diabetes, compromised immune systems)
- students with a reason provided as acceptable other than an absence due to suspension, cultural absence, illness or family holiday
- families keeping their children home due to a perceived risk that they are safer at home than in a school setting due to possible transmission of the virus.

If the absence does not meet the criteria above, it will be recorded as an unauthorised absence.

[Learning at home](#) resources are available to students whose parents have chosen to keep them home. 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.

Workforce matters

Streamlining selection processes

Principals now have a number of staffing options available when filling vacancies related to COVID-19. The document [Staffing Processes and Practices](#) outlines a number of actions which support principals to manage a range of staffing related issues and to quickly source and appoint staff. The advice also provides information regarding your options in relation to the existing recruitment processes.

Advice to staff with health concerns

Any staff member who is concerned about their health, including chronic conditions that they have, or any potential risk relating to their age should seek advice from their general practitioner or health care advisor. Decisions should be guided by the advice from health care experts.

BYO water bottles

As per advice received from the Public Health Emergency Operations Centre (PHEOC), it is preferable that students bring their own individual water bottles that can be filled from the fountain as necessary. This will reduce the need for students to drink directly from fountains. All students should be instructed on safe usage of water fountains e.g. not putting their mouth onto equipment. The water fountains should be regularly cleaned and checked that they are working correctly with good pressure.

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 updated [advice regarding mass gatherings to support principal decision-making](#).

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

While schools remain exempt from social distancing requirements, the Department of Health has produced a [fact sheet on social distancing](#) for general information.

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 (Public Schools)

We are seeking to minimise any additional burden on businesses that are already facing the enormous challenges of COVID-19. Current advice in relation to capital and maintenance works, including the stimulus package works at your school, is that it should proceed unless the risks cannot be managed.

Contractors who come on site must comply with the self-isolation requirements and the advice issued by the Department of Health. This includes requirements for social distancing and hygiene measures.

Where a principal recommends to not proceed with any 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. This should be done prior to deciding whether or not to 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 [updated 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.

ICT

ICT are currently reviewing options for the best way to provide remote access, where it is possible and critical to operations of schools and the Department. This work is being managed and co-ordinated in a way that will be applied consistently as instructed by the Director General and the assembled working group. Formal advice on what is available to connect remotely, the steps to do so and where to get more information will be provided soon.

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.

Cleaning staff

Recruitment and training processes are underway to increase our cleaning workforce. Adverts for cleaners will appear on JobsWA today, the West Australian tomorrow and a social media campaign undertaken. The recruitment process will be streamlined and a fixed-term pool established for schools to be able to access. It is anticipated that principals, through RAMs, will have access to these pools by Wednesday, 1 April 2020.

Additional cleaning requirements

Additional funding for increased school cleaning will be provided to schools by the end of the week through an operational response. The operational response will provide funding for the estimated 26% increase in cleaning time and a \$2500 allocation for the additional cost of supplies.

The allocation will be provided in two instalments, the first allocation has been calculated based on the increased cleaning time from Week 7, Term 1 to Week 10, Term 2 plus the \$2500. The second instalment will occur prior to Term 3 and will cover the remaining 2020 requirements.

Should schools have any queries regarding their allocation, they can contact School Funding on SchoolFunding@education.wa.edu.au.

COVID-19 testing

The Australian Health Protection Principal Committee (AHPPC) releases regular updates. The latest can be found here <https://www.health.gov.au/committees-and-groups/australian-health-protection-principal-committee-ahppc#statements->

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.

Western Australia is introducing new, broader testing criteria for COVID-19. Guidelines will be made in coming days and more details will be available shortly, however at this stage the criteria for testing at COVID-19 clinics has not changed.

People will only be tested if they have fever and/or respiratory symptoms such as cough or sore throat AND documented evidence of:

- overseas travel in the last 14 days
OR
- close contact of a confirmed case (provide name of case).

There is no point testing someone if they do not have symptoms. Testing 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.

Those who are tested should remain isolated at home, until they receive their test results and further

Employers should not send their staff to COVID Clinics or GPs for medical clearances or certificates.

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.
- Disposing of the tissue immediately after use and performing 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
- 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 making 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
- ensuring staff have access to cleaning and disinfectant agents to enable cleaning of staff facilities and work stations.

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.

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
- 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 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
- 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 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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