

COVID-19 Return to School Policy

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to outline how our school will be managing risk relating to Coronavirus (COVID-19) during key interactions between students, parents and staff during the return to school in Term 2, 2020.

Ascot Vale Special School is committed to providing a safe learning and working environment for our students and staff. We ask for the whole school community to follow this policy to enable us to provide the safest possible environment during this time. We all have a role to play in stopping the spread of COVID-19 in Victoria.

Background

Ascot Vale Special School is following the advice from the Department of Education and Training including, [Health and safety advice for return to onsite learning in the context of COVID-19](#) which can be found on the Department's [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) website](#).

Scope

This policy applies to everyone in the Ascot Vale Special School community. This includes all members of staff (principals, teachers and education support staff), all parents/carers who interact with the school and all students. It also includes visitors to the school.

Requirements

Attendance on-site

The Department of Education and Training (DET) advises that:

Perhaps the most important action school communities can take to reduce the risk of transmission of coronavirus (COVID-19), is to ensure that any unwell staff, children and young people remain at home.

While the risk of transmission of the virus is very low, staff or students most at risk of severe illness should individually assess appropriateness for onsite attendance at this time with support from their medical practitioner.

As the main risk of transmission of coronavirus (COVID-19) in the school environment is between adults, it is important that visitors to school grounds are limited to those delivering or supporting essential school services and operations.

This means that at our school:

- All unwell staff and students **must** stay home (fever, cough or sore throat)

- Parents/carers of students with complex medical needs (including those with compromised immune systems), should seek advice from the student's medical practitioner to support decision-making about whether on-site education is suitable, noting that this advice may change depending on the status of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic in Victoria. This is in line with the [DET Health Care Needs](#) policy.
- Visitors to school grounds will be limited to those delivering or supporting essential school services and operations (e.g. Assessment Australia psychologists, student health and wellbeing services, maintenance workers).
- Additional staff, including parent volunteers, are discouraged from attending school at this time.
- Activities dependent on and involving parents are cancelled until further notice.
- We ask that any parents/carers wishing to discuss any matters with a staff member to first use the options of either a phone call, video call or email]. If a face-to face meeting is needed, it must meet the physical distancing requirements of 1.5m between adults.
- All interschool activities that involve onsite attendance by students from other schools will either take place virtually or will be cancelled.
- School assemblies, excursions, camps and other non-essential large gatherings will be postponed.

Hygiene

DET advises that:

Everyone can protect themselves and prevent the spread of coronavirus by continuing effective hand hygiene.

This means that at our school:

- Staff are reminded to clean their mobile phones regularly. The Mobile Phone Policy remains in place so students will not be handling their mobile phones during the school day.
- Sharing of food is not permitted.
- Students must wash their hands or use sanitiser upon entry to the school building and all learning spaces, at the start of the day, after a break or upon change of class
- Students must wash their hands or use hand sanitiser prior and following using shared materials and resources
- Students must wash their hands and use sanitiser after going to the toilet and before and after eating
- Students to bring their own water bottle and refill as required

Specific arrangements for teaching and learning environments and break times

DET advises that:

Maintaining a physical distance of 1.5 metres will not always be practical in education settings. Physical distancing is most important between adults.

Reducing mixing between different cohorts (either classes or year levels) is recommended as a precautionary measure to minimise risk of spread of transmission and aid containment in the rare event of a confirmed case of coronavirus (COVID-19) on site.

This means that at our school:

Shared materials and resources

- Each child to have their own pencil case where practicable and keep this in their tubs: School will purchase pencil cases that will be kept in the student's table tub Library books, iPads, mathematics

manipulatives and games, general classroom resources are available for student use – students must wash hands or use hand sanitiser prior to use and then after use

- Larger items, such as iPads to be wiped with anti-bacterial wipes following use (non-abrasive)
- Library or class books may be browsed and read but not borrowed and taken home – students must wash or sanitise their hands prior and following accessing library or class books

Materials and resources brought from home to school

- Home reading: the school will not be providing books or digital resources to go home but students will be encouraged to read their own books from home
- Students to bring their essentials to school in their bag and take them home every night – lunch box, drink bottle, uniform items, medical items, e.g. asthma inhaler
- Lunch boxes and school bottles to remain in students' bags throughout the day instead of being put into tubs. Food accessed from school bags and only taken to child's desk
- Students not to bring sport equipment or toys to school as the shared use of these creates a more challenging context around managing hygiene
- VCAL Inbox to be set up for paper-based learning that has been done from home
- PMP equipment needs to be sanitised and wiped down before and after use
- Bikes needs to be sanitised and wiped down before and after use
- Student iPads to remain at school. Students not returning to school due to medical reasons will be able to continue to have access to the school's iPad
- Student mobile phones and student's own iPads are to stay in their bags while they are at school. Mobile phone policy to apply to a use of mobile phone of a student at school

Specialist Classes and School Programs

- The normal PE fitness program to be conducted outside dependent on weather, with no equipment.
- PE classes where possible to be done out in the open but will depend on the weather conditions
- SAKP, Café, Canteen, Wednesday Program all cancelled until the end of the term.
- It is recommended that Thursday Secondary program continue with an alternate option for work experience and school radio will be adapted to run in school.
- Wednesday and Friday gardening program to continue with gloves being washed after each use.

Student break times

- Staff are to ensure that they observe social distancing arrangements while on active supervision duty and report any concerns re students being sick to leadership.
- Students are to be discouraged from touching or grabbing each other in their play breaks. Hands free play with others needs to be reinforced to the students by staff on active supervision duty.

Playground

DET advises that:

- *In line with community advice, reasonable precautions are still advised to reduce the risk of coronavirus (COVID-19) transmission in the context of sport and recreation.*

This means that at our school:

- Senior secondary students to stay in their designated learning space for the rest of the term. Senior secondary students are not to access the main play space of the school in school break times or before school.
- Student Break Times: To remain as Term 1- Primary and Secondary cohorts will have access to same recreational spaces as previously.

- Students entering the school from 8.50am of a morning either independently or via contract buses are to go straight to their classrooms and wash and sanitiser their hands on entering their learning space.

School arrival and departure

DET advises that:

As the main risk of introducing coronavirus (COVID-19) to the school environment is from adults, close proximity between adult members of the school community should be avoided, particularly during school drop-off and pick-up.

This means that at our school:

- School start and end times will stay in place however we have requested parents stagger their times for dropping off between 8.50am and 9.30am and picking up between 2.30pm and 3.10pm. This is to be reviewed at the end of the first week.
- Teachers need to be in their classrooms from 8.50am ready for students arriving.
- Students will sanitise their hands before entering the school from the school buses and parent drop off. Bus rostered staff will be responsible for the sanitisation of students coming off buses. Students entering the foyer will need to use the sanitise station in set up in the foyer.
- Students accessing the school contract buses will be dropped off and picked up from the Fernhill entrance of the school. Students will be called to their bus. Bus 1: 2.50pm, Bus 2: 2.55pm and Bus 3: 3.00pm
- Staff, parents and carers transporting their child to and from school will enter via the front double gates and will not be able to enter the school. They will be required to use the social distancing markers that have been place in dropping off and picking up their child.
- The small gate from Tasma Street will remain closed with no access to parents, staff and students.
- Additional staff will be allocated at drop-off and pick-up times to direct students to the playground or classrooms depending on the weather. These staff will also monitor parents and visitors trying to enter the school.
- Communication with teachers must be by phone, Seesaw, via e-mail, or by prior arrangement for a meeting, not simply by entry to the school grounds.
- Parents and visitors are not to enter the school grounds unless by prior arrangement with the leadership of the school. Leadership will communicate to staff if parents and visitors will be in the school.
- If students arrive in school prior to 8.50am they will be requested to wait in the carpark or in the car with their parent or carer.

School offices and staff facilities

DET advises that:

As the greatest risk of transmission of coronavirus (COVID-19) in the school environment is between adults, close proximity between staff will be avoided where possible and especially in offices and staff rooms.

This means that at our school:

- In line with other workplaces across Victoria, we will remind staff to maintain physical distancing from each other as much as possible in the reception, staff room and offices.

Staff Break, Office Corridor, Learning Spaces

- Staffroom: Primary, VCAL and Leadership / Kitchen area: Secondary, Specialist and Allied health staff.
- School corridors: staff are to keep to social distancing requirements.

- Staff are not to enter office spaces unless social distancing requirements can be met.
- Learning spaces in the school will be issued with hand sanitiser and sanitiser wipes to support staff and student hygiene requirements.
- Staff to sanitise and wash their hands before and after each learning session or program.
- Staff need to maximise fresh air flows in classrooms and learning spaces that may mean doors are to remain open to enable this to occur. Secondary staff please access the windows that have window winders to open and shut.
- Office spaces and the staff room are areas in the school where proximity needs to be closely monitored.
- Staff workstations need to be spaced as much as possible, and the number of staff in an enclosed small space should be limited. Please access the kitchen space that is available for planning and meetings where social distancing requirements can be met.
- Recommendation BYO cutlery, cups, containers etc. to ensure staff are responsible for washing their own equipment.

Parents and Visitors and Student Drop Off/Pick Up

- Parents and visitors are not to enter the school playground or the entrance foyer of the school, they must wait on a social distancing marker and will be greeted by a member of staff.
- School start and end times will stay in place however we request parents stagger their times for dropping off between 8.50am to 9.30am and picking up between 2.30pm to 3.10pm. Parents and carers are requested to remain in their cars until social distancing pick up / drop off social distancing requirements can be met. Please do not enter the school carpark prior to 8.50am.
- Students accessing the school contract buses will be dropped off and picked up from the Fernhill entrance of the school. At the end of the day students will have staggered times transitioning to their buses. Student's bus home pick up and drop off times will NOT change.
- Parents and carers transporting their child to and from school will enter via the front double carpark gates and we request you do not enter the school. Parents will be required to use the social distancing markers located in the school carpark when dropping off and picking up your child.
- The small pedestrian gate from Tasma Street will remain closed with no access to parents, staff and students.
- Additional staff will be allocated at drop-off and pick-up times to direct students to the playground or classrooms depending on the weather. These staff will also monitor parents and visitors trying to enter the school.
- Communication with teachers must be by phone, seesaw, via e-mail, or by prior arrangement for a meeting, not simply by entry to the school grounds.

Cleaning and facilities management

DET advises that:

Environmental cleaning, coupled with regular hand hygiene, remains important to reduce the risk of coronavirus (COVID-19) transmission.

This means that at our school:

- Continue extension of routine environmental cleaning, including progressive cleaning throughout the day to ensure that risks of transmission are reduced for high-touch services. See Department information about [Access to cleaning supplies and services](#).
- Playground equipment can be used. However, students will be directed to practice hand hygiene before and after use.
- Wherever possible, outdoor facilities will be used for physical education and recreational play. Where indoor facilities are used, we will limit the number of students.

- We will encourage non-contact sports at this time. Hand hygiene will be practiced before and after use of any sporting equipment.
- If a staff member is unsure whether a student is unwell in the first instance we will contact the parent/carer to discuss any concerns about the health status of the student, and we will take a precautionary approach, requesting the parent/carer to collect their child if concerns remain. A trained staff member may take the temperature of the student, where appropriate, to support decision-making. Gloves will be worn for the purpose of taking a temperature.
- Staff or students experiencing compatible symptoms with coronavirus (COVID-19) should be encouraged to seek the advice of their healthcare professional who can advise on next steps. A medical certificate is not required to return to school after a period of illness, however staff and students should not return until symptoms resolve.
- If a student spreads droplets (for example by sneezing, coughing or vomiting), surfaces will be immediately cleaned with disinfectant wipes (and using gloves).

Staff Wellbeing

- Staff are to consider the mental health and well-being of all staff in their interactions and their work. Staff members are encouraged to support each other in this time of transition, if you have any needs with respect to your mental health and well-being please consult with leadership or contact the Employee Assistance Programme for advice and assistance.
- Risk of transmission of the virus is very low, staff and students most at risk of severe illness should individually assess appropriateness for them for on-site attendance at this time with the support from their medical practitioner. The medical certificate needs to communicate that the staff member is not able to attend the work site due to unacceptable risk to the staff member's health.
- Teachers who consider themselves to be vulnerable should take additional care to protect themselves and consider leave options that are available to them.
- Teacher absence: the school will endeavour to not split classes for the remainder of term 2 but there may be times that specialists may be required to cancel their program to take the class. The Senior Leadership Team may also be called upon to teach classes. Collaborative planning time lost by staff will be recorded and will be made up by the school.
- Staff check in 5 minutes prior to meetings to give staff the opportunity to share how they are doing.
- Staff absences will be communicated through Compass.

Management of an unwell student or staff member

DET advises that:

It is important that any staff member or student who becomes unwell while at school returns home. While it is unlikely that a staff member or student who is unwell with flu-like symptoms will have coronavirus (COVID-19) there are some sensible steps schools can take while a student awaits collection by a parent or carer as a precaution.

This means that at our school:

- Staff and students experiencing compatible symptoms with coronavirus (COVID-19), such as fever, cough or sore throat, will be isolated in the first aid room with suitable supervision and collected by a parent/carer as soon as possible. Urgent medical attention will be sought where needed. Unwell students will not be permitted to travel home unsupervised.
- Where staff or students are experiencing compatible symptoms with coronavirus, we will ensure hand hygiene, physical distancing and (where possible) use of a face mask. See DET [guidance for the use of Personal Protective Equipment in education](#).
- For special schools or where students with complex health needs are being supported: In the context of schools supporting students with complex health needs, if the care of an unwell child or young person is to be prolonged (for example, because it will take some hours for a parent to

collect a child) and maintaining distance is not practical when providing direct care, gloves, gown and eye protection will be considered if available.

- Health care plans, where relevant, should be updated to provide additional advice on monitoring and identification of the unwell child in the context of coronavirus (COVID-19).
- Standard precautions as per DET [Infectious Diseases policy](#) will be followed when providing first aid. For example, we will use gloves and an apron when dealing with blood or body fluids/substances.
- If a staff member is unsure whether a student is unwell it is advisable in the first instance the contact the parent carer to discuss any concerns about the health status of the student and taking a precautionary approach and request the parent carer to collect their child. If concerns remain, a trained staff member is to take the temperature of the student and where appropriate to support decision making gloves should be worn to take the student's temperature.
- Staff need to be trained in the use of PPE and will be provided with the information that they need to use this equipment.

Managing a suspected or confirmed case of COVID-19

DET has comprehensive procedures in place with the Department of Health and Human Services to manage suspected or confirmed cases of coronavirus (COVID-19) in schools.

- We will contact the Department of Health and Human Services on 1300 651 160 to discuss what to do next if a student or staff member:
 - is a confirmed case
 - has been in close contact with a confirmed case
- We will inform the Department by making an [IRIS incident alert](#).

DHHS defines 'close contact' as someone who has either:

- had at least 15 minutes of face-to-face contact with a confirmed case of coronavirus (COVID-19)
- shared a closed space for more than two hours with someone who is a confirmed case.

Further information and resources

- [DET Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) website:](#)
<https://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/Pages/coronavirus-advice-schools.aspx>
- [DHHS Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) website:](#)
<https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/coronavirus>
- [DET Infectious Diseases Policy:](#)
<https://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/spag/health/pages/infectiousdiseases.aspx>
- [DET Health Care Needs Policy](#)
<https://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/spag/health/pages/healthcareneeds.aspx>
- [Talking to your child about COVID-19:](#)
<https://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/about/department/covid-19/talking-to-your-child-during-coronavirus.docx>
- Department of Education and Training COVID-19 Advice Line – 1800 338 663
- Department of Health and Human Services Coronavirus hotline – 1800 675 398 (24 hours, 7 days a week)

Review

This policy was last updated on 9/06/2020 and will be reviewed weekly until the end of Term 2