

# COVID-19 Operating guidelines for Queensland state schools

Effective 19 June 2020

Minor update 4 August 2020



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# Introduction

As COVID-19 restrictions continue to ease across the state, principals will need to make decisions that are appropriate to their local context, while aligning with Queensland Health advice. These operating guidelines are designed to support school leaders in determining what best reflects the interests of their staff, students and community, in line with the Queensland Government's [Roadmap for easing restrictions](#).

## Students

All state schools, including special schools, have now returned to on-site teaching and learning for most students. This includes students who may be 18 years or older, who remain subject to the operating guidelines in place for all students.

Some medically vulnerable students or students who live with medically vulnerable people, may need to continue to learn at home, and normal arrangements will be in place to support these students to continue their learning.

### Student safety and wellbeing

Schools are required to monitor student attendance to ensure all students return to on-site learning. Where schools identify students who have not returned to on-site learning, it is important for schools to follow-up with parents or carers to discuss reasons the student has not returned and to implement supports to ensure attendance.

Concerns about children at risk of significant harm should continue to be reported to Child Safety in accordance with requirements outlined in the department's [Student protection](#) procedure.

# Principals

Principals should continue to engage additional relief staff trained in their school's learning approach to help support any teaching staff absence, and to assist with supervision needs arising due to [vulnerable staff](#) working off-site.

Schools should use available staff and funding to support the return to regular school-based teaching and learning and to support staff workload management and wellbeing.

Options for providing support and relief include:

- reassigning teachers to other year levels
- altering school timetables and break times
- employing extra teachers using school funding.

If an employee is absent and on leave they should be replaced as usual.

Temporary staff employed using school funds, including Investing for Success funding, should have their employment continued (in accordance with government policy) as if their employment would have continued, but for the COVID-19 pandemic.

When determining the working arrangements for the return to school-based learning, coordination, communication and consultation mechanisms are important to ensure staff have input into the ways that work is organised and allocated — while ensuring appropriate physical distancing between staff, parents, carers and other adult visitors is applied.

It is important for principals and leadership teams to actively support and manage arrangements for [vulnerable staff](#). This includes a work plan that outlines responsibilities for teachers who are not teaching their normal classes.

The arrangements should be reviewed weekly. Regions will continue to case manage school staffing requirements.

External parties, for example those delivering School of Distance Education, TAFE courses or University units of work, may continue to have an increased component of the course delivered online.

To ensure student safety remains a paramount priority, principals are reminded to ensure adults working with students, either face-to-face or in an online environment,

comply with the requirements set out in the department's [Working with Children Check – Blue cards](#) procedure.

Non-departmental employees and visitors are also required to complete student protection training as deemed appropriate by the principal. At a minimum, this may include provision of the [Student protection fact sheet](#). Further information about student protection training requirements is available in the department's [Student protection guidelines](#).

## Staff

Continued staff commitment and flexibility is key to supporting COVID safe learning environments.

Staff who are [vulnerable](#) or live with a vulnerable person should not be in the workplace and should discuss options with their principal to allow working from home.

The current Australian Health Protection Principal Committee (AHPPC) advice defines vulnerable people as:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people 50 years and older with one or more chronic medical conditions
- people 65 years and older with chronic medical conditions. The most current definition of 'chronic medical condition' is on the Department of Health website
- people 70 years and older
- people with compromised immune systems (see Department of Health website).

Other staff who may be medically vulnerable, including those with chronic health conditions, should seek their own medical advice and provide this to their principal so appropriate arrangements can be put in place.

Staff working from home are required to develop a work plan with their supervisor that outlines their responsibilities and duties. The Vulnerable worker assessment form should be completed for any vulnerable staff voluntarily wanting to return to work.

Schools will need to make alternative arrangements and/or engage additional staff using school funds to support teaching and learning across the school including the classes of vulnerable workers who are not able to attend work.

Staff hours of work will be consistent with the attendance arrangements already in place at each school and determined in accordance with the school's local arrangements and industrial agreements.

Specialist staff and itinerant teachers, including local and district relieving teachers have resumed circuit responsibilities.

Business managers, administrative staff, science technicians, agricultural assistants, teacher aides and other support staff will continue to perform their roles to ensure the effective functioning of the school while practising physical distancing measures.

## Attendance and roll marking

Normal roll marking arrangements are now required.

Where a student has compromised immunity or other medical advice to remain at home or absent from the learning program, schools will continue to use Code F to record the status of children as learning at home.

[Same day student absence notification](#) remains in effect. Schools should notify parents or carers of an unexplained absence of their child as soon as practicable on the day of the student's absence (allowing time for parents to respond prior to the end of that school day).

If a parent or carer chooses to keep their child at home or out of the learning program without a reasonable excuse, schools should implement the usual student absence procedures.

## Boarding school students

State school operated residential boarding facilities are open for all students, having satisfied risk assessment requirements.

Decisions for students to return to state school-operated residential boarding facilities must be made in conjunction with parents or carers.

Boarding students (state, Catholic or Independent) who reside in designated Indigenous communities and have not yet returned to their boarding facility, will

continue to have their learning program provided by the school at which they are usually enrolled. These students may continue to access their local school where there is a documented agreement signed by both principals.

Further information regarding the operation of boarding facilities during the COVID-19 pandemic is available in the [Guidelines for state school-operated boarding facilities](#).

## Contractors and external workers

Schools will need to ensure any contractor, supplier or external support worker entering the school to undertake work or provide supplies complies with the on-site health and safety measures outlined in these guidelines. This includes not attending the site if unwell, maintaining physical distancing requirements and practising good health and hygiene.

## Curriculum and supervision

### Students learning at home due to medical reasons

Students unable to return to school or participate in the learning program due to medical reasons should be supported by their school, just as they would in the case of any extended student medical absence.

This includes students where a medical practitioner has advised in writing the student should not attend school as parents or other family members have medical conditions that place them at risk.

Schools can determine the most appropriate approach, taking into account the expected duration of absence, the student's learning needs, available tools and resources, and the school's established approach to supporting continuity of learning.

The [learning@home](#) website will remain live.

## Academic reporting requirements

Schools have flexibility to choose how they report on academic achievement for Term 2 by customising their OneSchool academic reporting to reflect choices made about curriculum delivery in Semester 1. Primary model reporting allows schools to select the subjects that are included, but English, Mathematics, and Science cannot be removed in Prep to Year 6, and English and Mathematics cannot be removed in special schools. Secondary model reporting is derived from the school's timetable and English, Mathematics and Science cannot be removed for Years 7 to 10.

If schools are preparing printed report cards, either a comment or no-comment format can be chosen. If QParents is used, the comment style report card is the default. Further detail is provided in the [Academic reporting requirements for state schools - Term 2, 2020](#) document.

Parent-teacher interviews, approved by the principal, can occur ensuring physical distancing requirements are maintained and other COVID-19 control measures are implemented. Where possible, options for teleconference or online platforms should be available.

## Planning for teaching and learning

As is always the case at the beginning of a term, teachers will plan teaching and learning programs that suit the needs of their students. They will consider the specific learning needs of students and plan for differentiated teaching and learning aligned to the Australian Curriculum. The [P-12 Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Framework](#), and [supporting documents](#) including Assessment and moderation in Prep to Year 10 and A whole school approach to differentiated teaching and learning, provide guidelines to support schools plan for teaching, assessment and reporting.

## Advice from the Queensland Curriculum and Assessment Authority (QCAA)

As schools with senior secondary students would be aware, the QCAA Board removed one of the three internal assessments from the summative assessment requirements for all General and Applied subjects.

The QCAA has published [Principles and advice for P-10 during COVID-19 disruptions](#), addressing common curriculum questions, teaching and learning, assessment and reporting.

The QCAA will continue to monitor the impacts of COVID-19 on senior secondary schooling including any changes that might be required to external assessment.

On 31 March 2020, to support teachers to review their assessment programs, QCAA provided subject-specific advice to schools about the nature and timing of the next internal assessment.

The [QCAA website](#) has frequently asked questions for parents and students about the removal of an internal assessment including clarification that this will not impact the calculation of students' ATARs.

The department will continue to work with QCAA and provide schools with advice regarding Years 11 and 12.

## Emergency management

The Building Fire Safety Regulation 2008 requirements for fire and evacuation drills to be undertaken remains in place. Schools should consider a reasonable approach to drills, ensuring controls are in place to maintain safety.

As part of each school's Emergency Response Plan, alternative assembly points should be considered.

Schools can complete their required drill using staggered options e.g. each individual classroom staggered over a week.

Staggered drills will allow for evacuation numbers to be reduced to a small group with each drill evacuated to a nominated assembly point, also allowing all teachers to fulfil duties as fire wardens.

Schools must ensure that adults comply with physical distancing requirements.

## Excursions and camps

Excursions and camps are permitted to be held at locations or businesses that have approved [COVID Safe Industry Plans](#) and Department of Education Outdoor and Environmental Education Centres (O&EEC). O&EECs with residential facilities are required to follow the Queensland Government's approved [COVID Safe Industry Plan](#) for outdoor education providers.

If excursions and camps are to be held at a business or organisation not covered by an approved COVID Safe Industry Plan, the principal must ensure all measures have been taken to meet departmental and Chief Health Officer requirements. An excursion / camp risk assessment taking into account approved COVID-19 control measures must be undertaken prior to approval.

## Health support procedures

All state schools including special schools must continue to implement student health plans.

Teacher aides and school staff will continue to support student health needs including performing [student health support procedures](#).

Advice from the Chief Health Officer indicates staff should undertake a visual assessment of the student to ensure there are no visible signs of being unwell prior to any procedure being undertaken:

- if the student appears unwell, do not continue with the procedure, follow existing guidance for unwell students/COVID-19 suspected cases, and advise parents as soon as possible
- where a student appears well, carry out the procedure with the Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) as per the table below.

Where a student has excess saliva, a risk assessment should occur in each case (as it should each time there is a procedure) to ensure that the risk of body fluid exposure is minimised and correct PPE is used (for example the addition of a gown if it is required). A [State Schools Registered Nurse](#) can support this risk assessment process.

It is always important to ensure that [hand hygiene](#) is carried out at the correct points of the procedure as per the [5 moments of hand hygiene](#).

Queensland Health advice has been used to inform the PPE as outlined in the table below.

Specialised health procedure	PPE
Blood glucose measurement	Gloves
Insulin pen injection or needle and syringe	Gloves
Enteral feeding	Gloves
Nasogastric feeding	Gloves
Colostomy/ileostomy care	Gloves. Plastic apron if risk of splashes (staff may choose)
Clean intermittent catheterisation	Gloves. Plastic apron if risk of splashes (staff may choose)
Continuous oxygen administration	Gloves
Administration of buccal midazolam	Gloves
Cleaning of soiling	Gloves and plastic aprons
Use of asthma reliever medication with spacer	Nil unless coughing then gloves, mask goggles/face shield*
Oral and nasal suctioning	Gloves Long sleeved fluid resistant gown mask Goggles/face shield
Tracheostomy care	Gloves Long sleeved fluid resistant gown mask Goggles/face shield

\* During COVID-19, this additional PPE should be considered for asthma if the student is coughing.

Schools can purchase PPE from suppliers. A list of suppliers who can provide PPE is available on the OnePortal [COVID-19 procurement page](#).

Information about how to put on and take off PPE is available on the OnePortal [COVID-19 Therapy & nursing page](#).

All clinical waste relating to COVID-19 must be disposed of in clinical waste bins provided as per the Queensland Government's [Clinical and related waste guideline](#).

For information regarding Clinical Waste Bins please contact Infrastructure Services Branch, Facilities Procurement: [procurement.facilities@qed.qld.gov.au](mailto:procurement.facilities@qed.qld.gov.au).

## Instrumental music program, ensembles and choirs

Instrumental music programs, ensembles and choirs are able to rehearse in the school environment provided the following safety protocols are in place:

- at least 1.5 metres between singers/players in all directions and no more than 1 person per 4m<sup>2</sup>
- choirs or bands that usually use a stage may need to move down to the hall floor to ensure physical distancing. Podiums/platforms with risers should not be used.
- where possible, choir practice should be held outdoors. If it is not possible to hold practice outdoors, open windows and doors or ensure air conditioning is on.
- ensure students clean hands before and after the lesson
- ensure instruments are not shared
- students should not face each other when singing or playing wind instruments
- students with wind instruments should have their own spit rag, which is placed under the instrument while it is being played. The spit rag should not be handled by anyone else and should be kept by the student in a zip-lock bag or container.
- a log of attendance should be kept.

Inter-school and external venue rehearsals or performances are not to be undertaken at this time.

The [Instrumental Music Program guidelines for managing hazards associated with COVID-19](#) provides guidance regarding risk management strategies and hygiene requirements that must be in place.

## International travel

As directed by the Director-General on 15 March 2020 there is a current travel ban on all DoE international travel until further notice.

The directive accords with decisions taken in other Australian education systems and is a further protective action to contain coronavirus (COVID-19) and to minimise risk to Queensland students and staff.

Any change to this directive will be messaged through the appropriate DoE channels.

## Meetings within the school

Meetings, including staff meetings and P&C meetings, can occur within school grounds, including indoor and outdoor areas, ensuring physical distancing requirements are maintained and other COVID-19 control measures are implemented.

Where possible meetings should include options for teleconference or online platforms.

## On-site health and safety measures

Under the Queensland Chief Health Officer Directive, any student who is unwell must not attend school and students should remain at home until well. The school must ask parents/carers to collect their child from school if they are unwell.

In accordance with Stage 3 of Queensland's [Roadmap to easing restrictions](#), schools are required to maintain appropriate health and hygiene measures:

- regular [handwashing and hand sanitising](#), particularly before and after eating, and after going to the toilet;
- increased cleaning of school classrooms, particularly high frequency touch points including water fountains or bubblers;
- regular cleaning of playground equipment and play materials
- physical distancing of adults.

Queensland Health [advise](#) it is safe to use water fountains and bubblers. However, schools should encourage students to bring water bottles for personal use.

Schools should continue to follow the [AHPPC advice on reducing the potential risk of COVID-19 transmission in schools](#).

Schools may consider using alternative spaces for learning and adjusting their school day to decrease contact between classes and year levels, to minimise gathering points and maximise airflow (with due respect to weather conditions and other safety factors) in teaching and learning spaces.

Based on advice from Queensland's Chief Health Officer, school swimming pools can reopen for use. Schools may wish to consider their plan in managing the use of swimming pools, including limiting lessons and training to year levels so as to decrease contact between classes and year levels.

## Physical distancing within schools

Schools will encourage staff, parents and other adult visitors to observe physical distancing measures by not congregating in areas inside or around the school. For example, it is important that parents do not gather before or after school, in the car park, at drop off and pick up time, outside classrooms or at the school gate.

Local school arrangements to practise physical distancing and minimise interaction of students and adults within the school and at school entry points may include:

- restricting adult (including visitors and parent) access to school grounds.
- staggered start, break and lunch times.
- supervision at school gates, including during drop off and pick up times and supervised movements between the school gate and classrooms.
- minimising adult access to office environments and recommending contact be made to the school via electronic means.

Staff should follow these guidelines:

- avoid sharing small office spaces.
- adhere to physical distancing of at least 1.5 metres (4m<sup>2</sup> per adult in an enclosed space), including in staff rooms and other shared spaces.
- continue to practise good hand washing and cough-sneeze hygiene.
- unwell staff members must remain or return home.
- open windows to promote air flow where possible and environmental conditions such as cold weather allow.
- take appropriate security measures if working in isolated areas of school sites.

## Confirmed case management

The Public Health Unit will directly contact a school to confirm the presence of a confirmed COVID-19 case and will advise of any additional measures such as self-quarantine/contact tracing. Schools should continue to report [confirmed COVID-19 cases](#) through existing reporting channels. As per usual department protocols and in accordance with health authority advice, schools may be closed for a short time if there is a confirmed case. This time will be used to support contact tracing and specialist cleaning as required.

## Hygiene supplies

Schools should actively monitor cleaning and hygiene supplies and reorder in advance of needing additional materials. If schools are having difficulty obtaining cleaning chemicals, hygiene products (such as soap, sanitiser or Personal Protective Equipment (required to perform specialised health procedures) please contact Procurement Services on 1300 366 612 or by email

[Procurement.OCPO@qed.qld.gov.au](mailto:Procurement.OCPO@qed.qld.gov.au).

## Cleaning – facilities

School cleaning should continue to prioritise frequently used areas, with extra attention to high frequency touch point surfaces such as door handles, light switches, desks, toilets, taps and sinks. This should also include sick rooms and student service areas.

Additional cleaning funding has been provided to schools and will continue until further notice. The principal will work with their Infrastructure Services Branch representative to ensure appropriate allocation of resources to meet COVID-19 requirements.

## Use of shared equipment or loaned resources

Shared equipment such as ITD resources, musical instruments and sports equipment used within the school, or equipment loaned to students to take home, will require appropriate cleaning and hygiene management practices including:

- washing hands or using hand sanitiser prior to cleaning or using equipment
- cleaning equipment prior to and after use
- cleaning of equipment prior to leaving the school grounds and upon return.

Further information regarding cleaning and disinfecting of this equipment is available in the [COVID-19 cleaning of equipment for practical subjects](#).

The loan of equipment other than books must be considered and assessed by each school on a case-by-case basis. It is recommended that these items are loaned on a long term basis.

## Library books and school readers

Library books and school readers can be borrowed by students and taken home. Please refer to the [handling library items](#) specifications on OnePortal for when these items are returned to school.

## Outside school hours care

In alignment with national directions for early childhood education and care services, Outside School Hours Care (OSHC) and vacation care services on school sites will continue to be delivered.

In April, the Premier announced that rent relief will be provided to businesses that rent premises from the State Government. This means that schools will not levy facility hire fees on OSHC or vacation care providers until further notice. More information is available about [rent relief](#).

## Playgroups and ECDPs

Programs such as playgroups, early childhood development programs (ECDPs) and KindyLinQ that involve parents on school sites need to follow Queensland's [Roadmap to easing restrictions](#). Physical distancing requirements for adults will remain in place.

Local school decisions around these programs are best made by the principal on a case-by-case basis to ensure any updates to health and physical distancing requirements are met.

Please continue to encourage families to visit the [Playgroup Queensland](#) website and [earlylearning@home](#) for ideas, activities and resources they can use with their children at home.

## Religious instruction

The resumption of religious instruction may commence and principals should negotiate suitable arrangements with the provider of religious instruction. All persons entering the school to deliver religious instruction must comply with the on-site health and safety measures outlined in these guidelines. This includes not attending

the site if unwell, maintaining physical distancing requirements and practising good health and hygiene

## School assemblies

School assemblies may commence with the principal ensuring that physical distancing requirements are maintained for all adults and other COVID-19 control measures are implemented. For additional activities that may occur during assemblies, such as musical performances, schools should follow advice provided in these guidelines.

## School functions

School functions such as formals and graduations are permitted to be held at businesses that have approved [COVID Safe Industry Plans](#).

If functions are to be held at a business or organisation not covered by an approved COVID Safe Industry Plan, the principal must ensure all measures have been taken to meet departmental and Chief Health Officer requirements.

Queensland Health has advised that dancing is not permitted at school functions, regardless of where they are held.

## School sports

Schools are able to participate in intra-school, inter-school and representative competitions for both indoor and outdoor sports, including contact sports.

The [COVID-19 Return to school sport planning considerations](#) document is provided to support planning for return to school sport.

Resources, including FAQs and a calendar of state championship events, are available to support schools.

## School transport

Transport arrangements will continue to operate for students including specialist school transport for students with disability.

Physical distancing requirements are exempt for public transport (including buses) and travel for school related activities such as inter-school sport, excursions and camps. Physical distancing guidelines should be followed at bus interchange locations pick-ups and drop-off and, at/on other shared transport services.

Transport operators will ensure buses and surface touch points are cleaned according to [COVID-19 cleaning and disinfection recommendations](#).

Due to the customised nature of delivery, specialist school transport (minibus, taxi or supported bus travel) requires:

- parents/carers to directly inform operators if students are not travelling
- school leadership teams to have electronic and hard copies of student travel arrangements for quick access
- school-provided, individual escort arrangements to continue being supported.

## Use of facilities and school amenities

Principals may negotiate the use of their facilities for external users if the external user has met the requirements of Queensland Health approved [COVID Safe Industry Plans](#). As the facility owner, the principal should be involved in the assessment process and be provided with a signed Statement of Compliance.

If external organisations, businesses or community groups not covered by an approved COVID Safe Industry Plan want to access school facilities, the principal must ensure all measures have been taken to meet departmental and Chief Health Officer requirements. A risk assessment taking into account approved COVID-19 control measures must be undertaken prior to approval.

# Visitors

Schools will need to ensure any visitors, including parents, carers, adult volunteers and visiting specialists, entering the school grounds to deliver additional programs at the school comply with the on-site health and safety measures outlined in these guidelines. This includes not attending the site if unwell, maintaining physical distancing requirements and practising good health and hygiene.

