



Coronavirus (COVID-19)

WA EDUCATION POSITION AND UPDATE

Number 10

This page was last updated and is current as at **Wednesday 25 March, 1:00pm** 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 23 March update (update 9).

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 22 March State Premiers and Chief Ministers agreed that at this time schools will remain open through to the end of the current school term to support students whose parents choose to send them to school. This does not alter our previous advice.

Teachers are not expected to provide work packages for students whose parents have chosen to keep them home without seeking medical advice, before the end of Term 1. The priority for staff is to maintain focus on classroom learning programs.

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.

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.

Attendance 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.

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

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 [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 2 events at this stage.

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.

Support and advice

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.

Important information about COVID-19 Testing from the WA Chief Health Officer, Dr Andrew Robertson

The Australian Health Protection Principal Committee (AHPPC) releases regular updates. The latest can be found [here](#)

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.

To be eligible for testing people must:

- be currently experiencing symptoms such as fever, cough or sore throat AND have
- returned from overseas travel in the last 14 days
- OR be currently experiencing symptoms, and be a contact of a confirmed case
- OR be currently experiencing symptoms and believe they have been in close contact with a person infected with COVID-19.

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

Employers should not send their staff to COVID Clinics or GPs for medical clearances or certificates. We implore Western Australians to be vigilant, but not alarmed.”

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.

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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