



# Coronavirus (COVID-19)

## WA EDUCATION POSITION AND UPDATE

### Number 16

This page was last updated and is current as at **Wednesday 8 April, 3:50pm** 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 6 April update (update 15).

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

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#### Key messages

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#### End of Term 1 message

[End of Term 1 message from the Director General.](#)

#### COVID-19 updates during the school holidays

Your next updates will be on Wednesday 15 April and Wednesday 22 April respectively. We will continue to update Ikon and if there is any significant news to share with you, we will do this separately.

#### Proposed new COVID-19 update coming in Term 2

We are working hard to ensure you have the correct information about COVID-19 matters when and how you need it. We are developing a new format for the COVID-19 update which we will trial during the holiday break. You will be encouraged to share your feedback with us when it launches.

## COVID-19 and public schools

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.

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

### Latest news

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## AITSL Spotlight – what works in online/distance teaching and learning

AITSL have released a [Spotlight](#) resource written from the perspective of teachers. This identifies best practice to guide teachers on setting up online learning and provides advice teachers can give to parents during this process. Key consideration is given to principles demonstrated to benefit student outcomes and wellbeing.

### Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders

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## Coronavirus (COVID-19) information for Aboriginal people resource

Health WA has published a website containing information and resources for Aboriginal people:

[https://healthywa.wa.gov.au/Articles/A\\_E/Coronavirus/Coronavirus-information-for-Aboriginal-people](https://healthywa.wa.gov.au/Articles/A_E/Coronavirus/Coronavirus-information-for-Aboriginal-people)

### Attendance

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In accordance with the Director General's instructions for Term 2:

- All public schools will remain open.
- Parents are encouraged to keep their children at home. Those who need to send their children to school to maintain employment, children of essential workers and those who require schools to support them overcome particular vulnerabilities, however, may choose to do so.
- To ensure that all students' needs are met, staff will be present on school sites.
- All students will be taught: those attending schools and those learning at home.
- Student wellbeing remains a priority, notably for our most vulnerable students.

Principals may wish to consider the following when making a reasonable judgement that the student is attending/participating in a learning program:

- satisfactory submission of work according to the work calendar or to a negotiated schedule; and/or
- teacher/student contact; and/or
- logging in to online lessons.

### Contacts and support

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## Principal and line manager support and advice

The WA education coronavirus support centre has been established to provide coordinated support across the Department of Education, Catholic Education Western Australia, and the Association of Independent Schools of Western Australia.

Further information is available at [www.healthywa.wa.gov.au/coronavirus](http://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](#)

## COVID-19 general information

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## Testing

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

As of Thursday 2 April, the testing criteria for COVID-19 will be expanded significantly at all COVID clinics.

### General public testing

Any person presenting to a COVID clinic with BOTH a documented fever ( $\geq 38^{\circ}\text{C}$ ) AND an acute respiratory infection (e.g. shortness of breath, cough, sore throat) will be tested.

### High-risk staff testing

Anyone working within a high-risk setting that presents to a COVID clinic with EITHER a fever ( $\geq 38^{\circ}\text{C}$ ) OR an acute respiratory infection will be tested. This includes healthcare workers (including aged care and disability workers) and WA Police Officers.

### High-risk settings

Testing will also be arranged for anyone from the following high risk settings where two or more people are experiencing EITHER a fever ( $\geq 38^{\circ}\text{C}$ ) OR an acute respiratory infection:

- Aged and residential care
- Rural and remote Aboriginal communities
  
- Detention centres
- Correctional facilities
- Boarding schools
- Military barracks or equivalent
- Geographically localised areas with increased risk of community transmission
- Cruise ship passengers or returned travellers (international and domestic).

Additional COVID-19 information, including FAQs, is available at [https://healthywa.wa.gov.au/Articles/A\\_E/Coronavirus](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.

## **Curriculum, learning and assessment**

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### **Students learning at home**

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.

Packages of work for Year 11 ATAR courses were added to the [Learning at home](#) website on Monday 6 April.

Packages of work for Year 12 ATAR courses were published on the [Learning at home](#) website on Monday 30 March.

The [Learning at home](#) website will continue to be available. This is a public site with resources, student wellbeing and support materials for parents.

### **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.

## **Finance**

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### **Laptop Loan Agreements**

There is no change to existing laptop loan agreements and RiskCover arrangements. Currently, RiskCover will not provide insurance cover to devices loaned off-site to students. The Department will liaise with RiskCover regarding arrangements and communicate any changes which may occur.

## **ICT**

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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.

Many organisations have staff working from home due to COVID-19. This is having a major impact on the performance and reliability of telecommunications across the country.

In response, ICT has:

- more than tripled the capacity of the Connect servers
- significantly increased resources for the public website (for Learning From Home resources) and Ikon.

Further increases are underway, but the level of demand in such a short period presents an unprecedented challenge. We are also reliant on external telecommunications services to connect and deliver services to our schools, students and staff.

For students and staff studying or working from home, this means that they may

- need to allow more time to perform a task
- have trouble connecting to some services
- see short delays in email delivery and even congestion of phone calls on the mobile network.

While the telecommunications companies and NBNCo are taking steps to minimise the impact on the network, this is a unique and global issue with many challenges. We thank you for your understanding and patience. More information can be found on [lkon](#).

### **Web conferencing, including important security information about Zoom**

WebEx and Microsoft Teams are available for Department staff. With many staff working from alternative locations, the use of WebEx and/or Microsoft Teams for teleconferencing and video conferencing are strongly recommended. WebEx and Teams rely on your Department login details for access, as the Department has a licence for use that covers all employees. [More information about WebEx, Microsoft Teams, WebEx support resources \(via the Connect WebEx Community\) and how to gain access, are available.](#)

### **School operations**

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### **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 outdoor 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.

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

On Sunday 29 March, the Prime Minister announced further measures and restrictions to slow the transmission of COVID-19. This includes public gatherings, excluding household members, have been reduced to a maximum of two people. Whilst schools remain exempt, he also announced further measures regarding staying at home as below. It is recommended that:

- If you are over 70, you are strongly encouraged to remain at home;
- If you are over 65 with pre-existing conditions;
- If you are Aboriginal and aged over 50, you should stay home wherever possible for your own protection; and
- [People with compromised immune systems \(see Department of Health website\)](#).

### **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.

## Student support

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## 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.

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](mailto: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.

## Child and Adolescent Health Services

The Child and Adolescent Health Services (CAHS) has advised the Department of Education of the suspension of services to schools from 30 March until further notice. Services to be suspended include;

- School Entry Health Assessments Program
- Aboriginal Ear Health Assessment Team
- School based Immunisation Program
- Community health parenting groups, Triple P groups and seminars.

## Virtual teen support group

SafeZone Counselling in collaboration with ADHD WA is now offering a free virtual support group for teens (ages 14 to 17). The delivery of these services will be via Zoom conference every third Thursday of the month from 5.00pm. The first meeting will be held Thursday 16 April 2020.

Note that places are limited and the group is for [ADHD WA members](#) only. If you are interested, please email [ADHD WA](#) before Monday the 13 April 2020.

## Travel

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## WA regional travel

On 27 March 2020, the State Government announced that travel between Western Australian regions will be restricted from 11.59pm Tuesday 31 March 2020. From this time, all intrastate travel must cease and Western Australians must stay within their regional boundaries.

Some exemptions apply, including:

- travel for work purposes
- to attend medical appointments
- to transport freight
- those who do not have access to groceries or supplies within their region
- returning to a place of residence
- where necessary to attend school or an educational institution
  
- caring for family members
- approved compassionate grounds.

The Department will provide confirmation of employment at particular schools. If staff are travelling for reasons under the exemptions, they are advised to travel with evidence that can be shown on request to WA Police at boundary crossings. [Such evidence could include a letter on school letterhead signed by the Principal.](#)

#### Kimberley Travel

As of 3 April 2020, new boundaries have been put into place to stop the spread of COVID-19 in the region. Read the [media release](#) for more information.

The State Government urges all Western Australians to remain calm, and take the time to ensure they understand the new restrictions and the exemptions.

General details, including the exemptions that apply and the regional boundaries, are available on <https://www.wa.gov.au/organisation/departments-of-the-premier-and-cabinet/covid-19-coronavirus-travel-and-transport-advice>.

#### Border controls - international and interstate travel

Strict border controls are in place to limit the spread of COVID-19 in WA. You will no longer be able to enter Western Australia after 11.59pm on Sunday 5 April 2020 unless an exemption has been granted. Read the [media release](#) or [State government website](#) for more information.

#### VET/TAFE/University

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#### University of Western Australia (UWA) – new entry options for Year 12 students

UWA have recently announced [new admission pathways for Year 12 leavers](#). They have made this change to provide certainty to Year 12 students during the COVID-19 pandemic. [We encourage schools with Year 12 students to share this link with them so that they can sign up to receive the latest news.](#)

#### Changes to operation at WA TAFE Colleges

On 28 March the Minister announced there will be a temporary pause in the face-to-face delivery of most courses at WA TAFE colleges from Monday 30 March until Thursday 9 April. The Department will work with

Training and Workforce Development to assess the implications for school-aged students engaging in VET courses regarding changes to how these are delivered from Term 2. Read the Minister's media statement [here](#).

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.



Department of  
Education

