

Back to school

Keeping your children safe

Welcome back for 2022

All schools are open from Monday 31 January and school staff look forward to seeing their students and families on day one of Term 1. As with every year, it will be an exciting start with new teachers, new classmates and new things to learn.

As we prepare for the start of school, we are all mindful of COVID-19 transmission occurring in the community. We have developed a 'Safe Return to School Plan' to keep students safe at school so they can continue to learn and thrive in the best educational setting.

As parents/carers, you can help us keep our students safe by supporting our Plan and using COVID-safe practices when you come to school for drop off/pick up, assemblies and sports carnivals, parent/teacher interviews or to volunteer.

Our Safe Return to School Plan

Every public school in WA is following this plan. It is based on the latest health advice. It provides guidance on:

- ensuring teaching and learning continues
- mandatory vaccination (including booster) requirements for all school staff
- vaccination requirements for regular visitors to school sites
- hygiene, ventilation and other health and safety measures
- how to adapt and respond to COVID-19 based on health advice

Vaccination requirements

- All school staff must meet the vaccination requirements.
- Parents and carers are not required to show proof of vaccination when:
 - dropping off or picking up their child from school, including entering the classroom
 - volunteering at school on an ad hoc basis (attending only one school/education facility no more than once per week)
 - attending an event such as an assembly, sports carnival or parent teacher interview.
- Parents and carers **are required** to provide proof of their double dose vaccination from 31 January 2022 and must have their third dose (booster) within one calendar month of becoming eligible or an exemption when:
 - volunteering at the school more than once a week or at multiple schools within a week (this includes volunteering at the school canteen, uniform store or an in-class literacy or numeracy program)
 - working in an unpaid capacity at the school more than once a week or at multiple schools within a week
 - participating in an endorsed program at the school where parent attendance is required (such as KindiLink).
- Students are not required to be vaccinated, unless:
 - they are on a work placement where they will need to comply with the requirements of that workplace.

- they are on an excursion or at a venue, aged 16 years and older and are required to comply with the vaccination requirements of that venue and show proof of vaccination.

Parents are encouraged to get their children 5 years and older vaccinated. Information on the safety and efficacy of the COVID-19 vaccines is available on healthywa.wa.gov.au.

- All visitors and contractors who enter a school site more than once a week must meet vaccination requirements and show proof of vaccination.

Proof of vaccination

There are a few ways you can show proof of your COVID-19 vaccination, both in a digital and paper-based form. The easiest way to show your proof of vaccination evidence is using the ServiceWA app or your digital wallet.

Masks

All secondary students must wear a mask when there is a public health requirement in place to do so (masks are currently required in Perth, Peel and the South West regions), unless:

- they have a physical, developmental or mental illness, condition or disability which makes wearing a face covering inappropriate
- they are deaf or hard of hearing and visibility of the mouth is essential for communication
- they are engaged in physical exercise
- they are eating, drinking or taking medicine
- staff are providing teaching or instructions to students.

Primary students can choose to wear a mask and are encouraged to do so. Based on advice from the Chief Health Officer, once there is a high caseload of COVID-19 in the environment, masks will become mandatory for students in Year 3 and above.

Health, ventilation and hygiene

Our schools will continue with hygiene and cleaning measures based on the current health advice from the Department of Health.

- Students and staff are encouraged to regularly clean their hands with soap and/or sanitiser.
- Staff, students and parents/carers must stay home when sick.
- Physical contact and physical greetings are avoided where possible.
- Schools are ventilated according to our ventilation strategy approved by the Chief Health Officer. Statewide, classrooms have been audited and will be ventilated in accordance with these guidelines through a combination of fresh air, by keeping windows and doors open; using fans, air conditioners and evaporative coolers; and, where necessary air purifiers.
- Surfaces in classrooms, staff areas, washroom/toilets and drink fountains are cleaned daily.
- Playgrounds and play equipment are cleaned weekly.
- Adults maintain 1.5 metres distance from other adults, where practicable.

Medically vulnerable students

Additional provisions are in place for vulnerable students including modified educational planning and specialised equipment for students in education support settings.

If your child cannot attend school because they, or a family member, have an immune compromised medical condition, speak to their teacher or principal. You can access support for your child from the School of Special Educational Needs: Medical and Mental Health. Talk to your local school for more information.

Unwell student or staff member

If a student or staff member shows possible symptoms of COVID-19, they will be sent home and asked to seek testing in accordance with State guidelines. While the student waits to be picked up, they will be given a mask to wear and be isolated from others.

The student will be provided with support to learn from home while they are waiting for a test result or quarantining. If they test positive for COVID-19, the Department of Health have processes in place to advise close contacts, so they can also be tested.

School closure

If the Chief Health Officer advises us that a school needs to close, your school will:

- provide online learning resources and/or hardcopy learning packages
- support vulnerable students remotely or refer them to the School of Special Educational Needs
- provide additional support for students' mental health and wellbeing.

Off-site school activities

School activities may operate with the ongoing promotion and practise of good hygiene principles and physical distancing between adults, where possible. Schools will ensure, where applicable, that businesses have COVID-19 Safety Plans that are up to date and will continue to consider COVID-19 as part of their excursion risk assessment. Staff and students will also need to comply with mandatory vaccination requirements that apply to the venue where activities are held.

The latest public health requirements, including vaccinations and mask wearing, are available on our website.