



Broader Horizons

Return to School – Operations Guide

Covid-SAFE Support



Education
and Training

Lowanna College – Community Guide

Version 1



RETURN TO SCHOOL OPERATIONS GUIDE

Transition back to on-site schooling

- Following advice from the Victorian Chief Health Officer and as announced by the Victorian Government, Victorian government schools will begin a transition back to on-site schooling for students.
- The Return to School Operations Guide supports schools to make an effective transition back to on-site schooling. The core elements of this approach are:
 - staged return for students commencing Tuesday 26 May 2020
 - all school staff to work from the school site from Monday 25 May 2020, with exceptions for some staff in identified risk categories, based on medical advice
 - voluntary prioritised coronavirus (COVID-19) testing available for all Victorian school staff from 13 May to 26 May 2020.
 - enhanced hygiene practice and cleaning on school sites
 - physical distancing, in particular for adults
 - return of all students for on-site schooling at government schools from Tuesday 9 June 2020.
- The message from the Victorian Chief Health Officer and health and safety advice for schools is attached to this guide as Appendix 1.
- In line with DET advice, it continues to be the principal's responsibility to make the school-based decisions required to deliver Government education objectives in accordance with the Victorian Government Schools Agreement 2017. When determining the working arrangements that enable the transition back to on-site schooling, the consultative arrangements in place at each school must be used to ensure staff are consulted on, and have input into, the ways that work may be organised and allocated.

Staged return for students

- The staged return will be as follows:
 - VCE and VCAL Year 11 and 12 students (and Year 10 students undertaking VCE studies for VCE classes where practicable) on-site from Tuesday 26 May 2020
 - students in Year 7 to Year 10 continue remote and flexible learning program until 5 June 2020
 - students in Year 7 to Year 10 being supervised on-site will continue remote and flexible learning program (students not able to be supervised at home and for whom no other arrangements can be made; and vulnerable students).
- The Australian Health Protection Principal Committee (AHPPC) has advised that a 'venue density rule' of no more than one person per four square metres is not appropriate or practical in classrooms or corridors, nor maintaining 1.5 metres between students during classroom activities. Therefore, the previously established ratio of 10 students per class is no longer required in schools.

- All students in the year levels returning to on-site schooling are expected to attend school. DET advise that schools are not expected to, nor should for state consistency, provide remote learning where parents elect to keep these students at home, except where this is based on medical advice.
- To support all school staff to prepare for the transition **Monday 25 May 2020 will be a student-free day**. Schools will use this day to ensure the health advice will be followed in their school, re-establish school routines, establish an approach to assessing student learning progress during the period of remote and flexible learning, and identify students in need of immediate health and wellbeing support.
- It is important to support students to return to normal routine, acknowledging the situation, providing developmentally suitable information about what is occurring, as well as providing a safe space for students to raise their concerns and feelings.
- **Any student who is unwell must remain at home**. Families can continue to notify the school via our absence line: (03) 5127 9200

Staff attendance

- All school staff will return to working on-site from Monday 25 May 2020, **beginning with a student-free day**.
- Staff will be required to attend for duty at their school in accordance with normal arrangements, making necessary adjustments to support physical distancing between adults. Teachers delivering a remote and flexible program will do so from their school site.
- Guidance on vulnerable staff has been updated by the Victorian Chief Health Officer. As with other members of the community, teachers and other school staff may be at greater risk of more serious illness if they contract coronavirus (COVID-19) if they are:
 - aged 70 years and older
 - aged 65 years and older and with chronic medical conditions.
 - of any age and have a compromised immune system
 - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and are aged over 50 years and with one or more chronic medical conditions.
- The Chief Health Officer's advice does not require that staff who are caring for elderly or chronically ill relatives should refrain from working on-site.
- Staff in these categories, except for those over 70, are required to provide a medical certificate if they are advised they should work from home.
- Normal attendance requirements for school staff will apply, consistent with the VGSA 2017.
- Where school staff have children in Grade 3 – Year 10, if their children are not able to be supervised at home and no other arrangements can be made, those children can attend their usual school from Tuesday 26 May to Friday 5 June as required.
- Consideration should be given to streamlining work not specifically focussed on the immediate return and routines of students.

Voluntary coronavirus (COVID-19) testing for all staff

- Prioritised coronavirus (COVID-19) testing is available for all Victorian school staff for a two-week period from 13 May 2020 to 26 May 2020.
- Staff who are asymptomatic will be able to continue to work while they wait for their test results. Staff who are symptomatic will be considered a suspected case and required to self-isolate until test results are received. Any staff who are unwell must not attend school until symptoms resolve.
- Any positive coronavirus (COVID-19) cases will be reported to DHHS as per current practice. In the event of a confirmed case, DET will contact the school to provide advice and support for enacting their coronavirus (COVID-19) management plan to contain any outbreak and commence contact tracing.

School health and safety measures

- Victoria's return to on-site school attendance is based on the advice of the Victorian Chief Health Officer. The message from the Victorian Chief Health Officer and health and safety advice for schools is attached to this guide as Appendix 1. This should be read in its entirety for full context.
- The health and safety advice at Appendix 1 indicates that schools should consider a variety of strategies to support physical distancing, **particularly among adults**, and good hygiene practices to reduce the risk of coronavirus (COVID-19) transmission within the practical limitations of a school environment. The actions at Appendix 1 are to be considered, adapted and implemented as necessary, according to the school setting and the individual needs of the staff, students and the wider school community.
- Students who are unwell should be sent to first aid for assessment. Where flu-like symptoms exist, distance measures should be applied, and the student sent home via a parent or emergency contact, as soon as practicable.
- To minimise congestion at the central first aid facility, Level 1 first aid requirements (band aid, icepack, etc.) should be managed by trained level one first aid staff where possible (eg. via Mini-Schools).

Staggered start and finish

- The college has determined that there are no significant points of congestion at the school gate. This is based on consideration of the proportion of students who catch a school bus, and the proportion of students who walk to and from school.
- Parents who may be dropping students off or picking students up, need to wait in their car along Newark Avenue, unless extenuating circumstances for child safety exist.
- Parents must avoid or minimise time in or around the school grounds.

Signage will be displayed at key entry points to remind all parents and visitors of this requirement.

- **Staggered times will be provided for the release of students to recess and lunch, and the return to class from recess and lunch, as follows:**
 - Students in **even numbered classrooms** (eg. J2, J4; S2, S4) will be released from class **two minutes before** the usual bell time, to transition to the next class, or recess or lunch. An alternative short-tone bell will ring to signal the two minute earlier release.
 - Students in **odd numbered classrooms** (eg. J1, J3; S1, S3) will be released at the **normal bell times**.
 - In turn, teachers of a class in an even numbered classroom adjacent to a break (Period 1, 3 or 5) will arrive and open those classrooms two minutes in advance of the usual bell time, for students to enter.
 - All students must exit via external classroom doors, where they exist, rather than via internal doors to corridors.
 - Where a class vacates a room early, the teacher may also vacate that room early, having an additional presence in the yard for transitions, while maintaining appropriate distance from students.
- For the time being, students are **permitted to take school bags to classrooms**, to minimise the use of locker bays during the day. Students may still access their lockers, this measure is provided to reduce the amount of time required at lockers and reduce any congestion. The mobile phone ban continues to apply (see below) – students may have their phones away either in their locker or school bag, turned off and out of site. .
- Specific attention will be paid to:
 - No assemblies or unnecessary mixing of students across classes or year levels.
 - Specific areas of the yard will be provided to specific year levels. This relates to areas where students may sit and socialise during break periods. Students may still pass through any other areas of the school for the purposes of transition between classes, accessing their designated area, or to seek communication with a staff member.

Other health and safety measures

- Playground equipment can be used. However, students should practise hand hygiene before and after use. Playgrounds will be wiped down as part of the enhanced cleaning program.
- Staff will consider the necessity of using shared equipment at this time. If used, strict hand hygiene for students should be followed before and after use.
- Students should bring their own water bottle for use at school as students should not drink directly from drinking fountains at this time. Taps may be used to refill water bottles.
- The DET *Students Using Mobile Phones Policy* remains in place. **Students are not permitted to have a mobile phone between the hours of 8:45am and 3:00pm** – the mobile phone ban continues to apply, and the implementation process (including confiscations) will continue to occur, for students found with a mobile phone. For students who may advocate the use of phones for the COVID SAFE app - phones can be turned on with the COVID SAFE app activated immediately before and after school. Schools are managed environments

which include records of student, staff and visitor attendance, which can support contact tracing, thus phones are still banned during school hours.

Physical distancing – Staff

- Close attention and proactive management must be provided to physical distancing for staff. Staff in office teams need to consider:
 - Office furniture being appropriately spaced.
 - Staggered use of communal areas (such as office lunch-tables).
 - Keeping windows open for increased ventilation and air flow, where possible.
 - Relocation of staff to nearby available spaces, if congestion within an office is an issue.
 - **Students should not be permitted in staff offices until further notice, unless an immediate duty of care or child safe issue prevails.**
 - Students must access classrooms via external doors, to remove student congestion in corridors. Staff, in turn, may access classrooms via internal corridors, to increase separation from students during transition.
 - Staff should undertake regular handwashing, particularly before and after classes, and before consuming food. Hand sanitiser should be used where handwashing is not available or practicable.

Cleaning

- Extended and increased cleaning arrangements have been introduced and will continue. This involves progressive cleaning throughout the day to ensure that risks of transmission are reduced for high-touch services.

Personal hygiene products

- Staff and students should advise Matt Robinson (IT & Projects Manager) immediately if there is an absence of personal hygiene products (soap, toilet paper, hand sanitiser). Matt will liaise with our cleaning contractors to source additional supplies.

Managing a suspected or confirmed case of coronavirus (COVID-19)

- DET has procedures in place with the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) to manage suspected or confirmed cases of coronavirus (COVID-19) in schools.
- **If staff, students or community become aware of a staff member or student who:**
 - **is a confirmed case**
 - **has been in close contact with a confirmed case****they must contact the college principal (Adam Hogan) or member of the College Executive Team as soon as possible.**
- The college will liaise with Department of Health and Human Services to activate the established procedures.

- 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.
- If a school has a confirmed case of coronavirus (COVID-19), the Department will work with the school to undertake a deep clean and the school will be made operational as soon as possible.

Access to devices

- **For students who are continuing to learn from home and do not have access to digital technologies, we will continue to loan existing devices and support internet access to students where possible.**
- As students return to learning on-site, where necessary we will **ask that devices are brought to school each day** and then allow students to take devices home each day to support out of school learning.
- It is important that families understand that devices remain the school's property and that devices support the school's learning and teaching program. These arrangements will apply until further notice.

School transport

- The Student Transport Program, for which we are a Coordination School with responsibility of our College Principal, will continue operation with enhanced cleaning and physical distancing from adults (driver and other attendants) where practical. Usual timetables will apply.
- The Department of Transport continues to work closely with DHHS and transport operators to implement measures to limit the risk of coronavirus (COVID-19) so that students can feel confident travelling on public transport to school.
- **Students should practise hand hygiene before and after catching school transport** (i.e. prior to leaving home and at the end of the school day) and practise physical distancing at bus stops and train stations and interchange locations for other shared transport services.
- Bus travellers will be encouraged to wash their hands using school facilities, prior to catching the bus. Staff on yard duty at the bus loop will have hand sanitiser for student use as required.

APPENDIX 1: FULL HEALTH ADVICE AND MESSAGE FROM CHIEF HEALTH OFFICER

HEALTH AND SAFETY ADVICE FOR RETURN TO ON-SITE SCHOOLING IN THE CONTEXT OF CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19)

The purpose of this guidance is to support schools to continue to provide safe teaching and learning environments for staff and students as schools transition back to on-site schooling.

MESSAGE FROM THE VICTORIAN CHIEF HEALTH OFFICER

As Victoria's Chief Health Officer, and as a member of the Australian Health Protection Principal Committee, and with the health, wellbeing and safety of students and staff front of mind, I fully endorse a return to on-site schooling for all Victorian schools.

As you know, since the beginning of Term 2, most children have been learning remotely in order to limit the number of people moving around the state and to help slow the spread of coronavirus (COVID-19).

This careful approach continues, and I trust that you have confidence in my view that it is safe for our community to have school students begin a phased return to classrooms.

I thank teachers, staff and families for their incredible efforts in helping deliver remote and flexible schooling and, in doing so, helping to flatten the curve of the pandemic.

These efforts, in addition to significant testing, mean we are now in a position to begin moving back to face-to-face teaching.

This is in addition to the available evidence that largely indicates that transmission between children in the school environment is low.

This growing evidence, coupled with low levels of community transmission in Victoria, means that the risk posed to staff and students returning to on-site schooling at this time is very low.

As we begin this transition, the following guidance provides some sensible steps schools can take.

Everyone in the Victorian community has a role to play in protecting themselves and keeping the spread of coronavirus (COVID-19) suppressed.

Thank you for your incredible contribution to Victoria's response to coronavirus (COVID-19).

Adj Clin Prof Brett Sutton

Victorian Chief Health Officer