



| NSW Department of Education

Roadmap for principals

Return to school

Information current as at 7 October 2021.

Developed in partnership with NSW Health

For the latest information, refer to:
education.nsw.gov.au/inside-the-department/covid-19



In Term 4, schools will return to face-to-face learning either through a 'staged return' or 'full return'.

The best learning environment for students is in the classroom and we are looking forward to welcoming back our staff and students to their classrooms in Term 4. We know that while there will be excitement, there will also be some uncertainty about being back together at school.

We have worked with NSW Health on our COVID-safe plan to return to school sites and have put in place effective practices: vaccinations for all staff on site, mask wearing, reduced mingling of staff and student groups, ventilation in classrooms and continued good hygiene and cleaning. We are confident that this, in combination with support from our school community, will minimise risk and help to keep students learning face-to-face next to their peers.

Supporting schools to safely return to face-to-face learning

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on the delivery of education in NSW. Our students, educational leaders, teachers, staff and families have shown remarkable resilience and flexibility throughout this period.

While the pandemic has affected everybody differently, there are some clear learnings and common themes emerging from NSW and around the world. We know that nothing can replace face-to-face learning with an expert teacher and there is a need for students to return to school as soon as it is safe for them to do so. Being at school with their teachers and peers is also vital for student wellbeing, as well as their social and emotional development.

The audience for this guide is all permanent, temporary and casual school-based teaching and non-teaching staff.

Principles underpinning our return to school approach

The following principles underpin these guidelines:

- Our key priority is the safety and wellbeing of our students, staff and school communities.
- We will always be guided by the latest Australian Health Protection Principal Committee and NSW Health advice and will keep all settings under review as that advice changes or is updated.
- Existing infection control protocols at schools, combined with new COVID-19 safety measures will help to maintain the health and safety of our students, staff and school communities. These include:
 - mandatory vaccination of all staff on school site, and vaccinations strongly encouraged for all eligible students
 - mask wearing by all staff and students in Year 7 and above
 - effective ventilation in all learning spaces, as well as use of outside spaces
 - learning in small cohorts, with physical distancing and reduced mixing of students
 - minimal onsite visitors

- staggered start, break and end times
- strict hygiene procedures, including sanitiser use and intensive cleaning.
- As students return to face-to-face learning we will balance the wellbeing of students with the return to classroom teaching and learning.

Roadmap to return to face-to-face learning

The NSW roadmap to return to face-to-face learning has been informed by the Doherty Institute Modelling Report for National Cabinet and ongoing advice from NSW Health. Schools will return to face-to-face learning either through a 'staged return' or 'full return', depending on NSW Health conditions in their area.

Full return (Level 3)

Areas across NSW (mainly in regional NSW) removed from stay-at-home orders returned to face-to-face learning at the end of Term 3 under Level 3 settings, and will continue to do so in Term 4.

This is a full return for all cohorts to schools, with reduced mixing, minimal onsite visitors and no multi-school activities.

Staged return to school (Level 3 Plus)

For other parts of NSW still under stay-at-home orders (mainly Greater Sydney), NSW Health advice is that it is safest for students to return in stages rather than all at once. Students in Kindergarten and Year 1 will return first, given the importance of developing their foundational learning in the early years and their disrupted experience to date. Students in Year 12 and those preparing for their HSC will also be prioritised.

Students will return to face-to-face learning with NSW Health-approved COVID-safe settings on Level 3 plus school sites in the following order:

- from 18 October – department preschool, Kindergarten, Year 1
- from 25 October – all remaining year groups.

Schools for Specific Purposes (SSPs) are recommended to have students return at the same time as students in mainstream settings to maximise the re-establishment of a consistent routine.

Students with disabilities in mainstream classes or support classes can return as part of the staggered return at the same time as their year groups.

It is recognised that some schools with low numbers of enrolled students or schools that do not follow year-based or stage-based cohorts, such as central schools or schools for specific purposes, may require flexibility for their staged return. These schools should seek support from their local Director, Educational Leadership to develop alternative arrangements having regard to the principles underpinning the return to school approach.

Department of Education preschools are expected to return to face-to-face learning from 18 October to align with guidance for early childhood education and care settings

Until 18 October 2021, students completing their HSC exams in schools at Level 4 restrictions will have limited access to school for:

- essential curriculum revision and wellbeing support
- participation in scheduled group face-to-face learning with their class teacher to enable essential course completion and revision.

A record of students on site will be kept each day and supervision is required for all on site activities. Schools should continue to provide support for students preparing for the HSC at home.



The cohort model

To support a safe learning environment for students, all schools will be required to adopt a cohort model. This will reduce the opportunity for transmission in the event of a confirmed case of COVID-19 and reduce the number of close contacts identified during contact tracing.

Primary settings

- In the early stages of returning to school (Kindergarten and Year 1), students will be placed into class-based cohorts. Ideally this will be their normal class.
- Classroom teachers will ideally be the allocated teacher for their cohort. Schools may use additional flexible staffing arrangements to support the delivery of face-to-face and home-based learning for that cohort.
- Each cohort will be allocated a learning space and will complete all lessons and break times with their allocated cohort.
- Break times, playground access and canteen access will be staggered by cohort.
- In some schools (such as smaller schools, or those with a stage-based class structure), school leaders may choose to amalgamate smaller classes to form one cohort, while adhering to class size policy. Students must then remain in this cohort.
- Students in support classes should return in line with their year group and according to the needs of each student.
- As additional year groups return to school, the class-based cohort model will be replaced by a year-based cohort model. Schools will manage the year-based cohort model in a way that best meets the needs of their students, if core cohort principles are maintained.

Secondary settings

- Schools with secondary students will adopt a year-based cohort model from the outset, which will determine students' arrival, break and departure times. Schools may create smaller cohorts within year groups where subject choices and flexible timetabling allow.
- These measures will enable secondary school students and teachers to return to their normal timetable.

- Students in support classes should return in line with their year group and according to the needs of each student.

Schools for specific purposes

- It is recommended that students in schools for specific purposes (SSPs) return at the same time as students in mainstream settings to maximise the re-establishment of a consistent routine.
- SSP Life Skills HSC Pathway students should have the option to attend school as per the HSC guidelines provisioned for mainstream settings and where contextually appropriate.



Break times

- The class or year-based cohort system must be maintained at break times, and break times should be staggered by cohort wherever possible.
- Physical distancing of 1.5m should be maintained, wherever possible.



Drop-offs and pick-ups

- Drop-offs and pick-ups will be staggered by cohorts and schools are to use all possible entrances and exits to support the beginning and end of school days.
- Where staggering is difficult to achieve due to buses, schools will need to consider the use of separate entrances and designated year-based spaces to limit mixing of cohorts on arrival and departure.

Parents and carers must follow their school's advice regarding changes to student drop-off and pick-up. This includes:

- staying in the car when dropping off and picking up children if it is safe to do so
- following the physical distancing advice for their local area and avoid gathering outside school gates
- remaining outside school grounds (some exceptions may exist for SSPs, vulnerable students or students with disability)

- adhering to mask-wearing requirements in accordance with the Public Health Order
- signing in using the Service NSW QR code if entering the school.

COVID-safe conditions



Staff vaccination requirements

As per the Public Health (COVID-19 Vaccination of Education and Care Workers) Order 2021, released 23 September 2021:

- An education and care worker must not carry out relevant work on or after 8 November 2021 unless the worker has:
 - had two doses of a COVID-19 vaccine, or
 - been issued with a medical contraindication certificate.

Work includes:

- work done under a contract of service or a contract for services
- work done as a volunteer or for a charitable organisation
- work done by a student on a student placement
- work done on a temporary basis, including while acting in or filling an office or other role because of a vacancy or absence.

For schools under Level 3 plus settings, all staff on-site from 18 October will be required to have received two doses of a COVID-19 vaccine.

For schools under Level 3 settings, all staff are strongly encouraged to have had two doses of a COVID-19 vaccine, but this will not be required until 8 November.



Providing evidence of vaccination

To meet the conditions of employment by 8 November:

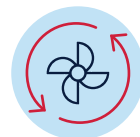
- staff will need to provide evidence that they have had two doses of a COVID-19 vaccine
- principals or workplace managers must sight and verify vaccination status.

To provide evidence of vaccination, staff will input their vaccination status into a central online system, the COVID-19 Vaccination Attestation and Confirmation System (VACS). VACS will be available for use from 5 October. All staff who work at or visit school sites and early education and care facilities are required to input their vaccination status before 18 October. Staff will then need to show evidence of vaccination status to a responsible person (for example their principal or workplace manager). This can be either done in-person, or virtually via teams or zoom.

An exemption may be available for staff who are unable to be vaccinated due to a medical contraindication. An exemption may be permanent or temporary. Medical exemptions are handled and reviewed on a case-by-case basis by the Health and Safety directorate.

If a school staff member has not had two doses of a COVID-19 vaccine and has not been issued with a medical contraindication certificate by November 8, the principal must advise the department that the staff member is not vaccinated. The department will then take appropriate action, which can include termination of employment.

Additional detailed guidance regarding staff vaccination is available on the Department's website.



Ventilation

The department continues to draw on the advice of NSW Health and the AHPPC as well as international research to support decision making around ventilation. In preparation for all students and staff returning to school, the Department of Education has well-advanced an audit of the suitability of all learning spaces including libraries and halls to ensure all schools continue to operate in the safest ways possible in the COVID-19 environment.

Natural ventilation is the best form of ventilation. As much as possible, open windows and doors to improve airflow. Using fans and air conditioners can also help.

To improve ventilation in indoor settings schools should:

- open windows and doors, where possible
- use ceiling and exhaust fans to assist with creating good air movement
- regularly service air conditioners not covered under the maintenance contract
- alert the maintenance contractor immediately where ventilation systems covered under the maintenance contract stop working.

If you have any concerns, questions or need support in relation to mechanical ventilation systems please contact your local Asset Management Unit for assistance.



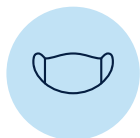
Hygiene and cleaning

Cleaning of schools is considered essential work and can continue. Principals and school staff should contact their local Asset Management Unit if they have any questions or concerns in relation to cleaning at their school.

Enhanced cleaning arrangements remain in place, which are:

- an additional 25% of cleaning provided to schools for the daily clean
- day cleaners wipe down high-touch surfaces
- ensuring bathrooms are well stocked with hand soap and paper towels or hand dryers
- providing hand sanitiser where appropriate.

Schools that require additional hygiene products will need to order through EdBuy by searching 'Department of Education' in the supplier box. Certain hygiene products remain free such as gloves and face masks.



Masks and face coverings

Masks or face coverings are currently required for Level 3, 3 plus and Level 4 schools in:

- all indoor and outdoor settings for all staff
- all indoor settings for students in Year 7 and above
- all outdoor settings for students in Year 7 and above (note Level 3 plus and Level 4 schools only).

Primary school students are strongly encouraged to wear masks or face coverings.

It will also be mandatory for all staff and students in Year 7 and above to carry a mask with them at all times.

Staff and students required to wear masks may remove them when:

- they are eating or drinking
- engaging in strenuous physical exercise
- they are communicating with another person who is deaf or hard of hearing
- the nature of their work or learning:
 - makes the wearing of a fitted face covering a risk to their own, or another person's health and safety, or
 - means clear enunciation or visibility of the person's mouth is essential
- because of an emergency
- when they are alone in an office or classroom.

Mask supplies are a back-up for schools. Staff and students should bring their own masks where possible.



Rapid antigen testing

We are exploring the use of COVID-19 home testing kits (known as rapid antigen testing) as a further screening measure to reduce the risk of outbreaks in schools, or the length of time students need to isolate after contact with someone with COVID-19. These are likely to be licenced and available from November onwards and we will work with NSW Health to develop the right approach for their use by students or schools.



Check-in protocols

All staff and visitors attending a school site must comply with school protocols and check in using the applicable Service NSW QR code.

Staff and visitors to the school who do not have access to electronic devices for the purposes of QR check-in can:

- authorise another person to provide their contact details on their behalf
- check-in using the school's Service NSW concierge webform

- provide their details to the school to be recorded in an appropriate manner for provision to NSW Health should it be required. In these circumstances, please enter any paper records into an electronic format such as a spreadsheet within 12 hours to support NSW Health contact tracing should it be required
- use their QR code check-in card.



Response protocols for COVID-19 cases

If the school receives advice from a parent/ carer or a staff member that a person who has recently been at school has tested positive for COVID-19, the school must immediately contact the Incident Report and Support Hotline on 1800 811 523.

Where the person has not been on school grounds within the previous three (3) weeks, there is no requirement to report these cases unless additional support and advice is required.

The Health & Safety Directorate will validate test results with NSW Health and determine what additional action may need to be taken by the school. The school will only be required to act if the person was deemed to be infectious at a time when they had been at the school. All other matters are a private health matter, and the person will be supported by NSW Health.

In addition, the department has protocols in place where it is notified by NSW Health of a confirmed case of COVID-19 in a student, staff member or member of the school community where the person may have been infectious whilst on school grounds.

Where NSW Health confirm that a person has been infectious at a time when they had been at the school, Health & Safety will contact the Executive Director and make urgent arrangements to set up a teleconference with the Director, Educational Leadership and the Principal to discuss relevant actions including:

- communication with parents advising them whether their child has been in contact with a confirmed case
- media support
- ceasing operations of the school (where it is deemed appropriate)

- contact tracing to identify all contacts to a confirmed case
- thorough cleaning of the school site to ensure the environment is clean and safe prior to the school resuming onsite learning.



Visitors

Under Level 2 to Level 4 settings non-essential visitors are not permitted on school sites, including:

- official visitors and dignitaries
- media and production crews
- visits by local members.

Parents should remain outside of school grounds and preschools and adhere to mask-wearing requirements. Some exceptions may exist for SSPs, vulnerable students or students with disability.

Parents and Carers are requested not to congregate outside of the school gates on drop-offs and pick-ups and are reminded to only park in designated areas.

Workers supporting the infrastructure development and maintenance of schools can continue to work onsite. This includes contractors, general assistants, farm hands and other grounds support staff. Allied Health partners and other providers that are unable to deliver critical services remotely are permitted and should continue to operate in a COVID-safe way.

All visitors are required to follow the mask-wearing requirements and sign in using the Service NSW QR code when entering the school.

Essential visitors, allied health partners and other providers who are on site at schools will be required to have received two doses of COVID-19 vaccine by 8 November 2021. For schools under Level 3 plus settings, all essential visitors, allied health partners and other providers on-site from 18 October will be required to have received two doses of COVID-19 vaccine by that date.

For schools under Level 3 settings, essential visitors, allied health partners and other providers are strongly encouraged to have had two doses of a COVID-19 vaccine before going on site, but this will not be required until 8 November.



Travel and public transport

Masks are mandatory on public transport. This applies to staff and students aged 13 years and over when:

- at a public transport waiting area
- travelling to and from school
- during school excursions by public transport or by chartered or private transport services.

Face masks are recommended for children aged 12 years and under whilst using public transport.

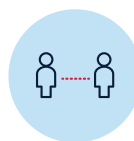
Wherever possible students should be transported to schools by private vehicle to minimise mixing enroute to school.

Permitted during school hours or within schools

Schools can continue to operate:

- canteens where appropriate hygiene measures are in place, provided:
 - they can ensure that they are accessed by one cohort at a time
 - physical distancing is in place
 - canteen staff follow normal COVID-safe protocols around vaccinations and testing.

Permitted with modification



Shared spaces

Shared spaces, such as changing rooms, libraries, school halls and other communal areas, may only be used by one cohort at a time, with adherence to strict personal hygiene protocols and physical distancing requirements.



Staffrooms

- Staffrooms must be ventilated, with windows open wherever possible.

- Teachers and staff must not congregate or sit together in staffrooms.
- Physical distancing rules and strict personal hygiene protocols must apply at all times.
- High-touch areas and other hard surfaces, door handles, lockers, light switches and handrails in staffrooms must be cleaned thoroughly throughout the day by cleaning staff.
- Masks must be worn in staff rooms, although temporary removal is allowed in line with Public Health Orders (e.g. eating or drinking).



School based activities

- Dance and/or drama are permitted in line with COVID-safe practices within classes in outdoor spaces. Mixing of classes is not permitted (except for HSC assessment purposes with COVID-safe practices in place).
- Sport may continue within existing PDHPE classes, in accordance with physical distancing guidelines.
- Library activities are permitted in line with the Infection control requirement for libraries.
- Uniform stores can only operate if they are online or have pre-ordering arrangements in place, with one dedicated staff member attending outside of school hours to arrange distribution.
- Emergency drills and evacuations where possible should be conducted in a COVID-safe manner. This means where possible keeping classes, groups or cohorts together.

Further guidance on end-of-year activities, such as formals, graduations, school dances and related events will be provided during Term 4.



Pre-service teachers and professional experience placement

- From October 18, Pre-service teachers and people on professional experience placements will be required to have had two doses of a COVID-19 vaccine to be on a school site.
- Professional experience placements are voluntary for all schools. Schools who choose to accommodate placements will only support final year pre-service teachers who are due to graduate by the end of this semester.

- Schools should provide face-to-face learning opportunities for pre-service teachers where possible and mixed delivery learning opportunities where face-to-face is not possible.
- VET work placements may resume wherever possible in line with Public Health Orders. Some industries where vaccinations are mandated can decline to take a placement student unless that student is fully vaccinated. NESAs has advised that students who cannot complete their VET work placement due to COVID-related impacts will still be eligible for the HSC. Any placements must be subject to appropriate risk assessments and approvals.
- Trade schools, VET, TAFE courses and school based apprenticeship and traineeship training should continue to be delivered virtually where possible. Training that cannot be delivered virtually can be delivered face-to-face if the training complies with COVID-safe practices and NSW Public Health Orders. When the NSW double vaccination rate reaches 70% TAFE, ACE and VET providers can deliver courses face-to-face, with providers encouraged to return teachers who are double vaccinated to deliver face-to-face training where practicable. .
- School based apprenticeship and traineeship training should continue to be delivered virtually where possible. Training that cannot be delivered virtually or on line can be delivered face to face as long as the training complies with COVID-safe practices and NSW Public Health Orders.

- In areas where stay at home orders have been lifted, school based apprentices and trainees (SBATs) may undertake employment if their employment complies with COVID-safe practices and NSW Public Health Orders.
- The white card training to school students should only be conducted via face-to-face delivery.
- Work experience should be deferred.

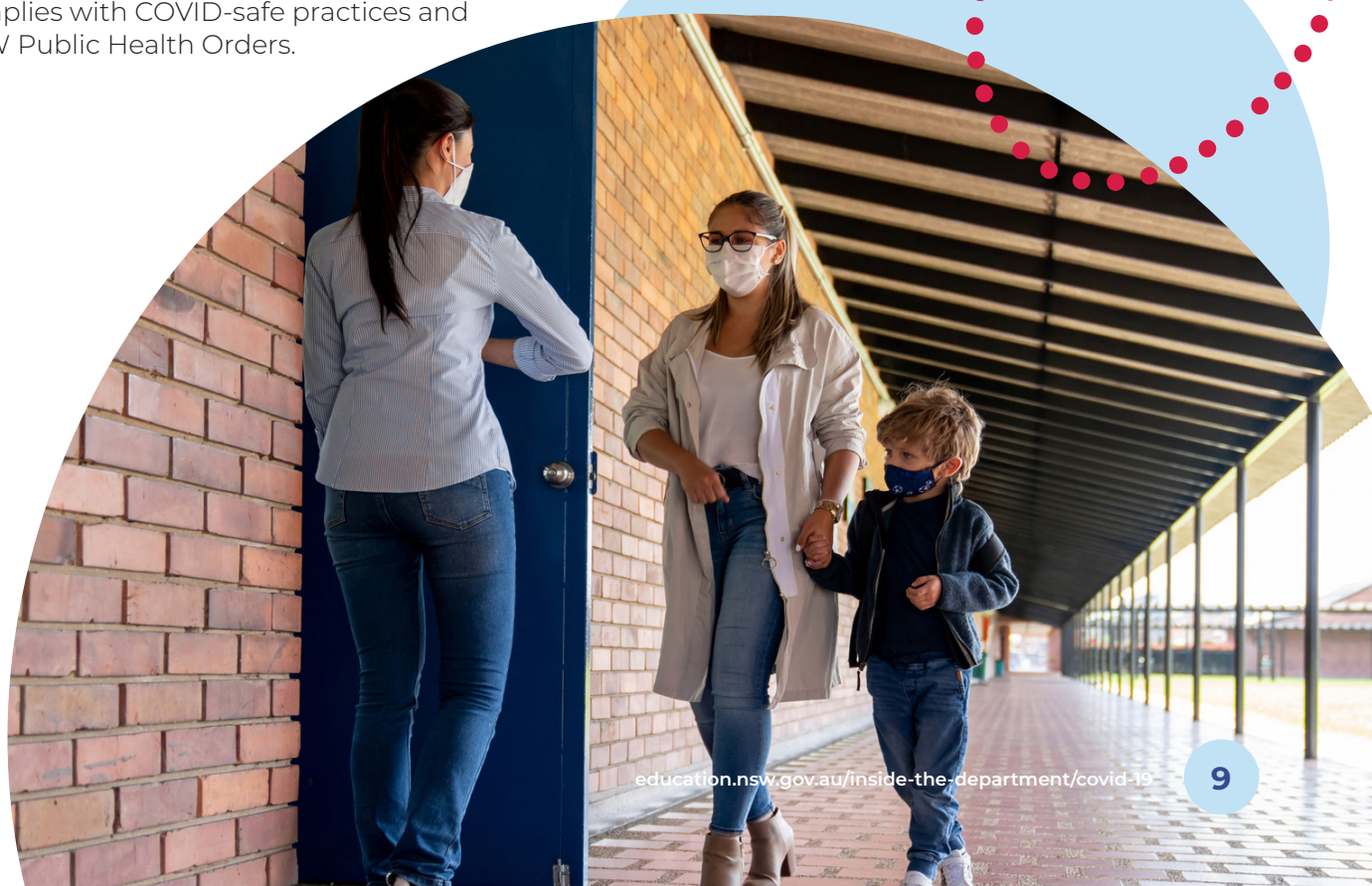
Meetings, staff development days, professional learning

Staff must:

- use virtual platforms where applicable to reduce staff gathering and mixing
- follow health advice about gatherings and follow physical distancing requirements.

Non-school based staff in Level 2 to Level 4 settings may only attend by online meeting platforms.

Compliance training (e.g. First aid/CPR) is to be conducted online until further notice.



Early Childhood Education, Preschools and OOSHC Services

Early childhood education and care services, including preschools and out of school hours care, play a vital role in our communities and are an important part of life at school. Out of school hours care, vacation care settings and preschools operating on school sites should prioritise staff and student safety by following the same COVID-safe guidelines as public schools. Increasing ventilation, wearing masks and using QR codes are important ways early childhood education and care settings can keep staff and children safe.



Vaccinations

ECEC staff across the state are required to have received two doses of COVID-19 vaccine by 8 November 2021. Staff working in out of school hours care and other settings on school sites are strongly encouraged to be fully vaccinated by 18 October.



Drop-off and pick-up

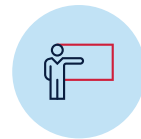
Principals should discuss drop-off and pick-up procedures with OSHC services staff. Principals have the flexibility to allow parents and carers to enter the site for drop-off and pick-up purposes for OSHC services to ensure the safety of students. This is particularly important when the entry/exit of the OSHC service is located at a distance from the school gate.



QR codes

Outside school hours care services and vacation care services on school sites should have their own QR code, separate to schools, as this makes it easier for NSW Health to complete contact tracing based on the specific operating hours and interactions of the business, should they be required to do so.

Teaching and learning



Learning delivery

The expectation is that all teachers and students will return to face-to-face learning aligned with the staged return to school from 18 October, including parts of Greater Sydney currently identified as “areas of concern”.

Due to NSW Health requirements and Public Health Orders (PHOs), some students may not be able to return to face-to-face learning if:

- they live in an LGA or suburb that is placed under stay-at-home orders
- they have a medical vulnerability or long-term illness
- they are self-isolating following NSW Health advice.

If this is the case, schools will either continue, or return, to the 2021 remote learning mode of delivery for these students. The department will continue to provide teacher resources to support learning from home for these students.

For schools in areas under stay-at-home orders, parents and carers must keep children – across primary and secondary school – at home unless they need to be at school. Schools and outside of school hours care (OOSHC) services will be open for any child that needs it.

To support the delivery of face-to-face and home-based learning for cohorts at different stages of return, schools may use flexible staffing arrangements, including casual staff and final year practicum students. The department does not expect staff to simultaneously deliver dual modes of learning to the same cohort.



Attendance

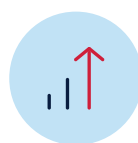
Regular attendance at school is essential for students to achieve quality life outcomes. Schools, in partnership with parents, are responsible for promoting the regular attendance of students.

If parents or carers believe that their child has a condition that means it is not safe for them

to return to school, they will need to provide a medical certificate. In this instance, schools should encourage these families to speak with their doctor or health care provider to develop a COVID-19 Action Plan to support decision-making about their activities, including attendance at school.

Schools should immediately contact families of students who have not returned to face-to-face learning with their cohort. If there are signs of students disengaging from education following their period of learning from home schools will need to take rapid action using a compassionate and common-sense approach.

- Schools should work with the student and their parent or carer to put a plan in place to support the student's return to school. Aboriginal Student Liaison Officers and Home School Liaison Officers are available to assist. If additional support is needed, schools can apply for support from the Home School Liaison program and local Learning and Wellbeing team.
- If a student is absent for more than three days without a medical certificate, this will be recorded as unauthorised absence and followed up by the school. Staff should continue to utilise the 'F' code for COVID-19 related absences where there is evidence of engagement with work and its completion.
- Schools are to take all reasonable steps to contact parents and carers of students where there are unexplained absences. Contact can be attempted via phone call, text message, letter or email and/or by calling emergency contacts listed in ERN. On the sixth consecutive day of unexplained absence, Principals can seek advice from the Child Wellbeing Unit (CWU) on 02 9269 9400. The CWU will assist in identifying if there are any known child protection concerns, whilst providing an alternate reporting pathway to support mandatory reporting obligations.
- In relation to medical certificates, if there is an ongoing pattern of poor attendance and major concerns, under Chapter 16A of the Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1999, the principal can contact the student's GP to discuss the matter. Principals will need to provide evidence of their concern.



Assessing student progress

Students will have had a mixed experience of learning from home. Schools will need to use a variety of methods to assess the progress students have made in their learning and development, and target teaching to support students as they return to face-to-face learning.

Schools have been provided with a range of assessment tools, which are available on the Learning from home hub. These provide short, sharp insights into learning progress, to inform teaching plans for students. Check-in assessments and the phonics screening test will enhance their suite of assessment tools during Term 4, which will provide individualised insights into any learning loss during Term 3 and suggested teaching strategies to address any gaps.

NESA has provided flexibility in K to 10 curriculum requirements. Principals have the authority to decide which syllabus outcomes and content they teach and assess for Kindergarten to Year 10 in 2021 provided they comply with the department's policy documents.



HSC exams

NESA has announced changes to the 2021 HSC exam timetable, which commences on 9 November 2021. The three school sectors will continue to work with NESA and NSW Health to deliver COVID-safe exams under this revised timetable.

Schools must implement COVID-safe arrangements for exams to minimise mixing between students, ensure that students are appropriately spaced and that exams are conducted in well-ventilated rooms and spaces. More information is available in the HSC advice guidelines.



Semester 2 reports

Schools are required to issue a formal written report to parents and carers for each student for Semester 2. The report will:

- use plain English

- describe student progress and achievement on the learning covered during the reporting period, including the learning from home period
- provide teacher comments to describe student learning and identify the next steps in learning.

In addition to the updated requirements, principals will have flexibility to:

- adapt or modify existing reporting templates/software to meet current requirements (this may include adapting or modifying the simplified report developed in Semester 1, 2020)
- continue to use the A-E scale where valid assessment judgements can be made against statewide syllabus standards
- provide information about student attendance and commitment to learning where possible
- incorporate information about student learning from parent-teacher discussions for a more complete picture of learning progress.

Schools are encouraged to engage with parents and carers about students' learning as part of the assessment and reporting process. Advice is available for conducting parent and carer interviews.



Opportunity class placement

The Opportunity Class placement test will now be held on Wednesday 17 November 2021. Further details on the testing arrangements will be confirmed soon. To ensure Opportunity Class placement offers can be provided in early January 2022, there will be some changes to the Opportunity Class placement test this year.

- The Opportunity Class placement test will be a computer-based test in the student's primary school, supervised by teaching staff.
- It will be a single test of approximately 60 minutes in length covering Reading, Mathematical Reasoning and Thinking Skills questions.
- The overall placement score will be calculated with the same weightings for each component as currently advised for the 2021 test.

- A computer-based practice test will be provided for students in the lead up to the test to allow familiarisation of the computer-based test experience. Sample test questions are already available on the department's website to download in PDF format.
- Readiness activities and test management will be streamlined with Check In assessments.
- Additional information will be communicated to parents and carers, students and schools in early Term 4 2021.



Orientation and transition to school

Orientation and transition to school are key for a successful start to a new school. Arrangements for orientation and transition to school should be flexible and responsive to emerging COVID-19 guidelines.

Level 3 restrictions allow the following COVID-safe practices for Kindergarten and Year 7 orientation:

- Students are allowed on site.
- Parents and carers will drop-off and pick-up at designated areas and should not remain onsite for more than 10 minutes.
- Parents and carers are required to follow the mask-wearing requirements and sign in using the Service NSW QR code when entering the school.
- School staff will be required to confirm with parents and carers at drop-off that their children are free of COVID-19 symptoms, even if only mild.

For Kindergarten orientation:

- Early childhood teachers and educators can bring students in their care and stay on site for the purpose of attending orientation sessions.
- Only fully vaccinated teacher and educators will be allowed on site.
- ECE staff will maintain the ratio requirements of regulation 271 (2) and follow the schools COVID-safe plan.

For Year 7 orientation:

- Primary school teachers and SLSOs can bring students in their care and stay on site for the purpose of attending transition sessions.
- Only fully vaccinated school staff will be allowed on site.

Level 3 plus and Level 4 restrictions do not allow face-to-face transition and orientation programs. Transition and orientation programs will need to be delivered virtually for schools under these settings.



SRE/SEE

Level 3 plus and Level 4 restrictions do not allow SRE/SEE and VSA. For more information contact Special Religious Education & Special Education in Ethics Officer at srecontact@det.nsw.edu.au.

Support and wellbeing



Student support and wellbeing

Schools and teachers will need to support students in the return to face-to-face learning. Students' experiences of learning from home, and their needs after returning to school will vary. In addition to normal support services, teachers will need to be supported to:

- acknowledge and listen to students' feelings and concerns
- take time to specifically re-establish routines and expectations
- create a balance between learning and wellbeing in the first weeks back
- focus on rebuilding connections
- support students who have struggled with learning from home
- notice changes in behaviour and offer intervention where necessary.

Delivery Support (via SSSP) is available to provide advice and support for schools as students return to onsite learning. Delivery Support is the school's support pathway. Find local departmental support officers by searching by school using the School Support Contact tile on the DEL staff portal.

The Student Wellbeing page provides strategies that schools may find useful to meet the individual needs of our diverse students, including our students with disability, EAL/D students and students in Out of Home Care who may need additional support.

Staff continue to have obligations under the Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998 (NSW) during COVID-19. All staff must inform their principal when they have reasonable grounds to suspect any risk of harm to a child or young person.

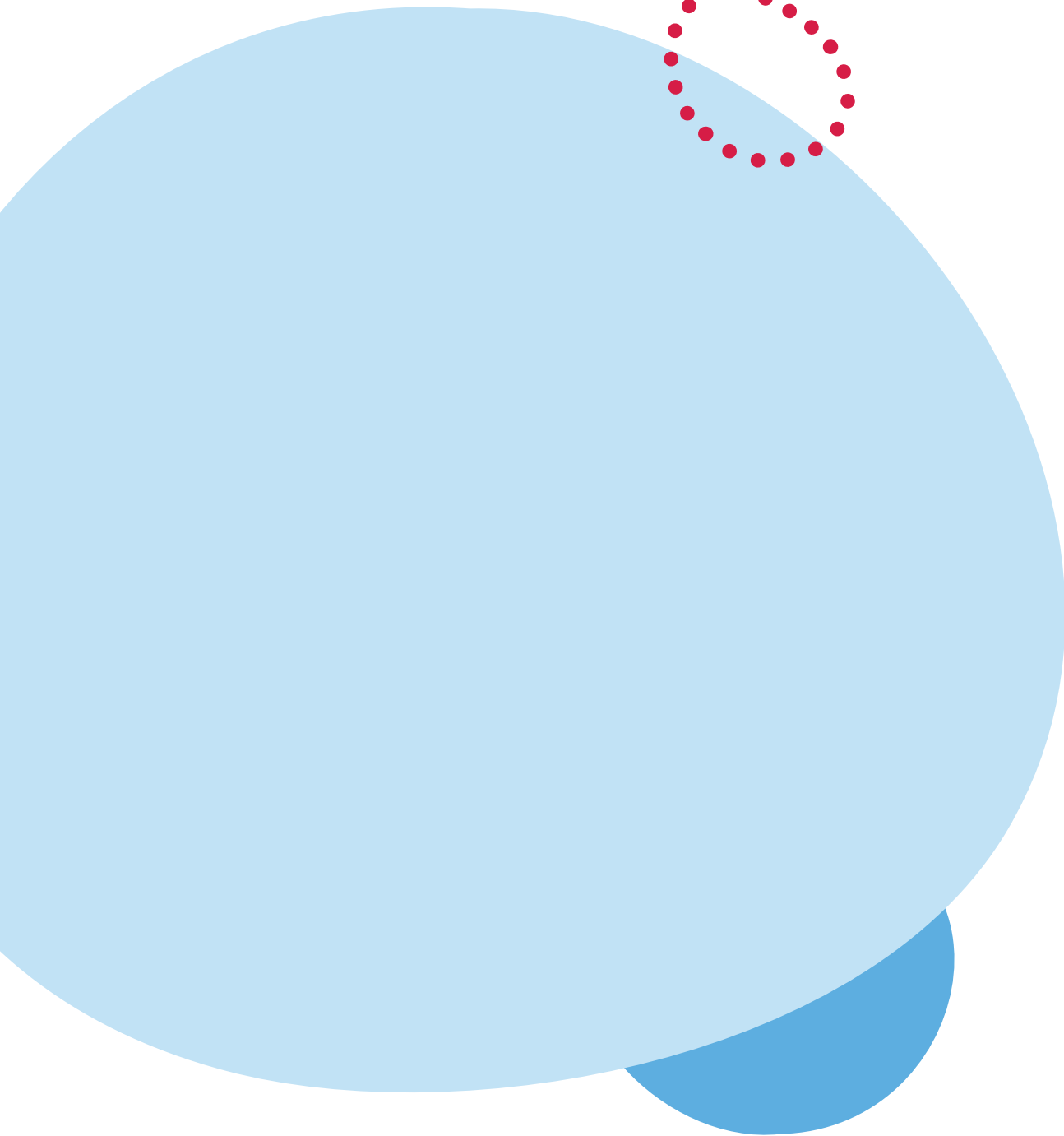


Staff support and wellbeing

The department remains committed to providing the appropriate support for schools. This support will adapt to the COVID-safe conditions on the relevant school site. Resources include:

- the department's Employee Assistance Program – Supporting You is available on 1800 060 650 for confidential counselling services
- EAP services are available to support our casual workforce until 31 December 2021
- the Mental health and wellbeing hub – for teachers provides link to mental health resources to support you, your students and your school community.





Say hello

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