

Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) – Frequently Asked Questions for School Communities Tuesday, 17 March 2020

Please note that this document references information from ACT Education Directorate for school communities.

1. Are schools boosting their cleaning or hygiene practices in response to the threat of COVID-19?

Catholic Education Archdiocese of Canberra & Goulburn (CECG) are focusing our cleaning to maintain the best possible hygiene standards for staff and students. All System schools have been asked to ensure school-wide hygiene practices such as hand washing are in place, encouraged and maintained and that signage is displayed around good hand hygiene, preventing the spread of germs, coughing and sneezing.

Currently, the ACT and NSW Governments are not advising additional cleaning or disinfecting procedures to be implemented in schools, public transport, shopping centres and other public places.

2. How will the school respond if there is a confirmed case of COVID-19 at a school?

Planning has been underway to assist our schools in the event of the spread of the virus in our school communities. When, and if, there is a case of COVID-19 in a System school, these plans will be scaled in proportion to the spread of the virus. Our response will be based on ACT and NSW Health advice and learnings from other jurisdictions.

3. Is it possible that schools will close?

- If a student or staff member were to test positive to the virus, the impacted school may close for a short period while ACT or NSW Health investigates the incident. Those students and staff identified as close contacts of a case will need to self-quarantine at home for 14 days.
- Parents will be notified by their school if it is to close via their normal communication channels.

4. Advice for parents on sending children to school

If your child develops any symptoms such as a fever, cough, sore throat or shortness of breath:

- Call your GP in the first instance. By calling your GP before arriving they can take appropriate infection control measures.
- Call your school to let them know.

As always, please do not send your child to school if they are showing any symptoms of sickness. Once your child is well again, they can return to school.

5. My child has COVID-19, do I need to notify the school and how long should they be excluded from school?

- Yes, you need to notify your child's school as soon as possible if your child has received a positive diagnosis for COVID-19. Your school will work with you and ACT or NSW Health to follow up close contacts and take appropriate public health action in line with national guidelines and well-established processes.

- The CECG will also receive direct advice from ACT or NSW Health, if a student or staff member returns a positive diagnosis for COVID-19.

6. What happens if my child has had close contact with another student who has a confirmed case of COVID-19?

- Students and staff identified as close contacts of a case of COVID-19 will need to self-quarantine at home for 14 days.
- Being quarantined at home means that you, or your children, need to stay at home, except if you are unwell and need medical attention. You cannot go to work, school, or public areas (such as shops or cafes/restaurants) and should not use public transport, ride share or taxis. You also need to tell people not to visit you while you are in self-quarantine.

7. Someone in our household has coronavirus, can my child go to school?

- If you are concerned your child may have been exposed to or have symptoms of COVID-19, it's important you limit exposure to other people to reduce the risk of transmission.
- Students identified as close contacts of a case of COVID-19 will need to self-quarantine at home for 14 days.
- Being quarantined at home means that you, or your children, need to stay at home, except if you are unwell and need medical attention. You cannot go to work, school, or public areas (such as shops or cafes/restaurants) and should not use public transport, ride share or taxis. You also need to tell people not to visit you while you are in self-quarantine.

8. What should I do if I think my child may have COVID-19?

- You or your child should get tested if:
 - You've travelled overseas recently, and you develop symptoms of COVID-19 within 14 days of leaving an overseas country.
 - You're concerned you may have come into contact with someone who has COVID-19 and you develop symptoms of the disease within 14 days of contact with the sick person.
- If you think you might have COVID-19:
 - Limit your exposure to other people by isolating yourself at home.
 - Call your GP and let them know you are worried you may have COVID-19. Testing will be arranged by your GP or medical practitioner if they determine it is necessary. It usually takes about 24 - 48 hours for the test results to be returned, but in some cases may take longer. Further information for someone who is being tested is available [here](#).
 - If you can't see your GP, visit any other local health facility established for this purpose.
 - You do not need to visit a hospital Emergency Department unless you have severe symptoms, such as shortness of breath, chest pain or high fever.
- If you or your child have recently travelled internationally or been in contact with someone who has COVID-19 and have symptoms of COVID-19 (such as fever, cough or sore throat), it is important that you take certain steps to reduce the risk of transmission.

9. Are students and their families who have travelled to certain countries excluded from my school?

- New quarantine requirements are in place for anyone arriving in Australia from overseas from midnight on 15 March 2020.
- Anyone returning from any overseas country, should isolate themselves for 14 days.
- ACT and NSW Health continue to work closely with the Australian Government and other health authorities across the country to monitor and respond to the evolving global situation. As the situation evolves advice will be updated, as necessary.

10. Are events going to be cancelled at my school?

- The Australian Government has announced that all organised, non-essential mass gatherings attended by more than 500 people must be cancelled from Monday, 16 March 2020.
- This announcement does not recommend school closures however, it does apply to a range of school events and events organised by school communities.
- From Monday 16 March, the following events will be cancelled in Systemic Catholic schools:
 - Upcoming school or regional/ACT swimming, athletics and other sporting events, large band or other music concerts where there would be large gatherings of students
 - School assemblies
 - Parent/teacher nights
 - School open days/nights.

11. Are school excursions still going ahead?

- Local and interstate school excursions, including camps will be cancelled - effective from Monday, 16 March.
- All camps scheduled to commence from Monday 16 March will be postponed and rescheduled, or, if there is no other option, cancelled.