**FAQs – Term 2 2022**

**Can my child remain at home if I am not comfortable sending them back to school?**

Children and young people learn best in person and for the majority of students it’s important to return to on campus learning with their peers.

Schools will continue to support students who have a medical vulnerability which requires them to learn from home. Students will receive a modified learning program that will be developed with their school.  A letter from your medical practitioner will support your school in making reasonable adjustments for your child. This applies to students, or members of their family, who are medically vulnerable to COVID-19.

**Will my child be marked as an ‘unexplained absence’ if they don’t have a medical certificate?**

Parents/carers can notify the school that their child will be absent from school and rolls will be marked accordingly. If parents/carers do not inform the school, then students will be marked with an unexplained absence and normal contact procedures will occur.

**Will Catholic Education be putting COVID-19 positive teachers in classrooms?**

No. If a teacher tests positive to COVID-19, they will need to go into isolation like other COVID-19 cases and not return to face-to-face teaching duties until they have recovered.

**Will there be a shortage of teachers?**

With the level of transmission in the community, we know that we will have teachers who will contract COVID-19 and therefore won’t be able to teach for periods during 2022. We believe we will be able to cover absences through a variety of strategies that will be implemented at the school level.

**Will teachers put their face to face classes online for students at home?**

Teachers will not offer simultaneous online and face to face classes, however some learning content will be available online for students to access at home.

Teachers will only be able to teach students who are at school on campus.

**What support will schools provide if my child stays at home?**

For those who remain at home, the following options are in place for term 1:

***Preschool to year 2***

* Students in Preschool – year 2 will be able to access a range of learning resources through the Education Directorate’s [Home Learning website](https://sites.google.com/ed.act.edu.au/act-home-learning/resources-to-support-home-learning). These resources are aligned with the Australian Curriculum and updated each Friday afternoon.
* Learning material will include daily lessons in English, mathematics and one other learning area.
* This learning will not be formally reported on in the semester 1 school report.
* A wellbeing check-in will be conducted once a week by a staff member from your child’s school.

***Year 3 to year 6***

* Students in years 3-6 will be able to access, at a minimum, one English, mathematics and one other curriculum area each day through a learning package provided by their school. This may be organised as a weekly program. The work provided will be similar to the work done at school in these subject areas. There will be no explicit instruction for students learning remotely.
* Students can submit completed work for feedback and some of this learning may be reported on in the semester 1 school report.
* A wellbeing check-in will be conducted once a week by a staff member from your child’s school.

***Year 7 to year 10***

* Students in years 7-10 will continue to access the curriculum that teachers would normally provide through a learning package provided by their school. This may include tasks or assignments, but it will not necessarily cover the full curriculum that is available through on campus learning. There will be no explicit instruction for students learning remotely while on campus delivery is available for their year group.
* Students can submit completed work for feedback or assessment and this learning may contribute to the semester 1 school reports.
* A wellbeing check-in will be conducted once a week by a staff member from your child’s school.

***Year 11 and 12***

* Colleges have worked closely with the Board of Senior Secondary Studies to apply flexibility around attendance and assessment schedules for year 11 and 12 students as required over the past two years and already utilise remote learning for all students.
* We encourage all families to maintain contact with their child’s school.

**QUARANTINE REQUIREMENTS FOR HOUSEHOLD CONTACTS**

The ACT Government has eased quarantine requirements for household contacts of people who have COVID-19 from 11.59pm on Tuesday 26 April.

Household contacts will not have to quarantine if they have no COVID-19 symptoms but will be required to minimise their movement in the community and comply with risk mitigation requirements including mask wearing indoors, COVID testing requirements and not entering high-risk settings.

Household contacts will need to comply with the following requirements for seven days from the time the first person in their household tested positive for COVID‑19:

* Advise ACT Health that they are a household contact by completing an [COVID-19 online declaration form](https://www.covid19.act.gov.au/travel/online-travel-forms).
* Wear a face mask in all indoor spaces when outside of the home, if aged 12 years and over.
* Work or study from home, where it is practical to do so, and where it suits the employer and employee.
* Notify their employer and/or educational facility that they are a household contact. This will assist employers and educational facilities to determine whether the household contact can work or study from home or can attend the facility following an assessment of risks in accordance with work health and safety obligations.
* If it is not practical to work or study from home, and there is mutual agreement to attend work or study, individuals must undertake COVID-19 testing and return a negative result in the 24 hours prior to returning to work or study and then every 48 hours if ongoing attendance is required.
* If needing to attend a gathering that is unavoidable they must have returned a negative COVID‑19 test result in the 24 hours prior to attending.
* Do not enter a high-risk setting such as aged care or hospital unless they reside there or need care (noting that high-risk settings can consider granting exemptions from this requirement).

Household contacts will also be expected to [practise COVID Smart behaviours](https://www.covid19.act.gov.au/stay-safe-and-healthy/covid-smart-behaviours) and avoid as far as possible attending crowded places, spending prolonged periods in indoor spaces with others and interacting with people who are at higher risk of severe illness.

**COVID-19 CASE AT SCHOOL**

**What happens if there’s a positive case in a school?**

Each school and early childhood education and care service uses approved plans for managing a suspected or confirmed case of COVID-19, based on the health guidelines.

***If a person displays symptoms:***

Children and young people at schools, early childhood education and care services who are experiencing COVID-19 like symptoms (e.g. fever, cough, sore throat, shortness of breath) will be isolated in an appropriate space with suitable supervision and collected by a parent/carer as soon as possible.

Symptomatic staff and visitors will be advised to travel directly to their home. The person with symptoms must  wear a mask while waiting to be picked up or while returning home.

Staff supervising symptomatic students will wear appropriate protective clothing (PPE) and practise COVID safe behaviours, including carrying out frequent hand hygiene, and practise physical distancing.

**Will I be told if there is a COVID-19 case at my child’s school?**

In line with revised reporting approaches across ACT Government, schools will not be listed as exposure sites in the way they were in Term 4, 2021.

Where a COVID-19 case in a school leads to students and staff being assessed as at risk of exposure, those impacted will be informed by their school about what they are required to do in line with ACT Health requirements. If the exposure is considered low risk, students and staff will continue to be able to attend school while closely monitoring for COVID-19 symptoms.

Schools will base their assessment off the ACT Health Guidelines for Schools.

Extensive risk mitigation strategies are in place in our schools. Schools have their own COVID safety plan that is tailored to the school environment, student cohort and staffing arrangements.

**What about my child’s siblings?**

The siblings of a positive COVID case are able to attend a school/ early childhood education and care service in accordance with ACT Health requirements.

**Am I eligible for financial support if I have to stay home to look after my kids due to possible COVID exposure?**

Depending on your circumstances, you may be eligible for the Commonwealth Government’s Pandemic Leave Disaster Payment. More information can be found [here](https://www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/pandemic-leave-disaster-payment).

**VACCINATIONS**

**Are all teachers vaccinated?**

The ACT has one of the highest vaccination rates of any city in the world and this is reflected in our teaching workforce.

COVID-19 vaccinations are mandated for staff working across our ELCs, primary schools, and Out of School Hours Care programs, or schools that share campus space with students in Year 6 or below.

Vaccinations are just one measure to manage transmission of COVID-19.

**Are teachers required to get a booster vaccination?**

All eligible school staff are strongly encouraged to get their booster vaccination, but this is not currently a requirement of their employment. School and early childhood education and care staff have been prioritised for their boosters to ensure their safety and the safety of school students.

**Do parents and carers need to be vaccinated when they come onto school grounds?**

Parents do not need to be vaccinated to enter school grounds. The vaccine mandate only applies to workers and volunteers at schools with students in year 6 or below who are in direct contact with children. It does not apply to parents and carers.

**VENTILATION**

**Why do we need to ventilate classrooms and other learning spaces?**

ACT Health has advised schools to optimise fresh air circulation to reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission. The risk of transmission is higher in crowded and poorly ventilated spaces where people spend long periods of time together in close proximity.

**What’s the evidence that it reduces risk?**

The Chief Health Officer, the AHPPC, World Health Organisation and Safe Work Australia all recommend good indoor air quality to reduce the chance of COVID-19 transmission.

**What are the ways to improve ventilation?**

The quickest and easiest way is opening windows in classrooms, adjusting the heating, ventilation and cooling (HVAC) system and turning on exhaust fans in rooms that have them.  Other actions include reopening windows that have been fixed or painted shut – where it’s safe to do so.

Outdoor learning will be encouraged wherever possible.

**Do we need HEPA filters and air purification units in ACT Catholic Schools?**

Safe Work Australia and the AHPPC advise air purification units and HEPA filters can be useful in spaces where ventilation is measured to be inadequate. Fortunately ACT Catholic Schools do not have many rooms without enough ventilation and these rooms are typically not teaching spaces.

**Can schools accept donations of air purification units from parents/parent groups?**

We appreciate the generosity of school communities in offering air purification units, or fundraising for them. These units, however, are not currently part of our air quality and ventilation plans for ACT Catholic Schools. In line with expert advice, we are maximising ventilation by opening windows in classrooms, adjusting HVAC systems and turning on exhaust fans in rooms that have them. If you would like to make a contribution to your school, please speak with your Principal about which types of donations would be most welcome.

**RAPID ANTIGEN TESTING**

**How will rapid antigen tests be used in schools and early childhood education and care services?**

Schools/ELCs will have access to Rapid Antigen Tests for distribution as needed. Staff and students who are symptomatic should not attend the school/ELC to collect a Rapid Antigen Test. Those staff and students are encouraged to access testing through an ACT Health testing facility.

**When should children, early childhood education and care and school staff do a rapid antigen test?**

If children and staff are unwell, even with mild symptoms, they should do a rapid antigen test.

**Do parents need to provide my child’s rapid antigen test result to their school?**

Parents are required to report a positive rapid antigen test to **ACT Health**. You can find more information on how to do that on the ACT Government’s [COVID-19 website](https://www.covid19.act.gov.au/stay-safe-and-healthy/symptoms-and-getting-tested/when-to-get-tested#Testing-for-children). They are also required to report a positive COVID-19 to their school. They **do not** need to report a negative rapid antigen test to their school.

**What do parents do if their child gets an invalid result?**

If a rapid antigen test has returned an invalid result and a child has no symptoms, they can go to school. If a child has symptoms, parents will need to take them for a PCR test.

**What do parents do if their child tests positive in the rapid antigen test?**

Parents will need to register a positive COVID-19 rapid antigen test with ACT Health via an online form and follow the instructions and advice. Parents also need to notify their child’s school or early childhood setting. Their child will need to isolate **for at least 7 days** from the date of their positive test and cannot leave the house or go to school.

**WORK EXPERIENCE**

**Will work experience resume this year?**

External training and work experience opportunities, including Australian School Based Apprenticeships, can be supported in the local community where they are necessary to a student’s program of study and operate in line with Public Health Directions. Employers should have COVID-19 Safety Plans in place.

**OUT OF SCHOOL HOURS CARE**

**Is out of school hours care operating?**

Yes. Out of school hours care is operating as normal, with COVID safe measures in place.

**LIBRARIES**

**Can school libraries continue to operate, including those shared with the community?**

Yes, libraries may operate including those shared with the community with COVID safety measures in place and frequent cleaning of high touch surfaces.