

COVID-19 Policy for 2021

1. Background

The purpose of this policy is to outline to parents, carers and students how our school will be managing risk and other operational matters relating to Coronavirus (COVID-19) this year

Melton Secondary College is committed to providing a safe learning and working environment for our students and staff. We ask for all members of the school community to follow this policy to enable us to provide the safest possible environment during this time. We all have a role to play in stopping the spread of COVID-19 in Victoria.

2. Scope

This policy applies to everyone in the Melton Secondary College community engaging in on-site learning or visiting school grounds. This includes all members of staff (principals, teachers and education support staff), all parents/carers who interact with the school and all students. It also includes visitors to the school. Information specific to staff only and not directly relevant to students and their families is not included in this policy

3. Implementation

On-site learning

We are pleased to welcome all students back to on-site learning for 2021 and hope you have all had a happy and safe break over the summer.

Health and safety at school

Our school follows the Department and Victorian Chief Health Officer's advice and requirements in relation to health and safety. The health and safety measures relating to students are outlined below. These health and safety measures are regularly reviewed in line with the changing context of coronavirus (COVID-19) in Victoria. As a result, as the year proceeds, some measures may no longer be required and/or new measures may be introduced.

Unwell students (including students who have been tested)

- Unwell students must stay home.
- Where students have been tested for coronavirus (COVID-19) they are required to isolate at home and must not attend school until they are both symptom free and have received their results (provided the result is negative).

Managing unwell students at school

- Students experiencing compatible symptoms with coronavirus (COVID-19), such as fever, cough, sore throat, shortness of breath, runny nose, or loss or change of sense of smell or taste, will be isolated in an appropriate space with suitable supervision and collected by a parent/carer as soon as possible. Urgent medical attention will be sought where needed. Unwell students will not be permitted to travel home unsupervised. NOTE: For some people coronavirus (COVID-19) symptoms may also include headache, muscle soreness, stuffy nose, nausea, vomiting and diarrhoea.
- Health care plans, where relevant and required, will be updated to provide additional advice on monitoring and identification of the unwell child in the context of coronavirus (COVID-19).
- If a staff member is unsure whether a student is unwell in the first instance we will contact the parent/carer to discuss any concerns about the health status of the student, and we will take a precautionary approach, requesting the parent/carer to collect their child if concerns remain. A trained

staff member may take the temperature of the student, where appropriate, to support decision-making. Gloves will be worn for the purpose of taking a temperature.

- Parent/carers of students experiencing compatible symptoms with coronavirus (COVID-19) will be encouraged to seek the advice of their healthcare professional who can advise on next steps. Students should not return until symptoms resolve.

Students with underlying conditions (such as hay fever or asthma)

- If a student has persistent symptoms due to an underlying condition such as hay fever or asthma, the student should still be tested for coronavirus (COVID-19) if they develop symptoms that are different to or worse than their usual symptoms.
- Parents/carers should also consider getting a medical certificate from the child's treating GP to confirm that it is safe for them to attend school with persistent symptoms that may overlap with some of the symptoms of coronavirus (COVID-19) such as cough or runny nose.

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

The Department has comprehensive procedures in place with the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) to manage suspected or confirmed cases of coronavirus (COVID-19) in schools. In accordance with these procedures:

- We will inform the Department's Incident Support and Operations Centre if a student (or staff member) tests positive to coronavirus (COVID-19).
- The Department will then notify WorkSafe on our behalf.
- The school will be advised by DHHS if a student at our school has been identified as a close contact of a person with coronavirus (COVID-19).
- Close contacts are contacted directly by DHHS regarding quarantine and testing; the student should not attend school until they are advised by DHHS that their quarantine has concluded. Students should bring a copy of the clearance message (text, email or letter) they receive from DHHS indicating that their quarantine period has ended when they return to school. Schools will be asked to confirm to DHHS that the student is not attending school during this time. If the student is attending school, we are required to send the student home immediately.

Face masks

As the requirements for face masks may change at short notice, our school will always follow the advice on the Victorian Government's Coronavirus (COVID-19) website at: <https://www.coronavirus.vic.gov.au/face-masks-study-and-school>

The Victorian Chief Health Officer has directed that:

- Face masks must be worn by individuals over the age of 12 when on public transport and school buses – unless you have a lawful exemption.
- Individuals over the age of 12 must carry a face mask at all times
- Face masks are no longer required to be worn at school. However, the Victorian Chief Health Officer advises that face masks are recommended for use by staff and secondary school students when physical distancing of 1.5 metres cannot be maintained. We will ensure this recommendation is followed, noting that exemptions regarding face masks continue to apply such as students who are over the age of 12 and are unable to wear a mask due to the nature of their disability.
- A face mask must cover the nose and mouth. Face shields, scarves or bandanas do not meet these requirements.

We will support students wearing face masks in hot weather by encouraging the following steps to improve comfort:

- keeping hydrated with water
- using a single-use mask, or a reusable face mask made from 100 per cent cotton, for increased breathability
- washing the reusable mask frequently to maintain effectiveness and bringing a spare so students can change their masks if it gets damp or wet
- taking mask breaks throughout the day when in settings that do not require them to be worn

Physical distancing

- Wherever possible we will encourage and support physical distancing of students however the Department and Victorian Chief Health Officer has acknowledged that physical distancing in schools is practicably difficult to achieve and has not mandated this practice.
- Parents are asked to observe physical distancing requirements (1.5 metres) whenever dropping off or collecting students from school and must not congregate at the school gate.
- Signage will indicate where there are limitations on the maximum number of members of the public that may be present in the space at a single time.
- Density limits do not apply to classrooms and other spaces for the purposes of student use, including corridors and other shared areas.

School arrival and departure arrangements for 2021

To support physical distancing at our school we will continue with our staggered timetable.

- Years 7 – 9:
 - Mon, Tue, Thu, Fri: School starts at 8:50am and finishes at 3:00pm
 - Wed: School starts at 8:50am and finishes at 2:20pm
- Years 10 – 12:
 - Mon, Tue, Thu, Fri: School starts at 9:10am and finishes at 3:10pm
 - Wed: School starts at 8:50am and finishes at 2:30pm

Hand, food and drink hygiene

- Hand sanitiser will be available at entry points to classrooms and students have been educated on the importance of this health and safety measure.
- All people on school grounds must undertake regular hand hygiene, particularly on arrival to school, before and after eating, after blowing their nose, coughing, sneezing or using the toilet.
- Where shared equipment is necessary, students will be required to exercise strict hand hygiene before and after use.
- Students must not share their food.

Air ventilation

- Wherever possible, we will increase fresh air into indoor spaces and maximise the use of outdoor learning areas and environments. This will include setting air conditioning units to use external air rather than recycling and keeping doors open to keep air circulating.

Temperature checks

- Mandatory temperature testing of all students is no longer required.

Mobile phones

- The Department and school's mobile phone policies continue to apply and we ask that students clean their phones regularly.

Health, Wellbeing and inclusions Workforces at school

- Health and wellbeing staff (such as Student Support Services, Koorie Engagement Support Officers, Visiting Teachers and school nurses) will continue to provide support to students as required.
- Please contact the front office on 9743 3322 for further information.

Record keeping for contact tracing

- To support contact tracing, we are required to keep a record of the name, contact details, date and time of attendance of all staff, students and visitors who attend on-site for more than 15 minutes.
- We are also required to record the areas of the school the person attended.

COVID-19 Safety Management Plan

- Our school follows and implements the Department's COVID-19 Safety Management Plan, available at: [COVID19 Safety Management Plan](#).

Attendance

- The Victorian Chief Health Officer has advised that given the current low risk of coronavirus (COVID-19) transmission in the school community, students with medical vulnerabilities can feel reassured that they can safely attend learning on school sites. An individual assessment is always recommended and decisions regarding school attendance should be informed by the nature of a child or young person's condition, its severity and intensity of required treatment. In most cases, the presence of common conditions of childhood, such as asthma, epilepsy or Type 1 diabetes, should not preclude a student from attending face-to-face learning.
- In keeping with expert public health advice, some students may be at higher risk for severe outcomes or complications of coronavirus (COVID-19), for example those with chronic medical conditions. Any student with a chronic medical condition should seek advice from their medical practitioner about attending school on site at different stages in the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. Given most of these conditions are rare in children, it should be an uncommon event for a child to be determined by a medical practitioner to be unable to return to school due to an ongoing medical reason raising concerns about coronavirus (COVID-19), outside of an acute illness.
- Our school will review assessments relating to attendance alongside notable changes to coronavirus (COVID-19) transmission in Victoria.
- You can contact the front office on 9743 3322 and ask to speak to the sub-school principal for your child's year level for further support and advice on how we can support your child in these circumstances. This is Kathryn Sobey for Years 7 - 9, and Alan Devine for Years 10 - 12.
- Our school records student attendance in accordance with the Department's [Attendance Policy](#).

Student absence due to border restrictions

- Where students are unable to attend school because they are prohibited from returning to Victoria due to being in a designated 'Red Zone' or because they are undertaking home-based quarantining after visiting a Red Zone, we will provide schools materials to support students to continue their learning remotely until such time as they are permitted to return to school. Please contact the front office on 9743 3322 and ask to speak to the sub-school principal for your child's year level for further support and advice on how we can support your child in these circumstances. This is Kathryn Sobey for Years 7 - 9, and Alan Devine for Years 10 - 12.

School assemblies

- Face to face assemblies may now resume without limits, provided the assembly has no external guests.
- If an assembly or other event is held with external guests (parents/carers/visitors) then we are required to have an overall attendee limit (inclusive of guests, staff and students) based on available floor space of the venue; with the density limit of one person per two square metres applied.
- If an event is held exclusively with students and staff from a single school, density limits do not apply to the venue or dancefloor, regardless of whether the event is held at school or at a hospitality venue, entertainment facility or community facilities.

Camps and excursions

- Excursions are now permitted across Victoria provided they are conducted in line with specific capacity limits on venues that are being used.
- School camps are also permitted across Victoria.
- Our school will follow DHHS advice on high-risk locations (when community transmission is occurring in areas of Victoria) and defer or make alternative arrangements for camps or excursions planned for these areas.

Sport and recreation

Based on the Department and Victorian Chief Health Officer advice and requirements as at 20 January 2021:

- Indoor and outdoor contact and non-contact sport are now permitted, including interschool sports.
- Sports equipment can be used by students. However students must practise hand hygiene before and after use.
- Swimming pool use in the community can occur.

Instrumental classes and food technology

- All music activities and instrumental classes are now permitted without specified limits. For wind instruments our schools follows the DHHS health and safety advice at Coronavirus (COVID-19) transmission from air-circulating, wind-blowing devices and activities.

Canteen

Our school canteen is open and will operate with the highest hygiene practices.

Visitors and school tours

- Limitations on who can visit school premises no longer apply but our school must comply with density limits of one person per two square metres when external guests are in attendance. This density limit applies to all persons in the space, including students.
- To support contact tracing we are required to keep a record of all visitors who attend on-site for longer than 15 minutes. Visitors to school grounds must comply with physical distancing and face mask requirements and practice good hand hygiene.

School buses and transport

- The School Bus Program will continue to operate as normal.
- Students should practice hand hygiene before and after catching any form of public or school transport.
- Physical distancing should be practised by both parents and students at bus stops, interchange locations and train stations.

Communication between parents/carers and our school

- Parents and carers are encouraged to contact their child's STARR Connect teacher to discuss any concerns or areas of need in regards to their child's learning, health, wellbeing or access to teaching and learning resources.

Cleaning and facilities management

- At our school we follow the Department's requirements relating to school cleaning and undertake daily end-of-school-day cleaning and disinfecting of high-touch surfaces.

Further information and resources

- DET Coronavirus (COVID-19) website:
 - <https://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/Pages/coronavirus-advice-schools.aspx>
- DHHS Coronavirus (COVID-19) website:
 - <https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/coronavirus>
- DET Infectious Diseases Policy:
 - <https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/infectious-diseases/policy>
- DET Health Care Needs Policy:
 - <https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/health-care-needs/policy>
- Talking to your child about COVID-19:
 - <https://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/about/department/covid-19/talking-to-your-child-during-coronavirus.docx>
- Department of Education and Training COVID-19 Advice Line – 1800 338 663
- Department of Health and Human Services Coronavirus hotline – 1800 675 398 (24 hours, 7 days a week)

4. Review

This policy was last updated on 28/01/2021 and will be reviewed on a regular basis as the situation changes.