

Purpose

Mildura Senior College and Mildura English Language Centre (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 reducing the risks relating to COVID-19 in Victoria.

Background

The College is following the advice for schools from the Department of Education and Training (DET) which can be found on the Department's website at: [COVID-19](#).

Scope

This policy applies to everyone in the College's 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, contractors & community groups visiting the school. Information specific to staff only and not directly relevant to students and their families is not included in this policy. Any additional information for staff only is available on the Department's [School Operations Guide \(staff login required\)](#)

Policy

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 COVID-19 in Victoria. As a result, the 2022 school year proceeds, some measures may no longer be required and/or new measures may be introduced.

Managing a suspected or confirmed case of 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 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 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 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.

Unwell students (including students who have been tested)

- Unwell students **must** stay home.
- Where students have been tested for 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 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 COVID-19 symptoms may also include headache, muscle soreness, stuffy nose, nausea, vomiting and diarrhoea.

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- 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 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 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 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 COVID-19 such as cough or runny nose.

Young children with persistent mild symptoms (MELC Campus)

- For younger children (in grades Prep to 2) who have had a negative COVID-19 test that was taken after they developed symptoms, the decision about return to school should be made in conjunction with the child's treating GP. If the GP is satisfied the child has recovered from their acute illness, is otherwise well, and does not need a repeat COVID-19 test, the child can return even if they are not completely free of symptoms. Any worsening of symptoms will require review and repeat COVID-19 testing, if considered appropriate by the doctor.
- Students with a negative COVID-19 test whose symptoms have completely resolved do not need a medical certificate to return to the school

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 COVID-19 website at: <https://www.coronavirus.vic.gov.au/face-masks-study-and-school>

Where required a face mask must cover the nose and mouth. Face shields, scarves or bandanas do not meet these requirements. During hot weather we encourage 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 that it can be changed if the mask 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.

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Hand, food and drink hygiene

- Hand sanitizer is available in all buildings and classrooms, and signage will be displayed 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, strict hand hygiene before and after use is required.
- School water fountains and taps have been reopened for normal use.
- Food preparation and catering can continue with frequent hand hygiene and it is recommended that no sharing of food occurs. Where sharing of food occurs at an event, we will encourage individual portions alongside strict hand hygiene.

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 with door jambs to keep air circulating, and utilising air purifiers in identified spaces.

School / Shared Community Spaces and other gatherings

As the requirements for density limits and facility hire arrangements as these may change at short notice, our school will always follow the advice from the Department of Education and Training (DET) which can be found on the Department's website at: [COVID-19](#).

As an example if density limit of one person **per two square metres** is applied the following ratios will come into effect:

- Gym – up to 375 people
- Library – up to 100 people
- Student Centre (carpet side) – up to 40 people

Where a school or community groups attends on-site it is their responsibility to **report immediately** to the Principal, if a member of their group has been identified as having COVID-19 or if they are a close contact of a person with COVID-19.

Visitors and volunteers performing work on school sites (both inside and outdoors) must have had at least two doses of a COVID-19 vaccine or have a valid medical exception. Schools must advise visitors and volunteers they must adhere to COVIDSafe requirements: physical distancing, face mask requirements, cough etiquette, good hand hygiene and QR code sign-ins.

Record keeping for contact tracing

- To support contact tracing, we are required to keep a record of all staff, students and visitors who attend on-site for more than 15 minutes.
- Visitors must record their name, date and time of visit, staff member they will be visiting and purpose of visit by signing in on one of the **Compass Kiosks**, these are located at Reception, Student Services or the TTC. The Compass Kiosk will issue a visitor pass, including a photo and a visitor number.
- Where a **school or community groups** attends on-site it is their responsibility to maintain an accurate record of attendees for future contact tracing purposes. E.g. attendance list.
- We are also required to record the areas of the school the person attended. Visitors must only visit the areas required &/or included in the activity, e.g. gym, gym changerooms & gym toilets.
- The requirement for temperature checking may continue to change over the school year, refer to the current DET guidelines.
- Visitors to school grounds must comply with physical distancing and current face mask requirements and practise good hand hygiene.
- For large events, such as Open Day and Parent Student Teacher Interviews, where there may be larger numbers of community members visiting on-site, our school uses the Victorian Governments QR Code, to assist with record keeping requirements.

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COVID-19 Safety Management Plan

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

School buses and transport

The School Bus Program will continue to operate as normal. Students must wear face masks whilst travelling.

Students should:

- Practice hand hygiene before and after catching any form of public or school transport.
- Not use transport if unwell.

Physical distancing should be practised by both parents and students at bus stops, interchange locations and train stations.

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.

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Resources

This policy should be read in conjunction with the following Department policies and guidelines:

- 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)

This policy should be read in conjunction with the following school policies:

- 1.21 Visitors Policy
- 1.51 Hire & Licence of College Facilities Policy
- 2.09 Hire & Licence of College Facilities Community Guidelines
- COVID-19 Health Declaration Form

Review and Evaluation

Given the rapidly evolving situation of COVID-19, this policy will require regular review on an as-needs basis in the event of any changed advice from Victoria's Chief Health Officer or the Department. The Department will advise all schools of any key changes through the School Update or direct emails.

<i>Ratified by:</i>	<i>SOP</i>	<i>Ratified date:</i>	<i>27.01.2022</i>
<i>Document Owner:</i>	<i>Principal</i>	<i>Reviewed date:</i>	<i>23.04.2021</i>
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