

# Guidance for Management of COVID-19 in Educational Settings

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Government of South Australia  
SA Health

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## Who is this advice for?

This guidance provides standard recommendations for primary schools, middle schools, high schools, early childhood education and care centres (ECEC), out of school hours care services (OSHC), vacation care services, and boarding schools to self-manage COVID-19 cases within their setting.

The advice in this document does not apply to tertiary education settings.

## Aboriginal health impact acknowledgment

Communicable Disease Control Branch (CDCB) COVID Operations adheres to the delivery of culturally respectful and safe engagement with the intention of positive health outcomes for South Australians who identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander, as outlined in the SA Health COVID Operations Aboriginal Health Impact Statement.

CDCB COVID Operations strives to address the inequities seen within health systems in South Australia and recognises the impact these operations may have on Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander People. This impact, in all regards, aims to be of benefit to Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander People, aiming to improve the health outcomes of both individuals and the wider community.

CDCB COVID Operations continues to engage with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders as well as individuals who identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander. This collaborative partnership in the self-determination of people and Community, in choices pertaining to positive health outcomes, is strengthened by ongoing shared decision making. CDCB COVID Operations values this ongoing connection with DHW Aboriginal Health Branch, local governments, Aboriginal Community Councils, health services, and non-government organisations (NGOs) throughout the response to COVID-19.

## Plan to prevent transmission in your setting

Educational settings should establish workplace and visitor policies to prevent COVID-19 from entering and spreading within the setting.

### COVID-19 safe measures

Based on SA Health advice, the Department for Education has outlined [COVID-19 safe measures](#) for schools, OSHC, vacation care, and ECEC settings.

Settings should consider additional public health measures when experiencing an increase in case numbers in a class/room or across the setting.

### Vaccination

Vaccination against COVID-19 should be considered in your workplace policy. Vaccination remains one of the critical pillars of communicable disease control.

### Face masks

Face masks are no longer mandated. However, masks are an important physical barrier to help stop the spread of COVID-19, particularly when indoors. Please refer to your COVID-19 management plan for face mask wearing considerations.

### Ventilation

Information on ventilation in schools can be found on the [SA Health website](#).

## Symptomatic children/students and staff

Educate children/students, staff, and families to recognise [COVID-19 symptoms](#). Children/students and staff should not attend the setting whilst unwell. This is to limit the spread of both COVID-19 and other infections within the setting. Please refer to your peak/governing body for any additional COVID-19 recommendations.

- > SA Health strongly recommends that children/students and staff stay at home if they have respiratory symptoms and get tested for COVID-19. Those who receive a negative test result should stay home until symptoms subside so other people are not infected
- > Recovery duration and infectious period varies between different respiratory viruses:
  - acute symptoms for most common respiratory viruses resolve after 5-7 days
  - approximately 50% of COVID-19 cases will still be infectious at day 5.
- > For further information about other respiratory viruses, please see the [SA Health page](#)
- > See below for advice specific to children/students and staff who return a positive COVID-19 result.

## COVID-19 cases in your educational setting

Educational settings should update and review their COVID-19 management plan on how to best manage COVID-19 positive cases in children/students, and staff.

**The following advice applies to schools, OSHC, ECEC and vacation care and should be considered when developing your COVID-19 management plan:**

- > Anyone who tests positive to COVID-19 should follow [SA Health advice](#) and report their positive Rapid Antigen Test (RAT) [here](#)
- > A child/student or staff member who has tested positive for COVID-19 should stay at home until acute symptoms have cleared (usually five to seven days)
- > A staff member who tests positive to COVID-19 should inform the educational setting and discuss with their employer when they should return to work
- > Parents/guardians of children/students are recommended to inform the educational setting of their child's COVID-19 positive result
- > COVID-19 cases should follow the setting's COVID-19 management plan
- > Children/students and staff who are COVID-19 cases can return at the discretion of the setting. Educational settings are encouraged to establish workplace policies to facilitate this process
- > Schools should avoid permitting cases to attend any activities in vulnerable settings including residential aged care settings and designated Aboriginal Communities. If cases are permitted, the school should inform the vulnerable setting or designated Aboriginal Community Council, prior to departure for the planned activity.

If the educational setting experiences an increase in case numbers, the following recommendations should be considered:

- > Asking symptomatic students to get a COVID-19 test
- > Mask wearing (staff and children/students, where age appropriate)

- > Group activity restrictions
- > Deferring camps and external school activities
- > Moving professional development online
- > Cohorting year levels
- > Remote learning for a defined time period.

## Reporting

- > Educational settings are not required to report on behalf of cases or contacts to SA Health. However, cases can report their positive RAT directly to SA Health [here](#)
- > Settings should refer to their peak/governing body for other reporting requirements
- > Educational settings are recommended to take vulnerable children/staff into consideration and notify relevant staff and parents of potential exposures.

## Cleaning

A classroom should undergo a routine clean using detergent and disinfectant following attendance of a case. Regular cleaning of high touch surfaces is recommended.

## Close contacts in your educational setting

Educational settings should appropriately establish visitor and workplace health and safety policies for managing COVID-19 [cases](#) or [close contacts](#).

SA Health strongly recommends:

- > Staff and parents/guardians inform the educational setting if a staff member or child/student is a close contact
- > The setting considers the risk of onward transmission related to close contact attendance at work, care, or education, as well as participation in internal and external activities
- > If a school permits close contacts to attend any activities in a designated Aboriginal community, the school should inform the designated Aboriginal Community Council prior to departure for the planned activity.

## Boarding schools

South Australian boarding schools are encouraged to develop and regularly review their COVID-19 management plan. Boarding schools are not required to provide these plans to SA Health but are strongly encouraged to share these plans with parents/guardians.

These plans should include risk mitigation strategies to reduce the risk of COVID-19 entering and spreading through the boarding school and strategies to manage any vulnerable staff or students in the event of an increase in cases. The school should consider engagement with boarders, parents/guardians, staff and peak/governing bodies in the development of the strategies.

## Risk assessment and mitigation

The [Australian Health Protection Principal Committee](#) (AHPPC) requires boarding schools to undertake an institution specific risk assessment and analysis and to adopt appropriate risk mitigation strategies to

manage the risks posed by COVID-19. Please refer to the AHPPC website for current risk management guidelines for boarding schools.

Please see additional considerations as below:

- > [Encouraging vaccination uptake](#)
- > [Ventilation](#) in shared spaces.

### Managing cases and close contacts

Please refer to your COVID-19 management plan.

The boarding school should access the school's regular or locum GP should medical assistance be needed. Advice can be obtained via the National Coronavirus Helpline on 1800 020 080 at any time if a GP cannot be accessed. Further information can be found on the [Health Direct website](#).

If a boarder or staff member's symptoms worsen, for example, they develop severe headaches, dizziness, difficulty breathing or chest pain, urgent medical care should be sought by calling 000 (triple zero) and requesting an ambulance.

More information about COVID-19 mental health support can be found [here](#).

#### For boarders who test positive:

- > The boarder's parents/guardians should be notified immediately so the school can implement arrangements
- > A boarder who has tested positive for COVID-19 is strongly recommended to stay away from others for five to seven days and until any acute symptoms have cleared. Accommodation arrangements for COVID-19 positive boarders should be made at the discretion of the boarding school, parents/guardians, and boarder
- > If a student remains on site and needs to leave their room, it is recommended they avoid other people and all communal areas. They should also wear a mask
- > Some boarding students may be eligible for antiviral treatment. More information on antiviral treatment eligibility and how to access this can be found on the [SA Health website](#).

#### For staff who test positive:

- > Staff should follow the school's advice about return to work. Staff are strongly recommended to stay away from the boarding house/s for five to seven days and until any acute symptoms have cleared
- > Some staff may be eligible for antiviral treatment. More information on antiviral treatment eligibility and how to access this can be found on the [SA Health website](#).

#### For boarders and staff who are close contacts:

- > Boarding schools have a higher risk of COVID-19 transmission
- > All boarders and staff identified as a close contact within a boarding school facility are recommended to follow the community close contact recommendations. Please refer to [SA Health's close contact guidelines](#) for the most up to date advice
- > Frequent COVID-19 testing helps to identify infections earlier and could minimise the spread through the boarding school facility.

## Additional assistance

Educational settings should refer to their peak/governing body for additional assistance.

Educational settings can email [SA Health Health.COVIDPublicHealth@sa.gov.au](mailto:SA_Health_Health.COVIDPublicHealth@sa.gov.au) if they are experiencing high levels of transmission and need assistance. Please include details about the setting and the support needed.



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