



Return to School Quick Reference Guide

ADVICE FOR CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

Effective 18 May 2020

From 18 May, all Catholic school students in Western Australia are required to attend school unless they are unwell or have a medical referral to continue their learning from home.

This decision aligns with WA Government advice and has been informed by the results of a comprehensive School Readiness Review undertaken by Catholic Education Western Australia on Monday 11 May.

Since the 'soft start' to Term Two, Catholic schools have been actively planning to return to classroom teaching and learning while supporting students who are learning from home. Across WA, more than 80% of Catholic school students are now back at school.

As the health and safety of all students and staff remains our highest priority, additional cleaning and hygiene measures are in place and some school practices have been altered to comply with advice regarding physical distancing.

Knowing this is a uniquely challenging time for all of us, Catholic schools will continue to focus on the care and wellbeing of students, staff and families as we journey together to manage the risks of COVID-19 in our community.



Student attendance

All students are required to attend school from 18 May unless they are unwell, have a medical referral to learn from home or live with a family member who is medically vulnerable.

Students with a medical condition

Students may continue to learn from home if they are immune-compromised or are otherwise considered at-risk medically.

- Parents who plan to keep their child home to continue learning remotely are to seek medical advice and will be required to provide medical evidence to the school. Students approved to learn from home will continue to be supported in their learning.
- Where a student's pre-existing medical condition is already known to the school, no medical evidence is required.

If a child is unwell

Students who are unwell should stay at home. Parents are asked to seek medical advice if their child exhibits symptoms of COVID-19. Normal processes for advising the school of a child's absence will apply.

Student with medically vulnerable family members

Students may continue to learn from home if a member of their immediate family is immune-compromised or medically vulnerable.

- Parents who plan to keep their child home to continue learning remotely are asked to contact the school Principal and provide medical evidence to support their request.



School facilities

School canteen

School canteens can continue to provide a takeaway service and may provide limited dine-in service for up to 20 people, where they meet physical distancing requirements.

School library

School libraries are able to open with staff and supervisors observing required physical distancing.

Swimming pool

Access to school swimming pools is permitted for up to 20 people in total, ensuring physical distancing, health and hygiene practices are observed.

Uniform shop

Where a school operates a uniform shop, the following considerations should be applied:

- If the uniform shop is located in an area where parents will potentially come into contact with students and staff, the store should not be open and other opportunities for purchase of uniforms, such as online, be considered.
- If the uniform shop is in a location where there will be no contact by parents/visitors with students and staff, except for the staff of the uniform shop, then the store can be opened.
- Until further notice, children should not be 'trying on' uniforms for fitting purposes.



- Discussions should be undertaken with the staff of the uniform shop regarding them undertaking their normal duties. Your Employment Relations Consultant can be consulted if you require further clarification.
- Where possible, parents should have the opportunity to make a specific appointment time to attend the uniform shop to avoid excessive numbers of people gathering in the store. If this is not possible, restrictions should be in place to limit the number of people in the store to allow for appropriate physical distancing.
- If parents are unable to access new uniforms for their children, flexibility should be allowed with regard to uniform codes.
- Increased cleaning and hygiene practices must be put in place to ensure that the uniform shop meets the required AHPPC guidelines.



School activities

In-school activities

Incursions for senior school students for purposes of course completion may proceed. However, they should not exceed 20 people in total, and supervisors and staff are required to maintain physical distancing.

Excursions and camps

Excursions for senior school students for the purpose of course completion may proceed. However, they should not exceed 20 people in total, and supervisors and staff are required to maintain physical distancing.

Assemblies, school Masses and school community events

Assemblies, interschool activities and school based extra curricular activities will not recommence until further advice is received from the Department of Health. However, co-curricular activities may proceed.



School Visitors

School meetings

School Boards, Parents and Friends and staff meetings may resume after school hours for up to 20 people where physical distancing and enhanced cleaning and hygiene protocols are observed.

Parent and caregiver meetings

Pre-arranged meetings with parents and caregivers are permitted for purposes of new enrolments, pastoral care case management, student behaviour and engagement, medical reasons and other emergencies..

School visitors

Visitors to school sites should be limited to essential health, wellbeing, case management and maintenance providers, and occur only when the school can assure adherence to physical distancing requirements and enhanced cleaning requirements. Contact with the broader school population must be kept to a minimum.

Use of school facilities

While service providers and community groups who have previously had access to facilities will be eager to re-establish activities, the current restrictions and health advice do not allow non-school related use of school facilities at this time. Further advice will be provided when this becomes available, but Principals will need to ensure future use of facilities is compliant with government advice at that time.



Teaching and Learning

Semester One reporting

School systems and sectors across the country have been offered flexibility in relation to reporting for Semester One, 2020. Principals have been previously advised that we are awaiting direction from the Federal Minister for Education regarding requirements to use A - E on reports.

- School principals to work with their staff to determine:
 - the extent to which comments are provided to describe the progress of students in learning areas taught in Semester One; and
 - if a general comment will be provided that addresses a student's overall progress.

Face-to-face parent / teacher meetings will not occur until further notice.



Health and hygiene

Keeping students and staff safe

The health, safety and wellbeing of students and staff must remain the school's highest priority. Additional cleaning measures already in place in all Catholic schools are to be sustained.

Unwell students or staff are to remain at home until they receive a medical clearance to attend school.

Physical distancing

Whilst physical distancing is not required for students in schools, students should be actively encouraged to do so wherever practical. Physical distancing is still a requirement for all adults.



Parent and caregiver access

Parents and caregivers should be advised that they are not permitted to exit their vehicles when dropping off or collecting their children.

If parents and caregivers are walking their children to and from school, they should undertake their drop-off or pick-up at the school gates. Schools are required to make arrangements for parents and caregivers to drop and collect students at designated locations.



Workforce Management

Staff members who believe they have a medical condition that may preclude them from attending work from Monday 18 May should seek relevant medical advice. If appropriate, staff should provide a medical certificate and discuss the matter with his or her Principal. For all other Workforce Management matters, Principals are advised to contact their Employment Relations Consultant.

Maximising the use of physical space

Schools should maximise the use of indoor and outdoor spaces to physically distance students where practicable. This may include conducting lessons outdoors or in environments with enhanced ventilation.

Students and staff should consider the following guidelines to reduce contact:

- Avoid direct physical contact (handshakes, hugs, etc.).
- Utilise staggered start and break times.
- Use alternative locations within the school.
- Unwell staff or students to remain at home.
- Combine or split year groups and classes as appropriate.
- Use alternative locations within the school boundaries to deliver classes.



Remaining prepared

Catholic schools will continue to review and respond to cleaning and hygiene protocols in line with advice from the Department of Health.

In the event of a confirmed case of COVID-19, any temporary school closure will be advised by the Department of Health and the school will enact its Six Step Response Plan in the event of a confirmed case.

When making decisions on applying this guidance the following should be considered:

- The AHPPC definition of vulnerable populations is based on age and [underlying medical conditions](#) that are limited and considered relatively serious.
- The AHPPC advises that there is a relatively low risk of Coronavirus (COVID-19) transmission in schools amongst children.

Personal hygiene:

- Schools are to ensure arrangements are in place for regular and thorough hand-washing for students and staff.
- Posters and information regarding handwashing and cough-sneeze hygiene should be displayed in schools.



Liturgy in Schools

The intent of the regulations relating to the closure of churches and places of worship is for the safety of parishioners and the public. This principle is foremost in the minds of our Bishops. Given the restrictions in place in relation to parents and visitors on school grounds at this time, it would not be appropriate for priests to be present on-site especially if they have not been included in training in relation to the protocols required for maintaining a COVID-19 safe environment. Taking this into account, it would not be appropriate for priests to attend schools to celebrate class liturgies, and especially not to celebrate class Masses. Principals are encouraged to reach out to their parish priests to keep them informed of developments and to provide opportunities for pastoral interaction. There is to be no distribution of Communion.