

From: Department of Education and Training
To: [Kennedy, Heather J](#)
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Monday 23 March 2020

Coronavirus (COVID-19): update

Dear colleagues,

Yesterday the Victorian Government, with the support of the Chief Health Officer, announced the bringing forward of school holidays in Victoria, commencing from Tuesday 24 March.

This is obviously an unprecedented step in response to unprecedented circumstances. I greatly appreciate your support as we navigate our way through these challenging times.

Below sets out the arrangements for the rest of this week and looks ahead to the first week of Term 2.

Tuesday 24 - Friday 27 March

Principals and school leadership teams are asked to be in attendance on site at school this week, where appropriate, observing common-sense social distancing measures.

Care and supervision program

During this week, we have a responsibility to provide care and supervision programs for primary school students and all students in specialist schools who are the children (or under the care) of essential services workers, where those families choose to send their children to school.

We also have a responsibility to ensure there is a program of care and support this week for vulnerable children.

Examples of essential services may include health, police, corrections and emergency services workers.

We also have a responsibility to primary and secondary school students who are vulnerable. They may include:

- children in out-of-home care
- children deemed by Child Protection and/or Family Services to be at risk of harm
- children identified by the school as vulnerable, including via referral from a family violence agency, homelessness service, mental health service or other health service.

There is no obligation for students who are children of essential workers or students who are vulnerable to attend school this week. However, we do have an obligation to ensure we provide a care and supervision program for these students if it is needed.

Principals and members of school leadership teams who have children that require care and supervision this week are welcome to bring their children to their own school, or they can access the care and supervision programs that will be available at their child's school.

Where Out of School Hours Care (OSHC) providers are available and willing to offer an extended program this week at your school, and this suits your circumstances, they are able to do so.

Staff attendance

Prep to Grade 6

Principals of schools with students in Prep to Grade 6 are asked to work with your staff so that approximately 30 per cent of your staff, including relevant support staff, who are willing and able to work on-site can be in attendance this week. This is likely to be more staff than will be required, but it will ensure adequate supervision can be provided. A roster can be arranged through the week.

In the circumstances of this week, we are defining adequate supervision as follows, based on social distancing measures:

- Maximum number of 10 children in a room.
- A minimum ratio of 1:8 to ensure staff are available to assist their colleagues with breaks, relief and other support where required. This staffing ratio can include the use of relevant support staff.

If you are in the situation where you think you may not have enough staff to meet these ratios, please seek to engage Casual Relief Teachers.

Staff not participating in the care and supervision program, should be working from home under instruction to prepare for the transition to flexible and remote learning, including preparing for the continuation of support for students' wellbeing.

Years 7 to 12

Principals of schools with students in Years 7 to 12 are asked to estimate the number of vulnerable students who should be supported and put in place arrangements for adequate care and supervision, with a minimum ratio of 1:8 staff to students.

Communication with parents

In order to communicate our commitment to provide care and support for children of essential service workers and vulnerable children, principals should:

1. Today inform parents/carers that children of essential service workers will be able to attend a care and supervision program at the school from (Tuesday 24 March).
2. Ask if those same parents/carers require holiday program places for their children over the Term 1 holidays due to the State of Emergency.
3. Work with vulnerable children and their families/carers to establish if they will require a care and supervision program over the Term 1 holiday.

The Department will then work with you and OSHC providers to determine the level of provision of holiday programs that can be provided over these coming holidays.

Start Term 2

Staff return: Tuesday 14 April, pupil free day

Students return: Wednesday 15 April

Victorian Chief Health Officer (CHO) will advise on whether the transition to flexible and remote learning and support should commence on the first student day of Term 2 (Wednesday 15 April) closer to that date.

Please work with your staff this week to establish on-site staffing arrangements for the first few weeks of Term 2, in the event that we proceed with the transition to flexible and remote learning and support.

I know many schools have done this already, but can you also please ensure that you have student

health and wellbeing supports in place for this term, including, for example, a phone number that students can call if they are feeling anxious or want to talk to a staff member.

Thank you again for your extraordinary leadership during this very challenging time. Further information to support the likely transition to flexible and remote learning will be provided later today and through this week.

Yours sincerely,

Dr David Howes

Deputy Secretary

Schools and Regional Services

The Department acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the traditional custodians of the land and acknowledges and pays respect to their elders, past and present.

