

MINIMISING RISK OF COVID-19 TRANSMISSION IN NSW SCHOOL COMMUNITIES

14 August 2020

In response to the recent cases of COVID-19 in school staff and students in NSW, I write to advise you of further measures to minimise the risk of COVID-19 transmission in school communities. These measures will be effective Wednesday 19 August 2020.

NSW Health requires schools to:

- exclude students and staff with even mild symptoms of COVID-19
- encourage immediate testing for any symptomatic child(ren) or staff
- prohibit return to school for anyone with symptoms of COVID-19 until a negative COVID test result has been reported
- ensure that adults maintain physical distancing at all times
- ensure good hand hygiene at all times (e.g. upon entry to the school, entry to the classroom and upon exit of the classroom)
- for activities that result in the mixing of students and staff from schools from the local area (e.g. local inter-school sports competitions), develop and ensure compliance with a COVID safety plan based on the COVID safety plan template for community sport activities
- for local activities, limit spectators to one parent only, where parental supervision is required
- carefully consider face-to-face professional learning for staff and, if proceeding, ensure COVID safety through physical distancing and limiting group numbers, and
- avoid professional learning activities that require staff to mix across schools.

For absolute clarity, professional development for staff should not be conducted face-to-face unless absolutely necessary. Staff gatherings should be minimised and, where they must occur, limited to the minimum amount of people required to achieve educational outcomes. Staff should also be required to maintain social distancing at all times and, where they must gather, their names should be recorded to assist in identifying who attended the gathering and for how long.

Furthermore, certain practices must cease altogether. These include:

- activities that result in the mixing of students from schools in different regions¹, such as sporting-related activities, drama and debating
- school-related group singing or chanting activities and use of wind instruments in groups
- school-related social activities (e.g. school formals, dinners or dances; graduation ceremonies; or parent engagement functions)
- school-related overnight events (e.g. retreats, camps, excursions) as there is increased risk of transmission of the virus in a residential type setting with shared facilities

These updated measures will assist us to achieve the NSW Government's aim of eliminating community transmission in NSW, and will support schools to continue to deliver onsite learning. I thank you and your school communities for your support and ongoing attention to providing a COVID safe environment for all students and staff.

Please refer to the NSW Department of Education or NSW Health websites for further information.

Yours sincerely



Dr Kerry Chant
Chief Health Officer
NSW Ministry of Health

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¹ Regional mixing include activities which bring together students or staff from schools in different regions of Sydney, from a rural area into a metropolitan area and vice versa, and movement between different rural areas