



Phase 4

Frequently asked questions Health, hygiene and cleaning

This document has been prepared for use by WA Public Schools and is provided to Independent Schools for their information and use in decision-making processes.

This document is uncontrolled and some information relating specifically to Department of Education operational processes has been removed prior to distribution.

Effective from Monday, 29 June 2020.

Not all COVID-19 information is covered in these questions and answers.

1. What safety precautions will be in place for staff and students?

The WA Chief Health Officer letter which was sent to all school staff states:

- Schools are safe for staff and students and should stay open
- That school staff and children are not at increased risk of COVID-19 by physically attending school; and
- That there have been no cases of student-to-student transmission in Western Australia and no cases of student to teacher transmission.

2. What happens if COVID-19 cases go up – will students be taken out of schools?

- All decisions are based on Chief Health Officer advice.

3. The AHPPC Guidelines recommends that water bubblers remain closed. How can I ensure that students have access to water?

- The Western Australian Department of Health has confirmed that they do not need to be closed but precautions taken.
- Schools must ensure that there is good water pressure, handles regularly cleaned and bubblers used to re-fill water bottles so students do not make contact with them with their mouths.
- Advice to schools relating to the use of water bottles remains consistent with advice given in Term 1.

4. Do schools have enough soap and hand sanitiser to ensure they are safe?

- Yes. The supply of soap or another cleansing agent is available in all schools and students should be given age-appropriate instruction for effective hand-washing.
- Schools should use normal supply chains to source these hygiene products.

5. Should schools be using hand sanitiser?

- Good hygiene practices include washing hands with soap and water for 20 seconds or using hand sanitiser.
- The AHPPC Guidelines advises that everyone must practise good hygiene to protect against infection and prevent the spread. Staff and students should wash hands or use hand sanitiser when entering school and at regular intervals throughout the day.
- Hand sanitiser is now back in stock and schools can source from their normal suppliers.

6. Is having students sit in rows facing forward, safer than having students sitting in groups?

- Practising physical distancing and minimising risk can include activities such as rearranging desks to maximise and increase space where possible.
- The explicit teaching of good personal hygiene is a strategy that minimises transmission. This includes; explaining to students why they should not share equipment, washing hands frequently, coughing into elbows and appropriate disposal of tissues.

7. Lots of schools have double desks. Are students safe to sit at these?

- Yes. Students can sit at double desks.
- Students should be encouraged to reduce contact by avoiding direct physical contact and practising regular and thorough hand hygiene.

8. There is lots of talk about students being “asymptomatic carriers and transmitters.” Is there truth in this?

- The WA Chief Health Officer letter that was sent to schools states there have been no cases of student-to-student transmission in WA and no cases of student to teacher transmission.
- The greatest risk of transmission in the school environment is between adults. Current Australian research show there is very limited transmission child-to-child or child-to-adult.
- Staff and parents alike should maintain physical distancing between themselves and each other at school. Reducing contact between staff in common areas and the staff room can also be implemented.

9. Are 17yo and 18yo students (Year 11 and 12) at greater risk of transmission as they are almost adults?

- The WA Chief Health Officer recognises that there are 17 and 18 yo students enrolled at schools in Western Australia. The advice sent to schools includes this age group. The risk of transmission in this age group is low.
- Health guidelines and the number of cases identified indicate persons 25 years and over are at greater risk.
- Some people are at greater risk of becoming seriously ill from the infection. These groups include people 70 years and over, people 65 and over with certain chronic medical conditions, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people over 50 with chronic medical condition and all people with compromised immune systems. The Department of Health has more information on this.

10. Should smaller rooms, such as music practice rooms, be closed off?

- No.
- Children are at low risk of transmission of the virus to other children and adults.
- Adults should maintain physical distancing of two square metres per person and good hygiene practices and regular cleaning regimes should be followed.

11. Students are normally in a classroom sitting next to each other for two hours at a time. Is there a maximum time limit students should be inside together?

- There is no prescribed time limit to students being inside together.
- The number of other students that each student has contact with each day should be limited where possible. Students should remain with their class group as much as practicable.
- Limiting physical contact and practising good hand hygiene remains the key areas of focus for students.

12. Early childhood students are not able to physical distance and frequently touch each other’s equipment, what level of risk is there in this?

The WA Chief Health Officer letter which was sent to all school staff states:

- Schools are safe for staff and students and should stay open.
- School staff and children are not at increased risk of COVID-19 by physically attending school.

- There have been no cases of student-to-student transmission in Western Australia and no cases of student-to-teacher transmission.
- There is a relatively low risk of COVID19 transmission in schools.
- Age appropriate hygiene practices may be taught to support students to increase their own personal hygiene routines.
- Extra precautions can be taken including regular cleaning of high-touch surfaces such as sporting equipment and teaching personal hygiene routines.

Cleaning

13. How should new cleaners be inducted?

- As per normal school processes, Head Cleaners will have the role of providing an on-site induction for new cleaners.
- A task checklist for cleaners to use in executing the additional cleaning tasks will be provided to ensure schools are aware of what needs to be done.

14. How frequently should playgrounds be cleaned based on Phase 4 advice?

- Schools playground should be cleaned once a day.
- This can be completed using a cloth soaked in a detergent or disinfectant based cleaning product.
- Persons who undertake this task must utilise PPE including; a full face visor or goggles, rubber gloves and plastic apron.
- When accessing playground students should focus on hygiene and wash hands before and after using this equipment.

Staff and student wellbeing

15. How will physical distancing be enforced in schools?

- The WA Chief Health Officers letter sent to all schools' states that adult staff appear to play a role in both the introduction and, to a greater extent than children, the transmission of the virus in education settings.
- Schools should focus on implementing physical distancing requirements for staff.
- Children are at low risk of transmission of the virus to other children and adults.
- The AHPPC guidelines have been prepared to guide decisions made by schools to implement as far as possible practical and reasonable measures given the limitation of the school environment.
- The AHPPC guidelines state that the more distance between people the harder it is for the virus to spread.
- Schools should continue to practise strategies to reduce physical contact among students.
- This might include floor markings to identify the appropriate space between people.

16. How will physical distancing be implemented for staff?

- Staff should avoid sharing common items such as cutlery or crockery.
- Physical distancing of one adult per two square metres should be maintained.

17. What support is provided to students who may be feeling anxious during this time?

- Each school is developing their own approaches to student health and wellbeing, which may include:
 - regular welfare checks with students and families
 - continuing support from school psychologists and chaplains
 - maintaining regular connections and contact.