



18 October 2021

Dear Parents/Carers,

It was absolutely beautiful to see our preschool, EIU, Kindergarten and Year 1 students return to school today. They were so happy and settled.

Below is information from the Department of Education. I am sharing it to inform you of the many steps being taken to ensure safety of staff and students. I hope that it eases any concerns you may have of students returning to school.

Information about close contacts, self-isolating and COVID-19 cases at school

The department has updated its pages with detailed guidance for parents and carers about what will happen should there be a confirmed case of COVID-19 at school and students are identified as a close or casual contact.

All schools have COVID-safe plans and are taking precautions to reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission on-site. This includes enhanced cleaning two times a day in all schools in line with the latest advice from NSW Health and SafeWork Australia.

It is important to note that medical advice suggests transmission among children is lower and when they do catch COVID they generally only have mild symptoms.

Contact tracing

NSW Health will notify the school if there is a positive COVID-19 case who has been infectious while at school and we will in turn notify parents and carers. Contact tracing will be undertaken as it is in all other venues. The action we take will in relation to the operation of the school will depend on how many people the person has been in contact with. In some cases, this may mean that the school may need to be made temporarily non-operational. Some staff and students may be asked to self-isolate as a precaution while contact tracing is completed.

Self-isolation

NSW Health have made changes to self-isolation requirements for people who are identified as close contacts who are fully vaccinated.

- Close contacts who are fully vaccinated must self-isolate for 7 days (and limit their movements for the next 7 days). Close contacts who are not vaccinated must isolate for 14 days.
- Casual contacts need to get tested and self-isolate until they get a negative test result - even if they are vaccinated.

A reminder that anyone who has the mildest of COVID-19 symptoms must get tested immediately and self-isolate until they get a negative result - even if they are vaccinated.

Please visit the [COVID-19 response protocols page](#) for factsheets on close and casual contacts, isolation guidelines for children and to answer your questions.



Vaccination requirements for staff and students

From 18 October, all staff onsite required to support the staged return of students will need to be fully vaccinated. You can have confidence that we are handling the evidence requirements with the department and anyone interacting directly with your students will be fully vaccinated. The only exception is staff supporting Out Of School Hours Care who are required to be vaccinated from 8 November.

There may be some staff members who are not yet fully vaccinated or who have an approved medical exemption to not be vaccinated that we are still undertaking a risk assessment around. For this reason some classes may be covered by another teacher. We appreciate your understanding and the need to ensure staff privacy is protected.

Updated mask requirements

To reflect the changes in community settings mask wearing requirements have been updated for schools.

When students and staff return to school, the following requirements are in place:

- masks are required for all staff and students in Year 7 and above in all indoor settings
- masks are strongly recommended indoors for primary students.

Ventilation in schools

Ventilation is an important layer of support under COVID-safe operations alongside vaccinations, mask wearing, reducing mingling across year groups and good cleaning and hygiene. The department's ventilation recommendations have been informed by NSW Health advice, expert advice from the Doherty Institute and the World Health Organisation.

This advice tells us that maximising natural ventilation in our learning spaces is the most effective method for minimising the spread of COVID-19 as it is a very effective way to disperse particles in the air. This can be best achieved by opening doors and windows.

All necessary repairs identified by the review, such as easing and adjusting windows to ensure they operate as intended, were complete last week, in readiness for students returning to school. If you'd like more information, refer to the department's [Ventilation page](#).

Other Measures

As outlined in previous communication, the following protection measures are also in place:

- Staggered pick ups – K-2 finish school at 2:45pm, all other students finish at 3pm.
- Designated pick up areas. – Kinder exit via O'Connell Street, Years 1 and 2 via Neville St, all other students as per parent arrangements.
- No visitors are allowed onsite, therefore parents must wait at the gates for their children, with the exception of Support Unit and ASPECT parents who have permission to come onsite for drop off and pick up. These parents must wear a mask, check in with the QR code and leave promptly.
- Students will remain in their stage groups including during play times to reduce mingling.
- Students will wash or sanitise their hands upon entering the school or classroom and before eating.

Canteen

Great news! The canteen will now open from Monday 25 October. Parents are strongly encouraged to order their child's lunch as students will have limited time to buy at the canteen. Lunch orders will need to be written on a paper bag brought in from home with the exact money placed inside. The canteen encourages parents to open a canteen school account, to minimise cash handling. This can be used for student lunch orders, and buying off the bench at lunchtime. To open a canteen account, please go to www.melstastybites.com then click on "Online Ordering." They also have Flexi Schools available for online lunch ordering.

Thank you for your ongoing support.

Regards

Jodi Harris

Relieving Principal