

C19 - Guidelines for Term 4, 2020

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Guidelines for Term 4, 2020

1. Introduction

Catholic Education NT will continue to follow health advice provided by the NT Government, NT Chief Health Officer, and Australian Health Protection Principal Committee (AHPPC) on the operation of schools.

1.1. National Principles for School Education response to COVID-19

The following principles are guiding decision making nationally in relation to the operation of schools and early childhood services:

1. Our schools are critical to the delivery of high quality education for students and to give our children the best possible start in life. Our education systems are based on the recognition that education is best delivered by professional teachers to students in the classroom on a school campus.
2. During the COVID-19 crisis, alternative flexible, remote delivery of education services may be needed.
3. Our schools must be healthy and safe environments for students, teachers and other staff to ensure the effective and efficient delivery of education to students.
4. State and Territory Governments and non-government sector authorities are responsible for managing and making operational decisions for their school systems respectively, subject to compliance with relevant funding agreements with the Commonwealth.
5. Decisions regarding the response to COVID-19 in the schooling sector must continue to be informed by expert, official, national and state-based public health and education advice, consistent with these national principles.
6. All students must continue to be supported by their school to ensure participation in quality education during the COVID 19 crisis.
7. The health advice consistently provided by the AHPPC is that attendance at a school campus for education represents a very low health risk to students. The advice also notes that appropriate practices must be employed at schools, like at other workplaces, to provide a safe working environment for school staff, including teachers, and that the specific AHPPC advice regarding school campuses should be followed.

2. Visitors and Events

In accordance with the [NT Roadmap](#) principles (personal responsibility, physical distancing and hygiene), principals should carefully consider the number of visitors coming into schools to ensure the maximum possible physical distancing and hygiene principles can continue to be applied. Practices to reduce the number of adults in the school and to encourage physical distancing at peak times should continue, such as alternative drop off/pick up arrangements, discouraging parents from entering classrooms, etc.

Principals retain the discretion to continue to restrict and minimise visitors to ensure the safety and wellbeing of students and staff, especially in circumstances where appropriate hygiene and physical distancing cannot be maintained. Visitors should not be permitted to attend the school if:

- they are unwell;
- they are awaiting the outcome of a test for COVID-19;
- they have been directed by relevant authorities to quarantine or self-isolate; or
- in the last 14 days, they have travelled to a place identified by the [Australian Health Protection Principal Committee \(AHPPC\)](#) as a COVID-19 hot spot.

Visits to schools by CEO staff to deliver programs and services in schools will continue in Term 4, particularly where the quality or efficacy of the service is significantly enhanced by in person delivery, or where onsite visits are central to the delivery of the program. Visits to schools from external parties such as dignitaries, community leaders, political candidates and unions are also permitted in accordance with normal processes and the below requirements.

Principals can allow visitors into their school on a case-by-case basis, provided the following requirements are met:

- **Visitors need to complete the [COVID-19 Visitor Declaration Checklist](#).**
- Visitors should maintain physical distancing of at least 1.5m between themselves and all other people including staff, students and other visitors. Where closer contact is absolutely necessary, it should be limited to less than 15 minutes.
- Schools should display markings indicating 1.5 metre distances in any areas where school visitors are likely to queue (e.g. at reception, at entryways to events, etc).
- Visitors should adhere to the school's hygiene practices, including:
 - Washing or sanitising their hands on entry, after contact with high touch surfaces, after coughing or sneezing and after using the bathroom;
 - Coughing/sneezing into a tissue or the inside of their elbow;
 - Avoiding the use of any water bubblers except to fill up their own personal water bottle (BYO water bottles should be encouraged).

- The school should ensure appropriate signage to advise visitors of the physical distancing and hygiene requirements, and ensure all visitors are advised of the requirements on entry to the school.
- Schools should provide hand washing or sanitising facilities to visitors on entry to the school, however visitors should also be encouraged to bring their own hygiene products (tissues, hand sanitiser, etc) rather than relying on school supplies.
- In remote communities, visitors must hold any relevant permits required for entry into the community.

Principals should continue to ensure frequent and transparent communication with their school community and relevant community stakeholders regarding the arrangements and requirements for visitors in the school and/or community.

2.1. Large school events

Schools are encouraged to continue to undertake measures and practices in schools to support physical distancing and to reduce transmission risks within the practical limitations of a school environment. Accordingly, schools are encouraged **to adopt a cautious approach** for any large events, and to consider alternatives including online delivery using videoconferencing, smaller events involving less attendees, and dissemination of video recordings, photographs and reports of events through school websites or electronic newsletters.

Due to a change in Department of Health policy, for the purposes of these guidelines, a large school event in Term 4 is any event that involves:

- multiple classes of students from different schools participating or spectating; and/or
- over 100 participants or spectators who are not students or staff members (e.g. parents, invited guests, volunteers).

Large events include assemblies, school masses, sports days/competitions, concerts, presentation events, parent/teacher nights, fetes, markets and other miscellaneous events.

Schools are permitted to hold large events with the Principal's approval, but should carefully consider the need to do so, applying the following recommended precautions:

- The hygiene and physical distancing principles set out in the NT Roadmap should be implemented where practical, including maintaining 1.5m between all participants.
- Visitors should adhere to the requirements as set out above.
- Transparent communication with the school community should occur regarding any proposal to hold large events.
- All attendees should be encouraged to download the Australian Government COVIDSafe app.

- For events held at a venue other than the school, the venue may also require additional plans, checklists or risk assessments to be carried out. Where they are required, these documents must also be completed.

A '**large school event checklist**' (attached) has been developed to assist schools to meet these recommendations, including specific considerations for sporting events.

Event with students and staff from the same school and:

Less than 100 external visitors:

- Large School Event Checklist should be used to guide safety requirements for your event.
This requires principal approval.

Between 100 and 499 external visitors:

- **COVID-19 Safety Checklist** should be completed, approved by the **Principal and submitted to the Environmental Health unit through the online form**. You will be issued a statement of commitment shortly after completing the checklist.
- Environmental Health Officers may visit the event to ensure you are meeting the requirements you committed to in the checklist.

Over 500 external visitors:

- **COVID-19 Event Safety Plan** should be completed, approved by the **Principal and submitted to the Environmental Health unit online**. The plan will be assessed by the Chief Health Officer. You should submit your safety plan at least two weeks prior to your event to ensure sufficient time for the plan to be reviewed and approved.
- Environmental Health Officers may visit the event to ensure you are meeting your responsibilities as outlined in your COVID-19 Event Safety Plan.

2.2. Community use of school facilities

In accordance with current school procedure, the principals retain the authority to approve the use of school facilities by other organisations when they are not being used for education purposes (i.e. after hours, weekends, school holidays).

In authorising the use of school facilities by other organisations, schools should:

- ensure all activities are conducted after hours following staff and students' departure (or, alternatively, that all activities are conducted in a discrete area separate from any areas used by staff/students);
- view and be satisfied with the organisation's COVID-19 Safety Plan; and
- ensure that the organisation cleans all areas accessed by participants (including access points, high touch surfaces, common areas etc) after each use and prior to the following

school day to the standard set out in the '**Cleaning and Disinfection Advice for Schools and other Workplaces fact sheet**'. (attached)

In-school health services such as dental clinics should resume in consultation between the principal and the provider, with appropriate physical distancing and hygiene practices in place.

3. Professional development

Wherever possible professional development should be conducted via zoom, phone and online (i.e. not face to face).

School-led face-to-face professional development can continue in Term 4, as will some CEO-led face-to-face professional development. Face to face delivery of professional development activities should only occur where:

- it has been identified as an urgent priority; and
- the quality or efficacy of the program is significantly enhanced by in person delivery; and
- physical distancing and hygiene practices are implemented.

4. Excursions

Some excursions resumed in Term 2 and can continue during Semester 2. Restrictions and quarantine requirements for interstate travel previously precluded excursions, but these were lifted from 17 July 2020. **Please continue to note COVID-19 declared hotspots.** Accordingly and continuing from Term 3, schools may plan interstate excursions.

The educational benefit of an interstate excursion in the current COVID-19 climate will need to be clearly justified for the rest of 2020.

An interstate excursion still requires **the Director's approval**. Planning should take into account the different levels of COVID-19 risk in other states and territories, ongoing uncertainty about the ability to freely undertake interstate travel, and the need to ensure reasonable lead times and communications with parents ahead of any such travel. Planning for interstate excursions should also include establishing protocols for circumstances where some or all staff/students become unwell or are suspected or confirmed to have contracted COVID-19 during the excursion, or if travel restrictions/quarantine requirements are re-introduced during the excursion. This may result in staff absence and additional costs to the school and parents. Schools are not to make any financial commitments relating to interstate excursions until the Director has approved the excursion. Approval for interstate excursions will not be given (and previous approvals will be revoked) if border restrictions or quarantine requirements for interstate travel are reinstated in the Northern Territory or the destination state.

The current CENT procedures for all proposed camps and excursions must be adhered to, ensuring the safety and wellbeing of staff and students, addressing the three Roadmap principles (personal responsibility, physical distancing and hygiene) and the risks set out above. Excursion activities must be conducted in accordance with the principles and restrictions set out in the Roadmap.

The excursion should not proceed if identified risks cannot be appropriately mitigated. All places to be visited must be able to supply their COVID-19 safety plan. Principals' Consultants and the WHS Manager are available to support principals with these risk assessments as required.

Travel across biosecurity borders must not be undertaken if biosecurity arrangements are re-activated.

If required by any of the venues visited during an excursion, additional venue plans, checklists and risk assessments may be necessary in addition to school documents. Where they are required, these documents should be attached to the excursion risk assessment.

Overseas excursions continue to be prohibited, and schools should not be undertaking planning for future overseas excursions given the long-term uncertainty about the ability to undertake, and risks associated with, international travel into the future. Any future overseas excursions will need to take into account the ongoing uncertainty about the ability to undertake overseas travel, and the need to ensure reasonable lead times and communications with parents ahead of any such travel.

5. Health and safety

The continued advice of the NT Chief Health Officer is that schools are safe and there is minimal risk to school staff or students in continuing to attend onsite schooling in the NT. Schools are defined as delivering essential services and are exempt from many of the current and previous directions of the Chief Health Officer. Where the Chief Health Officer does issue a direction that applies to schools, schools will be required to comply. These directions will be communicated to schools if they arise.

Staff and students who are unwell should remain at home, and schools should continue to implement '**physical distancing, hygiene and cleaning practices**' (attached) as much as practicable. From Week 2, Term 4 2020, schools may recommence using water bubblers for drinking, provided hygiene measures are followed. However, where feasible, the use of personal water bottles continues to be encouraged.

In accordance with AHPPC advice on reducing COVID-19 risks in schools, schools are encouraged to continue with enhanced cleaning practices, including regular disinfection of high touch surfaces and playgrounds.

6. Students

Education is compulsory for children in the Northern Territory, and all students are expected to physically attend school unless they are unwell. Students who are unwell must remain at home, and parents/guardians of children at school that are unwell should be required to collect them as soon as possible.

Schools returned to regular student learning practices during Term 2. This means that students who attend school will receive education that aligns to the Early Years Learning Framework, the Australian Curriculum or relevant senior years programs of study. Any children who are still at home continue to have access to resources on the [Learning Together](#) website.

6.1. Senior years students

Supporting senior secondary students to continue their final stages of schooling is a priority for all schools.

The NT Department of Education will support schools:

- to adjust subject specific assessment to meet curriculum requirements;
- to case manage students, enabling pathway completion;
- to modify pedagogy to meet curriculum requirements;
- to flexibly collect evidence for learning; and
- to ensure the NT stays abreast and is consistent with changes at the national level.

The department partners with the South Australian Certificate of Education (SACE) Board to deliver the NT Certificate of Education and Training (NTCET). The department will continue to work with SACE and provide schools with the advice regarding senior years students. Additional information is also available online:

<https://www.sace.sa.edu.au/covid-19-coronavirus>

The ATAR will continue to be calculated in all states and territories as in previous years. Additional information about the ATAR is available online:

https://www.satac.edu.au/documents/actac_april_covid19_update.pdf

Access to digital technologies may be important for students in senior years. Many students in senior years have, and use, ICT devices to support their learning. Where lack of a device or connectivity is a barrier to senior years students engaging with their learning, and students

cannot attend school due to vulnerability or medical advice, schools should lend students devices to support their learning from home.

6.2. Vocational Education and Training (VET)

VET courses will continue in Term 4, 2020, including courses run by Charles Darwin University in Darwin and Palmerston.

Any changes to VET courses will be communicated directly from the Registered Training Organisation (RTO) to the school and to the enrolled student.

RTOs are expected to be operating in accordance with NT Roadmap and businesses have completed COVID-19 safety plans. Schools should view and be satisfied with the COVID-19 safety plans before engaging with RTOs.

Structured Work Placement (SWP) for students undertaking a VET course will continue if agreed to by the employer and parent and the schools and parents are satisfied with the business's COVID-19 safety plan.

Please contact the relevant Industry Engagement Officer with any concerns or queries.

6.3. Supporting boarding students

On 1 May 2020, the Australian Health Protection Principal Committee (AHPPC) released a statement outlining the requirements boarding schools will need to meet to be allowed to reopen – see [here](#).

All Northern Territory boarding schools met these criteria and re-opened during Term 2, and are expected to continue operating in Semester 2, 2020. The department continues to work with boarding schools in the NT and interstate to facilitate students transitioning successfully back into their boarding facilities.

At the commencement of Semester 2:

- Students enrolled in boarding schools were expected to return to their boarding schools in either the NT or elsewhere.
- Students whose parents had made the decision not to return to their boarding school were required and supported to enrol in:
 - a) their local school
 - b) another boarding school; or
 - c) the Northern Territory School of Distance Education.

- Students whose parents did not undertake any of the steps above should be referred to the student engagement team for additional support, and if required, compliance action.

6.4. Employment Pathways

Employment Pathways will continue in Term 4. More information on Employment Pathways is available online:

<https://elearn.ntschoools.net/connecting-learners-hub/years-10-12/employment-pathways>

6.5. Music and language school programs

In-school programs, with educators who usually visit schools to provide small group and whole class lessons, will continue to operate where approved by the principal and in accordance with the health advice. The music and language programs that operate outside of school hours can be recommenced as determined by school and principals, with any relevant changes directly communicated to schools. All social distancing and hygiene protocols must be adhered to.

6.6. International Students and partnership activities

Current international travel restrictions mean that schools are unable to participate in face-to-face international partnership activities including study tours and overseas excursions.

Schools are encouraged to maintain communication with their overseas partner schools and to explore innovative approaches for incorporating Australian Curriculum Asia and Australia's Engagement with Asia cross-curriculum priorities and Intercultural Understanding general capabilities in teaching and learning programs.

Schools are reminded of their obligations to fee-paying international students under the Education Services for Overseas Students Act and National Code. International travel restrictions may affect the health and wellbeing of overseas fee-paying students, especially those who are unable to return home to see families. Some families may be finding it difficult to pay international student tuition fees and are encouraged to contact the schools to discuss any financial hardship matters.

7. Principals

Our principals' work is highly valued; we acknowledge their leadership, their leadership teams and the work of all staff to deliver quality learning to students and young children. Principals will continue to exercise their professional judgement and make local decisions, within the parameters and guidance provided to ensure operations suit their school context.

Principals will:

- ensure that staff and students who are unwell stay at home;
- enable physical distancing, hygiene and cleaning practices in their school;
- continue to focus on student attendance and engagement. Any new activities or programs should contribute to, and not distract from, this focus.

7.1. Communications

Principals will continue to ensure frequent and transparent communications with their school communities regarding school operations, including changes arising from the COVID-19 pandemic response.

7.2. Vulnerable staff and Working from Home (WFH)

Principals should continue to encourage staff to confidentially disclose if they consider that they are vulnerable in the circumstances of the COVID-19 pandemic. Principals will work with staff who have a medical health plan from their General Practitioner, and in the event of a COVID-19 community outbreak, may require **Working From Home** arrangements. These plans should be reviewed fortnightly.

7.3. Staff travel

Normal delegations relating to official staff travel and the use of 'Flights out of Isolated Localities' (FOILs) were reinstated from 5 June 2020 in line with the lifting of biosecurity arrangements. Accordingly, principals (for driving or regular air transport) can now approve FOILs, and intra-territory official travel for school-based staff.

In order to ensure your safety and that of the broader community, we require all employees who intend to travel interstate for any reason, to register their travel plans with their Principal.

8. Wellbeing

As the pandemic continues to evolve, it is very important that we all continue to look after our wellbeing. Staff in our schools need to support each other and know that it is okay to let somebody know when you need support.

During this period, CENT staff and their immediate family members can access counselling sessions.

For more information contact:

- Catholic Care Access Program

EASA and CORP Workplace Solutions are committed to supporting all Territorians during these unprecedented times, and have developed some tips (attached) for maintaining wellbeing:

- Calming Coronavirus Concerns
- Managing Stress
- Managing Sleep
- Managing Anxiety

Good resources for maintaining mental health in the pandemic can also be found on the Wellbeing section of the Pandemic Communications Portal.

9. Early Childhood Education and Care Services and Programs

Operating guidelines for Early Childhood Education and Care Services were released on 13 May 2020 with updates for Semester 2 on the Pandemic Communications Portal.

As announced by the Australian Government on 9 June 2020, the ECEC services resumed charging fees from 13 July 2020, and became ineligible for the JobKeeper program from 20 July 2020.

The Transition Payment to services for the period 13 July to 27 September 2020 has now ceased.

10. School transport

School buses contracted by the NT Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Logistics (DIPL) will continue to operate. DIPL has implemented enhanced cleaning protocols for buses, including a thorough daily cleaning, and twice daily cleaning of buses for special schools.

Where schools operate transport services for students, buses should be cleaned in line with the **'COVID-19 Cleaning and Disinfection Advice Fact Sheet'** and physical distancing and hygiene practices should be in place to the extent practicable.

Schools should manage student movement when entering and exiting buses to maintain appropriate physical distancing.



Please note that these guidelines have been adapted from an NT Government's Department of Education document.