

COVID-19 - Information for Parents and Carers

This fact sheet sets out how the operations of Northern Territory Government schools have been changed in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The NT Department of Education would like to sincerely thank students, parents/carers and the broader school community for their ongoing support for our educators in schools and early childhood education and care services during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Schools are safe

Education is compulsory in the NT, and all children of compulsory school age are required to attend school. The NT Chief Health Officer, as well as the [Australian Health Protection Principal Committee \(AHPPC\)](#) continue to advise that schools are safe.

Students who are unwell or in quarantine

Students who are unwell must remain at home and parents/carers should notify the school.

If your child falls ill during the day, parents/carers will be contacted by the school and required to arrange for them to be collected as soon as possible.

Schools are actively following up with parents/carers of absent students, and we ask that parents/carers notify the school of any absences, and respond to any queries from the school.

Parents/carers are also asked to notify the school when students have been directed to self-isolate at home or enter mandatory quarantine. In these circumstances, the school will provide the student with learning from home materials to ensure that they can continue to learn.

Students who have been required to quarantine will need to provide the school with a letter of clearance from the NT Government or health professional prior to their return to face to face learning. This assists to minimise the risk of the spread of the virus and gives reassurance to other students, staff and the community. Please note that all school staff who have been required to undertake quarantine, will also provide the same clearance letter before they return to school.

Parents and carers on school grounds

Where possible, minimising the number of adults entering school sites is desired to ensure the safety and wellbeing of students and staff.

Principals have the authority to determine when visitors are permitted onto school grounds, and the responsibility to ensure appropriate physical distancing and hygiene requirements are met. Visitors to schools are required to sign in on arrival to the school, comply with all directions from the school regarding physical distancing and hygiene, and supply their own water bottle and hygiene products (hand sanitiser, tissues, etc.) wherever possible.

No person including staff, students or visitors should come onto school grounds 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 hotspot.

At principal discretion, schools may hold events and other activities that include visitors coming onto school grounds. Where this does occur, these activities will be carefully managed to ensure that physical distancing and hygiene measures are in place. Parents/carers are asked to keep updated with the latest information about visiting and events from their child's school, and to comply with any requests and protocols put in place to ensure the ongoing safety and wellbeing of students and staff.

Please speak directly with your school if you have queries or concerns about visiting the school, or any planned activities.

Parents/carers of primary aged students and students with additional needs are encouraged to speak directly with their school to confirm what arrangements are put in place to minimise the number of people moving in and out of the school grounds, particularly at drop off and pick up times.

Parents/carers are encouraged to continue to regularly communicate with their child's school. It is recommended that this be done via phone or online in the first instance and if a face-to-face discussion is required, this is discussed and planned.

Measures in place in schools to enhance safety

Schools have adopted rigorous new measures to ensure they are safe and healthy environments. Measures that are in place at your school might include the following:

- Continuing to limit the number of visitors in schools, and ensuring visitors practice good physical distancing and hygiene.
- Taking a cautious approach to large events, and ensuring that any large events are carefully planned and managed to ensure the safety and wellbeing of staff, students and others.
- Many schools will continue to deliver events in different ways, including online assemblies, reading announcements over PA systems, delivering awards in class, and holding smaller events.
- Children may be asked to stay in designated areas in the playground and avoid close contact with each other, including avoiding activities like handshaking, hugging and kissing, or games that include holding hands or other physical contact
- Extra care is being taken to clean the school every day, and to wipe surfaces regularly including playgrounds, door handles, desks, computers, phones and touch screens.
- Students are being encouraged to increase the space between each other where possible, for example, by placing markings on the floor and increasing the space between desks and chairs.
- Students are being encouraged to maintain 1.5m distance when entering or leaving a classroom, and when getting on the bus.

Check with your child's school to find out more about the specific measures they are taking.

How can families help the school community to stay healthy?

- Keep sick children at home, and arrange for COVID-19 testing if needed. It is more important than ever to do this.
- Stay 1.5 metres away from others when doing pick up and drop off.

- When you enter the school:
 - make sure you sign in;
 - follow all the directions from the school regarding physical distancing and hygiene;
 - wash your hands with soap or hand sanitiser on entry;
 - bring your own hygiene products (hand sanitiser, tissues, etc.) and water bottle.
- Practice and promote good hygiene with your children, including:
 - keep your hands to yourself
 - try not to touch your face
 - sneeze and cough into your elbow or a tissue, NEVER into the air
 - regularly wash your hands with soap, properly for 20 seconds, including:
 - when you enter the school or classroom;
 - before you eat or touch your face;
 - after playing outside or with other people or animals; and
 - after going to the toilet
 - don't suck your fingers, pencils or other things
 - don't share food or drink bottles
 - spread out and avoid close contact with others
 - use hand sanitiser before and after sharing things like laptops, iPads and toys.
- Download the Australian Government COVIDSafe app on your phone.
- Talk to your child about what is happening, remain calm and reassuring. Help your child feel informed so they understand what is happening.
- If your child is required to stay at home, it is important that they maintain a healthy lifestyle, including a balanced diet, good sleep and social contact at home and by email and phone with family and friends.

Talking to your child about COVID-19

Listen to your child; answer their questions as honestly as possible and correct any misunderstandings. This will help them feel informed and understand what is happening.

Stay up to date with the facts from reliable sources so you can keep conversations calm, considered and constructive. Provide information in words that are appropriate to the age of your child.

Children can be distressed by hearing repeated stories so monitor how much your children are being exposed to television and social media and encourage them to talk about what they are seeing and hearing.

Tips for [talking to kids](#) about coronavirus (COVID-19).

Learning from home

Where a child is learning from home due to vulnerabilities to COVID-19 or direction by a health professional to self-isolate or quarantine, schools will provide learning (online or printed) to support the continuation of learning from home and, where possible, may also loan devices to students to support their continued learning.

Parents/carers can also access a range of resources on the [Learning Together website](#) to support their child if they are learning from home.

Where a student is learning at home, the parent/carer is responsible for the student's learning, safety and wellbeing at home or elsewhere.

Parents/carers must notify their child's school if they will be absent. Schools will work with any students and parents/carers for notification of any unexplained or unacceptable reasons for being absent from school.

As per usual practices, schools will work with students and parents/carers to support learning from home if the student is unwell or has explained absences.

Students with unexplained or unacceptable reasons for absences may be supplied with a hard copy or online learning package with further support being provided dependent on the operational capacity of the school.

Supporting your child to learn safely online

Parents/carers are encouraged to access the [eSafety.gov.au](https://www.esafety.gov.au) for specific advice regarding COVID-19 including:

- [an online safety kit for parents and carers](#)
- [an online safety booklet for parents and carers](#)
- [advice for school leaders keeping schools and learning safe online](#)

Information for Year 12 students

The same requirements for completing the NT Certificate of Education and Training (NTCET) are in place and students will be able to obtain an Australian Tertiary Admissions Rank (ATAR).

If you have further questions, contact your school's NTCET Coordinator or visit the [South Australian Certificate of Education](#).

Information on Vocational Education and Training (VET) courses

VET courses will continue, including courses run by Charles Darwin University in Darwin and Palmerston. All Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) working in partnership with schools are expected to have in place COVID-19 safety plans. Schools will be reviewing RTOs' COVID-19 safety plans before engaging with them.

Structured Work Placement for students undertaking a VET course will continue if agreed to by the employer and parent, subject to school and parents being satisfied with the business's COVID-19 safety plan.

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

Information for boarding school students

All NT boarding schools are open and operating as normal.

Students whose parents/carers have made the decision not to return to previous boarding will be required and supported to enrol in:

- a) their local school
- b) another boarding school; or
- c) the NT School of Distance Education.

Assessments

Assessment and reporting expectations remain the same; that is every student in transition receives a comment and in Years 1 to 9 students must receive an A to E grade for each subject studied, and Years 10 to 12 will receive one written report each semester using A to E grades.

For students learning from home for health reasons, each school will develop an assessment and reporting schedule that identifies evidence of learning to make an assessment of the student's progress and achievement.

These students can still receive an A to E grade for each subject studied. Each school to determine how teachers will collect evidence of learning if students are learning from home.

Outside school hours care

Outside school hours care (OSHC) services will continue to operate, including on-site OSHC and other services off site that cater for school age children, such as long day care or family day care.

School transport

School buses will continue to operate.

Additional cleaning practices, physical distancing and hygiene practices are in place.

Advice on wellbeing support for families and children

If you have concerns about your child's wellbeing, please contact the school to discuss the most appropriate support for your child's needs and circumstances.

Parents and other family members might also need support, as such a large scale event can take a toll on our mental health. During these challenging times it is important to remember that you are not alone and there is always someone available to speak to if you are struggling. There are a number of support services you and your family can reach out to, including:

- Kids Helpline – 1800 551 800 – kidshelpline.com.au
- Headspace – 1800 650 890 – headspace.org.au/eheadspace
- Parent Helpline – 1300 30 1300
- Beyond Blue – 1300 224 636 - beyondblue.org.au
- Lifeline – 13 11 14 - lifeline.org.au
- Lifeline Text – 0477 131 114 (6pm - Midnight (AEST) seven days a week)
- [Suicide Call Back Service](http://suicidecallbackservice.org.au) – 1300 659 467 – suicidecallbackservice.org.au
- [MensLine Australia](http://mensline.org.au) – 1300 789 978 – mensline.org.au
- [TeamTALK](http://teamhealth.asn.au) – 1800 832 600 – teamhealth.asn.au

- NT Mental Health Line – 1800 682 288
- Your GP can also help you access the services you need.

Further information

- Contact your school for further information about your child's education
- Stay informed of the latest information relating to COVID-19 in the Northern Territory by regularly visiting the [Coronavirus NT website](#).
- To arrange for COVID-19 testing, contact 1800 008 002
- For the National Coronavirus Hotline, contact 1800 020 080
- Contact your local GP or Community Health Centre.
- Follow the [Education NT Facebook page](#).
- Download the Australian Government COVIDSafe app in the Apple App Store or Google Play.
- Join the Coronavirus Australia WhatsApp channel on iOS or Android.