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COVID Update

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Dear Parents and Carers

This update includes the latest up-to date information based on the Operational Guide of the Catholic Education Commission of Victoria in collaboration with the Department of Education. Some important advice is repeated from last week's update. The measures set out in the plan are designed to ensure every possible effort is made to ensure staff and students are safe and that schools remain open.

The first few weeks of this year will require patience, perseverance, kindness and teamwork. Some of our students and staff will miss the beginning of the year because they are unwell or in isolation. Extra responsibilities exist for families, students, teachers and College staff to enable the College to operate in a COVID safe and supportive environment. We are appreciative of everyone's efforts to do their best.

Rapid Antigen Testing

Free rapid antigen tests were distributed to Year 7 and 12 students and staff yesterday and are being distributed to all other students tomorrow. Rapid antigen testing is recommended for all students and staff twice a week regardless of symptoms. It is voluntary but we hope that families will take up this opportunity to secure the safety of each member of our school community.

Tests are in packs of five individual tests. A second pack will be distributed in week three. Students and staff should do the tests at home and must report any positive test results to the College through PAM or by phoning student reception on 5329 6121

If staff or students receive a positive test result at any time, they must also report this through the Department of Health system ([Rapid antigen tests | Coronavirus Victoria](#)) or via the coronavirus hotline on 1800 675 398.

The College will let the rest of the school community know by email and the Loreto app that there has been a positive case onsite and that they should monitor for symptoms. The notification will protect the privacy of the individual but will include:

- Dates of attendance
- Affected group/cohort/year levels
- Any relevant extracurricular activities undertaken

The notification may be provided to only the affected group/cohort/year level or we may notify the whole school community depending on the circumstances and the risks.

Advice for Positive Cases

All students and staff who return a positive result from a rapid antigen test should also follow the latest government health advice at <https://www.coronavirus.vic.gov.au/rapid-antigen-tests>.

Information about how to do a test, including a how-to video translated into 33 languages, is available [online](#).

Students who report a positive result must isolate for seven days and not attend school during that period.

Where a student is a household contact of a positive case (**that is, they have spent more than four hours with someone who has COVID-19 inside a house, accommodation, or care facility**) they must inform the school and isolate for seven days and not attend school during that period.

Staff and students **must not return to school** while they remain symptomatic, unless it is known that their symptoms are caused by an underlying health condition or medication.

Students who are required to isolate or quarantine will be supported by the school in the same way as students with an extended absence due to illness or injury, with learning materials provided. The level of support will depend on the capacity of the school to support continued learning and the number of staff available to do so. Our school is not able to provide a full remote learning programs in these circumstances.

What to do in the event of a COVID-19 exposure or a positive result?

A student tests positive to COVID19, either through RA test or PCR test

- Isolate at home for 7 days (inclusive of weekends) and do not attend school during this period.
- Inform the school, that they have tested positive to COVID-19.
- A negative test is not required to return to school following completion of 7 days of isolation.
- Follow the [Checklist for COVID cases](#) located at: <https://www.coronavirus.vic.gov.au/checklist-cases>

A student is a household contact to a positive COVID-19 case:

- You have spent more than four hours with someone who has COVID-19 inside a house, accommodation, or care facility.
- Follow the [Checklist for COVID contacts](#).
<https://www.coronavirus.vic.gov.au/checklist-cases>
- **Student must quarantine for 7 days** (inclusive of weekends) and **must not attend school** during this period.
- Contact at school is not included in this definition, unless contact has occurred in a school based residential setting, e.g. school camp or boarding school.

A student has been in contact with a case of COVID-19 at school:

- If **asymptomatic**, students should continue to attend school and monitor for symptoms.

- If **symptomatic**, all students must stay or return home, take a rapid antigen test, or get a PCR test if a rapid antigen testing kit is unavailable.
- On receipt of a negative test result, and if well enough, the student can return to school. If students are too unwell to attend school, usual leave/absence policies apply.

Follow the Checklist for COVID contacts. <https://www.coronavirus.vic.gov.au/checklist-cases>

Learning Continuity

Our school community is deeply committed to providing learning continuity, and ensuring that each child and young person has the best possible learning experience in 2022. We have a range of contingencies in place if members of our staff team contract COVID or are required to isolate as household contacts. We do anticipate that maintaining a full roster of staff may be a challenging issue over the coming weeks and we want families to be aware that we may need to ask particular year levels to stay home on a rotational basis so that we can provide an adequate duty of care and quality learning onsite. This may occur on relatively short notice. Any decision to cancel school or move to home-based learning will be after we have exhausted our other staffing options including, but not limited to,

- Drawing on our regular pool of committed and professional pool of casual relief teachers
- Utilising non-classroom teachers and school leaders redeployed into the classroom on some occasions
- Reducing school activities that draw teachers away from the classroom, such as professional learning programs and co-curricular activities
- Work with neighbouring schools to address staffing concerns
- Working with part time staff to extend their available hours where possible.

Any decision to cancel school or move students to home based learning for particular grades and or year levels will be as a last resort. This would be rotated to avoid the same groups having their learning impacted.

Parents and Visitors coming onsite

We appreciate the start of the school year is a challenging time regarding parents and carers coming onsite. In the early weeks of this year we are limiting parents, cares and visitors who enter school buildings to reduce the risk of transmission. The school is aware of the challenges that the current restrictions impose and is required to observe the following requirements.

Face Masks

Face masks have proved an effective protection in previous outbreaks and are again a key protection. We ask that parents/carers discuss with their child the importance of wearing a mask and taking responsibility for their own mask wearing:

- All students must wear a face mask indoors at school, unless a lawful exception applies. Students must wear face masks even if vaccinated. Students are not required to wear masks outside.
- Everyone over eight years old must wear a face mask when travelling to and from school on public transport, taxis or ride share vehicles.
- School staff must wear a face mask in all indoor settings, except where removal of a face mask is necessary for effective communication or teaching.
- Visitors to schools aged eight and above must wear a face mask in all indoor spaces, unless a lawful exception applies.

VCE/VCAL/VET provision in schools, TAFEs, non-school senior secondary providers and other training organisations

Students can participate in face-to-face VCE or VCAL classes, including VET studies, where these are held at TAFEs, RTOs, non-school senior secondary providers, or schools. These providers may have their own requirements and families will be notified of these ahead of classes commencing.

Wellbeing

For some families the media and reporting surrounding the return to school will cause increased nervousness and concern in children and young people. There are a range of resources to support parents and carers on page 3 of the attached document.

<https://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/school/teachers/health/mentalhealth/quick-guide-to-student-mental-health-and-wellbeing-resources.pdf>

Smiling Mind has also created digital Care Packs to support the mental health of kids aged five to 12. The resources can be downloaded from the Smiling Mind website. Each pack includes brief learning tools as well as activities for children to use within the home or school environment. To download the pack, see: [Smiling Mind Digital Care Packs](#)

If you have school specific questions, please contact the Year Level Coordinator or Director of Students, Claire Canavan, or the Assistant Principal Wellbeing, Gemma McDermott

Stay home when unwell and get tested

The most important action school communities can take to reduce the risk of transmission of COVID-19 is to ensure that any unwell students remain at home and get tested, even with the mildest of symptoms. Everyone should consider their health before they attend school, and ensure that they are free from coronavirus symptoms and have not had recent contact with a person confirmed or suspected to have coronavirus.

Looking Ahead

These guidelines are designed to keep everyone safe and able to continue with their learning. We express our gratitude to all families for your continued cooperation in following the above guidelines and ask that you contact the school if there are any further areas of concern. We look forward to the year ahead working with staff and families in the education of your child.

Yours sincerely



Michelle Brodrick
Principal