



IMMUNISATION & EXCLUSION

INFECTIOUS DISEASES POLICY

Rationale & Critical Information

- Primary responsibility for the prevention and control of infectious diseases lies with individuals, families and public health authorities.
- Schools are not expected to provide expert advice or treat students, which is the role of medical practitioners and health authorities.
- As of December 2019, changes to the Public Health and Wellbeing Regulations (the Regulations) mean primary schools and children's services are **no longer required to notify the Department of Health and Human Services** if a child at their school has a confirmed infectious disease.
- A person in charge of a primary school must not allow a child to attend the school in accordance with the Public Health and Wellbeing Regulations 2019 (the Regulations), if they have been informed the child is infected with, or been in contact with a person with an infectious disease/condition listed in the Regulations, where that condition requires exclusion. Diseases and exclusion periods are listed in the Department of Health and Human Services school exclusion table.
- As of December 2019, changes to the Regulations mean failure of a person in charge of a primary school to exclude a child with, or exposed to, a specified infectious disease from a primary school, in accordance with the Regulations, may result in an infringement penalty. An existing court penalty also remains.
- Schools have a legal responsibility to help manage infectious diseases in their facilities and have an important role to play in supporting prevention and control of disease transmission.
- Schools have a legal responsibility to help manage infectious diseases in their facilities.
- Schools also have an important role to play in supporting the prevention and control of transmission of infectious diseases through:
 - abiding by legislated requirements for school exclusion, infectious disease notification and immunisation status recording
 - supporting the personal hygiene routines of students, for example, provision of hand hygiene facilities
 - ensuring procedures are in place to safely manage the handling of spills of blood and other body fluids or substances.

Purpose

- To outline the strategies and actions that schools are required to take to prevent the transmission of an infectious disease or control transmission of an infectious disease when a case/s is identified.
- To help prevent and control the transmission of infectious diseases in the school.
- To ensure the school is informed about the immunisation responsibilities and exclusion processes during an infectious disease outbreak.
- To ensure the school complies with DET policy and legislative requirements.

Definitions

Hand hygiene is a general term referring to any action of hand cleansing. It includes hand washing with soap and water and using antimicrobial hand rubs (for example, an alcohol-based hand rub).

Infectious diseases are diseases caused by pathogenic microorganisms, such as bacteria, viruses, parasites or fungi; the diseases can be spread, directly or indirectly, from one person to another.

Respiratory hygiene or **cough etiquette** are terms used to describe infection prevention measures. Practices include:

- covering the mouth and nose when coughing or sneezing
- using tissues and disposing of them appropriately
- attending to hand hygiene immediately after coughing, sneezing or blowing nose.

Standard precautions are the minimum infection prevention and control practices that must be used at all times for all people in all situations. The use of standard precautions aims to minimise and, where possible, eliminate the risk of transmission of infection.

Implementation

- Please refer to Wembley's *Enrolment Policy* and the *Admission Policy* for full details of the enrolment and admission processes and immunisation requirements.
- Wembley Primary School will assist health authorities and families prevent and control infectious diseases through **the support of immunisation programs** and through **recording the immunisation status of each student**. For more information, see the [Immunisation](#) policy.
- Staff and students must treat all blood and other body fluids or substances as being potentially infectious and practice standard precautions whenever dealing with them.
- Standard precautions include:
 - hand hygiene, for more information, see the [Personal Hygiene](#) policy
 - the use of personal protective equipment (for example, gloves and masks)
 - safe handling and disposal of 'sharps', for more information, see the [Syringe Disposals and Injuries](#) policy
 - respiratory hygiene
- The school will provide soap and other hand hygiene consumables to support good hand hygiene.
- The school will have appropriate personal protective equipment (for example, single-use disposable gloves and masks) available for staff to use when dealing with blood or body fluids/substances.
- Staff members and students should be familiar with and practice recommended standard precaution practices. For more information, see the [Managing Open Wounds and Blood Spills](#) policy
- The school will encourage staff to be appropriately vaccinated against preventable infectious diseases as per the Australian Immunisation Handbook recommendations for persons who work with children.
- The school will:
 - ensure that unwell children do not attend school
 - isolate children who become unwell during the day and send the unwell child home as soon as possible
- If the school is made aware of student illness that is a medically confirmed case(s) of pertussis, measles, mumps, rubella, meningococcal disease polio, or novel coronavirus, this must be reported via the Department's IRIS alert system. This is to assist the Department (with DHHS) to monitor disease outbreak at a school level and to provide further guidance where required.
- For further information about a child with an infectious disease, the school will contact the Department of Health and Human Services **Communicable Disease Prevention and Control** telephone: 1300 651 160 (24 hours) infectious.diseases@dhhs.vic.gov.au (regularly monitored).
- As set out in the [Public Health and Wellbeing Regulations 2019](#), the Principal must not allow a child to attend school if:

- they have been informed that the child is infected with an infectious disease, confirmed by a medical practitioner, that requires exclusion as described in the [DHHS School exclusion table](#)
- they have been informed that a child has been in contact with a person with an infectious disease as described in the School exclusion table
- during an outbreak, the Chief Health Officer directs a primary school to exclude a child based on material risk of a child contracting a vaccine-preventable disease (i.e. a child who is not immunised to be excluded until advised attendance can be resumed)
- The school will consider the following important points when responding to students affected by common infections:
 - students with cold or flu-like symptoms or vomiting or diarrhea should be encouraged to seek medical attention, limit contact with others and stay at home until symptoms have passed
 - if a child becomes ill at school with these symptoms, schools should contact the family and arrange for the collection of the child
 - good general hygiene remains the best defence against infection and schools should encourage children to regularly wash their hands and cover their nose and mouth if sneezing and coughing; see the [Personal Hygiene](#) policy.

Please note:

An outline of key school actions against different stages of an influenza pandemic can be found in the [Human Influenza Pandemic Incident Response Procedures \(docx - 242.26kb\)](#)(Pandemic Influenza Incident Response Plan).

The schools also will refer to DHHS advice regarding pandemic influenza.

It is not generally necessary to communicate with the broader school community about an infectious disease, unless there is an outbreak or the school has been directed to pursue specific action by health authorities. Doing so can cause unnecessary anxiety in the school community.

For advice on alerting parents/carers, or displaying signage, in relation to case(s) of a notifiable infectious disease in the school, the school will phone DHHS on 1300 651 160 who may give advice on whether such as action is required.

In more general cases, where communication has been deemed necessary, the school will give consideration as to what should be communicated to the school community. It should:

- maintain student confidentiality
- be fact based
- be written in a way not to cause alarm
- inform parents and carers that a school community member/s has been diagnosed with an infectious disease
- name the condition
- suggest that they seek medical advice regarding their child's health if they have concerns.

Department resources

[First Aid](#) (HRWeb): for OHS first aid information, including information on training courses

[First Aid and Infection Control](#) (HRWeb): for information on first aid in the context of infection control requirements

[Hand Hygiene](#): for Clean Hands curriculum materials (and other supporting materials) for primary schools

Human Influenza Pandemic Incident Response Procedures ([Pandemic Influenza Incident Response Plan \(docx - 242.26kb\)](#)) is located in the Guides section and outlines key actions against different stages of an influenza pandemic

- Please refer also to the school's *Blood-Borne Viruses (Hepatitis & HIV) Policy*, *First Aid & Medical Emergencies Policy* and the *Bleeding Students/Blood Spills Policy*, the *Head Lice Policy*.

Evaluation

- This policy will be reviewed as part of the school's review or if guidelines change (latest DET update mid-March 2020).

Policy not mandatory

School Council Approval No Longer Required.

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References:

www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/spag/health/pages/infectiousdiseases.aspx