



27 January 2022

Dear parents and caregivers

The start of the school year is an important time for students, staff and families and I write to provide assurance of the measures that Catholic schools have in place to align with the requirements set out by State Government in response to COVID-19.

Since the onset of COVID-19, the response to the pandemic has centered on the fact that COVID-19 is first and foremost a health issue. As a result, Catholic Education Western Australia (CEWA) has worked with the Department of Education and the Association of Independent Schools Western Australia (AISWA) to ensure a comprehensive, collective, and consistent response to the advice of State Government and the Chief Health Officer to ensure the safety and wellbeing of every student in every school in Western Australia.

In announcing the safe return to school plan for 2022, Premier Mark McGowan and the Minister for Education confirmed that Term One in Western Australian schools will commence from Monday 31 January 2022.

In keeping with the Premier's announcement, CEWA schools will be open for students for the start of Term One, from Monday 31 January 2022. All CEWA schools and offices will also be 100% compliant with the Public Health Order regarding staff mandatory vaccinations.

All CEWA schools began planning for the provision of enhanced ventilation in classrooms and workspaces last year. As the WA government is only providing air purifiers to WA state schools, CEWA has sourced 2,200 air purifiers for use in our schools as required and await delivery.

As we prepare for schools to open next week, all of our schools have well developed plans to support the continuation of teaching and learning, including provisions for online learning, additional support for teachers and operational COVID-safe practices.

I ask that all parents and carers are familiar with the information provided below and trust that the start of school year will be a positive and encouraging experience for your child and family.

## **SCHOOL ENVIRONMENTS**

In line with Department of Health advice, all Catholic schools have the following measures in place to support the continuation of teaching and learning:

- Use of well-ventilated spaces;
- Physical distancing in compliance with the Public Health Orders;
- Staff, students and visitors reminded to use COVID-19 safe practices such as masks, hand and respiratory hygiene;
- Enhanced cleaning services and supplies.

We are awaiting advice from the Chief Health Officer regarding the use of Rapid Antigen Tests (RATs). We hope that the State Government will make RATs freely available for use by students and staff in all schools, including Catholic schools, if and when required by the Chief Health Officer.

## VACCINATION REQUIREMENTS

All Catholic schools are committed to keeping the community safe and to minimising the risk of exposure to COVID-19. All staff employed at Catholic schools are compliant with the Public Health Orders regarding mandatory vaccination.

Parents and carers **are not required** to show proof of vaccination when:

- dropping off or picking up their child from school, including entering the classroom
- volunteering at school on an ad hoc basis (attending only one school no more than once per week)
- attending an event such as an assembly, sports carnival or parent teacher interview.

Parents and carers who regularly support our schools are required to comply with the mandatory vaccination direction order to continue to be a regular volunteer. These parents and carers **are required** to provide proof of their double dose vaccination from 31 January 2022 and must have their third dose (booster) within one calendar month of becoming eligible or an exemption when:

- volunteering at the school more than once a week
- working in an unpaid capacity at the school more than once a week
- participating in an endorsed program at the school where parent attendance is required.

Students are not required to be vaccinated, however in line with the advice of the Chief Health Officer, parents of children five years and over are encouraged to get them vaccinated. Information on the safety and efficacy of the COVID-19 vaccines is available on [healthywa.wa.gov.au](https://healthywa.wa.gov.au).

If you have any questions or concerns about vaccinating your child, please visit the [HealthyWA](https://healthywa.wa.gov.au) website.

## SCHOOL ATTENDANCE

All students are required to attend school unless they are unwell.

Staff, students and parents are not to attend schools if they are unwell (symptomatic) or test positive to COVID-19, until permitted under public health requirements. Parents are asked to seek medical advice if their child exhibits symptoms of COVID-19 and are encouraged to notify the school if they have undergone testing. Normal processes for advising the school of a child's absence will apply for any parent who keeps their unwell child home.

## PERTH, PEEL, SOUTHWEST, GREAT SOUTHERN AND WHEATBELT SCHOOLS - MASKS

All students in Years 7 to 12 are required to wear a mask indoors and on public transport unless they:

- have a physical, developmental or mental illness, injury, condition or disability which makes wearing a face covering unsuitable;

- are communicating with a person who is deaf or hard of hearing and visibility of the mouth is essential for communication;
- are engaged in swimming as a form of physical exercise;
- performing other forms of physical exercise; or
- are consuming food, drink or medicine.

Likewise, staff must wear a mask at all times while indoors, unless they are providing teaching or instructions to students, in which case they can remove the mask if they wish to do so.

Students are encouraged to take responsibility for ensuring they have a mask.

Community notification of positive COVID-19 cases and contact tracing will be as per public health requirements.

Your Principal will continue to keep the school community updated regarding the ongoing management of COVID-19 and I provide every assurance that your child's wellbeing and safety at school remains the highest priority for Catholic Education Western Australia.

Yours sincerely



Dr Debra Sayce  
Executive Director