



INFECTIOUS DISEASES POLICY

For specific information about Coronavirus (COVID-19) refer to the [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) – School Operations Advice](#) on PAL, which brings together key operational information for schools. Schools can also refer to the [Coronavirus advice](#) on the Department's website for information and updates.

Policy & Guidance

- 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 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 [DHHS 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 role in helping 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 Department's [Immunisation Policy](#).

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). For more detailed information about hand hygiene, see: Personal Hygiene in Related policies

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.

Purpose

- This policy outlines the strategies and actions that Footscray North Primary School is required to take to prevent the transmission of an infectious disease or control transmission of an infectious disease when a case/s is identified.

Implementation

- The 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**.
- 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.
- Hand hygiene also will be promoted through the display of available resources and DHHS posters.
- 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.
- 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
 - notify a medically confirmed case(s) of pertussis, measles, mumps, rubella, meningococcal disease polio, or novel coronavirus, via the DET IRIS alert system.
- As set out in the Public Health and Wellbeing Regulations 2019, the Principal will not allow students to attend school if:
 - she/he has 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
 - she/he 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 the 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)
- When 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 should be reported to the Incident Support and Operations Centre (ISOC). This is to assist DET (with DHHS) to monitor disease outbreak at a school level and to provide further guidance where required. For more information on how to report an incident via ISOC, refer to [Reporting and Managing School Incidents \(including emergencies\)](#).

General responses to influenza, gastroenteritis and other common infections in the school

We will consider the following when responding to students affected by common infections:

- students with cold or flu-like symptoms or vomiting or diarrhoea will 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, we will contact the family and arrange for the collection of the child
 - good general hygiene remains the best defence against infection and we will encourage children to regularly wash their hands and cover their nose and mouth if sneezing and coughing
- Please refer also to the school's *Blood Spills & Open Wounds Policy*, the *Blood-Borne Viruses Policy*, *Enrolment*, *Head Lice*, *Health Care Needs*, *First Aid for Students & Staff Policies* and the *Personal Hygiene Policies*.

Evaluation

- The policy will be reviewed as part of the school's three-year review cycle or if guidelines change (latest DET update late November 2020).

Reference:

<https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/infectious-diseases>