

SUBJECT: Return to school and early childhood education and care in 2022

Dear parents and carers

Today the ACT Government released the details of how all school students will return for Term 1 2022. Students will be returning on campus for face to face learning in Term 1, with new students starting on 31 January and returning students on 1 February as was planned.

Early childhood services will continue to operate for all children with new processes in place to manage cases and out of school hours care services.

With the level of the transmission of COVID-19 in the community in the ACT, our Back to School plans acknowledge the unavoidable reality that we will see COVID-19 cases in our schools.

Each school will have its own COVID safety plan in place, tailored to the individual circumstances of the school environment, staffing arrangements and student cohort.

These plans are based on refreshed ACT Health Guidelines that have been endorsed by the Chief Health Officer and apply to all school settings, outlining risk mitigation strategies that have been developed and refined to enable our schools to manage cases as they arise and where possible avoid closures.

Many of the measures in our Back to School arrangements for Term 1 are very similar to the measures that were in operation in schools during Term 4 of last year.

Measures include:

- COVID safety plans for each school
- provision of rapid antigen tests, two per week for all school-based and early childhood education and care staff and pre-school to year 12 students for the commencement of the school year for the first 4 weeks of school available from schools from the end of the first week of Term 1, with further information about contactless collection of tests to be provided to school communities in the coming days
- compulsory use of masks indoors for all adults and for students in years 7-12 and masks for years 3-6 encouraged
- cohorting of children and staff and staggered timetables to allow for this
- maximising outdoor learning and ventilation in classrooms to ensure good circulation of fresh air
- increased cleaning across the school, including high touch surfaces
- revised drop off and pick up arrangements
- restrictions to visitors on site during school hours. Parents and carers will only be allowed on school grounds for scheduled appointments
- restrictions of school events – events that bring cohorts of students together will not go ahead
- restrictions on excursions – only essential excursions and activities (that form a core component of the curriculum) involving individual classes or year groups will be allowed
- no interstate excursions at this time, with exceptions to be considered later in term 1 for camps and excursions that are necessary to a student's study program.

Parents and carers can be assured that the focus of our schools is always on our students and staff and continuing to provide the best possible education to our children and young people.

More information, and a comprehensive set of Frequently Asked Questions about how we will be managing COVID-19 in our schools in term 1 2022 can be found on the [ACT Education Directorate website](#). We have also included a function on the website where you can submit a FAQ if you have a question that is not addressed.

Your school will send out more specific information in coming days about how COVID-safe arrangements will work at your school.

Katy Haire
Director-General
ACT Education Directorate
24 January 2022