**Torrens Primary School**

Ritchie Street TORRENS A.C.T. 2607

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Dear parent and carers,

I am writing with additional information about the return of students to our school campus. First, a reminder about the commencement dates (Day 1) for students.

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| **Day 1** | **Students:** |
| **Commencing Monday 31 January** | * Preschool:   + Chifley Kookaburras   + Torrens Kangaroos * Kindergarten |
| **Commencing Tuesday 1 February** | * Years 1 – 6 (including new students to Torrens Primary in these year levels) * Out of hours school care (OHSC) |
| **Commencing Thursday 3 February** | * Preschool:   + Pearce Butterflies   + Torrens Koalas |

Drawing on national and local health advice, we have developed a return to school plan which has three key priorities:

* the health and safety of staff and young people
* the mental and emotional well-being of students and staff, and
* ensuring continuity of learning.

Below is an outline of [ACT Health Guidelines](https://www.education.act.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0003/1935444/January-2022-Health-Guidelines-for-Schools-and-ECEC.pdf) that schools are required to implement to ensure effective COVID-19 measures are in place.

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| **Student illness** | **Anyone who is unwell, symptomatic or who are household close contacts must not be at school or preschool**. This applies to staff and students. **If they attend when unwell, they will be sent home.** |
| **Masks** | Staff and visitors must wear a face mask on campus. Students in years 3-6 are encouraged to wear a mask if they are comfortable doing so. Students in Preschool to year 2 are not required to wear a mask. Masks may not be suitable for students with a disability or medical condition and schools will make allowances for those students not to wear masks.  *\* Masks will be available at school for staff and visitors who require them. Students will need to provide their own masks. Disposable masks need to be changed every four hours.* |
| **Physical Distancing and cohorting of staff and students** | Physical distancing between children and young people is not always possible, particularly in single classrooms and school environments. It is however important for limiting the transmission of COVID-19. To support cohorting of staff and students, we may adjust learning programs, stagger timetables as well as pick up and drop off arrangements. More specific information about what this means for your child is included below. |
| **Hand hygiene and COVID smart behaviours** | Schools will maintain and promote hand and respiratory hygiene practices. Students will need to wash hands and use hand sanitisers throughout the day. Students will not be allowed to share food or drink. This also includes birthday cakes and celebratory items that are not pre-packaged. |
| **Environmental cleaning** | Our school cleaning program includes regular cleaning of high touch point services, frequently used objects, common areas, toilets and play equipment. |
| **Ventilation** | All schools are following an Indoor Air Quality Plan. Improved ventilation and increased outdoor learning will be implemented where appropriate. Ventilation systems have been adjusted to increase fresh air circulation and plans will be updated to reflect improvements made since 2021. |
| **Vaccination** | The ACT has one of the highest vaccination rates of any city in the world and this is reflected in our teaching workforce. COVID-19 vaccinations are also mandated for staff working across early childhood education and care services, preschools, primary schools, Out of School Hours Care, specialist school settings and P-10 schools, or schools that share campus space with students in year 6 or below. These requirements are in place until the conclusion of the public health emergency. |
| **Visitors and use of Check in CBR app** | All staff and visitors must check in using the ‘Check in CBR' app. **Parents and carers are allowed on school grounds for scheduled appointments only.** Special arrangements will be made for children starting at a new school or early childhood service in 2022, or children with special needs who require transition visits prior to the commencement of the new school year. |
| **Wellbeing supports** | Wellbeing and learning supports will recommence with the return to school. They can be accessed through the schools established referral process.  If the school psychology position is temporarily vacant, you can book an appointment for your child with our Central Telehealth team by filling a [booking request form](https://forms.office.com/r/0zRwGpF3Hm) or emailing [Telehealth@ed.act.edu.au](mailto:Telehealth@ed.act.edu.au). Central Telehealth Service is available between 9:30 – 4:30 pm during weekdays.  For parents and carers of students with a medical vulnerability: If you wish the school to make reasonable adjustments for the safe return of your child, you must consult a GP and provide medical advice to that effect. Where adjustments can’t be made, the school will support your child to learn from home. |
| **Managing COVID-19 in schools** | We are prepared to respond to a positive COVID-19 case on campus. A student who presents with symptoms of COVID-19 will be isolated with suitable supervision, and parents will be required to collect their child. Symptomatic students will be required to wear a mask. Symptomatic staff and visitors will be advised to travel directly home.  If a staff member, child, young person or visitor is diagnosed with COVID-19 and has attended a school site during their infectious period, they are required to advise their school.  Where a COVID-19 case in a school leads to students and staff being assessed as at risk of exposure, those impacted will be informed by the school about what they are required to do in line with ACT Health requirements. If the exposure is considered low risk, students and staff will continue to be able to attend school while closely monitoring for COVID-19 symptoms.  Risk assessments are based off the ACT Health Guidelines for Schools. |
| **COVID-19 screening** | Anyone with COVID-19 symptoms should get a PCR or Rapid Antigen Test immediately.  Free Rapid Antigen Tests will be provided to all staff and students in ACT schools for the first four weeks of term 1. Rapid Antigen Testing will be voluntary for staff and students. Students and staff will do the tests at home and are required to report any positive test results to their school and to ACT Health.  Rapid Antigen Testing kits will be distributed to schools during the first weeks of term. More information on the collection arrangements for our school will be provided in the coming days. |

**To further support the ACT Health Guidelines our school is making the following adjustments:**

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| **Day 1 Arrangements for beginning and new students.** | We acknowledge that starting school is an important day for young people and families. To support the wellbeing of students, Kindergarten, Pre-school and New students may bring two parents each onto the school ground, on the designated first day (‘Day 1’ as outlined in the box at the beginning of this letter) of school only.  **Due to the density requirements of our classrooms we are unable to allow parents into the buildings but would like to welcome and encourage you to come into the school grounds for drop off and pick up on their first day.**  Outside of the designated first day, parents will not be permitted onto the school grounds without a pre-arranged appointment made through the office.  For ongoing arrangements for parents on school grounds, please see below. |
| **Day 1 Arrangements for returning students.** | Students will need to be dropped at the gates and enter the playground.   * Students Years 3-6 will line up on the senior playground at the covered basketball court. There will be allocated witches hats for each year level to line up at. Book packs should be placed at their year level witches hat with their bag. * Student Years 1-2 and will line up on the junior playground under the shade sails. There will be allocated witches hats for each year level to line up at. Book packs should be placed at their year level witches hat with their bag.   Staff will meet the students at 9:15a.m.   * Our Explorers class (Small group learning program) will go straight to their classroom when they arrive. |
| **Student Drop off** | Torrens Primary School is required to adhere to the ACT Health Guidelines and limit the number of adults accessing the school grounds. **Parents or carers must not enter school sites or come onto school grounds to drop off or collect children.** Each morning, staff will be available at the entry gates, to greet students and direct them to their play area. Please say goodbye to your children at the gate and allow them to go into the school on their own. Students will be supervised in their cohort region before school begins.  It is essential that children are not at school too early each morning. Please try to arrive between 9-9:15am to ensure that children are properly supervised. If you need to drop your child/ren off earlier than 9:00am, please contact Torrens Out of School Hours Care to make arrangements.  If your child is likely to experience difficulties in moving to their play area on their own, please contact their teacher via the office so that we can make arrangements.  When arriving at school alone, students are encouraged to enter a gate close to their cohort region. If accompanying younger siblings, they should drop them off in the junior region and move on to their own region immediately.  For information about Before School Care, please see the item below.  **Preschool**  Preschool parents are asked to follow the drop-off procedure outlined below:   * Parents or carers must not enter the preschool grounds to drop off children. * Staff will meet children at the gate and escort them into the building. * The children will unpack their school bag later in the morning. * Leave the preschool site immediately after your child enters the preschool site. |
| **Student Pick Up** | After school, parents or carers must not enter the school site or come onto school grounds to collect children. **Please do not arrive prior to 3:00pm and do not collect children prior to their dismissal as this will impact our cohort arrangements.** Children will be unable to be collected early without a pre-arranged booking.  Kindergarten and Year 1 students will be dismissed at 3:10pm at the front of the school. Kindergarten will be dismissed from Gate 1 and Year 1 will be dismissed from Gate 2. Parents are asked to meet children outside these gates on Ritchie Street. Siblings from older grades will also be dismissed at this time to ensure they can meet their sibling/family outside the front gate.  Students in the Explorers Class will be dismissed at 3:10pm via the OSHC gate (Gate 3) on Ritchie Street.  Remaining students in Years 2-6 will be dismissed at 3:15pm and need to exit the school grounds immediately via the most appropriate gate. If you need to meet your child in Years 2-6, please arrange a gate or location outside school grounds to meet them promptly at the end of the school day.  Students should leave the school grounds immediately after school. Play areas are not available outside of school hours. Please make sure you have discussed this with your child/ren.  Students catching school buses will be dismissed at 3:15pm. If your child/ren catch a bus after school, they will exit through gate 7 off Beasley Street and make their way to their regular bus stop.  For information about After School Care, please see the item below.  **Preschool**  Preschool parents are asked to follow the pick-up procedure outlined below:   * Parents or carers must not enter the preschool grounds to collect children. * Staff will meet parents at the gate to dismiss children. * Please leave the preschool site immediately after you meet your child at the preschool gate. |
| **Hygiene routines** | As per ACT Health guidelines, students and staff will be explicitly taught and encouraged to thoroughly wash their hands on a regular basis, especially before and after break times.  Handwashing posters are located in all bathroom areas. Students will also receive explicit teaching and regular reminders about good hygiene.  Hand sanitiser will be available in all learning spaces, as well as the front office. Students and staff will be encouraged to use hand sanitiser regularly, especially on entry to the learning space.  Students will be eating in their classrooms prior to the break. They will be given additional time to eat their recess and lunch and use the bathroom facilities. |
| **Teaching and learning** | Some changes to teaching and learning programs are necessary to ensure we meet ACT Health Guidelines. We are working hard to reduce further disruption to student learning. Students will continue their regular class program within their cohort.  In order to minimise the mixing of year levels in the school and limit the risk of Covid infection we have strategically structured our timetable and staffing arrangements to ensure that our release programs will continue. Staff will see only one cohort per day and not cross over.  The following changes have been made to our timetable and programs:  The library will remain open for borrowing by specific classes, with additional quarantine of books and library resources in place between lessons.  Unfortunately, due to health guidelines many of the school’s clubs and extra-curricular programs will not be able to run in the same format. Where possible, we will provide an online alternative but unfortunately some programs may need to be cancelled. This also applies to assemblies and events. We will provide more information about these as the term progresses.  We will ensure that students continue to receive the support they need to access the learning and maintain their wellbeing. |
| **Break times** | As the Torrens Primary School playground can be split into two different regions, the two student cohorts (K-2 and 3-6) can play in separate areas at the same time. We have also restructured our teaching spaces to ensure there is minimal cross over between cohorts. Break times will stay the same:  Recess: 11-11.30am  Lunch: 1-1.45pm  Students will play in their designated region for the whole break time. Communal areas such as the courtyard and library will not currently be accessible during break times. Students will be encouraged to use the bathroom before the end of the break. Staff will ensure that students can move in and out of bathrooms and their classrooms without too much close interaction.  Students will be required to follow the morning line up procedures and line up at their designated meeting points to ensure we maintain appropriate distancing and minimise large numbers of students in small areas such as doorways and corridors. |
| **Before and After School Care** | Torrens Out of School Hours Care (OSHC) will support the cohort arrangements in place at Torrens Primary School.  All children attending Before School Care should enter via the OSHC gates off Ritchie Street. Please call when you arrive and an OSHC staff member will meet you to sign children in.  The Torrens OSHC program will make arrangement to ensure that students from different cohorts do not interact closely while in Before and After School Care. The program for K-2 students will be run out of the New Hall, and the program for 3-6 students will be run out of the Old Hall. OSHC staff have plans in place for moving students to those areas once they are signed in.  In the mornings, students in K-2 will use the indoor space of the new hall, and students in years 3-6 will use the old hall space. Breakfast will be served at 2 different stations.  In the afternoons, K - 2 students will enter OSHC via the front entrance to the New Hall. Students in years 3-6 will meet staff at the Old Hall. Staff will check students in while outside, and entry to the OHSC rooms will be staggered to ensure students from different cohorts do not interact too closely. |
| **P&C uniform stores** | We are working with the P&C about contactless pick up for second-hand uniforms on the first day of school outside the gates.  Donations can be dropped at the front office via your child. We encourage you to follow the Torrens Primary School P&C Facebook page for updates. |
| **Events and Excursions** | Unfortunately, to provide a safe learning environment, several regular and special events need to be postponed and/or cancelled. These include, but are not limited to:   * *Assemblies (to resume in Term 2)* * *Sporting Carnivals* * *Swimming Carnivals are cancelled (arrangements are being made for competitive swimmers to register for an ACT event in Term 2)* * *Athletics and Cross-Country carnivals are delayed* * *Camps are delayed until further notice* |

We will continue to review and adjust these measures based on the most up to date advice from ACT Health.

During this time we may experience impacts on our workforce due to the requirements of staff to isolate under ACT Health directions. We will work closely with the Education Directorate to make appropriate adjustments to ensure student and staff safety. This may include using casual relief staff, combining of classes, limiting or cancelling non-essential activities, switching to the provision of supervision only or possibly temporary transition to remote learning.

Remember, all adults and children aged 5 years and above are eligible for vaccination. If your child is eligible but not yet vaccinated, we encourage you to book them in by calling the COVID-19 vaccination line on 5124 7700 daily between 7am-7pm. Bookings can also be made with some [GP clinics and pharmacies](https://covid-vaccine.healthdirect.gov.au/eligibility?lang=en).

For more information about the return to schools, I’d recommend visiting [the Education Directorate’s website.](https://www.education.act.gov.au/public-school-life/covid-school-arrangements)

You can keep up to date with the latest health information, advice and resources on the [ACT’s COVID-19 website](https://www.covid19.act.gov.au).

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank you for your support. We look forward to seeing all our students back at school.

My regards,

***Rachel Matthews - Principal***

Torrens Primary School

27 January 2022