



St Patrick's School Lithgow COVID-19 School-Wide Response and Strategy Document for Parents

This document has been created by the St Patrick's School Leadership Team, in alignment with the Australian Health Protection Principal Committee (AHPPC) advice on reducing the potential risk of COVID-19 transmission in schools. The full AHPPC statement can be found at <https://www.health.gov.au/>. Staff, students and community members are required to adhere to the recommendations set out within this document to ensure the health, safety and wellbeing of every member of the St Patrick's School community.

Purpose of this document:

1. To help stop the spread of viruses
2. To keep everyone healthy
3. To keep everyone informed
4. To help everyone feel supported

Things that have been considered:

- Physical distancing
- Risks to vulnerable populations in schools
- Hygiene
- Environmental Cleaning
- Physical and Psychological well-being
- Communication

Physical Distancing:

Physical distancing (or social distancing) is one way to slow the spread of viruses. The more space between people, the harder it is for the virus to spread.

Message for parents: if your child is sick, they must not go to school. You must keep them home and away from others. Remember to maintain physical distancing from other parents and teachers when attending school, including when dropping off and picking up your children.

Message for children: Tell your parent, guardian or teacher when you are feeling sick. Remember to maintain physical distance from other children and adults when attending school.

Message for Teachers: Do not come to work if you are sick or in a vulnerable person category. Remember to maintain 1.5m physical distance between all adults and students at school.

Message for adults: The greatest risk of transmission in the school environment is between adults. It is of utmost importance that teachers and parents alike maintain physical distancing between themselves and each other at school.

We are engaged in the following social distancing practices to minimise risks at St Patrick's School:

- Ensuring children wash their hands regularly throughout the day
- Providing hand-sanitiser in each classroom for students to use
- Providing wipes for students to wipe down surfaces after each session
- Providing individual workspaces for children without the use of any shared equipment
- Reduced use of common areas
- Reduced numbers of students onsite

- Increased space between students and avoiding close-proximity queuing
- Reminding students to maintain 1.5m distance from each other at all times
- Cancelling school assemblies, excursions, sporting activities, Masses and other large gatherings
- Enhancing ventilation in classrooms and utilising outdoor learning spaces where possible
- Arranging classroom furniture to allow for as much space between students as possible (at least 1.5m)
- Maintaining smaller classes
- Suspending group work
- Ceasing access to playground equipment and sports equipment
- Ceasing face-to-face meetings, including student sessions with School Counsellor, until further notice
- Providing Zoom invites to Staff Meeting so that staff can join meetings from home or their classroom
- Playground duty teachers monitoring and reminding students about 1.5m social distancing rule
- Teachers maintaining 1.5m distance from other adults in the staffroom
- Provide home learning for students who are working from home and the same work for students who are attending school
- Student work being submitted electronically where possible
- Encouraging no-contact greetings
- Keeping the Canteen and Uniform Shop closed until further notice
- Minimising outside people coming into the school
- Drop off and pick up procedures for parents that minimise the need for them to enter the school grounds.

Risks to Vulnerable Populations at School:

Parents and carers of children with complex medical needs are encouraged to seek medical advice from their health practitioner to support informed risk assessment and decision-making regarding the suitability of on-site education for their child during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Protecting vulnerable people within school workforces is critical to making schools a safe environment. People aged 70 years and over, people aged 65 years and over with chronic medical conditions, all people with compromised immune systems and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people over the age of 50 with chronic medical conditions, are at greater risk of more serious illness if infected with COVID-19.

There is limited evidence at this time regarding the risk to pregnant women. Teachers and staff who are vulnerable should take additional care to protect themselves, and where possible, arrange to work from home. This is also the case for those with caring responsibilities for vulnerable people.

Hygiene:

Everyone must practise good hygiene to protect against infection and prevent the spread of COVID-19. Good hygiene practices include:

- Washing hands with soap and water for 20 seconds, or using hand sanitiser, when entering school and at regular intervals throughout the day

particularly before and after eating, and after going to the toilet

for younger students, this may include having a regular handwashing schedule

- Covering coughs and sneezes with one's elbow or a tissue
- Placing used tissues straight in the bin
- Avoiding touching one's eyes, nose and mouth
- Using hand sanitiser before touching surfaces or equipment

- Not sharing food or drink
- Close all communal water fountains/bubblers
- Closure of the Canteen and Uniform Shop

Mobile phones are regularly touched and breathed on. Where mobile phones must be used they should be cleaned regularly. Students are discouraged from bringing mobile phones to school for this reason. If a student requires a mobile phone at school for a particular purpose, the usual procedure is to be followed, ie: request in writing to the Principal and the phone secured in the Front Office throughout the day.

Routine Care:

Standard precautions are advised when it is necessary to come into physical contact with someone for the purpose of providing routine care and/or assistance (eg: the use of gloves for nappy changing, toileting, feeding for those with a disability or complex needs).

Staff must always wash hands with soap and water, or use hand sanitiser before and after performing routine care and other close interactions with students in the classroom environment, and ensure environmental cleaning where relevant. Hand sanitiser is to be available at school entrances and in every classroom.

It is not recommended non-medical face coverings be used as a mitigation strategy against the transmission of COVID-19 or other similar communicable diseases, as the use of these masks has the potential to create more harm than good.

Adequate Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), for example medical face masks, is not required to provide regular care for children or young people who are unwell, unless such precautions are usually adopted in the routine care of an individual child or young person. Good hygiene practices and environmental cleaning are more important for reducing risk.

St Patrick's School will not conduct wide-scale temperature checking of students as there is limited evidence to demonstrate the value of such checks.

First Aid

Standard precautions should be adopted when providing first aid, for example gloves and an apron to use when dealing with blood or body fluids/substances.

Always wash hands with soap and water or use hand sanitiser before and after providing first aid.

Management of suspected and confirmed cases

Where there is a suspected or confirmed case of COVID-19 in a school environment, schools should contact the National Coronavirus Helpline (1800 020 080) which operates 24 hours a day, 7 days a week for further advice.

If a student or a staff member is unwell, they should not attend school or will be required to go home. If they are a suspected COVID-19 case, they should self-isolate and seek testing in accordance with state and territory guidelines. Schools should not conduct COVID-19 testing themselves.

Staff, children and young people at school experiencing symptoms compatible with COVID-19 (fever, cough or sore throat) or flu-like symptoms should be isolated in an appropriate space with suitable supervision, and collected by a parent/carer **as soon as possible**.

In this situation, where staff, children or a young person are experiencing symptoms compatible with COVID-19, such persons should continue to practise hand hygiene and physical distancing.

All children and young people with a health care plan should ensure this is up-to-date and that, if required, it provides additional advice on monitoring and identification of the unwell child in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.

It is important that schools also follow situationally appropriate environmental cleaning. For example, if a child spreads droplets (by sneezing or coughing), clean surfaces with disinfectant wipes immediately.

School Buses

St Patrick's School will continue to communicate with Lithgow Buslines to ensure that environmental cleaning on the buses that our students may be using is to a high standard. See Appendix A for a statement from Lithgow Buslines outlining their procedures.

Environmental Cleaning:

Coronaviruses, including COVID-19, can survive on surfaces for many hours but are readily inactivated by cleaning and disinfection.

To reduce the spread of viruses or germs in schools through environmental cleaning:

- Clean and disinfect frequently used high-touch surfaces such as benchtops, desks, doorknobs, taps and handrails at regular intervals throughout the day with detergent solutions or detergent/disinfectant wipes
- Clean and disinfect frequently used objects such as computers, photocopiers and sports equipment with detergent solutions or detergent/disinfectant wipes
- Clean and disinfect play equipment that has not been closed at the end of each recess and at the end of the day
- Increase the amount of fresh air available indoors by opening windows or adjusting air conditioning
- Provide bins in every classroom for used tissues, and empty them regularly throughout the day
- Clean toilets throughout the day and at the end of each day

Psychological and physical well-being for everyone

Maintaining good habits, including healthy eating, exercise and sleep, continue to be important for all people at this time.

Children

Children are seeing and hearing an abundance of information about COVID-19 on the television, radio and social media, as well as from other people. Their weekdays, weekends and school holidays will be different to any they have experienced before. It is important that children be supported through what could be a stressful period for them, including reassuring them that being worried and anxious is normal.

[Head to Health](#) provides online resources on mental health and COVID-19, including information for parents, which may also be useful for teachers.

Talking with children about COVID-19 can help them understand and cope with the current situation. The following steps can be used as a tool to have an open discussion with a child about their feelings surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic:

- Make time to talk
- Find out what the child knows and address any misconceptions
- Explain COVID-19 in a way the child can understand
- Tune into the child's feelings, validate their concerns and don't forget to highlight the positives and things that are going well (eg: how the children are adapting)

In addition to children's psychological safety, it is also important to consider other safety concerns that children may be confronted by, including:

- eSafety - children will be online more than ever this year. Parents and school leaders are strongly encouraged to go to [eSafety.gov.au](https://www.esafety.gov.au) for special advice regarding COVID-19, including:

[an online safety kit for parents and carers](#)

[an online safety booklet for parents and carers](#)

[advice for school leaders keeping schools and learning safe online](#)

- Domestic violence - with social distancing requiring more Australians to stay home, it is important to recognise that home is not always a safe environment. Evidence shows heightened rates of domestic violence associated with significant social disruption. It is important that schools continue to apply existing measures to protect students who are at risk of domestic violence, whether they are learning at school or at home. See [Services Australia's website](#) for more resources.
- Attendance - laws around student attendance will still apply during the COVID-19 pandemic. The school will set the criteria for students to be counted as "present" when working from home and parents will be required to engage with the school and explain should their child not be meeting the home learning engagement criteria set out by the school. If parents fail to engage and explain, absences will be marked as "unexplained". Standard protocol around Child Protection will be followed by the school should there be students who accumulate unexplained absences during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Communication

Continuing clear and consistent communication will help to ensure everyone within the school community has access to current and accurate information. This will help students, teachers and parents understand we all have a part to play in slowing the spread of COVID-19.

St Patrick's School will continue to keep parents informed through their normal channels of communication with their communities, including:

- Newsletters (letter or email) on actions the school is taking
- Correspondence sent out via Compass portal and School Facebook Page
- Communication with parents and students via the Google Classroom platform

Schools should continue to communicate key messages to students and parents and:

- Where possible, display messages relating to physical distancing, hygiene, and mental health.
- Where possible, age-appropriate posters also displaying key messages relating to physical distancing, hygiene and mental health.
- Provision of posters and/or fact sheets to the parents of children who are engaging in home learning.

- Provision of links to websites and information portals e.g. [Beyond Blue](#) and [eSafety.gov.au](#)

Date of implementation:	4th May 2020
To be reviewed:	29th May 2020

Appendix A:



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Tel: (02) 6352 3888
Fax: (02) 6351 3206
www.lithgowbuslines.com.au
info@lithgowbuslines.com.au

Buslines Group wishes to advise our customers that **ALL** School and Regular Route Bus Services are currently operating as normal.

Information and advice on the Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19)

Transport for NSW has been working closely with NSW Health and other Government Agencies to address the challenge of coronavirus (COVID-19) and support the containment efforts. Our priority is the safety of our customers and staff and the continuity of services to provide the public with access to vital goods and services.

Based on current information received from Transport for NSW, Buslines Group have implemented the following measures and actions:-

- In addition to our regular cleaning regime we will increase the cleaning of internal areas on the buses on a daily basis before the commencement of shifts (twice each day) and this will be done with Hospital Grade Disinfectant.
- Regular cleaning of the steering wheel, other driver controls and the driver's area in general.
- Additional cleaning will also be carried out in the shared areas of the depot and office environment.
- Handling of cash is a necessary requirement of our business and drivers have been informed about being conscious of not transferring any contamination to the eyes or mouth. We have made gloves available to drivers, if preferred, when driving or cleaning.

Buslines Group will continue to monitor information and advice received from Transport for NSW and NSW Health.

How to protect yourself and others

Practising good hand hygiene by washing your hands frequently is crucial and this will protect you, fellow commuters and our staff.

Advice from Transport NSW and NSW Health:-

- Clean your hands with soap and water, or hand sanitiser.
- Cover your nose and mouth when you cough or sneeze.
- Avoid close contact with anyone with cold or flu-like symptoms
- We encourage any individual that feels ill to avoid travel

In addition Buslines Group would also like to encourage our passengers in the interest of ongoing health of our bus drivers to:-

- Observe the recommended 'social distancing' protocols and leave a 1.5 metre buffer zone from drivers where possible. A "leave this seat vacated" notice has been placed on buses.
- Tender the correct fare when boarding the bus.

[Keep up-to-date with the latest information and advice about novel coronavirus \(COVID-19\) at nsw.gov.au](#)