

Principal FAQs – Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) – 1 March 2020

[This advice has been prepared by the NSW Government for use by all NSW schools]

1. What is the advice for those travellers who arrive from mainland China and Iran?

Based on the new Federal Government advice any student or staff member who has been in or transited through mainland China or has returned from Iran from 1 March 2020, is *excluded* from work, school or childcare services for a period of 14 days after leaving China or Iran. These students or staff members are also required to self-isolate from the community for a period of 14 days, as the COVID-19 incubation period can be as long as two weeks.

2. Is Hong Kong, Japan, Italy or any other country included?

At this time (1 March 2020), only those students and staff who have been in or transited through China or have returned from Iran from 1 March 2020 are required to self-isolate and be excluded from work, school and childcare services for a period of 14 days after departure from mainland China or Iran.

Those travelling from other countries which may have confirmed cases of COVID-19 are able to remain at school and attend work but should monitor for symptoms. If symptoms develop, they should self-isolate immediately and seek medical assessment from their local health practitioner.

3. Does this advice also relate to students and staff who transited through airports in mainland China?

Yes. The current advice does include those who only passed through airports in mainland China. Any student or staff member who has returned to Australia after 1 February 2020 and has transited through China is excluded from school and required to self-isolate from the community for 14 days after they departed mainland China. If they remain well, they can stop the self-isolation and attend school and work after the 14 days has passed.

4. Does this relate to employees who visited China or Iran in the last 2 weeks?

Yes. Employees who have visited or transited through China or were in Iran should also refrain from attending school for 14 days after their departure from China or Iran. Affected employees are asked to contact their line manager or principal via phone/email, to advise of their departure date from China or Iran and indicate the number of days they will be absent from school based on their departure date.

5. Is the Federal Government allowing year 11 & 12 students, who due to their visa status were banned from entering Australia, to return to school under the new exemption announced by the Federal Government on 22 February 2020?

Yes. Catholic Schools NSW has been working closely with the other school sectors, the Australian Government and NSW Ministry of Health to put in place strict measures to assure the health and safety of our students, staff and school communities. We have been establishing a clear process for NSW schools to manage the return of students in Years 11 and 12 from mainland China and further information will be provided shortly.

The Australian Government has advised that the relaxation on travel exemptions for Year 11 and 12 students will not pose a risk to the community. These students will be isolated for 14 days after they enter Australia before they will be allowed to attend school.

6. Can Year 11 & 12 students currently in China make travel bookings to return to Australia?

Only students enrolled at NSW schools and granted approval to travel from the Australian Border Force Commissioner will be allowed entry to Australia. This approval will be on a **case by case basis** and must be granted prior to a student making arrangements to undertake travel to Australia.

7. Staff Leave Information

The Department of Education has provided the following advice to their schools

On this occasion, the Department of Education has decided to make special leave of up to a maximum of 10 days available for staff in this situation. Evidence of travel will be required. To apply for leave in the Portal, employees should select the leave type 'Special Leave' and then select the reason code 'Special Approval by Director'.

For example, an employee who left China or Iran on 1 March 2020 would be granted 10 days special leave up to and including Monday 15 March 2020

If employees becomes symptomatic while they are on approved special leave they should see their doctor and, depending on the diagnosis, will be expected to access 'Sick Leave'.

Diocesan Offices and RI and PJP Catholic schools should determine the appropriate approach that will be adopted.

8. I didn't travel to China or Iran but my child did and now they are required to stay home from school or their childcare service. I'm responsible for their care, what leave can I access?

Employees who did not travel themselves but are responsible for the care of children and young people who have been asked to stay home from school or childcare due to travel to China or Iran can access FACS leave. If FACS leave is exhausted employees can access personal carers leave (sick leave) for the period the child or young person is required to not attend childcare or school.

9. Does this apply to staff and students who return from China or Iran in the coming weeks?

Yes, refer to question 1. This will remain in place until formal advice is provided to staff and schools that the arrangement is to cease.

10. How should we advise students who are known to have travelled to China or Iran in the last 14 days, arriving at school without an understanding of these changes?

Schools are asked to contact the families of any students who arrive at school, who have travelled to China within the last 14 days, to ensure that they are aware of this advice.

Any students who have been in or transited through China or have returned from Iran since 1 March 2020 within the last 14 days must not attend school in accordance with the advice from the Australian Government Chief Medical Officer. Refer to question 1 and 3. The following information may assist you with your conversation with the family:

- You will have seen the news of the Novel Coronavirus(COVID-19) on the news or radio. While this news can be upsetting for many people it is important that we work together to support those who have been in the impacted areas and take steps to minimise the spread of the virus to protect our community
- You must come and collect your child/children and they should not return to school until XXXXX date
- I will arrange for some learning materials to be sent home and will ask your child's teacher (using the word School Counsellor may not be helpful for them) to connect them to our student wellbeing program if you think that would be of benefit. (If they ask for counselling then offer that for them).

Translated parent information in Persian and Mandarin will be made available to schools.

11. What steps should schools take to ensure parents are aware of these arrangements?

Schools must take all reasonable steps to advise parents of new requirements where appropriate. Parents can access information from NSW Health and the Catholic Schools NSW website. If you have any concerns please contact your Diocesan office (Systemic schools) or Catholic Schools NSW (RI and PJP schools).

12. How should we advise parents who wish to keep their children at home due to fear of contracting COVID -19?

In line with the medical advice there is no reason why those who have not travelled should not be at school. The expectation is where students have not returned from travel to China or Iran that students will attend school as usual.

13. Do students require a medical certificate to return to school?

Where staff or students remain without symptoms during the 14 days self-isolation period after returning from China or Iran, they do not require a medical certificate to return to school after the 14 days. Schools should request a short note from parents/carers to explain the absence from school in the usual way.

If a staff member or student has become unwell within 14 days of returning from China or Iran, or if they have been diagnosed with COVID -19 they will need a medical certificate confirming they are able to return to work or school.

14. Are any students currently required to be excluded from school?

Yes, the students currently excluded from school are those who

- have been in or transited through China within the last 14 days
- have been in Iran within the last 14 days commencing 1 March 2020
- are under medical assessment or
- have been diagnosed with the COVID -19 or
- have had contact with a confirmed case of COVID -19 infection.

15. What if a parent refuses to comply with the request and send their child/children to school?

If a student who has been in the China within the last 14 days or has returned from Iran from 1 March 2020 attends school, appropriate steps must be taken to isolate the student while at the school. The parents should be contacted and asked to come and collect the student immediately.

The following information may assist you with your conversation with the family:

- You will have seen the news of the Novel Coronavirus (COVID -19) on the news or radio. While this news can be upsetting for many people it is important that we work together to support those who have been in the impacted areas and take steps to minimise the spread of the virus to protect our community
- You must come and collect your child/children and they should not return to school until XXXXX date
- I will arrange for some learning materials to be sent home and will ask your child's teacher (using the word School Counsellor may not be helpful for them) to connect them to our student wellbeing program if you think that would be of benefit. (If they ask for counselling then offer that for them).

16. How is the school to record the absence of students who remain at home in accordance with the current advice?

In consultation with the other schools sectors it is recommended that students who are absent due to this advice should be marked using the F code. The F code will not negatively affect attendance records. If Diocesan offices direct systemic schools to use the M code in accordance to Diocesan policy please do so.

If a student is diagnosed with Novel Coronavirus the code to be used in this instance is M for the period they are absent due to the virus.

17. How does this advice affect students in boarding schools?

For those students in boarding schools Principals are asked to work with their families to support the advice. If there are any issues please contact your please contact your Diocesan office (Systemic Schools) or Catholic Schools NSW (RI and PJP Catholic Schools).

If a boarding student has been in or transited through China within the last 14 days or has returned from Iran from 1 March 2020 appropriate steps must be taken to isolate the student while at the school. The parents should be contacted, and reasonable attempts made for the student to be accommodated in an alternative location where possible. If it is not possible the student will need to remain isolated until the 14 days period has expired.

If a student develops a fever, a cough, sore throat or shortness of breath while at school they should be immediately isolated from other people. [Infection control guidelines](#) should be followed. If available, give a mask to the student or staff member.

The parent or carer should be contacted and arrangements made for the student to receive medical assessment for the local GP or an emergency department as soon as possible.

You will need to phone ahead so that ideally they can speak to the doctor and the practice can make appropriate preparations to protect others. The doctor can assess the situation and may recommend the person attend a nearby emergency department. If so, call ahead before attending the emergency department.

Schools should report any suspected or confirmed cases of COVID-19 to your Diocesan office (Systemic schools) or Catholic Schools NSW (RI and PJP schools) and contact the local Public Health Unit on 1300 066 055 to provide details so that the Public Health Unit can follow up as necessary.

These arrangements are the same for any staff member.

18. Assisted School Travel Program

The Assisted School Travel Program unit is working to identify and support students in accordance with this advice.

19. Will this affect upcoming overseas excursions?

With the current COVID-19 situation, the safety of students and staff is paramount and it is for this reason that all overseas excursions should be evaluated. The NSW Department of Education has placed all overseas excursions hold until further notice. They have also advised their schools that all overseas excursions planned for later in the term will require schools to make the necessary arrangement to cancel the excursion or consider rescheduling until later in the year.

20. Should schools continue with their plans for normal school activities and domestic school excursions?

Yes. Schools should continue to engage in formal planned school activities. If this situation changes at any stage into the future schools will be provided with specific advice.

21. What support will be provided to students unable to attend school?

Contact should be made with students to check on their welfare while they are unable to attend school. If a student is distressed the issue should be referred to the School's Wellbeing team who can arrange for appropriate support to be provided.

22. Will the School need to provide educational material to students unable to attend school?

Yes. Schools should provide learning materials to students who unable to attend school due to self-isolation. If students are unwell there is no expectation that they should complete school work.

23. Will the school be notified if there is confirmed case of the virus?

Relevant protocols, as advised by the Ministry of Health, will be followed. The decision to inform the school and any members of the school community will be made case by case, depending on if there has been close contact with any person(s) at the school.

24. How does this advice apply to students in Before and After School Care?

Students who have been in or transited through China or have returned from Iran from 1 March 2020 in the last 14 days must not attend Before and After School Care.

25. How does this advice apply to students attending Early Childhood centres?

This advice also applies to staff and children who attend early childhood education and care services.

Waivers

If my service is impacted by the current coronavirus outbreak, which National Quality Framework (NQF) requirements can I get a waiver for?

You can apply for a waiver for any NQF staffing requirements, including ratio and qualification requirements.

What is the process for getting these waivers?

Submit an application for a temporary waiver through NQA ITS and provide all relevant information.

How will fees for these waivers be addressed?

On NQA ITS, the application fee must be paid to submit a waiver application. Please be aware that the NSW Department of Education has advised their schools that they will then refund the application fee.

Diocesan Offices and independent Catholic schools should determine the appropriate approach that will be adopted.

If another service is affected by the coronavirus outbreak, can I accept additional children looking for education and care?

Yes. Please submit an application through NQA ITS to increase your service's maximum numbers to offer emergency placement to these children. The coronavirus outbreak will be considered as an exceptional circumstance in the application.

Reporting requirements

If I think there is an outbreak of coronavirus or a respiratory illness at my service, who do I need to report this to?

Services are encouraged to seek advice from their local public health unit when they suspect an infectious disease outbreak is affecting their service, including outbreaks of coronavirus or respiratory illnesses.

Report outbreaks of infectious disease to:

- Your local Public Health Unit on 1300 066 055
- The NSW Regulatory Authority

How do I report to the Regulatory Authority?

Notifications about coronavirus must be made by services to the Regulatory Authority via NQA ITS or by contacting the Regulatory Authority directly (Email: eccd@det.nsw.edu.au or Phone: 1800 619 113).

Fee queries

How does the coronavirus outbreak affect the payment of childcare fees?

Under the National Law and Regulations, CSNSW does not have the power to intervene in operational decisions of individual services. The payment and provision of fees is a commercial

decision for each early childhood education service to determine, in accordance with their policies and procedures.

Should you have concerns about how your service is charging you, you should discuss this with your service in the first instance. If your concerns are unresolved, you can discuss this with NSW Fair Trading, through www.fairtrading.nsw.gov.au or 13 32 20.

What if I have a question about the Child Care Subsidy?

Please contact the Australian Government Department of Human Services <https://www.humanservices.gov.au/individuals/services/centrelink/child-care-subsidy>