

# Returning to school in a COVID-safe way Webinar 21 October 2021

## Ventilation questions will be posted separately

### Questions

**Can you tell us more about the Arts Recovery Program? How much money is available, how will it be assessed, can P&Cs apply or only schools? If a band program ended in 2020 as a result of COVID-19 disruptions, is funding available to start or restart a program that doesn't currently exist?**

**How much money is available, how will it be assessed, can P&Cs apply or only schools?**

NSW public schools will be invited to apply for a 2022 Minister's Arts Recovery Grant to support the development and implementation of arts-based projects for students who have been affected by drought, bushfires, floods or COVID-19 in 2020 and 2021. Grants up to \$10,000 will be available to fund:

- the recovery of school arts programs impacted over the last two years; and/or
- initiatives that reflect an arts-based response to trauma.

Funds may be used for projects administered by a P&C; however, all grant funding must be held by a school and applications must be endorsed by the Principal.

Schools will be invited to complete a short application form. Applications will close on Friday 3 December 2021. Schools will be notified of the outcome of their application in Term 1, 2022.

**If a band program ended in 2020 as a result of COVID-19 disruptions, is funding available to start or restart a program that doesn't currently exist?**

The Minister's Arts Recovery Grant funding can be used to restart an arts program that has ended due to COVID-19. The application will need to be made by a school and the school will hold the funds.

**What evidence do you have of long COVID-19 not impacting young children? What is the hospitalisation rate of unvaccinated children in "best practice" jurisdictions?**

Despite the highly contagious Delta variant, most children diagnosed with COVID-19 during the current outbreak have had mild or no symptoms. Only 2% of those cases had to be hospitalised. (National Centre for Immunisation Research and Surveillance).

Under the Public Health Order, all education and care workers, including teachers and education providers, must be fully vaccinated by 8 November 2021. To help protect our kids while they're at school, all school staff are required to wear masks indoors.

The department understands the impact of the stay-at-home restrictions on school communities and acknowledges the best environment for children to learn is face-to-face in the classroom.

**Year 10 work experience should be deferred, our LGA has past the 90% second dose, I am just struggling to understand if we are not getting on with these things now?**

Currently all non-essential work experience should be deferred. However, prospective and current school-based apprentices and trainees (SBATs) may undertake work experience and employment as long as their employment complies with COVID-safe practices and NSW Public Health Orders.

The department has worked closely with NSW Health to develop our framework of COVID-19 response settings. These settings are reviewed regularly as Health advice changes.

We encourage parents and careers to contact their school principal who will be able to provide more localised individual support. Details for COVID-safe school operations is available on the Department's website at <https://education.nsw.gov.au/covid-19/advice-for-families>.

**Originally when the back to school plan was announced, the education and health ministers said that kids would not return if case numbers were above 50 per 100,000 in a particular LGA. This seems to have been abandoned. What health advice changed to lead to this being abandoned? My kid's LGA is still above this level.**

The Return to School plan has been regularly updated to align to community settings under the NSW Roadmap to return and in line with further advice from NSW Health.

**Is learning from the overseas experience of children returning to school being taken into consideration? The UK experience is not doing well. 207 000 children contracted COVID-19 in one month. The UK government has understood that more needs to be done hence CO2 monitors being bought. San Francisco, with greater mitigations in place, has very minimal contractions of COVID-19.**

**Many families have high schoolers and primary schoolers. This means the high schoolers can bring COVID-19 back to the under 12s, even if the under 12s stay learning from home (despite lack of state support or a route to do so). There needs to be a family-wide policy to protect the under 12s and support families keeping kids learning from home (until all children can be vaccinated). Will schools be involved in a vaccination program for 5-11s?**

**Vaccination rate in classrooms in children under 12 is 1:26. How is that protection when children can transmit?**

**Staff have to be vaccinated in order to return to work. Why are the schools not requiring us to notify them whether our children are vaccinated like we do when they first start in kindergarten?**

The department understands the impact of the stay-at-home restrictions on school communities and acknowledges the best environment for children to learn is face-to-face in the classroom.

The safe return to school plan involves a number of elements, including restrictions of movement between age cohorts, vaccinations of staff, mask wearing, review of ventilation in school learning spaces, provision of hygiene supplies, increased cleaning and staggered start and finish times.

Parents should feel confident their child's school is well equipped to keep them as safe as possible. Vaccination is one element of keeping our students and teachers safe as they return to school.

Under the Public Health Order, all education and care workers, including teachers and education providers, must be fully vaccinated by 8 November 2021.

The NSW Government is actively encouraging all eligible people to get vaccinated.

At this time, vaccinations are yet to be approved by the relevant authorities for children under the age of 12.

**I have heard of very different responses to encourage primary school students to wear masks. One school nearby is telling parents they are neither encouraging or discouraging students to wear masks. Is this contrary to Departmental policy as it has been stated here? (From what parents were saying, most students were not wearing masks).**

The current department policy on mask wearing is that wearing a mask or face covering is required for all staff and all students Year 7 and above when indoors. Wearing a mask or face covering is strongly recommended for primary students when indoors (except when eating or exercising).

**Are you aware that only about 10-20% of primary students are currently wearing masks, despite these 'strong recommendations'? And that overseas, schools without universal masking have 3.5 times the number of COVID-19 outbreaks?**

**My child is one of only three in his Year 1 class wearing a mask every day. There are no boxes of masks in their classroom. Why will you not mandate these measures to protect young children?**

The current Public Health Order requires all persons over the age of 12 to wear a face mask indoors across 'stay-at-home areas'. While the Public Health Order does not require students to wear a face mask while they are in school, the department has taken their positions based on health and safety grounds that face masks are required by staff and students of a certain age.

**Will teachers be provided with RATs for voluntary surveillance testing once they are available to the public?**

At this time, we are still working on options for the use of rapid antigen testing in NSW public schools.

We are exploring with NSW Health the use of COVID-19 home testing kits (known as rapid antigen testing) as a further screening measure to reduce the risk of outbreaks in schools, or the length of time students need to isolate after contact with someone with COVID-19. Further details will be provided later this school term.

**I have heard of some schools having SISA (sport) onsite yet our school isn't allowing any external contractors on site. Why the difference between schools?**

The department of recently released our school sport activities guidelines which will come into place from 1 November, in line with guidelines from the Office of Sport NSW. Refer to [School sport activities](#) for full details.