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Updated COVID Information for Schools 20.7.2022

Dear Parents and Guardians,

Due to the high number of Covid cases, the Victorian Education Department has received updated information from the Victorian Department of Health regarding public health measures to help reduce the spread of COVID-19 and other illnesses, especially influenza, throughout the remainder of the winter season

Please read the following important information which includes the wearing of masks in schools for students aged 8 and over and all school staff, as well as changes to exemptions for testing and isolation.

Face Masks

It is strongly recommended by the Victorian Department of Health that face masks are worn in indoor settings, with face masks mandatory for those aged 8 and over who are household contacts and attending school. This is because the wearing of masks is effective in reducing the transmission of COVID-19.

What does this mean in practice for schools?

It is the department's expectation that, through to the end of winter, students aged 8 and over and staff will wear masks when in class, except where removing a mask is necessary for clear communication or when a particular activity requires the removal of a mask.

Masks are not required to be worn outdoors but can be worn when physical distancing is not possible. This expectation should not constrain student participation in the full range of school activities, including music, sport and performances.

Schools are not required or expected to sanction students or staff who do not meet this expectation, but are asked to communicate this expectation to the whole school community and seek their support for this collective effort.

Wearing masks is a simple step we can all take this winter to reduce the number of COVID-19 cases and ensure our schools are as safe as possible.

Exemptions for testing and isolation

The period of time when someone is considered a recently confirmed case and therefore exempt from testing and isolation requirements has been reduced from the previous 12 weeks to 4 weeks.

This means that staff and children who are household contacts of people with COVID-19 are now required to undertake the testing and isolation requirements from 4 weeks after completing isolation with COVID-19. Previously, this exemption period was 12 weeks.

After the 4-week exemption period, students and staff members who are a household contact of a new COVID-19 case, must follow the rules for household contacts, including reporting this to their school.

As part of this they must take 5 rapid antigen tests (RATs) over 7 days and receive negative test results and wear a face mask (if over 8 years old) in indoor spaces.

Families and staff will also have to report being a household contact to their school after this 4-week period.

More information can be found at the following site.

<https://www.coronavirus.vic.gov.au/checklist-contacts>

Please Note: Please help us by supplying your child with their own mask, as we do not have enough masks to give to all students.

Thank you again for your support in helping to keep our school community safe.

Lee Blunt

Acting Principal