

Frequently asked questions (FAQs) on a school closure

My school has been closed, why?

Your school has been closed in the interests of public health and the safety of your school community. This decision has been made in consultation with the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS).

If a member of the school community (staff or student) has tested positive for coronavirus (COVID-19), closure of the school will allow time for staff from the DHHS to carry out contact tracing (to identify any staff and students who have been in contact with the confirmed case) and take necessary steps to contain and slow the spread of COVID-19 in the community.

The DHHS recommendations for education settings take a highly precautionary approach based on the latest and best medical advice.

How long will my school be closed for?

The school will close initially for one week to allow time for the school to receive a pandemic clean and for staff from the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) to carry out contact tracing.

Following this, the length of time a school may be closed will be decided on a case-by-case basis on the expert advice of the DHHS.

The decision to reopen a school will be made when experts deem it safe to do so.

My school has been closed, are my staff/students at risk?

The health and safety of school communities is paramount, and the steps recommended for your school by the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) take a highly precautionary approach based on the latest and best medical advice.

DHHS officials will work through a contact and containment strategy to contain and slow the spread of coronavirus (COVID-19) in the community.

This includes identifying and notifying any person who has been in close recent contact with the affected student/staff member who has tested positive for COVID-19.

Affected students, their families and school staff will be supported to ensure they understand what actions to take and receive appropriate medical support where required.

What is a 'close contact'?

The spread of coronavirus (COVID-19) occurs through close contact with an infected person, mostly face-to-face or within a household.

A close contact is someone who has been face-to-face for greater than 15 minutes or shared a closed space for more than two hours with a person who has tested positive for COVID-19 when that person was infectious.

A close contact could include any person meeting any of the following criteria:

- living in the same household or household-like setting (for example, a boarding school) as a confirmed case
- having direct contact with the body fluids of a confirmed case
- spending two hours or longer in the same room as a confirmed case
- having face-to-face contact for more than 15 minutes with a confirmed case in any other setting not listed above.

The Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) will work with your school to identify and notify any staff and students identified as having been in close contact with the confirmed case, providing further advice as required.

My school has been closed, are staff/students required to self-isolate?

In the first 24 hours, students and staff are asked to remain at home while the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) undertakes contact tracing. This includes limiting movements to home-based activities and not attending public places.

The DHHS will work with your school to identify and notify any staff and students confirmed as having been in close contact with the person who has tested positive for coronavirus (COVID-19), providing further advice as required.

Close contacts

If a staff member or student is identified by the DHHS as being a close contact of the confirmed case of COVID-19, they will be required to self-isolate at home and not return to school for 14 days from last contact.

Further information on close contacts and self-isolation can be found in [DHHS factsheets](#).

During this period, if a staff member or student starts to experience symptoms associated with COVID-19 such as fever, shortness of breath, cough, sore throat, fatigue or tiredness, they should:

- see a doctor (calling ahead before visiting)
- inform the school.

Once well again, they can return to school.

Not identified as a close contact

If a staff member or student is not identified by the DHHS as being a close contact of the confirmed case of COVID-19, they do not need to self-isolate and can return to school as soon as it reopens.

My school has been closed, should all students/staff be tested for COVID-19?

People who are well should not be tested for coronavirus (COVID-19). There is no need for students or staff to be tested for COVID-19 unless they are advised to do so by the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS).

My school has been closed, should members of staff and students' households self-isolate (including staff and students attending other educational settings)?

There is no need for members of a household to self-isolate unless identified as a close contact of a confirmed case of coronavirus (COVID-19) or advised to do so by the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS).

All members of a household should be encouraged to:

- wash their hands often with soap and running water, for at least 20 seconds. Dry them with paper towel or a hand dryer
- try not to touch their eyes, nose or mouth
- cover their nose and mouth with a tissue when coughing or sneezing. If they don't have a tissue, cough or sneeze into their upper sleeve or elbow.

My school has been closed. Can school-based activities such as outside school hours care (OSHC) or a school holiday program still go ahead?

In the first instance, no school-based activities should continue until advised otherwise by the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS).

The scope of the school closure will be decided on a case-by-case basis on the expert advice of the DHHS.

My school has just reopened, are my staff/students at risk?

The Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) recommendations for education settings take a highly precautionary approach based on the latest and best medical advice.

The decision to reopen a school will be made when it is deemed by the experts to be safe to do so.