

Chief Health Officer message for parents or carers of school-aged children

Dear Parents, Carers and Guardians,

As students in both mainstream and specialist settings recommence on-site learning in Term 4, I want to thank you all for your efforts during this challenging time. I also want to reassure you that the health, wellbeing and safety of children, young people and those involved in their education continues to be of paramount importance.

Throughout the pandemic we have closely monitored the impact of coronavirus (COVID-19) on schools; the strategies that can be implemented in schools to reduce risk; and the health impacts of coronavirus (COVID-19) on children and young people, including those with a disability or complex medical condition.

Research by Murdoch Children's Research Institute found that coronavirus (COVID-19) transmission in schools is uncommon when community transmission is low. A [summary report](https://www.mcric.edu.au/news/covid-19-victorian-schools-and-childcare-mainly-driven-community-transmission-analysis-finds%20) of these findings is available to read. <https://www.mcric.edu.au/news/covid-19-victorian-schools-and-childcare-mainly-driven-community-transmission-analysis-finds%20>

With declining case numbers in the community, I am confident that the risk of coronavirus (COVID-19) transmission in mainstream and specialist schools is very low, when we have in place a range of health and safety measures.

The health and safety measures recommended for schools focus on the strategies we know are most effective. These include ensuring unwell staff and students remain home, good hand hygiene, enhanced cleaning and wearing face masks (only mandatory for those 12 years and over attending high schools). Temperature screening is not currently recommended for schools, given low levels of community transmission. I encourage you to read the [health and safety advice for schools](https://www.coronavirus.vic.gov.au/health-and-safety-advice-all-victorian-schools) for further information on what schools are doing to keep students and staff safe.

<https://www.coronavirus.vic.gov.au/health-and-safety-advice-all-victorian-schools>

The most important thing I ask of every family this term is to keep your child home from school if they have even the mildest coronavirus (COVID-19) symptoms and to get tested as soon as possible. Staying home when unwell is one of our strongest measures to limit the spread of the virus. For more information on what to do if your child is unwell, see

this [fact sheet](https://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/about/department/covid-19/managing-unwell-students-covid19-factsheet.pdf). <https://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/about/department/covid-19/managing-unwell-students-covid19-factsheet.pdf>

The good news is that evidence continues to show that children are less impacted by the virus, and are less likely to develop severe illness. Additional [advice for families](https://www.coronavirus.vic.gov.au/medical-vulnerability-during-coronavirus-covid-19-advice-schools-families) has been developed for those with medical vulnerabilities to support decision making about on-site learning at this time.

<https://www.coronavirus.vic.gov.au/medical-vulnerability-during-coronavirus-covid-19-advice-schools-families>

Working together to implement COVIDSafe strategies, I am confident Victoria's students can continue to safely attend school throughout Term 4.

Adj Clin Prof Brett Sutton

Victorian Chief Health Officer