



8 March 2022

Dear Parents/Caregivers

COVID-19 Update 2022 – No. 6 (as of 8 March 2022)

I trust that you enjoyed a restful long weekend with your family and friends and our students are ready to embark on the second half of the term. It is timely that I write to update our community in relation to recent developments in relation to COVID-19. These include:

- [1] Covid-19 Reported Positive Cases**
- [2] Identification and Isolation of School Close Contacts**
- [3] Requirements for Students and Staff who have Tested Positive for COVID-19**
- [4] Measures to Minimise Close Contacts in Schools**
- [5] Keep Calm and Carry On**

[1] COVID-19 REPORTED POSITIVE CASES - UPDATE

There has been a gentle but gradual increase in the number of students and colleagues who have now tested positive for COVID-19 or have been deemed close contacts. During the last seven days, the College has recorded 9 positive cases across both campuses, 7 of which were potentially infectious while on campus.

Fortunately, given the timing of the emergence of symptoms and the Student Free Day at the Balmoral Street campus on Friday there have been very few students and staff members who have been deemed to be close contacts. **Those who have been identified have been formally notified** and we have been working to ensure that these students and staff remain at home until the conclusion of their isolation.

Given these recent developments, it is important for us to reflect on what our community can learn from these early encounters with the virus, in particular the identification of and requirements for staff and students deemed to be close contacts.

[2] IDENTIFICATION and ISOLATION OF SCHOOL CLOSE CONTACTS

It is important to note that if either a student or staff member have been identified as being potentially infectious while on campus, it does mean that everyone on the campus, in a year level or in the class/es will be deemed a close contact. In a domestic situation, a **household member** of a person who tests positive for COVID-19 who has had contact with them during their infectious period are required to isolate.

Under WA Health's current high caseload environment regulations, the following process for determining close contacts in a school context is followed when either a staff member or a student's parents notifies the Principal that they have tested positive for COVID-19.

1. **Question 1:** Was the COVID-19 positive person at school during their infectious period?
 - If the answer is 'No' – no further action is required.
 - If the answer is 'Yes' - the next two questions would need to be explored.
2. **Question 2:** Did the person spend **more than 2 hours** in a classroom environment where masks were not worn by **both** the person who tested positive and the people in that classroom?
 - For students in Years 3-12, it is highly unlikely that any classes will meet this criterion.
 - For students in Years K-2, this is likely to include the class. **However, if the student had been wearing a face mask or was absent during the exposure period, then they would not be considered a close contact.**
3. **Question 3:** Did the person spend more than **15 minutes face-to-face** with a staff member or student, where masks were **not** worn by **both** the person who tested positive and their potential contacts?
 - This will include members of a close peer group who eat lunch together with the COVID-19 positive person. This will not include when face-to-face contact is brief, such as playing basketball in a physical education class or during recess and lunch breaks.
4. If the answer is 'No' to both Questions 1 and 2, no further action is required.
If the answer is 'Yes' to either or both Questions 1 and 2, student/s and/or staff will be deemed a close contact and **will be contacted by the College by phone and advised in writing** that they are required to isolate for 7 seven days.

WA Health has recently updated advice in relation to quarantine/isolation requirements for parents and family members of students deemed to be close contacts.

Effective immediately, parents and family members are no longer required to quarantine with a child who has been identified as a close contact to a COVID-19 positive case. **This advice also applies retrospectively** to any parents and family members who are currently in quarantine, subject to them adhering to all the WA Health advice (attached).

One parent or caregiver may still need to miss work or work from home to care for their child while in quarantine. The rest of the household, including brothers and sisters, who have not been identified as close contacts, can attend work or school.

Family members are reminded to take extra precautions and limit interaction with the close contact where possible. If possible, they should use a separate bathroom, regularly clean surfaces, wash hands and wear a mask in shared areas or when caring for other household members.

The household should adhere to the recommendations for careful symptom monitoring and other precautions noted in the attached information provided by WA Health.

The close contact must still quarantine.

If symptoms consistent with COVID-19 are experienced, symptomatic persons should get tested immediately.

[3] REQUIREMENTS FOR STUDENTS AND STAFF WHO HAVE TESTED POSITIVE FOR COVID-19

It is important for students and staff **who have had COVID-19** to be aware of and adhere to the following requirements:

- If a COVID-positive person does not have symptoms at the end of 7 complete days, they can leave isolation.
- They do not need to take another test or be cleared by WA Health to leave isolation.
- If the COVID positive person still has symptoms at the end of 7 days, they must continue to isolate until their symptoms resolve.
- After leaving isolation, **they must wear a mask indoors and outdoors** (in areas accessible to the public) and in any vehicle **for 7 days**.

[4] MEASURES TO MINIMISE CLOSE CONTACTS IN SCHOOLS

While deferring to medical experts, the following comments are confined to matters within my professional experience and expertise and shared in the best interests of all members of our community.

The Importance of Mask Wearing

No doubt the recent change in regulations about the wearing of masks by students in Years 3-6 has been extremely helpful with the identification and minimisation of close contacts. As such, the key learning from our experiences of last week is the need to continue to educate ourselves and our children about the importance of assiduously adhering to mask protocols (as defined by WA Health), especially before school, during the recess and lunch breaks and at the end of school. We also need to continue to emphasise that these regulations are not only school requirements but apply within the wider community as well - particularly when using public transport, at indoor venues and outdoors when physical distancing is not possible.

Masks For Students in the Preparatory School

Under the current definition of a close contact, our younger students are potentially most likely to have to work from home if a student is diagnosed positive for COVID-19 within their class. The wearing of face masks for even small periods of time while in class will assist in limiting the number of close contacts. While re-emphasising that it is not a mandated requirement for students in K-2 to wear face masks, I urge parents to carefully consider this option. Their teachers and support staff must continue to wear masks, where necessary.

Personal Hygiene

It is also important to not forget to that everyone, including students, plays a part in stopping the spread of COVID-19 by having good personal hygiene:

- wash your hands often for 20 seconds with soap and water
- use [alcohol-based hand sanitisers](#) when you can't use soap and water
- avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth
- clean and disinfect surfaces you often use such as benchtops, desks and doorknobs
- clean and disinfect objects you often use such as mobile phones, keys, wallets and work passes.

If you have cold or flu like symptoms you should get tested for COVID-19, even if your symptoms are mild and do not send students to school if they are symptomatic.

[5] KEEP CALM AND CARRY ON

All members of our community have been outstanding in their individual and collective efforts to assist and support each other as we journey into an environment in which we expect to experience increasing numbers of COVID-19 positive cases and associated close contacts.

We all have an important role to play in educating ourselves and our children about how to positively confront this *'once in a hundred-year event'* in a calm, empathetic and caring manner towards staff, students, and their parents/caregivers.

Please be reassured that the College will continue to enact our plans in support of our community and to provide regular updates in a rapidly evolving environment.

Thank you again for your understanding, support, and cooperation.

With regards and prayerful best wishes.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Geoff Mills', with a horizontal line underneath.

Geoff Mills