



Communications support pack for Principals

This pack contains communications for principals about student and staff vaccinations and COVIDSafe school settings

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Vaccinations: changes to staff vaccination requirements

Responses to frequently asked questions from parents and staff:

Possible staff questions

Q. As an unvaccinated worker, my employment at a school was terminated. Can I return to my previous role, or do I need to apply for a new one?

A. Our current understanding is that, following lawful termination, unvaccinated workers cannot return to a previous role. They may apply for positions as they arise.

Q. As an unvaccinated worker, I resigned. What are my options? What about continuity of service?

A. If you have resigned from your employment and wish to seek employment you will need to apply for advertised positions. Where your resignation resulted in a break in your continuity of service, the MEA provides the scope for prior service to be recognised for salary and leave purposes.

COVID-19 vaccination is still strongly recommended for all staff working in every school. Getting vaccinated is the best way to protect yourself, your colleagues, students and the whole school community.

Q. Is it possible alternate venues, such as for excursions and camps, may have their own vaccination mandate?

Schools will need to liaise with camp and excursion venues to determine vaccination requirements at those locations.

Q. What does this announcement mean for staff who have had two doses but have been on unauthorised leave since the third dose requirement came into effect?

A. These staff will be permitted to return to duty from the start of Term 3, or on their first normal scheduled day. Where an employee is on approved leave the employee will resume duty following the expiration of the leave period.

Q. Will all staff returning from unauthorised absences be placed back in their previous roles?

A. As backfill arrangements are expected to be in place, the principal will consult with staff returning from Term 3 in relation to how they can best support the needs of the school. Minimising disruption to students needs to be taken into consideration.

Q. Will there be additional RAT screening or requirements, such as masks, for unvaccinated staff?

A. No, but we will continue to strongly encourage these staff, and all new staff, to get vaccinated in the interests of their own health and safety, and the safety of those around them. While recommended, face masks are not required in any school settings. Any students or staff members who wish to wear a mask may do so, including those who are medically at-risk.

Q. Is the change applicable to all school settings?

A. No - teachers in specialist schools will continue to need to have 3 doses of a COVID vaccine or meet one of the exceptions to be permitted to work.

Q. Why are there different settings for specialist schools? This doesn't seem equitable/fair.

A. This was a decision made by the Minister for Health based on the expert advice of the Acting Chief Health Officer. They made this decision to continue to protect the most vulnerable through winter. These settings also apply to residential aged care and disability care, healthcare, and custodial and emergency services, including police.

Q. There are students with disabilities in all schools. Shouldn't they have the same protection as in specialist schools?

A. This was a decision made by the Minister for Health based on the expert advice of the Acting Chief Health Officer. Given the extremely high vaccination rates across teaching staff, there will be little change in our school.

We will continue to promote strong COVIDSafe measures in our school. This includes enhanced ventilation through air purifiers, promoting vaccination and keeping the vital safety steps such as staying home when unwell and washing hands. This is about keeping our school as safe as possible.

Possible parent questions

Q. I don't want my child to be around staff who are not vaccinated. Can I keep them at home?

A. Some families may have concerns about their child because they or a member of their family is medically vulnerable.

I encourage you to discuss this decision with your GP who can assist in balancing your child or family's personal circumstances with the social, health and wellbeing and educational benefits of returning to school onsite and reconnecting with peers and teachers.

To keep our students safe at school, a range of measures have been put in place. These include the strong promotion of vaccination of students aged 5 and above, ventilation of indoor spaces, and a range of COVIDSafe measures including cleaning, the regular use of hand sanitiser, increased use of outdoor spaces and air purifiers in classrooms.

Q. Do parents have the right to pull their kids out of a class if they don't want them being taught by an unvaccinated teacher?

A. No. Parents do not have a right to information about a teacher's vaccination status, which is confidential.

Q. Can parents check whether their child's teacher is vaccinated?

A. The vaccination status of staff is completely confidential. Parents do not have the right to ask for this information and no-one at the school should have this information. Principals cannot seek information about the vaccination status of staff or students.

Q. What happens if I have COVID-19 but still need to drop my children off the school. Can I do this?

A. A further change to the pandemic orders from the start of Term 3, will allow COVID-19 positive parents or carers to leave self-isolation where other arrangements cannot be made to transport children who live with them to or from a school or an early childhood service.

The parent or carer must travel directly to and from the school or service only. They must remain in the vehicle at all times, unless it is reasonably necessary to leave the vehicle to deliver the child to, from and into the school safely and they must wear a face covering at all times while transporting and delivering the child.

For further information and resources to help you talk to your school community about COVID-19 vaccinations, please visit coronavirus.vic.gov.au.

If you require additional information about engaging further with your local communities on this issue, consult your Education Consultant.

Further support

Further support is available for principals in managing parent/carers/staff behaviour and communications.

Support	Description
Support for Principal Health and Wellbeing	Principal and leadership team members can access supports for their mental health and wellbeing through the EAP Converge International 1300 687 327 www.convergeinternational.com.au
Complex Matter Support	Please contact your Education Consultant in the first instance who will liaise within CEB and other support services to provide the most appropriate targeted support
HR support	Contact the People and Culture team at CEB
Media support	If you are contacted by journalists or need support with an incident that might draw media attention, please contact Kerrie Zammit at CEB, who can provide advice.