



CIRCULAR TO ALL DOBCEL SCHOOL STAFF

Friday, 8 October 2021

Dear Colleague

Re: Mandatory COVID-19 Vaccination Directions

Main points from the Directions

- To limit the spread of coronavirus (**COVID-19**) within the population of school settings, Victoria's Acting Chief Health Officer has released [COVID-19 Mandatory Vaccination Directions \(No. 6\)](#) (**Directions**).
- As updated from time to time, the Directions impose obligations upon the Diocese of Ballarat Catholic Education Limited (DOBCEL) as the operator of primary and secondary schools in the Diocese of Ballarat concerning the vaccination of staff, contractors, and volunteers.
- The Directions oblige DOBCEL to collect, record and hold vaccination information about all education workers, who are, or may be, scheduled to attend a school for work purposes on or after the 18 October 2021. For this purpose, **education workers** include:
 - people who work in schools (including principals, teachers, administration and education support staff, casual relief teachers and pre-service teachers), or early childhood education and care (including outside school hours care services);
 - staff of any other entity who attends an education facility (including CEB staff).
- DOBCEL schools must also collect, record and hold vaccination information in a locally stored register for:
 - a person contracted to work at an education facility and who will or may be in close proximity to children, students or staff, whether or not engaged by the education operator including casual relief teachers, Breakfast Club suppliers, IT personnel, NDIS providers and auditors, but does not include delivery personnel);
 - volunteers that attend an education facility and that work in close proximity to children, students or staff (including parent helpers); and
 - students on placements at an education facility.

Critical dates

- By **18 October 2021** all education workers are to have had a first dose of a COVID-19 vaccine or produce evidence of a booking to receive a vaccine by **25 October 2021**, unless a medical exemption applies.
- By **29 November 2021** all education workers are to be fully vaccinated with two doses of a COVID-19 vaccine, unless a medical exemption applies, and to show evidence of their vaccination status.

What must I do as a DOBCEL employee in compliance with the Directions?

All school staff are required to provide evidence of their vaccination status to their Principal or delegate appointed by the Principal, in accordance with the following key dates:

- By **18 October 2021** all school staff are required to:
 - be fully vaccinated with two doses of a COVID-19 vaccine, or
 - have received their first dose of a COVID-19 vaccine, or
 - have a booking to receive their first dose of a COVID-19 vaccine by 25 October 2021, or
 - have a medical exemption evidenced by an authorised medical practitioner
- By **25 October 2021** all school staff are required to:
 - be fully vaccinated with two doses of a COVID-19 vaccine, or
 - have received their first dose of a COVID-19 vaccine and have a booking to receive their second dose of a COVID-19 vaccine by 29 November 2021, or
 - have a medical exemption evidenced by an authorised medical practitioner
- By **29 November 2021** all school staff are required to:
 - be fully vaccinated with two doses of a COVID-19 vaccine, or
 - have a medical exemption evidenced by an authorised medical practitioner

The requirement to provide vaccination information is a new requirement as part of your employment that has arisen as a result of the Victorian Chief Health Officer's directions

What vaccination information can be accepted?

For the purposes of the Directions, **vaccination information** is information about a person's vaccination status and includes information derived from a record of information that was made under, or in accordance with, the Australian Immunisation Register Act 2015 of the Commonwealth.

The Directions provide that vaccination information may be recorded in a variety of documents, such as a letter from a medical practitioner, a certificate of immunisation or an immunisation history statement obtained from the Australian Immunisation Register.

What are the guidelines for medical exemption?

The Directions allow for an exemption for those unable to be vaccinated on medical grounds, as determined by the Australian Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation (ATAGI).

A person may be exempt if they are unable to be vaccinated because of a medical contraindication as outlined in the Directions section *10 Other Definitions (6)*. The employer must sight and record evidence from a recognised medical practitioner.

What if I am not vaccinated or booked to be vaccinated by 18 October or elect not to provide my vaccination information?

Employers are obliged to follow the mandate in the Directions; as such, employees who do not meet and/or provide evidence of their vaccination requirements will not be permitted to attend a school for work purposes from 18 October 2021. In this case, we encourage you to speak to your Team Leader as soon as possible regarding your circumstances.

Between 18 October and 17 December 2021 (end of Term 4), employees who do not meet the vaccination requirements will not be able to attend work on-site and will not be assigned alternative duties. During this period, any such employees will be able to access existing leave entitlements in accordance with the relevant leave policies.

If an employee does not nominate a preference and has not provided required evidence of vaccination status employee will be on unpaid leave.

From 18 December 2021 until 27 January 2022, normal school holiday provisions will apply.

What must I do as a DOBCEL Principal in compliance with the Directions?

- Principals must:
 - ensure all school staff receive a copy of this Circular
 - communicate the COVID-19 vaccination key dates to all education workers
 - collect, record, and hold evidence of vaccination status in accordance with the Directions using the provided template unless otherwise advised
 - exercise flexibility in enabling staff to make and attend vaccination appointments

Additional information

- Principals cannot provide health advice and encourage staff who have health concerns regarding COVID-19 vaccination to speak with their general practitioner and to consider the information at coronavirus.vic.gov.au regarding COVID-19 vaccines/testing.
- For more information about the vaccination requirements for the education sector, visit [Information for workers required to be vaccinated](#).
- Information in relation to how to book a COVID-19 vaccination appointment and what to take to an appointment can be found on the [Book your vaccine appointment](#) section of the coronavirus.vic.gov.au website.
- DOBCEL remains committed to supporting the best interests of the health and wellbeing of the students, staff, and families in our schools in conjunction with appropriate government recommendations or directives to reduce the spread of COVID-19 in our schools and the wider community.

Further guidance and supporting materials, including an FAQ, will be provided to principals early next week to assist in implementing the Directions.

I recognise the many challenges and complexities that living through a pandemic presents. I am grateful for all staff's contributions to a healthy workplace and for safe school communities in line with our obligations under the Victorian Government vaccination mandate and related Chief Health Officer Directions.

Should you have questions about how this may affect your work requirements, please speak with your Principal or usual team leader. If you have further questions, you can send an email to the CEB Leadership via covid@dobcel.catholic.edu.au.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'T. P. Sexton', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Tom Sexton

Executive Director Catholic Education Ballarat