

Principal FAQs – Novel Coronavirus – 3 February 2020

1. What is different for those travellers who arrive after 1 February 2020?

Based on the new Federal Government advice any student or staff member who has returned to Australia after 1 February 2020, and has over the last 14 days visited or transited through mainland China, is *excluded* from school and should not return to school or child care services for a period of 14 days after leaving China. These students or staff members are also required to self-isolate from the community, as the coronavirus' incubation period can be as long as two weeks.

2. What is the advice for travellers who arrived before 1 February 2020?

Any student or staff member who over who arrived in Australia before 1 February 2020 and in the previous 14 days had visited the province of Hubei in central China is *excluded* from school and should not return to school or child care services for a period of 14 days after leaving China, as the coronavirus' incubation period can be as long as two weeks. Returned travellers who have been in Hubei Province of China must be isolated in their home for 14 days after leaving Hubei Province, other than for seeking individual medical care.

Any student or staff member who had visited China and Hong Kong excluding the province of Hubei who arrived in Australia before the 1 February 2020 should not attend school or child care services for a period of 14 days after leaving China, as the coronavirus' incubation period can be as long as two weeks.

3. Is Hong Kong included?

Any staff member or student who is currently not attending school due to being in Hong Kong should not return to school until the 14 period has expired.

As of the 2 February Catholic Schools NSW, working with NSW Health is recommending that people who have travelled in Hong Kong and not mainland China are able to attend school.

4. Does this advice also relate to students and staff who transited through airports in China?

Yes. The current advice does include those who only passed through airports in mainland China. Any student or staff member who has returned to Australia after 1 February 2020 and has transited through mainland China is excluded from school and required to self-isolate from the community.

5. Are Schools able to include those students whom they know to be excluded from school due to possible coronavirus exposure, in their actual enrolment returns of Thursday 6 February 2020 (Eastern).

Yes. Schools are able to include these students in their census. We ask schools should:

- Contact students not in attendance to confirm whether their absence is coronavirus related and to be marked as excluded, as distinct from students who have enrolled in another school (who are not to be counted)
- That the expectation is for students who have not returned to Australia after travel to China within the last 14 days that they will continue to attend school as normal.

6. Does this relate to employees who visited China in the last 2 weeks?

Yes. Employees who have visited China should also refrain from attending school for 14 days after their departure from China. Affected employees are asked to contact their principal via phone/email, to advise of their departure date from China and indicate the number of days they will be absent from school based on their departure date.

7. Staff Leave Information

The Department of Education has provided the following advice to their schools

- On this occasion, the Department of Education has decided to make special leave of up to a maximum of 10 days available for staff in this situation. Evidence of travel will be required

For example, an employee who left China on 27 January 2020 would be granted 10 days special leave up to and including Monday 10 February 2020. An employee who left China on Friday 17 January 2020 would be granted 4 days special leave up to and including 31 January 2020.

If employees become symptomatic while they are on approved special leave they should see their doctor and, depending on the diagnosis, will be expected to access 'Sick Leave'.

Diocesan Offices and Independent Catholic schools should determine the appropriate approach that will be adopted.

8. I didn't travel to China but my child did and now they are required to stay home from school or their childcare service. I'm responsible for their care, what leave can I access?

Employees who did not travel themselves but are responsible for the care of children and young people who have been asked to stay home from school or childcare due travel to China in the last two weeks can access Family and Carers leave. If FACs leave is exhausted employees can access personal carers leave (sick leave) for the period the child or young person is required to not attend childcare or school.

9. Does this apply to staff and students who return from China in the coming weeks?

Yes, this will remain in place until formal advice is provided to staff and schools that the arrangement is to cease.

10. How should we advise students who are known to have travelled to China in the last 14 days, arriving at school without an understanding of these changes?

Schools are asked to contact the families of any students who arrive at school, who have travelled to China within the last 14 days, to ensure that they are aware of this advice. Any students who have been in the Hubei province within the last 14 days must not attend schools in accordance with the advice from the Australian Government Chief Medical Officer. Additionally, families whose children have visited other parts of China or Hong Kong in the last 14 days are strongly encouraged not to have their child at school.

A translated parent information document once completed will be made available.

11. Where schools are unsure if a student has travelled to China in the last 14 days, what action should be taken?

Schools must take all reasonable steps to advise parents of this new requirement. The experience so far has been that a large number of families who have travelled to China

recently are requesting advice about the best way forward. If you have any concerns please contact your Diocesan office (Systemic Schools) or Catholic Schools NSW (RI and PJP Catholic Schools) for advice and support.

12. How should we advise parents who wish to keep their children at home, where they have not travelled to China within the last 14 days?

In line with the medical advice there is no reason why those who have not travelled should not be at school. The expectation is where students have not travelled to China within the last 14 days that students will attend school as usual.

13. Do students require a medical certificate to return to school?

Where students remain without symptoms 14 days after returning from China, they do not require a medical certificate to return to school after the 14 days. Schools should request a short note from parents/carers to explain the absence from school in the usual way.

If a staff member or student has become unwell within 14 days of returning from China or if they have been diagnosed with the Novel Coronavirus they will need a medical certificate confirming they are able to return to work or school.

14. Are any students currently required to be excluded from school?

Yes, the students currently excluded from school are those who

- have been in the China within the last 14 days
- are under medical assessment or
- have been diagnosed with the Novel Coronavirus or
- have had contact with a confirmed case of the Novel Coronavirus.

15. What if a parent refuses to comply with the request and send their child/children to school?

If a student who has been in the China within the last 14 days attends school, appropriate steps must be taken to isolate the student while at the school. The parents should be contacted and asked to come and collect the student immediately.

The following information may assist you with your conversation with the family:

- You will have seen the news of the Novel Coronavirus on the news or radio. While this news can be upsetting for many people it is important that we work together to support those who have been in the impacted areas and take steps to minimise the spread of the virus to protect our community
- You must come and collect your child/children and they should not return to school until XXXXX date
- I will arrange for some learning materials to be sent home and will ask your child's teacher (using the word School Counsellor will not be helpful for them) to connect them to our student wellbeing program if you think that would be of benefit. (If they ask for counselling then offer that for them).

16. How is the school to record the absence of students who remain at home in accordance with the Department's request?

In consultation with the other schools sectors it is recommended that students who are absent due to this advice should be marked using the F code. The F code will not negatively affect attendance records. If Diocesan offices direct systemic schools to use the M code in accordance to Diocesan policy please do so.

If a student is diagnosed with Novel Coronavirus the code to be used in this instance is M for the period they are absent due to the virus.

17. Will this affect enrolment data? Does the census date need to be considered?

No. Students who are enrolled but are absent with an F code as a result of this advice, should be counted in the enrolment data.

18. How does this advice affect students in boarding schools?

For those students in boarding schools Principals are asked to work with their families to support the advice. If there are any issues please contact your Diocesan office (Systemic Schools) or Catholic Schools NSW (RI and PJP Catholic Schools).

If a boarding student has been in China within the last 14 days appropriate steps must be taken to isolate the student while at the school. The parents should be contacted and reasonable attempts made for the student to be accommodated in an alternative location where possible. If it is not possible the student will need to remain isolated until the 14 days period has expired.

If a student develops a fever, a cough, sore throat or shortness of breath while at work or school they should be immediately isolated from other people. Infection control guidelines should be followed. If available, give a mask to the student or staff member.

The parent or carer should be contacted, and arrangements made for the student to receive medical assessment for the local GP or an emergency department as soon as possible.

You will need to phone ahead so that ideally, they can speak to the doctor and the practice can make appropriate preparations to protect others. The doctor can assess the situation and may recommend the person attend a nearby emergency department. If so, call ahead before attending the emergency department.

The school should report any suspected cases to their Diocesan office (Systemic School) or Catholic Schools NSW (Independent Catholic School) and contact the local Public Health Unit on 1300 066 055 to provide details so that the Public Health Unit can follow up as necessary.

These arrangements are the same for any staff member.

19. Assisted School Travel Program

The Assisted School Travel Program unit is working to identify and support students in accordance with this advice. CSNSW is currently working with the NSW Department of Education and will provide advise regarding transport providers.

20. Will this affect upcoming overseas excursions?

Planned excursions to China should be reviewed case by case. Principals should discuss any planned excursions with the Diocesan office who will seek risk management advice from external agencies i.e. Department of Health and Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade.

21. What support will be provided to students unable to attend school?

Contact should be made with students to check on their welfare while they are unable to attend school. If a student is distressed the issue should be referred to the school's wellbeing team who can arrange for appropriate support to be provided.

22. Will the School need to provide educational material to students unable to attend school?

Schools should provide learning materials to students who unable to attend school. If students are unwell, there is no expectation that they should complete school work.

23. Will the school be notified if there is confirmed case of the virus?

Relevant protocols, as advised by the Ministry of Health, will be followed. The decision to inform the school and any members of the school community will be made case by case, depending on if there has been close contact with any person(s) at the school.

24. How does this advice apply to students in Before and After School Care?

Students who have been in China in the last 14 days must not attend Before and After School Care.

25. How does this advice apply to students attending Early Childhood centres?

This advice also applies to staff and children who attend early childhood education and care services.

Waivers

If my service is impacted by the current coronavirus outbreak, which National Quality Framework (NQF) requirements can I get a waiver for?

You can apply for a waiver for any NQF staffing requirements, including ratio and qualification requirements.

What is the process for getting these waivers?

Submit an application for a temporary waiver through NQA ITS and provide all relevant information.

How will fees for these waivers be addressed?

On NQA ITS, the application fee must be paid to submit a waiver application. Please be aware that the NSW Department of Education has advised their schools that they will then refund the application fee.

Diocesan Offices and independent Catholic schools should determine the appropriate approach that will be adopted.

If another service is affected by the coronavirus outbreak, can I accept additional children looking for education and care?

Yes. Please submit an application through NQA ITS to increase your service's maximum numbers to offer emergency placement to these children. The coronavirus outbreak will be considered as an exceptional circumstance in the application.

Reporting requirements

If I think there is an outbreak of coronavirus or a respiratory illness at my service, who do I need to report this to?

Services are encouraged to seek advice from their local public health unit when they suspect an infectious disease outbreak is affecting their service, including outbreaks of coronavirus or respiratory illnesses.

Report outbreaks of infectious disease to:

- Your local Public Health Unit on 1300 066 055
- The NSW Regulatory Authority

How do I report to the Regulatory Authority?

Notifications about coronavirus must be made by services to the Regulatory Authority via NQA ITS or by contacting the Regulatory Authority directly (Email: eccd@det.nsw.edu.au or Phone: 1800 619 113).

Fee queries

How does the coronavirus outbreak affect the payment of childcare fees?

Under the National Law and Regulations, CSNSW does not have the power to intervene in operational decisions of individual services. The payment and provision of fees is a commercial decision for each early childhood education service to determine, in accordance with their policies and procedures.

Should you have concerns about how your service is charging you, you should discuss this with your service in the first instance. If your concerns are unresolved, you can discuss this with NSW Fair Trading, through www.fairtrading.nsw.gov.au or 13 32 20.

What if I have a question about the Child Care Subsidy?

Please contact the Australian Government Department of Human Services
<https://www.humanservices.gov.au/individuals/services/centrelink/child-care-subsidy>

