

HE PITOPITO KŌRERO

COVID-19 UPDATE - 11 OCTOBER 2021

11 October 2021

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Kia ora koutou,

And so our COVID-19 response continues at pace. I hope you have managed to get some greatly deserved down time over the term break so far.

An important new decision today is that the education workforce needs to be vaccinated.

The strong message behind the Government's decision is that this is a critical opportunity for community, iwi, whānau, hapu leaders (which you all are) to show leadership to protect your students, whānau and others wherever they are.

I have heard very powerful messages from Māori that they want to lead the work to increase the rate of vaccination. The message was well encapsulated by the musician Teeks this week when he said on social media, "Taking the vaccine doesn't diminish your sovereignty or mana motuhake, it only enhances and protects the very essences of what these principles stand for".

We are connecting up with Māori communities and leaders to amplify the messages of empowerment, whakapapa and hauora that they are leading. We will keep you updated on this work and share the results so that you can further distribute them.

Beginning this week, we'll also be hosting a series of webinars with Dr Michelle 'Nanogirl' Dickinson, who will be answering your questions about the science behind vaccinations. Details about session times and how you can register are provided below.

Thank you to Stephen Lethbridge, the Auckland Primary Principals' Association (APPA), Perry Rush and New Zealand Principals Federation (NZPF) for proposing this.

The Ministry for Pacific Peoples continues to provide information to support Pacific communities in New Zealand in a range of languages, through their website, communications to their communities, Zoom meetings and more.

Following their meeting with Cabinet this afternoon, the Prime Minister and the Minister of Education have announced:

- the Auckland region will remain at Alert Level 3 as it currently stands, for another week. Cabinet will review this decision on Monday 18 October
- for schools in Auckland, they will not reopen to all students on Monday 18 and further public health advice will be provided next week. Schools in Auckland will however be open on Monday 18 October for distance learning and on site for those children who need to attend because they don't have appropriate care at home
- Northland and Waikato will remain at Alert Level 3 until 11.59pm, Thursday 14 October, with Cabinet to review on Wednesday 13 October

- for all Alert Level 3 regions there are immediate COVID-19 testing requirements for school staff prior to their return to school
- from 1 January 2022, schools and early learning services and providers will need to ensure only vaccinated staff and support personnel have contact with children and students. They need to have their first dose by 15 November
- schools will also need to maintain a COVID-19 vaccination register
- this includes home-based educators and anyone in the home aged over 12, and all those support people in our schools and early learning services such as teacher aides, administration and maintenance staff
- face coverings are required to be worn by Year 9 to 13 students when on school transport at all alert levels
- face coverings continue to be required by students and staff in secondary settings (Year 9 to 13) at Alert Level 3, including in middle and area schools. Children under 12 years of age remain exempted from wearing face coverings.

As a result of these decisions, there will be a lot of information to come on alert level requirements and how we will work with you to introduce mandatory testing and vaccination. We have tried today, to only provide the most pressing information, with further bulletins providing more detail.

We share your concern for how we collectively support young people to be resilient and ready for learning, so in the next day or two we'll also focus on wellbeing supports. Part of this will be refreshing information from NZQA about how to most efficiently and effectively gather information in case of the need to use derived grades to ensure our tamariki and rangitahi can progress to their next stage of learning.

You do not need me to tell you that the Delta variant tracks down weak points in the system – that is, those who have not been vaccinated. As I've said before, as educators you can and should promote the public health message that vaccination is essential to get us back to some sort of normal. If you or your staff wish to share that you have decided or have already been vaccinated, then individuals are free to share that.

Please keep doing the COVID-19 mahi – support everyone you know to get vaccinated, check in wherever you go, keep people who are unwell at home, and encourage lots of testing. It is hard, but it is working.

Kia maiea tō rā,
Iona

Mandatory testing for Alert Level 3 regions

All school staff who work in schools and kura in Auckland and other Alert Level 3 regions are required to have returned a negative COVID-19 test result before they can return to working on site. This is regardless of their vaccination status.

This testing requirement applies to direct employees working on site including relief teachers, casual staff, administration staff, caretakers, and cleaners.

Additionally, in the period leading up to 1 January 2022, staff members, workers who may have contact with children and students when delivering an education service, and those that provide other onsite services during opening hours, such as volunteers, ITE students on practicum, contractors like builders, bus drivers and hostel staff, will be required to undergo weekly COVID-19 testing.

Once staff have returned a negative test, those that are fully vaccinated are not required to undergo weekly testing.

All registered schools and other education services, including hostels, are required to maintain a register of the vaccination status of their staff. Secondary schools and wharekura will need to keep a vaccination register for students. This information will support public health authorities in their rapid risk assessment if there was a confirmed case of COVID-19 in your school. A highly vaccinated staff and student population could support the school to remain open, limit the duration of any closure, or limit the numbers of students and staff asked to self-isolate.

We will provide more information tomorrow about the evidence and recording requirements for this.

Mandatory vaccinations

All staff members who work in schools and kura and workers who may have contact with children and students will be required to have a first dose of the COVID-19 vaccine by 15 November 2021 and be fully vaccinated by 1 January 2022.

Where possible, staff are encouraged to be tested and book vaccinations outside of regular working hours, including the current school holidays. If this is not possible, you should provide adequate time during working hours for staff to be vaccinated. No leave of absence should be recorded.

This applies to all those that may have contact with children and students when delivering an education service, including principals, teachers, relief teachers, casual staff, administration staff, maintenance staff, OSCAR providers and hostel staff.

If this is not possible, you should provide adequate paid time during working hours for staff to be vaccinated. No leave of absence should be recorded.

You will need to provide a clear instruction to your employees, advising them of the need to be vaccinated, and to be tested if you are in an Alert Level 3 area. We have attached an example notice for this.

In addition, from 1 January 2022, education services must only allow those that are fully vaccinated to provide onsite services. This includes volunteers, learning support specialists, and initial teacher education (ITE) students on practicum.

We will provide more information before the end of the week, about the process for evidence and recording of vaccinations.

What if a staff member is not able to be vaccinated?

Not everyone is able to be vaccinated, tested, or make use of PPE like face coverings. Where this is not possible, employees should provide appropriate medical evidence for an exemption to these and identify how they can reasonably assure you that they are not at risk of transmitting COVID-19.

We will be working with unions and others to consider the implications for those people who cannot or will not be vaccinated.

Our objective will be to retain as many people in employment while ensuring public health.

What about school drop-offs and pick-ups?

For parents conducting student pick-ups and drop-offs, these should occur in an outdoor environment where face coverings must be worn, and physical distancing measures retained.

Parents, whānau and caregivers are not required to be vaccinated or tested in order to pick up or drop off children.

How does this compare to what's happening overseas?

A number of jurisdictions overseas have already adopted mandatory COVID-19 vaccinations in education settings, such as Victoria, New South Wales, Washington, the Northern Territory and New

York City.

- Victoria requires that all staff in government and non-government schools and all types of early childhood and care settings to be vaccinated against COVID-19.
- Washington requires all teachers and school personnel including, sports coaches, bus drivers and volunteers to be fully vaccinated as a condition of their employment.
- In New South Wales all people working at a school or early education and care facility must be vaccinated. This includes, teachers, support staff, contractors, volunteers and students on student placement.
- The Northern Territory mandates vaccinations for workers in high-risk settings which includes those who work (or come into contact with) people who cannot get vaccinated and includes all teachers and child-care workers.
- New York City requires educators alongside other school staff (including custodians, school lunch helpers and safety agents) in public schools to be vaccinated.

Alert Level 3 requirements

10 things you need to know about Alert Level 3

1. Schools are open for children who need to attend

At Alert Level 3, more businesses and services are open (not just essential services) and some parents and caregivers will have to leave home in order to go to work. In these cases, any child who can't be supervised at home by an appropriate person, needs to be able to attend school. Schools must be open for these children to attend.

Distance learning will need to be provided for all students who are off site, including those required to self-isolate and those individuals who health authorities have asked to stay away while waiting for a test result.

2. Face coverings are required to be worn in some circumstances

At Alert Level 3, students and staff who are in registered schools that provide secondary education (state, state-integrated and private) are required to wear face coverings when indoors. This will include middle and area schools.

The requirement will only apply to students receiving secondary education (Year 9 and above) and any staff member working to provide, or support the provision of, that education.

To assist in managing this requirement in area or middle schools, it is recommended that Year 9 to 13 students are grouped together in bubbles, with all students and staff wearing face coverings.

Face coverings are also required to be worn on school transport for students in Years 9 to 13.

3. School bubbles will need to be put in place for those attending on site

For those who are on site, school bubbles of no more than 10 children/students will need to be formed and keep a two-metre distance from other school bubbles.

Where possible, it is recommended that teachers stay with the same school bubble of students.

4. Schools are not classified as gatherings

Schools are permitted to open at Alert Level 3, as are a range of businesses and services.

In order to do so, they must meet a range of requirements as specified in the COVID-19 Public Health Response orders.

5. Schools will close for cleaning and contact tracing if there is a confirmed case who was infectious when at school

Your Director of Education will work closely with you and health authorities should this occur.

Please contact your Ministry regional office if you hear of a confirmed case in your school community but have not been advised about it by health officials.

6. Testing remains a crucial component in preventing an outbreak

If a child or staff member is sick, they should stay home.

If they have COVID-like symptoms, they should call their doctor or Healthline on 0800 358 5453 for advice about getting tested. If recommended to get tested, they should do so.

7. Sick people must stay at home

Anyone who has COVID-like symptoms should seek medical advice and get tested if advised to do so.

If that person displays relevant symptoms of COVID-19, tests positive for COVID-19, or has been in close contact with someone who tests positive for COVID-19, they must self-isolate.

8. You must have a contact tracing system in place

This includes displaying QR code posters at your entrances, your timetable, attendance register and visitor register.

9. Fundamental public health measures continue to apply

- Physical distancing of one metre inside and two metres outside at Alert Level 3.
- Hand hygiene.
- Cough and sneeze etiquette.
- Regularly cleaning and disinfecting high touch surfaces (daily at Alert Level 3).

10. Your Ministry regional office team is available to provide support

Contact details for local offices – Ministry of Education

For more detailed information for Alert Level 3, please refer to our health and safety guidance.

Guidance for schools in Alert Level 3 – Ministry of Education

School hostels

The key changes to guidance for school hostels for Alert Level 3 settings (currently Auckland, Waikato and Northland) are:

- the requirement for staff to be tested before they return to the hostel
- hostel workers (paid and unpaid) will need to be fully vaccinated no later than 1 January 2022
- hostel management will need to maintain a vaccine register.

School bubbles will remain in place for school hostels operating in an Alert Level 3 region.

Guidance for school hostels – Ministry of Education

Please refer to the Unite Against COVID-19 for details about what is permitted regarding social gatherings when outside the hostel – for example, some gatherings are allowed outside in Auckland, which were previously forbidden while remaining at Alert Level 3.

Advice for Auckland – Unite Against COVID-19

Mandatory vaccinations for hostel staff

In the same way that workers in schools (paid and unpaid) will be required to be vaccinated, hostel management will need to ensure only vaccinated staff and support personnel have contact with boarders from 1 January 2022.

These staff will need to have their first dose by 15 November 2021 in order to meet this timeframe.

Vaccine register

Hostel management are also required to keep a COVID-19 vaccination register for boarders and staff. Where your hostel is directly connected with a school, the school will already be collecting this information for students and staff.

The hostel will therefore only need to collect vaccination information for other workers (paid and unpaid) who are directly employed to work in the hostel, and not in the school.

We will provide more information before the end of the week, about the process for evidence and recording of vaccinations.

Alert Level 3 regions: Staff testing prior to returning to the hostel

All staff members who work in schools and kura in Alert Level 3 regions are required to have been tested for COVID-19 up to seven days prior to all boarders returning to the hostel (date to be confirmed) and have returned a negative result before they can return working on site.

We will provide further advice regarding testing requirements for staff currently on site.

For further details on all these requirements, please see the relevant information for schools in this bulletin.

Translations for Alert Level 3

We've translated some key messaging for families and whānau regarding Alert Level 3 in schools.

You should be able to cut and paste the relevant text into your own communications as needed. You can see we've also added links to some relevant translated information on the Unite Against COVID-19 website.

There is also a range of alternate format content on their website including New Zealand Sign Language and Easy Read.

Alert Level 3 translations – Ministry of Education

Wear a face covering – Unite Against COVID-19

Alternate formats – Unite Against COVID-19

FAQ: What can we say about vaccinations?

We've had a number of teaching staff and principals asking what they can (and cannot) say to their school community about vaccination.

School leaders and teachers have a strong influence on learners and their understanding of the world because of the trusted position they hold.

Public health advice cannot be clearer: vaccinations are the most significant tool we have to reduce the risk of serious illness in our communities. If most of us are vaccinated, we can also reduce the risk of outbreaks which can lead to alert level restrictions and put our health system under pressure.

As members of the public service, school leaders and school staff should promote to learners' public health advice about the need for vaccinations, but they should not put pressure on individuals to get vaccinated or not get vaccinated.

Staff are welcome to share their own vaccination status at any time, however employers cannot do so without the individual's permission.

Vaccination information for New Zealand [DOCX, 71 KB]

Vaccine science webinars with Dr Michelle 'Nanogirl' Dickinson

We're partnering with Nanogirl Labs to deliver a series of webinars hosted by Dr Michelle Dickinson focused on vaccine science and debunking vaccine myths.

The aim is to support the education workforce get answers to vaccine questions from a trusted source of information.

The webinars will be open to all education workforce through a registration process from today.

Webinars will take place:

- Wednesday 13 to Friday 15 October at 10am
- Thursday 21 to Friday 22 October at 4pm.

Please register your interest here:

Q&A for educators – Eventbrite

Additional webinars will be offered if there is ongoing interest.

Dr Dickinson is encouraging the education workforce to submit questions in advance of the webinars, which is possible as part of the registration process. Questions will be answered as part of the webinar, which will be 45-60 minutes. A live Q&A will also be possible.

Travel across Alert Level 3 boundaries

Travel for workers across an Alert Level 3 boundary is permitted for some businesses and services.

School hostel staff are included in this permission, but not boarders.

School staff who are required to support distance or online learning for primary or secondary education, can also travel across the regional boundary (but not for teaching students on-site). An example of this would be your IT specialist who needs to access servers to ensure distance learning can continue.

Employers are expected to ensure any such travel is kept to an absolute minimum.

Anyone travelling through these permissions must carry evidence of their purpose of travel and destination. Unless they are exempt, they must also carry evidence that they have had a COVID-19 test (they do not need evidence of a negative result – they just need evidence you have been tested) or a medical certificate.

Go to Unite Against COVID-19 for further information, including testing requirements.

Travel across an alert level boundary – Unite Against COVID-19

Personal travel

There are a range of reasons why someone is able to travel across an Alert Level 3 boundary for personal reasons – for example, children can travel to visit or stay at the home of a shared caregiver. This includes travelling to maintain a whāngai arrangement.

We will provide information as soon as we can, about the ability for boarders in hostels to return to an Alert Level 2 region from an Alert Level 3 region in order to resume learning on site at their school.

Personal travel across an alert level boundary – Unite Against COVID-19

Other travel by exemption

For travel that is not permitted by the COVID-19 Public Health Order, the person will need an individual personal travel exemption. The threshold for approvals will be extremely high.

Apply for a personal travel exemption– Unite Against COVID-19

Ka Ora, Ka Ako in Alert Level 3

Returning to normal routines as much as possible will be important for the wellbeing of ākonga.

For schools and kura using an external supplier, your supplier will contact you to confirm lunch orders. It is important to keep in regular contact so that orders can be adjusted if required. If do not hear from them, please contact them directly to confirm arrangements. We are also contacting suppliers to inform them of our requirements.

Where lunches are prepared on school premises, lunch staff should follow the Ministry for Primary Industries (MPI) guidelines for food safety in Alert Level 3.

Food safety in Alert Level 3 – MPI

This may mean there are changes to the usual lunch menu. As well as wearing face coverings, it is strongly recommended staff keep physically distanced from one another by at least one metre wherever practicable.

We also recommend you consider how lunches are served and where ākonga eat lunch. Here are some examples:

- public health advice is that if practicable, eat lunch outside where there is good ventilation. If this is not possible, ensure your indoor areas are well ventilated
- provide hand sanitiser in dining areas and other common areas
- remind ākonga about the importance of not sharing food or drinks

- explore other ways to avoid ākonga congregating such as staggered mealtimes.

Contact your Ka Ora, Ka Ako senior advisor if there are any issues.

Vaccination: Letter templates for parents and whānau

Here are letter templates for your school community that can be edited as needed.

Vaccination: Letter template for schools at Alert Level 2 [DOCX, 18 KB]

Vaccination: Letter template for schools at Alert Level 3 [DOCX, 18 KB]

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COVID-19 UPDATE - 12 OCTOBER 2021

12 October 2021

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FOREWORD

Ngā mihi o te Rātū,

I appreciate the feedback you have sent in response to yesterday's decisions – in particular the largely positive response to the decision to mandate vaccinations for the education workforce.

It is reassuring to see our vaccination rates rise – we're now closing in on our six millionth dose.

However, I know that because of this many of you have been fielding questions from your staff and wider school community. In today's bulletin we are aiming to provide more clarity on the new

requirements. We'll be providing more frequently asked questions tomorrow, as well as information on exams and events, activities and gatherings. I know this is top of mind for many of you.

A reminder about the opportunity for staff to ask Dr Michelle Dickinson questions about the science behind vaccinations. It may be a helpful tool in your 'promoting public health messages' playbook!

Thanks again for allowing me to interrupt your term break. Noho ora mai rā, nā, look after yourselves.

Ngā manaakitanga,

Iona

Applying the mandatory vaccination and testing requirements

On Monday 11 October 2021 the Government advised that all staff and workers who may have contact with children and students in schools and kura throughout the country (regardless of COVID-19 Alert Level) will be required to have a first dose of the COVID-19 vaccine by 15 November and be fully vaccinated by 1 January 2022.

From 1 January 2022, education services must only allow those that are fully vaccinated to provide onsite services during opening hours.

This means vaccinations are mandatory for all those working on site including teachers, relief teachers, casual staff, administration staff, caretakers, cleaners, OSCAR providers and hostel staff – whether direct employees or employees of a contractor. It also applies to unpaid workers, such as volunteers (including parent volunteers) and any members of the community who are on site at the school kura, as they are likely to come into contact with students.

The vaccination requirement does not apply to parents or whānau undertaking student pick-ups and drop-offs, but these should be conducted in an outdoor environment where face coverings are worn and physical distancing measures can be retained.

Staff are encouraged to be tested and book vaccinations outside of regular working hours. If this is not possible, schools should provide adequate time during working hours for staff to be vaccinated or tested. No leave of absence should be recorded.

[Notice for staff of schools and kura at Alert Level 2 \[DOCX, 13 KB\]](#)

[Notice for staff of schools and kura at Alert Level 3 \[DOCX, 20 KB\]](#)

Testing requirements for Alert Level 3

Everyone working in a school or kura in Auckland and other Alert Level 3 regions will be required to return a negative COVID-19 result ahead of returning physically to a school, regardless of vaccination status.

When a region is at Alert Level 3, follow-up tests will be required on a weekly basis for all staff who are not fully vaccinated. Once a staff member becomes fully vaccinated, regular testing will no longer be required for them to continue to work on site.

Once they have returned an initial negative test (and can then return to work) staff will not be required to isolate after their follow-up tests unless they are:

- experiencing COVID-19 symptoms
- a casual plus contact
- a close contact who is experiencing COVID-19 symptoms
- a household member of a close contact
- a household member of a close contact who is experiencing COVID-19 symptoms.

Testing locations – Unite Against COVID-19

Privacy and record keeping

Following discussion with peak bodies, we know that getting clarity around the nature of data collection and record keeping is a frequently asked question. We will continue to work with representatives to road test longer term solutions. In the meantime, here is some initial guidance about the requirement to keep a record of each person's vaccination status.

Schools and kura in Auckland and other Alert Level 3 regions are required to keep a record of each person's testing status, including when they were last tested and confirmation that the result was negative.

Schools and kura should do this in a secure and confidential manner in line with their usual obligations under the Privacy Act. Given the sensitivity of the information being collected, schools and kura should ensure that unauthorised access to the information is not able to occur.

Schools and kura may accept any proof which assures them that the staff member is fully vaccinated or has received a negative test result. This may be an email, immunisation card, or SMS that the staff

member has received from their vaccine or medical provider, the Book My Vaccine website or the My COVID Record website.

Book My Vaccine – Ministry of Health

Frequently asked questions

We're working to provide answers to frequently asked questions about vaccine and testing requirements, schools reopening, staffing matters and face coverings.

We'll provide a link to FAQs on our website tomorrow.

Distance learning in Auckland: Preparing for Term 4

As you know, the Government has announced that Auckland schools and kura will continue their teaching and learning by distance at the beginning of Term 4.

We know that Term 4 is a crucial time for you and that there is some uncertainty about how long school and kura sites will need to remain closed for general face to face teaching. We will continue to support you through this period.

We know that for many of you teaching and learning kanohi ki te kanohi (face-to-face) is the best way to engage students. However, we've also heard about some of the innovative ways you have adapted your school and kura practice to make sure students are continuing their learning from home.

Courier costs

We can help you meet the costs associated with delivering materials to student households whether this be your own devices and packs or those we have provided to you.

For a reminder about how to arrange reimbursement, see our article bulletin on 25 August.

Reimbursement of distribution costs – School Bulletin 25 August

Live and on-demand educational television

Home Learning | Papa Kainga TV and Mauri Reo, Mauri Ora continue to broadcast daily learning content for a range of ages, as well making much of this available on-demand.

- Home Learning | Papa Kāinga TV on television weekdays between 9am–1pm. Duke+1 (Freeview channel 18). Those households who have Sky can also access Duke +1 on channel 504. For households who have internet connectivity they can access the lessons through TVNZ On Demand. Schedules are published on Learning from Home.
- Mauri Reo, Mauri Ora Kōanga 2021 screens on Te Reo channel every weekday from 9am to 12pm. Programmes are also available online on the Māori TV website and on the Māori+ app.

Home Learning TV – Learning from Home

Mauri reo, Mauri Ora for primary students – Māori TV

Mauri reo, Mauri Ora for secondary students – Māori TV

Learning packs

If you are unable to provide materials to students, we can provide new learning packs for a range of ages, including Years 1 to 10 and NCEA, and in both English and Māori-medium contexts.

To make sure you are well supported, the Auckland Ministry regional office team will be in contact with you as soon as possible to discuss readiness and any support you may need. Note that we will need to make sure we quickly get support to those most in-need and will prioritise Deciles 1 to 3 first.

Q&A for educators on vaccines

As highlighted yesterday, we're working with Nanogirl Labs to deliver a series of webinars for the education workforce with a focus on vaccine science and debunking vaccine myths.

If you have any staff who are feeling nervous about booking in their vaccine or who want to fact-check some of the things they've read online, Dr Michelle Dickinson is hosting a Q&A series.

The president of Auckland Primary Principals' Association and principal of Pt Chevalier School Stephen Lethbridge has also kindly agreed to open the webinar series. Thank you, Stephen!

Vaccine Q&A for educators – Facebook

Webinars will take place:

- Tomorrow Wednesday 13 October to this Friday 15 October at 10am
- Thursday 21 and Friday 22 October at 4pm

Please note: the purpose of these webinars is to provide accurate and up-to-date information on the science behind vaccinations. We will be covering your operational implications of mandatory vaccinations, testing timeframes and mask wearing queries in these bulletins.

Collecting unexpected event grades for NCEA

Every year, schools are required to use the unexpected event grade process to collect and report results to NZQA for external achievement standards in instances a student cannot sit NCEA examinations.

Unexpected event grades – NZQA

Submitting unexpected event grades is especially important this year, in case sudden COVID-19 alert level changes mean students are unable to sit all their end of year examinations.

The process is based on the collection of evidence of student achievement from class work, tests or other preparation for external assessment.

Guidance and templates for collecting evidence are available for all teachers through the school's NZQA secure login and subject pages. These can be used whether students are learning in class or remotely and could provide an alternative to practice examinations.

Subjects – NZQA

Schools can use the same template approach to collect evidence for internal and external achievement standards.

While schools are experienced in this process, we are conscious the operating environment is much more challenging for some schools this year. NZQA's school relationship managers can provide additional support to assist schools with entries, results, transferring students, and other data submission issues.

COVID-19 dual tuition gateway for Alert Level 3 areas

The dual tuition gateway is available until the end of the 2021 school year for students whose schools are operating under Alert Level 3 or 4.

Schools in Auckland, Waikato and Northland can register their Year 9 to 15 students to access support from Te Aho o Te Kura Pounami (Te Kura) through the COVID-19 dual tuition programme.

COVID-19 dual tuition gateway programme – Ministry of Education

The COVID-19 dual tuition programme can support both your students and teachers if your school does not have distance learning resources to help students to continue learning at home. It is also a valuable resource for students who are engaged in learning but feel they are at risk of not attaining their learning goals for the year.

If your school is interested in learning more about the COVID-19 dual tuition gateway, Te Kura has organised online sessions to show the features of this online programme and how it can be used to support your students and teachers.

COVID-19 dual tuition gateway – Te Kura

For registration or eligibility enquiries, contact the Student and Whānau Support team at Te Kura on 0800 65 99 88 and select 1, email enrolment@tekura.school.nz or contact the Te Kura relationship coordinator for your region.

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Super Saturday: Get vaccinated

FOREWORD

Kia ora koutou,

As I'm sure you're aware, Super Saturday is happening this weekend, our national day of action to get more people vaccinated.

I encourage you to think about what you can do as an individual or as a school leader to help others be vaccinated – summer is just around the corner and I for one know I'd like to enjoy it in full! Find more information on Super Saturday below.

As indicated yesterday, this bulletin covers some queries around events and gatherings, and we are preparing advice on the new vaccination and testing requirements. A big thank you to those of you who joined in the workshops today on vaccinations, vaccine registers and industrial relations. Your voice is invaluable in shaping our work.

Kia kaha to those of you in Waikato and Tai Tokerau as you remain under Alert Level 3 for five more days. We've included information and letter templates for you to send to your school community.

Should a decision be made to change alert levels, a period of time of at least 24 hours will be allowed to prepare for schools reopening for face-to-face teaching. Students already attending under Alert Level 3 will need to continue to be supported on-site.

Please let me know if there is anything else you'd like to see covered before the end of the term break.

Ngā mihi maioha,
Iona

Tonight: Vaccination live chat

In advance of Super Saturday, tonight (Wednesday 13 October) at 7.30pm you have the opportunity hear questions on the vaccines answered live on Facebook by Nigel Latta, Dr Maia Brewerton and Dr Helen Petousis-Harris.

COVID-19 vaccination live chat – Facebook

Northland and parts of Waikato remain at Level 3

This afternoon Minister Hipkins confirmed that Northland and the parts of Waikato currently at Alert Level 3 will remain at Alert Level 3 for a further five days until 11.59pm Monday 18 October. Auckland remains at Alert Level 3 (on Step 1 of the stepped transition).

Cabinet will review alert level settings again on Monday for these regions and for Auckland.

Schools in these areas must operate under Alert Level 3 settings when they reopen on 18 October, which means that only those children who need to attend as they don't have appropriate care at home, will be on-site.

The majority of children will remain learning from home through your distance learning programme.

We included a reminder of the Alert Level 3 settings in our bulletin on 11 October with full details on our website. There are also translations for key health requirements at Alert Level 3 which you can cut and paste from to send to your community, as well as a draft letter template for you to edit as needed.

Alert Level 3 requirements – School Bulletin 11 October

Public health measures at Alert Level 3 – Ministry of Education

Alert Level 3 translations – Ministry of Education

Letter template for Northland and areas of Waikato [DOCX, 20 KB]

Events, activities, gatherings and education outside the classroom

Alert Level 3

At Alert Level 3, there should not be any events, activities or gatherings held onsite beyond those related to curriculum requirements. Numbers involved in any curriculum-related activity should be kept to a minimum.

Physical activities, including singing and dancing, should only be held outside.

There should be no non-essential visitors onsite at Alert Level 3.

Alert Level 2

While there is discretion in what you may do at Alert Level 2 (subject to meeting public health requirements), we encourage you to consider adopting a similar stance to government decisions more generally – that is, take a precautionary approach when deciding whether to host a gathering or large event.

As noted in our bulletin on 30 September, events and activities where participants and attendees are there for education purposes are exempt from the rules of gatherings.

However, even if your event is considered to be for education purposes, unless it is really necessary to give effect to the curriculum, we recommend you avoid such events until Alert Level 1. An example of this is prize giving – though it is an important aspect of school life, it is not a curriculum requirement.

In lieu of holding a prize giving or another event in person, you may choose to hold a virtual event. Find guidance on our website.

With careful planning, education outside the classroom (EOTC) activities are able to go ahead at Alert Level 2. Our 14 September bulletin links you to the EONZ Q&A Zoom hui held on 13 September and the EONZ guidance for Alert Level 2.

Alert Level 2 Q&A – School Bulletin 14 September

Returning to school hostels in Alert Level 2 regions

Cabinet has agreed that students who are currently at home for the holidays in an Alert Level 3 region and board in hostels on the other side of the boundary will in the near future be able to travel to their hostel in an Alert Level 2 region.

Boarders would then be required to stay at their hostel for the remainder of the term. Travel back and forth between family home and hostel will not be permitted until travel restrictions are withdrawn (for example the Alert Level 3 region moves to Alert Level 2).

We expect this change to be effective from midnight on Friday, the latest we expect the COVID-19 Public Health Response (Alert Level Requirements) Order to be live. We will advise if there is any change to this.

This means boarders can plan to travel in the weekend in accordance with agreement with their hostel manager.

In the much the same way as requirements for tertiary students, there will be testing requirements – that is, you will need to carry evidence of a negative COVID-19 test taken no more than 72 hours prior to travelling and documentation (for example, a letter from the boarding hostel/school to show they are returning for the stated purpose). Family or caregivers are of course able to accompany their children and will also be subject to the testing regime.

For information, the advice provided for tertiary students is available on the Unite Against COVID-19 website (see 'Going to your home or relocating home/Move house permanently').

Permitted travel across alert levels – Unite Against COVID-19

COVID-19 board employee and ACC-funded teacher aide reimbursements

We're providing funding to support schools who have incurred additional costs in relation to board employees and ACC-funded teacher aides during the Alert Level 3 and 4 restrictions that commenced 18 August 2021.

If your school or kura is applying for both funding schemes, please ensure that you use the correct application forms provided below and submit them separately.

COVID-19 board employee reimbursement

Funding will be provided to schools and kura who have incurred additional costs in relation to the following board employees:

- kapa haka tutors
- canteen staff
- out-of-school care and recreation (OSCAR) employees.

Please note the costs incurred must be in relation to the Alert Level 3 and 4 restrictions that commenced 18 August 2021.

To apply for reimbursement, please complete the application form on our website.

Funding support for COVID-19 – Ministry of Education

To be reimbursed as part of the 1 January 2022 operational grant instalment, applications must be submitted no later than 5 November 2021.

Applications can still be submitted after this date, but the payment will be made as part of the 1 April 2022 operational grant instalment.

ACC-funded teacher aides

Schools and kura can claim reimbursement of ACC-funded teacher aide costs incurred from 1 September 2021 to the end of the Alert Level 3 restrictions that would otherwise be covered by ACC.

To apply for reimbursement, please complete the application form on our website.

Funding support for COVID-19 – Ministry of Education

To be reimbursed as part of the 1 January 2022 operational grant instalment, applications must be submitted no later than 5 November 2021.

Applications can still be submitted after this date, but the payment will be made as part of the 1 April 2022 operational grant instalment.

Wellbeing information and tips

To assist teachers and parents with the transition back to school, we've updated our supporting wellbeing information.

Guidance for teachers and school leaders – Ministry of Education

This includes practical tips on how to support children and students returning to school.

We know many students will be excited about getting back to see their friends and to to learning. However, some students may be reluctant and feel they have missed out on a lot of learning.

First and foremost, we'd encourage prioritising giving students the opportunity to reconnect with their friends, relating their experiences of recent weeks and then getting back into learning habits.

Super Saturday: Get vaccinated

With summer rapidly approaching, the Government is working hard to get everyone to have their first vaccine dose now.

We encourage you to support the national day of action this Saturday 16 October and think about what you can do as an individual or as a school leader to help others be vaccinated.

Super Saturday – Unite Against COVID-19

HE PITOPITO KŌRERO

COVID-19 UPDATE - 14 OCTOBER 2021

14 October 2021

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FOREWORD

Ngā mihi o te pō,

Throughout the motu I know there are many questions about the new vaccination and testing requirements. I appreciate this will have an impact on you and your community, and I thank you for your patience in waiting for guidance. The first article today addresses some of this.

The Public Health Orders which put the Government's decisions to mandate vaccinations and testing into effect will be published shortly, and we'll then be able to provide further guidance.

However, with regard to when staff should be tested prior to returning on site, it is likely the Health Order will state the test should be completed within five days of return. Public health advice is that where possible, a test within 72 hours of return would be preferred. Again, we'll confirm details when the order is in place.

Just to confirm, you will have 48 hours to prepare for the return of all students on site following any decisions about alert level changes.

Thank you to the hundreds of Auckland principals who joined the 'zui' this afternoon, Sorry we weren't able to answer all of your questions in the session – but we are providing some information in today's bulletin that will cover off some of the things you raised.

In the meantime, please continue to encourage your staff of the benefits and importance of getting vaccinated – we've had feedback that the webinars from Dr Michelle Dickinson have been helpful to the educators who have attended so far. Find information on the remaining sessions below.

Thank you again for all of your work – particularly this week!

Nāku iti noa, nā

Iona

Advice on the mandatory vaccination and testing requirements

We understand you have many questions on what the mandatory vaccination and testing requirements mean for your school and your staff.

As the deadlines approach, you may have employees who have chosen not to be vaccinated (or tested in Alert Level 3 regions). In those circumstances, due process and good employment practices need to be followed.

Your requirements as an employer under the Employment Relations Act 2000 remain in the COVID-19 environment and appropriate employment relations advice should be sought before any actions are taken.

The specific actions that your school board will need to take will depend on the final form of the Public Health Orders which put the Government's decisions to mandate vaccinations and testing into effect. Shortly, the Public Health Orders will be made and published and we will provide you with further guidance.

COVID-19 vaccine: Pregnancy and breastfeeding

We understand that your staff may have questions about getting the COVID-19 vaccine while pregnant and breastfeeding.

The Ministry of Health has information online which you may like to pass on to them to help them with their decision making.

Vaccines, pregnancy and breastfeeding – Ministry of Health

Vaccination register

Following the Government's announcement asking for a vaccine and testing register of education workers and eligible students, we held a workshop with a number of educators.

Following their feedback, we will provide you with guidance around the vaccination and testing information that you should be collecting.

We're finalising a vaccination register spreadsheet and supporting privacy statement that you can use to collect and record this information for education workers and eligible students. This will be available tomorrow.

Students and staff on the other side of a boundary

We've had a number of questions from schools in an Alert Level 2 area who have students and staff living in an Alert Level 3 area, including within Waikato.

In the current COVID-19 Public Health Response (Alert Level Requirements) Order, it is currently not permitted for students or staff to travel across the Alert Level 3 boundary to attend school in Alert Level 2. (Nor is it permitted for students or staff in an Alert Level 2 area to travel across a boundary to attend school in Alert Level 3.)

However, this is an issue under active consideration, and we will update you if there are any changes to permissions to travel in the near future.

It's possible that, if permitted in the future, travel by those in Alert Level 3 areas going into Alert Level 2 areas will require regular testing as part of that permission to travel back and forth (for those aged 12 and over). This would be confirmed through a future health order.

In the meantime, an exemption request to travel remains an option, but the threshold for approval remains high. Links to exemption requests can be found on the Unite Against COVID-19 website.

Personal travel across an alert level boundary – Unite Against COVID-19

Business travel across an alert level boundary – Unite Against COVID-19

If a school is faced with the situation where they won't have enough staff to safely operate with all or most students onsite, the school's board will need to decide how they will provide learning.

The school will remain open but may need to provide distance learning for a period of time for a proportion of students. Any planning will need to include supporting students to attend on site where they don't have appropriate supervision at home and consider what relief teacher options there are available.

Clarification on bubbles

You can form new bubbles at the start of Term 4 (for example adding new children to a bubble to make the numbers up to 10). Once they are formed, they cannot then be changed or mixed with other bubbles.

Bubbles cannot mix with each other, including teaching staff. Bubbles should maintain at least a two-metre distance from other bubbles and should use different spaces at break times.

Wherever possible teachers should stay with the same school bubble of students. In practice there may be a need to have a designated relief or back-up teacher identified for each school bubble.

You don't need separate toilets to manage bubbles – just try and avoid any bubbles congregating together at the same time, which would include break times. Keep spaces, including bathrooms, well-ventilated and follow all good hygiene and cleaning practices.

Bubbles are to be made of no more than 10 children plus teaching staff.

There is no limit to the number of bubbles you can host on site, as long as you can meet all other public health requirements including physical distancing, staff not working across different bubbles, cleaning

and hygiene. Consider also how you will avoid congregating of students before and after school and at break times. Staggered breaks are recommended to support this.

Exemption requests: Senior students onsite

Unless you have a new or different purpose for bringing senior students onsite, your previous approval from the Secretary for Education will continue to apply.

Face coverings on school transport

Students of all ages are encouraged to wear a face covering on all school transport services under all alert levels.

Providing face coverings is the responsibility of individuals and caregivers. Any student who is unwell should not travel on a school or public bus.

We encourage you to convey the following information on face coverings to the caregivers of your students.

Students aged 12 and over

Face coverings are required to be worn by students aged 12 and over while on school transport (both Ministry and regional council-operated services) under all alert levels.

This includes SESTA, daily, technology, direct resourced, and Māori-medium school transport services. It also includes charter buses hired by schools to transport students and staff.

Students aged 12 and over are also required to wear face coverings on public transport.

Please note, while the school transport drivers are not required to enforce the wearing of face coverings, they will report any non-compliance to your school's bus controller. Schools are expected to manage any non-compliance just as they currently manage behavioural issues of school transport users.

Students under 12

Students aged under 12 are not required to wear face coverings on school transport.

This includes SESTA, daily, technology, direct resourced, and Māori-medium school transport services. It also includes charter buses hired by schools to transport students and staff.

However, all students are encouraged to wear face coverings on school transport.

SESTA students

SESTA students are covered by the above face covering requirements. However, we understand that some SESTA students will not be able to wear a face covering.

Schools with SESTA students should note that some exemptions from face covering requirements are allowed. Information on face covering exemptions can be found on the Unite Against COVID-19 website.

Wear a face covering – Unite Against COVID-19

To request an exemption card, please contact the Disabled Persons Assembly NZ on 04 801 9100 or info@dpa.org.nz.

What to do if you have a case of COVID-19 in your school

If you have a probable or confirmed case of COVID-19 in your school, you'll be notified by the Medical Officer of Health or your local public health authority.

Our regional staff will work with you and local health authorities to agree a plan. This will happen quickly, and you'll be provided with assistance to help you to communicate with and support your staff and parent community.

COVID-19 in your school – Ministry of Education

We also have a checklist to support your preparations if you are in the future required to close at short notice.

Checklist for possible closure [DOCX, 32 KB]

New session: Vaccine webinars

The Nanogirl Labs webinars hosted by Dr Michelle Dickinson launched yesterday – thank you to those who joined the hui, we hope it was helpful.

For those of you who can't attend the morning sessions, we've added an evening session next Thursday 21 October.

The next sessions are happening:

- tomorrow Friday 15 October at 10am
- Thursday 21 October at 4pm and 7pm
- Friday 22 October at 4pm.

The sessions are open to all education workforce through a registration process:

Vaccine science webinars – Eventbrite

A reminder that the aim is to support you and your staff to get answers to vaccine questions from a trusted source of information. The hui will not cover the operational implications of mandatory vaccinations and testing time frames. We'll answer those pātai (questions) in these bulletins.

Getting your COVID-19 test results

- Test results are usually available within 48-72 hours. Several factors can influence this, including how quickly a given sample can be transported to the laboratory for testing and how many samples that lab has to process.
- Samples taken from close contacts of cases and high-risk individuals are prioritised by laboratories.
- Anyone who receives a positive test result will be contacted directly by someone from the public health team.
- Anyone whose test result comes back as negative will be advised via text message (unless another method for contact is specified at the time the test was taken).
- Anyone who has not received the results of their test within five days should contact the place where the swab was taken (such as their GP or the testing centre they visited).
- Across the entire period of the outbreak, 78% of all tests were processed within 24 hours.

Settlement funding for 2022

We'll be providing additional funding in 2022 for both the support staff in schools and teacher aide pay equity settlements.

Letters will be provided that outline schools' funding instalments for the 2022 year:

- 1 December 2021 letters will provide you with a detailed breakdown of your schools 1 January 2022 settlement funding instalment.
- 25 March 2022 letters will provide you with a detailed breakdown of your schools remaining 2022 Settlement funding instalments for 1 April 2022, 1 July 2022 and 1 October 2022. Please note that the 1 April 2022 instalment will also include wash up settlement funding, and where applicable a breakdown of your schools Exceptional Translational Funding relating to the 2021 school year.

For further information see our website.

2022 funding instalments – Ministry of Education

HE PITOPITO KŌRERO

COVID-19 UPDATE - 15 OCTOBER 2021

15 October 2021

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End-of-year applications for ORS and SHHNF

FOREWORD

Ngā mihi o te Rāmere,

Way back at the beginning of the latest outbreak, I commented that “three COVID days always seem like six ordinary days”. I don’t know about you, but this week has felt a bit like that again.

The queries are still coming, but as I noted yesterday, it’s challenging to be able to provide clear guidance without the Public Health Orders which will put the Government’s decisions to mandate vaccinations and testing into effect.

The Health Order to support testing looks set to be published tonight, and we are aiming to provide you with full guidance on what testing requirements mean for schools from an employment perspective on Monday. A Health Order to support vaccinations is not expected until next week.

In the meantime, we are providing clarity on the testing requirements for those of you in Alert Level 3, when staff can return on site and what being fully vaccinated means.

We have also today talked with representatives of all of the District Health Boards to discuss how we can support this. We have seen surges in Alert Level 3 areas as educators and other staff seek testing in advance of a limited return on Monday. If you haven't had a test and you intend to be on site from Monday, I encourage you to get a test as soon as possible. If you're not sure where to do that, find a helpful website below.

At this time, test results are taking one to two days to return. You will need to plan your test so that you have a result in time. Equally, if you are working remotely from Monday and do not have symptoms, you may want to wait and get a test next week. Remember you need to have a negative test result within five days of returning on site at Alert Level 3.

I apologise for any confusion caused by the communication around preparing for opening and the need for negative testing. To clarify, you will have 48 hours to prepare if there is a change down to Alert Level 2 – testing is only required in Alert Level 3. Of course, if you are ready to reopen, you can do so as soon as an alert level change comes into effect.

Once again, your governance and leadership through this change is incredibly important. How we react as a sector and how we prepare for staff and tamariki returning to school will be a mark of the profession. Thank you for this – another momentous step up that this pandemic has required.

Your Regional Director of Education and their teams are available to provide advice and support, I encourage you to contact them.

Kia kaha,
Iona

Vaccine and testing register

Following the Government's announcement asking for a vaccine and testing register of education workers and eligible students, we have created the following documents for your use.

However, if you have another system that captures the information required that works better for you, you are free to use that. We are working on a consistent secure tool for Term 1 next year.

Privacy statement for education workers [DOCX, 18 KB]

Privacy statement for eligible students [DOCX, 17 KB]

Vaccination register spreadsheet for the education workers [XLSX, 55 KB]

Vaccination register spreadsheet for eligible students [XLSX, 93 KB]

Schools and kura should complete these in a secure and confidential manner in line with their usual obligations under the Privacy Act 2020. Given the sensitivity of the information being collected, schools and kura should ensure that unauthorised access to the information is not able to occur.

We anticipate that there will be significant public interest in vaccination status, particularly from 15 November. We will work with you on how we can best meet that interest in an secure and low compliance manner.

For advice contact Data.Team@education.govt.nz.

Clarification on testing requirements for Alert Level 3 regions

Everyone working in a school or kura in Auckland and other Alert Level 3 regions (regardless of vaccination status) will be required to return a negative COVID-19 result ahead of returning physically to a school. Preferably the test will be done within 72 hours of returning to school, but up to five days before will suffice.

All staff members must have returned an initial negative test in order to return to work.

Weekly testing at Alert Level 3

When a region is at Alert Level 3, follow-up tests will be required on a weekly basis for all staff who are not fully vaccinated. (See 'Being fully vaccinated' below for further details.)

Weekly testing for COVID-19 will be required if:

- the school is in an Alert Level 3 region and
- the staff member is not fully vaccinated.

Staff will not be required to isolate after their follow-up tests unless they are:

- experiencing COVID-19 symptoms
- a casual plus contact

- a close contact who is experiencing COVID-19 symptoms
- a household member of a close contact
- a household member of a close contact who is experiencing COVID-19 symptoms.

Once a staff member becomes fully vaccinated, regular testing will no longer be required for them to continue to work on site.

Being fully vaccinated

- You are considered fully vaccinated when you have received your second dose of the vaccine for COVID-19.
- You are considered to be fully immunised two weeks after having received your second dose of the vaccine.

The requirement for weekly testing in Alert Level 3 regions is until you are fully vaccinated. So as soon as you receive your second dose, there is no need for continued testing.

It is important to note however, that even if you are undergoing weekly testing or if you are fully vaccinated, if you start to experience any symptoms that could be related to COVID-19, you must stay at home and seek advice about getting tested.

The time from being exposed to the virus, until a person tests positive is shorter for the Delta variant. This means that on average, a person may be infectious for one to two days before they develop symptoms.

Vaccine requirements and contractors

We've had a number of queries about the contractors schools may have on site. While we can't provide a definitive answer ahead of the Health Order, we anticipate that the vaccination requirements will not apply to employees or workers who will not have contact with a child or student in the process of providing their service.

Contact with a child/student means either by directly having contact with the child/student by being on site during opening hours and having contact with a worker who has direct contact with a child/student.

As always, we recommend you exercise caution. If there is any doubt, contractors should comply with the testing and vaccination requirements.

Where to get tested

If you are not sure where you can get a test, please use the following link to find a GP, urgent care clinic or community testing centre near you.

COVID-19 testing – Healthpoint

Face coverings on school transport

As noted yesterday, there will be new requirements to wear face coverings on school transport for ages 12 and over.

We will notify you when this takes effect following inclusion in the Health Response Order.

Face coverings on school transport – School Bulletin 14 October

End-of-year applications for ORS and SHHNF

To receive a decision about your Ongoing Resourcing Scheme (ORS) and School High Health Needs Fund (SHHNF) applications this school year, email applications to manager.eligibility@education.govt.nz by 5pm Friday 12 November.

The verifiers consider applications up until the office closes for the Christmas/new year period and they start considering applications again when they return to the office in the new year.

For all applications received after the 12 November, decisions may not be available before the end of the school year. Please note this is one of our busiest times of the year and we will endeavour to get decisions to you as soon as possible.

There is no cut-off date for applications for the school year and they can be submitted at any time.

The aim of the application process is to ensure that all students who are eligible are included in the ORS. If there is not enough information in applications to make a decision or the information is contradictory, the verifiers will request additional information. Often towards the end of the term and year end there is a noticeable increase in the additional information requests the verifiers need to ask for.

Educators can help timely consideration and decision-making by referring to the ORS guidelines before they start applications, ensuring they include all relevant information and that the application does not include contradictory and/or unsubstantiated information.

ORS guidelines – Ministry of Education

HE PITOPITO KŌRERO

COVID-19 UPDATE - 20 OCTOBER 2021

20 October 2021

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Ka Ora, Ka Ako in Alert Level 3

FOREWORD

Ngā mihi o te ahiahi,

The disruption to NCEA this year for students in Year 11, 12 and 13 has been significant which is why the announcement made this afternoon by the Minister of Education is so critical.

As well as supporting our senior students in relation to NCEA, there are considerable wellbeing benefits to having rangatahi learning kanohi ki te kanohi. We know that many of our ākonga have found distance learning very difficult, and in some cases impossible to maintain.

And so students in Years 11 to 13 and who are in an Alert Level 3 area can return to on site learning next week from Tuesday 26 October to assist with their end-of-year preparation.

While today's bulletin is primarily focussed on the details of this, I also want to acknowledge those of you who are "keeping on" in Alert Level 2.

Please know we are working closely with our colleagues in Health to support you. If you want advice on hosting a vaccination site at your school or support or guidance through this period, please contact your local Director of Education in the first instance. We'll make sure you are connected with the right people.

We're also aware today's announcement does not change the situation for teachers in an Alert Level 2 area needing to cross the border to teach in Alert Level 3. We're seeking clarification on this and will provide an update as soon as we're able.

Kia ora rawa atu,
Iona

Why it's important for Years 11 to 13 to return on site in Alert Level 3 areas

The reopening of onsite learning to all students is critical for their learning and therefore the country's future and is based on advice from public health experts.

Taking incremental steps will allow us to reconnect our young people with face-to-face learning while we build up our national immunity to the virus.

We want to protect our children now and into their future. A focus on vaccination and testing remains a critical element of our nation's COVID-19 response.

Eligible young people were able to be vaccinated from the beginning of September. This means they have had a good opportunity to get vaccinated and protected from COVID-19. However, they have had less opportunity and time to do so, which is why it's important that we continue to look at opportunities to make it easy for young people to get vaccinated when they return on site to school.

And so for now we have prioritised students in Years 11 to 13 returning to school because they will be need to take assessments before the end of the year.

With that said, we recognise that the situation remains challenging for all students and we are looking at what options we have for getting them physically back to school while managing public health risks.

We've been looking at how other countries have been bringing students back (for example, bringing student back in separate groups or having learning take place outside as much as possible), and we are working towards being able to do this.

Later this week, we will (alongside Health) talk to school leaders and unions about what is possible, and Ministers will look at these options next week.

In the meantime, the vaccination programme is supplemented by other measures that reduce transmission of virus such as wearing of face coverings, fresh air and good ventilation, ensuring great hygiene practices at all times, and increased vigilance of symptoms.

Public health advice remains that with the expected health measures in place, risk of infection in a school setting is low. Parents and whānau can be confident that the approach is designed to keep their children, their teachers and their communities as safe as possible.

But it's important everybody continues to play their part: stay at home if you are unwell, get tested if you have symptoms, maintain your bubble, and keep track of where you have been. Please continue to encourage your community to be vaccinated – the more people that are vaccinated, the more children can attend learning on site with fewer restrictions in place.

Letter template: Return of Years 11 to 13 to return on site in Alert Level 3 areas

Return of Year 11 to 13 students to onsite learning in Alert Level 3 areas [DOCX, 20 KB]

Summary of information for Years 11 to 13 returning onsite in Alert Level 3

Minister Hipkins announced today that young people in Years 11 to 13 in Auckland will return to school for face-to-face onsite teaching from Tuesday 26 October.

- There are a range of health measures that are required to be in place to ensure all students in Years 11 to 13 can return to onsite learning in Alert Level 3 areas safely.
- The small number of students from Years 1 to 10 who are already attending on site will continue to be able to learn on site (as they don't have an appropriate carer at home).
- The health measures noted below and in the more detailed guidance will therefore apply to all students and staff on site where there are Year 11 to 13 students attending.

- The existing measures for Alert Level 3 will continue to apply for any school which does not have Year 11 to 13 students attending.

No school bubbles

There will no longer be bubbles of up to ten students required when all senior students return on site, including for those students already on site in Years 1 to 10.

Wherever practicable a one-metre distance should be kept from all others on site, particularly between staff, and a two-metre distance from people you don't know.

Existing Alert Level 3 requirements that will continue

There are an extensive range of health requirements and measures at Alert Level 3 that will remain in place.

- Staff and children who are unwell must stay at home and get tested for COVID-19.
- Children at higher risk of severe illness should remain home where possible.
- Staff who are not fully vaccinated and at higher risk of severe illness must remain home.
- Mandatory mask wearing for staff and students in Years 9 to 13.
- Only essential visitors will be permitted on site.
- All visitors on site need to wear a face covering.
- Maintain good hand hygiene and cough and sneeze etiquette.
- Classrooms should be well ventilated.
- High-touch surfaces need to be cleaned and disinfected each day.
- Physical distancing should be adhered to wherever practicable, particularly between adults.
- Physical distancing of two metres will be in place from people you don't know.
- QR code posters for contact tracing with the COVID-19 app must be displayed.
- A contact tracing register in place for everyone coming on site – including students and staff – through the attendance register, timetable and visitor register.

Additional public health measures

Over the last two weeks, we have worked with the Ministry of Health and Education to refine public health measures that would need to be in place when children and young people return to school.

Some additional public health measures were agreed by Cabinet on Monday 11 October:

- face coverings will be required on school transport for people aged 12 and over
- time outdoors for students and staff will be maximised, including breaks, lunchtime, before and after school (unless the weather does not allow), and rooms will be aired during breaks
- exercising and singing will take place outdoors
- groups meeting indoors, including assemblies or staff meetings, will be avoided
- exams can go ahead but physical distancing will be maximised within the space available with a minimum of 1.5 metres between desks.

You are also aware that all staff must return one negative test before they return on site and staff who are not fully vaccinated will need to be tested weekly with mandatory vaccination of all staff by 1 January 2022. Please see our bulletin yesterday for further details.

Information about the COVID-19 Required Testing Order – School Bulletin 19 October

The guidance document below provides details of all health requirements and measures for all schools with Year 11 to 13 students in an Alert Level 3 area returning on site.

Guidance for schools in Alert Level 3 when bringing Year 11 to 13 students on site [DOCX, 59 KB]

NCEA and New Zealand Scholarship exams 2021

NCEA exams and New Zealand Scholarship exams will go ahead as planned between Monday 22 November and Tuesday 14 December.

The wellbeing of students remains our top priority, as does supporting students to return to school and to continue their learning.

NZQA has also invoked the unexpected event grade process for students in Auckland, Waikato and Northland.

This means students in Auckland, Waikato and Northland who cannot attend an exam due to the COVID-19 disruption will receive the unexpected event grade submitted by their school. Where they do attend the exam, they will receive the better of their exam grade or their unexpected event grade.

Where possible, students are expected to attend exams. NZQA is working with schools on measures to protect students and staff which align with public health guidance. Of course, physical distancing is a normal part of exam conditions.

Unexpected event grades are available for NCEA examinations only. They are not available for New Zealand Scholarship examinations.

Unexpected event grade – NZQA

Advice on ventilating classrooms

A reminder that the fastest and easiest way to ventilate is by opening the windows, doors and any vents. It's good practice to keep your windows open all day (where possible), not just during breaks.

Find further advice on ventilation, including how to best ventilate using mechanical or passive ventilation, on our website.

Ventilation in schools – Ministry of Education

If for any reason your windows don't open, please ask your caretaker or another appropriate person to facilitate fixing or replacing them. If you need to, please contact your property advisor for advice.

We are considering how public health measures, optimising ventilation in classrooms, and the potential use of other active technologies such as air monitoring and air treatment can best be used to provide healthy internal environments.

To make sure that our decisions are the right ones to support healthy internal environments in New Zealand schools, we are working with the Ministry of Health and considering good practice in New Zealand and internationally.

Specialist, residential and sensory schools reopening in Alert Level 3

We know from previous alert level restrictions that some parents with children in specialist, residential and sensory schools will welcome the re-opening, while others will be reluctant to send their children to school.

Schools will need to work with students and their parents on a case-by-case basis supported by the Ministry.

Specialist schools will have satellites within a secondary school. Where there are children is part of a satellite unit within a secondary school, their return should be considered part of the re-opening of the secondary school with support from the specialist school.

Prioritising testing for the education workforce

We've been working with Health on planning for the prioritisation of testing for the education workforce should it be required.

We recommend that when you are getting tested you use the codes detailed here.

These 'surveillance' codes are used for public health purposes to easily track and group people in the event of a positive case, location of interest and to review testing uptake amongst a population group.

These codes will be the vehicle Health will use should there be a need in the future for prioritisation testing of the teaching workforce and the capacity to deliver that.

- Secondary school faculty: SURV-SEC
- Primary school faculty: SURV-PRIM
- Early Childhood Education: SURV-ECE
- Education providers who work outside the above categories: SURV-EDU

Parental consent for vaccinations

A number of schools have asked about parental consent for the vaccinations of young people aged 12 to 15 years.

As you're aware, anyone aged 12 years and over is eligible to receive the COVID-19 vaccine. As with other vaccination programmes, and under New Zealand law, children and young people under the age of 16 years may give or withhold consent to healthcare treatment, so long as they are competent to do so.

A health professional will discuss the vaccination prior to giving the vaccine and can answer any questions from the young person. If the young person has a good understanding, they can say yes or no to getting the vaccine themselves.

A parent or caregiver can provide consent if preferred, and it is the Ministry of Health's recommendation that young people aged 12-15 years discuss the vaccination with whānau or a trusted support person first.

If the parent or caregiver would prefer to give consent, the easiest way to do this is for the parent or caregiver to be present during vaccination and provide verbal consent. They can book their young

person in for vaccination at the same time as their vaccination or accompany them to their own appointment.

You can book through your GP or through vaccination centres.

- Book online through Book My Vaccine.
- For a group booking, call the COVID Vaccination Healthline on 0800 28 29 26 (8am-8pm).

Please note that the consent process is different if it is part of a school-based vaccination programme (as opposed to a community-based vaccination programme that might be held on a school site).

For more information on the consent process in these settings, please see the Ministry of Health's policy statement on informed consent for young people aged 12-15.

Book My Vaccine – Ministry of Health

Policy statement on informed consent for young people aged 12-15 [PDF, 56 KB]

Ka Ora, Ka Ako in Alert Level 3

At Alert Level 3, Ka Ora, Ka Ako lunches should be provided to all those attending school when schools and kura reopen for Year 11 to 13 ākonga.

Returning to normal routines as much as possible will be important for the wellbeing of ākonga.

For schools and kura using an external supplier, we are contacting suppliers to tell them of our requirements, and your supplier will contact you to confirm lunch orders and any special dietary requirements. If do not hear from them, please contact them directly to confirm arrangements.

Please keep in close contact with your supplier or kitchen manager to keep them informed of the number of lunches needed week by week and to adjust orders accordingly. We know it may be difficult to determine attendance and you should also consider a plan for managing any surplus lunches.

Please ensure your school and any suppliers are meeting all health and safety requirements for your alert level before you restart the supply of food to your students.

Schools making their own lunches should check guidance from Ministry for Primary Industries (MPI) around food safety and COVID-19 at Alert Level 3.

Food safety in Alert Level 3 – MPI

We also recommend you consider how lunches are served and where ākonga eat lunch.

Here are some examples:

- if practicable, eat lunch outside where there is good ventilation. If this is not possible, ensure your indoor areas are well ventilated
- provide hand sanitiser in dining areas and other common areas
- remind ākonga about the importance of not sharing food or drinks
- explore other ways to avoid ākonga congregating such as staggered mealtimes.

HE PITOPITO KŌRERO

COVID-19 UPDATE – 21 OCTOBER 2021

21 October 2021

IN THIS BULLETIN ISSUE

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FOREWORD

Kia ora koutou,

An issue dedicated to vaccines today: at a critical time in the vaccine rollout, we know there is still a significant amount of misinformation in communities and many of you are under pressure as a result. Sometimes it's good just to get back to basics – for instance, why is it we want to get vaccinated in the first place? Find information below, including a letter template you can share with parents and whānau.

We are working really closely with our colleagues in Health to provide you with support, in this bulletin there is information about a dedicated email line for educators where you can ask your questions about vaccines or get support to set up a vaccination site.

The Government is currently considering public health advice related to those areas in the Waikato currently in Alert Level 3 and will have an update in due course. We will provide guidance in the event any changes are made.

Ngā manaakitanga,
Iona

Why get vaccinated?

We've talked a lot about vaccinations in our bulletins lately, but we're aware that in many school communities there continues to be anxiety about vaccinations – and some may even wonder why vaccines are being emphasised so strongly.

As noted, the Ministry of Health have set up a dedicated email you can use for queries about vaccinations and access to vaccination.

Email schools@health.govt.nz with your queries.

Reasons to get vaccinated

Without vaccines, we're at risk of serious illness, disability or even death from things like the measles, meningitis, pneumonia, tetanus and polio – and now COVID-19.

Vaccines work by stimulating the body's natural resistance by training our immune systems to create antibodies.

Here are a few reasons why vaccinations are good for everyone:

- they can prevent us from getting sick
- they are safe
- they can save lives
- they will not cause a disease they are designed to prevent
- they can help protect the community
- prevention is much better than treatment.

In a nutshell, by getting vaccinated, we are protecting ourselves, our loved ones and those around us. Most people can be vaccinated, but those who cannot be – including very young babies, those who are seriously ill or have certain allergies – depend on us to be vaccinated to ensure they are also safe from vaccine-preventable diseases.

These are the reasons the Government is requiring the education workforce to be vaccinated by 1 January 2022.

It's important to know that licensed vaccines have been rigorously tested across multiple phases before being approved for use.

How COVID-19 vaccines work – Ministry of Health

Addressing vaccine misinformation in your community

We know there is added pressure as misleading COVID-19 and vaccinations information circulates through social media and the public.

Here are some answers to common questions that may be helpful.

How does the vaccine work?

The COVID-19 vaccine works by teaching your body to fight the virus and protects you from getting sick.

1. The vaccine sends a set of instructions to teach your body how to fight the COVID-19 virus.

2. With these instructions your body learns to recognise the COVID-19 virus and use antibodies against it. Antibodies stop the virus from infecting your cells and help to kill it.
3. That means if you come into contact with the COVID-19 virus in the future, your body will have the right tools to protect itself so you are less likely to get sick.

Is the vaccine safe?

The Pfizer vaccine has been thoroughly assessed for safety by our own Medsafe experts.

Medsafe only grants consent for using a vaccine in Aotearoa once they're satisfied it has met strict standards for safety, efficacy and quality.

This is the same process used to assess other vaccines, like the flu, measles, and tetanus vaccines. There have been no shortcuts taken in granting approval.

The Pfizer vaccine has been used successfully by millions worldwide and is highly effective at preventing severe illness and death. It continues to be monitored for safety.

Why was it developed so quickly?

Because the mRNA vaccine is not new technology and has been studied for over a decade, including for the development of other vaccines such as the seasonal flu vaccine, researchers had a head start.

This is the first time scientists and governments from around the world have united to develop a vaccine. This global collaboration meant they could spend an enormous amount of time and money into developing the vaccines very quickly without taking any shortcuts in the necessary processes or compromising safety. This also meant that the various stages of research development happened at the same time.

What I can expect when I get the vaccine?

You can book through your GP or through vaccination centres:

- book online through Book My Vaccine
- group bookings, call the COVID Vaccination Healthline on 0800 28 29 26 (8am-8pm).

When you arrive to receive your vaccination, the vaccinator will offer you the opportunity to ask any questions.

You will need to relax and sit still. Some find it helpful to listen to music, or you may choose to have a support person with you.

The vaccinator will then inject the vaccine into your arm. You can look away or close your eyes if you need to. You may feel a pinch or scratch when the needle goes in.

You'll then be asked to get your second dose of the vaccine six weeks or more after your first dose.

Book My Vaccine – Ministry of Health

Are there any side effects?

It is common to experience mild side effects, such as muscle aches, pain at the injection site or headaches.

These are more commonly reported after the second dose and are actually a sign that your body's immune system is learning to fight the virus. They don't last long and won't stop you from having a second dose or going about your daily life.

There are some side effects that are more serious but very rare, like a severe allergic reaction or an inflammation of the heart. If you develop difficulty breathing, a racing heart, chest pain or feel faint immediately or in the days after the vaccine, you should seek medical attention.

Further information

The Ministry of Health's COVID-19 guidance will provide you with the facts to help communicate with your community.

Here are links to some downloadable PDFs:

Managing false and misleading information and scams [PDF, 820 KB]

Getting the COVID-19 vaccine if you're 12 to 15 years old [PDF, 526 KB]

COVID-19 vaccination: Get the facts [PDF, 719 KB]

Your COVID-19 vaccination: Everything you need to know [PDF, 836 KB]

COVID-19 vaccine information and resource toolkit [PDF, 2.7 MB]

The Unite Against COVID-19 website also has content about misinformation and scams that may also be helpful for you and for your community.

Misinformation, scams and online harm – Unite Against COVID-19

If you see something about COVID-19 or the vaccine that doesn't seem right or if it's on social media, you can report it to the platform. Anything else can be reported to CERTNZ.

COVID-19 scams – CERTNZ

Working through vaccine hesitancy

Here is a range of resources available to inform people in your community who are anxious about the vaccine.

Videos

Nigel Latta, Dr Maia Brewerton and Dr Helen Petousis-Harris recently answered questions in a Ministry of Health Facebook live event:

Ask an expert: COVID-19 vaccination live chat – Facebook

Mihingarangi Forbes sat down with Dr Hinemoa Elder to discuss some key concerns and hesitations on Te Puni Kōkiri's Facebook:

Mihi & Hinemoa Elder: How does the vaccine protect us? – Facebook

Dr Anthony Jordan, Dr Papaarangi Reid, Dr Rawiri McKree-Jansen, Dr Maia Brewerton (specialists and activists in Māori health) take phone calls from the public about COVID-19 and the vaccine on Te Ao with Moana's Facebook page:

Vax facts with Māori doctors – Facebook

Clinical psychologist Rachel Prebble explains how to talk to friends and whānau in this video create an opportunity for open, safe conversations which build trust and enable change over time on YouTube:

Clinical psychologist Rachel Prebble – YouTube

A fun and informative item on the Hahana Facebook page with answers to lots of vaccine questions:

COVID-19 kōrero with three doctors – Facebook

A rangatahi panel with Dr Jason Tuhoe on Te Puni Kōkiri's Facebook to kōrero about the vaccine from different perspectives (vaccinated, vaccine hesitant, wants to be vaccinated but whānau pressure not to).

Rangatahi panel with Dr Jason Tuhoe – Facebook

Watch a discussion on The Panel between four health professionals where they share their thoughts, knowledge and experiences of the COVID-19 vaccine:

Straight Up with Dr Lily Fraser – Facebook

Articles

Why some people struggle to change their minds about vaccination is a video and article in The Whole Truth series on Stuff:

The Whole Truth: COVID-19 Vaccine – Stuff

The World Health Organization has an article on talking to vaccine-hesitant people, also available in Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian, Portuguese and Spanish:

How to talk about vaccines – World Health Organization

An article in The Herald where University of Auckland vaccinologist Associate Professor Helen Petousis-Harris looks at 10 vaccine myths circulating on social media:

10 of the biggest vaccine myths debunked – NZ Herald

In this The Spinoff article, Kate Hannah (a cultural historian at Te Pūnaha Matatini) shares some thoughts on how to talk to loved ones who are vaccine hesitant:

Bridging the gap with someone who's been pulled in by disinformation – The Spinoff

Information and translations about the vaccine for parents and whānau

We have prepared a draft letter for parents and whānau that you may choose to send:

Letter template to support vaccination [PDF, 55 KB]

Find information on te rongoā ārai mate korona (the COVID-19 vaccine) on the Unite Against COVID-19 website:

Ngā kano ārai mate – Unite against COVID-19

The Ministry for Pacific Peoples has key messages about vaccines for Pacific communities from which you can cut and paste the relevant text into your own communications as needed.

Vaccinations and boosters – Ministry for Pacific Peoples

There is also a range of other alternate format content on the Unite Against COVID-19 website, including New Zealand Sign Language and Easy Read:

Alternative formats – Unite Against COVID-19

How to set your school up as a vaccination site

While it is often more convenient for many 12 to 15-year-olds to go with their families to get vaccinated, in some instances your school board may decide that offering vaccinations at school (a school-based programme), or on a school site is in the best interests of your community.

Your school can be used as a 'community vaccination site' which will be able to vaccinate staff, students and whānau using a District Health Board (DHB) vaccination team or other team as agreed by the DHB.

In the instance that a school and local health provider agree that the school will be used as a vaccination site, they will be the joint PCBU – schools boards for the health and safety of people on the school site and Ministry of Health/the health provider for the health and safety in relation to vaccine logistics and delivery.

The Ministry of Health have set up a dedicated email you can use for queries about vaccinations and access to vaccination. Email schools@health.govt.nz with your queries.

Consent for school-based vaccinations

A reminder that the consent process for young people receiving vaccinations is different, depending whether:

- the vaccination is part of a school-based programme
- the vaccination is part of a community-based programme (that might be held on a school site).

For more information on the consent process in these settings, please see the Ministry of Health's policy statement on informed consent for young people aged 12 to 15.

COVID-19 vaccine informed consent for young people aged 12 to 15 [PDF, 173 KB]

School-based vaccination programme

School-based vaccination programmes will require written consent from the young person's parent or guardian for all COVID-19 vaccines administered in schools.

Community-based vaccination programme

As with other vaccination programmes, and under New Zealand law, children and young people under the age of 16 years may give or withhold consent to healthcare treatment, so long as they are competent to do so.

However, a parent or caregiver can provide consent if preferred, and it is the Ministry of Health's recommendation that young people aged 12 to 15 years discuss the vaccination with whānau or a trusted support person first.

Clarification: To bubble or not to bubble

Apologies for any confusion caused yesterday regarding the guidance provided for those schools with Year 11 to 13 students returning next week.

If you are a school with Year 11 to 13 students, the guidance from yesterday's bulletin will apply to all students on site, including those students who were already attending in other year levels (as they don't have appropriate care at home).

Wherever practicable keep those students already on site separated as much as possible from the Year 11 to 13 students who are returning, especially when indoors.

For schools with no Year 11 to 13 students, you will continue to operate in the same way for those students who are already on site. So you will need to continue with bubbles of up to 10 students.

Where to get tested

If you are not sure where you can get a test, please use the following link to find a GP, urgent care clinic or community testing centre near you.

COVID-19 testing – Healthpoint

Reminder: My COVID Record

A reminder that anyone aged 16 and over can now access a record of their COVID-19 vaccinations through My Covid Record

My Covid Record – Ministry of Health

The records include details of the vaccinations you've had including date, time, location and batch number. You will initially need to register and create an account. You can also request proof of your vaccination.

COVID-19 vaccination record requests – Unite Against COVID-19

HE PITOPITO KŌRERO

COVID-19 UPDATE - 24 OCTOBER 2021

24 October 2021

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Attestation forms required

Alert Level 3 boundaries: Newly permitted travel

School transport

Update on testing timeframes

Vaccine register update

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Specific actions

FOREWORD

Kia ora koutou,

As you know, we try not to publish bulletins over the weekend unless it is absolutely necessary.

This issue covers several key pieces of information to support schools in Alert Level 3 areas that are welcoming secondary students back on Tuesday. Most importantly, it clarifies the latest requirements about who can return to onsite learning – we didn't get it right for you yesterday.

Thank you again for raising questions and issues with me. We do our best to get this right first time, but where we don't your feedback is essential.

Ngā mihi,
Iona

Students attending on site in Alert Level 3 areas

Students in Years 11 to 13 and who are in an Alert Level 3 area can return to onsite learning from Tuesday 26 October to assist with their end-of-year preparation.

The information I provided you in the direction yesterday was confusing and in some cases incorrect. Thank you to those who drew this to my attention. It provided a far too narrow set of instructions for who can return. I want to apologise for that. We are fixing it.

To be absolutely clear, all students in Years 11 to 13 can return to onsite learning from Tuesday 26 October.

There are a small number of schools who have students in Years 9 and 10 who are also undertaking formal NCEA (or similar) assessments and exams. In those cases, those students can also attend on site.

Attestation forms required

Please note that school leaders will need to attest that the conditions in the direction can be met.

There are two forms depending on whether you are in an Alert Level 2 area or an Alert Level 3 area:

Senior student exams exemptions approved form in Alert Level 2 [DOCX, 21 KB]

Senior student exams exemption approved form in Alert Level 3 [DOCX, 21 KB]

Before a school can operate under the direction, the appropriate form needs to be completed and sent to Covid19.essentialservices@education.govt.nz.

However, it is important to note that a school does not need the permission of the Secretary to operate and should not wait for this before opening for students.

The attestation relates to students returning only. Staff are permitted to return to school on site through amendments to the Health Order and follow all relevant health measures.

Alert Level 3 boundaries: Newly permitted travel

The COVID-19 Public Health Response (Alert Level Requirements) Order (Health Order) was amended late Friday. Changes will take effect from 11.59pm 22 October.

The changes are very strongly linked by the health order to the new direction issued by the Secretary for Education, which permits attendance at school for senior students.

The following information applies to those students and staff who have not previously been allowed to travel to attend or work at school.

The key changes to support a return to learning for senior students next week are:

- you are permitted to attend or work at school through the order or the new direction issued by the Secretary for Education
- if you are permitted to attend or work at school, you will also be permitted to cross an Alert Level 3 boundary to do so (whether travelling to an Alert Level 3 area, or travelling to an Alert Level 2 area, to get to school).

Note that for all New Zealanders, the testing requirements for travel in the order only relate to leaving Auckland, not travelling to Auckland or travelling out of Waikato.

Testing requirements will therefore apply to staff who are permitted to travel across the Auckland boundary in line with the Health Order (for example, evidence of having had a COVID-19 test no more than seven days before their journey, for those travelling back and forth across the Auckland boundary on a regular basis).

Personal travel across an alert level boundary – Unite Against COVID-19

You will be aware there are further testing requirements in place for workers (paid and unpaid) in schools, including that they must provide evidence of a negative COVID-19 test before returning on site in Alert Level 3.

COVID-19 Public Health Response (Required Testing) Order – NZ Legislation

However, day students who are travelling back and forth across the Auckland alert level boundary are not required to undertake regular testing.

Please note this is a public health decision based on the fact there are a very large number of other health measures that are in place to protect students, staff, whānau and their community including wearing of face coverings, vaccination (for those eligible) staying away if unwell, physical distancing and good ventilation.

- Boarders returning to their Hostel in Alert Level 2 areas from Auckland are required to be tested within 72 hours of travel (as previously advised).
- Boarders returning to their Hostel in Alert Level 3 areas are not required to be tested prior to travel, unless they are travelling from Auckland to Waikato.
- Boarders are not permitted to travel back and forth between alert level areas (that is, from Alert Level 3 to Alert Level 2 and back again, or vice versa). Once they travel to their hostel they should remain there for the remainder of the term.

The exception to this is:

- if they are travelling in the same alert level area – for example, travel is permitted for boarders in a hostel in a Waikato Alert Level 3 area whose family home is also in a Waikato Alert Level 3 area. A reminder that at Alert Level 3, any travel should be for essential purposes only
- if permitted to travel for another reason through the health order
- or have received a specific exemption to travel.

You may have noted there is a perceived inconsistency between boarders and day students in regard to their ability to travel back and forth from home to school. It is important to remember that the purpose of these amendments to the Health Order is to that senior students can attend on site.

Evidence will need to be provided when travelling to school/hostel between alert level areas (for example, proof of enrolment, proof of residential address, letter confirming individual is a boarder at a hostel, proof of ID where reasonably practicable).

The Unite Against COVID-19 website provides more information to support you with testing and evidence requirements required for travel at different alert levels.

Permitted personal travel for education – Unite Against COVID-19

Business travel across an alert boundary – Unite Against COVID-19

School transport

School transport services that cross alert level boundaries will resume full service from Tuesday 26 October.

If no eligible students use a transport service on Tuesday 26 October, your transport service provider will liaise with you to confirm that the transport service can be discontinued until further notice.

Please contact your transport service provider directly if you have any questions.

Update on testing timeframes

Further to our bulletin on Thursday, we can confirm that the current wait time for COVID-19 test results to be returned is between 30 and 48 hours where the test was undertaken at a community testing centre.

For those that are tested at either their GP or an urgent medical care centre, results can take around 72 hours.

We recommend that when you and your staff are getting tested, that you use these education codes:

- Secondary school staff: SURV-SEC
- Primary school staff: SURV-PRIM
- Early childhood education staff: SURV-ECE
- Education providers who work outside the above categories: SURV-EDU

This will assist with planning for the prioritisation of testing for the education workforce, should it be required going forward.

Vaccine register update

On 15 October we provided you with a privacy statement and register template that secondary schools can use to meet the obligations for putting in place a vaccine register.

Government has determined that the register is to be in place for secondary schools in Alert Level 3 areas by Tuesday 9 November.

The requirement to operate a register for both education workers and students will be included in a COVID-19 Public Health Response Order prior to this date, so you have the correct coverage to maintain a register.

Testing requirements

Specific actions

As you will be aware, on 17 October the COVID-19 Public Health Response (Required Testing) Order came into force for schools and kura which are at Alert Level 3.

COVID-19 Public Health Response (Required Testing) Order – NZ Legislation

This makes it a legal requirement for everyone returning to working on site (including principals) in an Alert Level 3 region to provide an initial negative COVID-19 test which was administered within the last five days, and to be tested every seven days until they are fully vaccinated.

We expect most education workers to be able to meet this requirement. If any staff members are not able to return a negative test they will not meet the requirement to be on site.

This needs to be managed as a health and safety risk. As with all health and safety risks the first thing to do is to work with the employee with the objective of eliminating it. If they have not yet been tested you should ask them to immediately head to the nearest convenient COVID-19 testing centre and advise them that they will need to work off site until they receive a negative result.

- In the first instance, an employee who has not yet got the results of their test should be provided with alternative duties off site (such as working at home). If working off site is not feasible and they are waiting for the results of their test, discretionary paid leave should apply.
- If the employee is not able to be tested due to medical reasons, they should work off site if practicable. If leave is required, discretionary paid leave should apply.
- If the employee has refused to be tested, and you have provided reasonable notice of the instruction to be tested (such as advising them of the testing requirements last week), discretionary leave without pay applies.
- If on leave without pay, the employees cannot be expected to do any school-related work while at home. You may also provide discretionary paid leave at the school's cost if the board considers this is appropriate.

A reminder that the testing order only applies to those who are physically on site. It does not apply to those who are working remotely. If the person's work is partially on site and partially remote, the testing requirements apply.

Further detail and answers to other frequently asked questions are available here:

Alert Level 3 testing requirements – Ministry of Education

HE PITOPITO KŌRERO

COVID-19 UPDATE - 27 OCTOBER 2021

27 October 2021

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Reminder: Financial assistance for duplicate relief teaching costs

Triennial school board elections

Auckland out-of-zone ballots for 2022 places

FOREWORD

Kia ora koutou,

It has been great hearing the positive feedback from you as many of your Year 11, 12 and 13 students returned to school yesterday.

In today's bulletin we provide you with further details on this afternoon's indication from the Minister of Education that children in Years 0 to 8 could return to face-to-face learning from Monday 15 November. We'll work with you on whether this is feasible and what you would need if that were to happen. As Minister Hipkins said, nothing is set in stone yet and we want to hear from you first.

For students in Years 9 and 10 we will take a bit more time so that we can allow secondary schools to work closely with their students sitting NCEA before bringing more students back on site. We will come back to you in the coming weeks.

Ngā manaakitanga,
Iona

Public Health Order on vaccinations

As at 11.59pm on Monday 25 October the COVID-19 Public Health Response Order for mandatory vaccinations for education came into effect.

COVID-19 Public Health Response (Vaccinations) Amendment Order – New Zealand Legislation

Thank you for your patience in receiving guidance about what information to provide to your staff. We will have full information on the order and how it should be applied tomorrow.

Planning for Years 0 to 8 to return to on site learning

Minister Hipkins has asked us to work with representatives of schools and kura over the coming week or so to provide him with advice about how children in Years 0 to 8 in Alert Level 3 areas could return to school for face-to-face teaching, in line with public health advice, with an indicative start date of Monday 15 November.

We will work on this through your peak body organisations in Auckland and Waikato over the next week.

While not wanting to prescribe in too much detail how this will best work for your communities, it is likely that the options will involve cohorts or groups of students attending on different days with flexibility for schools to arrange this in the way that works for their communities.

Alert Level 3 Letter template

Here is a letter template you may use with your school community if you choose.

Alert Level 3 areas: Letter template for whānau with children in Years 1 to 8 [DOCX, 16 KB]

Existing Alert Level 3 requirements that will continue

There are an extensive range of health requirements and measures at Alert Level 3 that will remain in place:

- staff and children who are unwell must stay at home and get tested for COVID-19
- children at higher risk of severe illness must remain home where possible
- staff who are not fully vaccinated and at higher risk of severe illness must remain home
- mandatory face coverings for staff and students in Years 9 to 13
- only essential visitors will be permitted on site and all visitors on site will need to wear a face covering
- good hand hygiene and cough and sneeze etiquette should be followed
- classrooms must be well ventilated
- high-touch surfaces must be cleaned and disinfected each day
- physical distancing should be adhered to wherever practicable, particularly between adults, and physical distancing of two metres will be in place from people you don't know
- QR code posters for the COVID app will be displayed
- a contact tracing register in place for everyone coming onsite including students and staff, through the attendance register, timetable and visitor register.

Additional public health measures

In recent weeks, we've worked with the Ministry of Health to refine public health measures that would need to be in place when children and young people return to school.

These additional public health measures were agreed by Cabinet on Monday 11 October:

- face coverings are now required on school transport for anyone aged 12 and over and recommended for all others
- time outdoors for students and staff will be maximised, including breaks, lunchtime, before and after school (unless the weather does not allow), and rooms will be aired during breaks
- exercising and singing will take place outdoors
- groups meeting indoors, including assemblies or staff meetings, will be avoided
- exams can go ahead, but physical distancing will be maximised within the space available with a minimum of 1.5 metres between desks.

As you know, all staff must return one negative test before they return on site and staff who are not fully vaccinated will need to be tested weekly with mandatory full vaccination of all staff by 1 January 2022. See our bulletin on 19 October for further details.

Information about the COVID-19 Required Testing Order – School Bulletin 19 October

Parts of Waikato in Alert Level 3

The parts of Waikato currently at Alert Level 3 will remain at this level, however from 11.59pm tonight will move to the same stepped down alert level settings for Auckland (Alert Level 3, Step 1). This allows school playgrounds to open.

The strict boundary requirements for Auckland and Waikato remain in place.

For Waikato, Minister Hipkins noted that Government is still aiming to stamp out this outbreak, but currently case numbers continue to creep up and the outbreak is not yet fully contained.

Cabinet will therefore review Waikato and Auckland alert level settings on Monday. Northland remains at Alert Level 2.

Please continue to remain vigilant, look out for locations of interest, if showing any symptoms please get tested, and support those in your whānau and community to get vaccinated.

Vaccination remains the best way to keep our communities safe and allow us to expand our opportunities over the summer ahead.

Face coverings in school at Alert Level 3

Under the COVID-19 Public Health Response (Alert Level Requirements) Health Order, it's a legal requirement for all students in Years 9 to 13 wear a face covering in an Alert Level 3 area when they are inside at school unless they have an exemption.

Face coverings are not required to be worn outside. However, as is the case for all New Zealanders, face coverings continue to be strongly recommended, especially when not able to physically distance from people you don't know.

If any student is reluctant to wear a face covering, we would recommend that you work with the parents or caregivers to understand what the problem is and come up with solutions.

These could include:

- making clear why it's important to wear a face covering
- helping them understand how face coverings protect them and others
- helping them to wear the mask comfortably, or
- providing a mask if the student doesn't have one.

In the instance the student continues to refuse to wear a face covering, we would encourage you to consider whether the student can continue to learn from home through distance learning.

Serious disciplinary action (such as detention or a stand-down period) should only ever be a last resort.

COVID-19 Public Health Response (Alert Level Requirements) Health Order – NZ Legislation

Face coverings on school transport at all alert levels

Further to yesterday's brief message, below are the detailed requirements for face coverings on school transport.

Students of all ages are encouraged to wear a face covering on all school transport services under all alert levels.

We encourage you to convey the following information on face coverings to your students and their parents or caregivers.

Students aged 12 and over

The exemption from wearing face coverings for students on school transport has been revoked under the COVID-19 Public Health Response (Alert Level Requirements) Health Order.

This means that from 11.59pm Friday 22 October, everyone 12 years and older legally must wear a face covering on school transport services (both Ministry and regional council-operated) at all alert levels unless they have an exemption.

This includes SESTA, daily, technology, direct resourced, and Māori-medium school transport services. It also includes charter buses hired by schools to transport students and staff.

Please note, while the school transport drivers are not required to enforce the wearing of face coverings, they will report any non-compliance to your school's bus controller (noting that some students may be exempt from face covering requirements for health and safety reasons). Schools are expected to manage any non-compliance just as they currently manage behavioural issues of school transport users.

Students under 12

While we encourage all students to wear face coverings on school transport, students aged under 12 are not required to wear face coverings.

This includes SESTA, daily, technology, direct resourced, and Māori-medium school transport services. It also includes charter buses hired by schools to transport students and staff.

SESTA students

SESTA students are included in the above face covering requirements, but we understand that for some SESTA students this will not be possible, and that they will have an exemption.

While we expect SESTA drivers to wear face coverings wherever possible, we also expect that there will be some situations where a SESTA student's caregiver requests that the driver not wear a face covering due to safety considerations.

We have asked our SESTA drivers to contact caregivers about the new face covering requirement for both drivers and students.

Exemptions from wearing face coverings

Information on face covering exemptions can be found on the Unite Against COVID-19 website.

Wear a face covering – Unite Against COVID-19

Alert Level 3 attendance data collection for Years 11 to 13

Tomorrow Thursday 28 October at 9.30am, we'll use Mataara to send those of you in Auckland and some parts of Waikato areas a text message to collect information on attendance.

Collecting information on how many students in Years 11 to 13 are attending on site for schools and early learning services at Alert Level 3 is a helpful way for us to ensure we're providing the support you need.

The number this message will come from is 8707.

What we need from you:

- a text response of the number (in digits not words) of how many Year 11 to 13 students you have on site (and no other words or messages if you can avoid it please).

Please reply to the text message by 12 noon if you are able to and, as always, please contact your education advisor if you need any assistance.

Testing for education staff in Alert Level 3

Types of testing required for COVID-19

Testing required to return to school

Staff will need to have a received negative COVID-19 test no more than five days prior to returning to school. This can be either a nasal swab (nasopharyngeal) or throat swab (oropharyngeal anterior nares).

These test results are usually received no more than 48 hours after having been tested.

Testing required for workers who are unvaccinated or partly vaccinated

You will need to undertake weekly surveillance testing until you are fully vaccinated. This can be:

- a nasal or throat swab once a week
- a saliva test twice a week, with at least two days between tests.

Testing locations – Healthpoint

Progress on saliva testing

The Ministry of Health is currently finalising its procurement process to appoint a provider for saliva testing and expects to have saliva testing available for the education workforce by the end of this week.

Reminder to use testing codes

When being tested, please remember to ask that the health professional doing the test notes down your education SURV code.

The Ministry of Health will use these codes to determine if there will be a need for prioritisation testing of the teaching workforce in the future (and the capacity to deliver that testing).

- Secondary school faculty: SURV-SEC
- Primary school faculty: SURV-PRIM
- Education providers who work outside the above categories: SURV-EDU

Exams in Alert Levels 1 to 3

Based on current public health advice, exams are able to go ahead at Alert Levels 1 to 3.

Revised guidance has been sent out by NZQA to their exam centre managers which aligns with the public health measures needed at each alert level. The same requirements apply to school-run exams and mock exams.

Should this information or the public health requirements change, we will notify you through a bulletin and NZQA will send out notifications through their usual channels.

Exams for any region at Alert Level 1

- There are no restrictions on the number of students in an exam room as gathering limits do not apply in schools and kura.
- In all exam rooms there must be a gap of 1.5 metres between students in all directions. This distance is measured from head-to-head, not from desk edge to desk edge. This gap provides enough distance between students to ensure they aren't touching or breathing directly on each other and exam supervisors can safely walk between desks.
- All teachers and other school staff (this extends to NZQA's examination workforce) must have received their first dose of the COVID-19 vaccine by Monday 15 November unless a medical exemption is provided.

Exams for any region at Alert Level 2

- All protocols under Alert Level 1 apply.
- Schools will need to establish a cleaning regime before, between, and after exam sessions.
- Rooms must be sufficiently ventilated.
- Additional supervision protocols apply – supervisors should limit themselves to supervising a section of a hall, limit movement between desks, and only attend to candidates with raised hands.
- Wearing a face mask is strongly encouraged, but not required, at Alert Level 2.

Exams for any region at Alert Level 3

- All protocols under Alert Levels 1 and 2 apply.
- Staff, including NZQA's examination workforce, who are not fully vaccinated will need to complete weekly COVID-19 tests.
- All exam centre staff, even if fully vaccinated, must receive a negative COVID-19 test the week before entering school property for the first time.
- All students and exam supervisors are required to wear face masks while inside the exam room unless they are exempted from doing so.
- NCEA candidates will be eligible for an unexpected event grade (UEG) if their region is in Alert Level 3 any time from the beginning of Term 4.

Reminder: Financial assistance for duplicate relief teaching costs

We're offering financial assistance to schools for duplicate relief teaching costs incurred through Alert Level 3 and 4 restrictions.

COVID-19 regional support scheme – Ministry of Education

We understand schools will be impacted by the regional Alert Level 3 restrictions where staff are unable to cross the Alert Level 3 borders or get exemptions to travel. Schools operating under Alert Level 2 restrictions that face this situation will be eligible to access the regional support scheme where relief teaching resources are required to ensure the school is able to operate.

This scheme covers any duplicate relief teaching costs incurred as a direct result of the COVID-19 regional and national Alert Level 3 and 4 restrictions. This includes:

- repeated bookings in relation to classroom release time (CRT)
- repeated bookings for relief teachers when re-organising professional development, school camps or curriculum trips
- repeated bookings for part-time staff when re-organising specific learning programmes
- schools that have teachers that are unable to travel to work due to regional border restrictions.

Please note that applications are assessed on a case-by-case basis and eligibility cannot be confirmed prior to an application being submitted.

If you have any questions or concerns relating to this, contact resourcing@education.govt.nz for further assistance.

Triennial school board elections

Triennial elections for school boards are being moved from May 2022 to later next year and will include provision for electronic voting.

The elections will now be held between 5 September and 23 September 2022.

The Minister of Education will post a notice of the date changes in the Gazette.

Moving the elections through to later in the year will reduce pressure in the early part of 2022 and help to increase participation in the elections. It also may make it easier to conduct elections as changes will

be made to the regulations to enable an electronic option. The existing paper-based voting papers will continue to be available.

Consultation took place earlier this year on a range of proposed changes to the regulations and there was strong support to allow elections to be conducted through electronic channels. The aim of enabling an electronic election option is to increase voter participation and improved accessibility.

Moving the election date to September will also affect the term of office for some board members who may be asked to stay on for longer.

The New Zealand School Trustees Association (NZSTA) will continue to be available to support school boards and returning officers, with governance matters and in the lead up to the 2022 triennial elections.

If you have a question or concern about any election process at your school, contact the New Zealand School Trustees Association (NZSTA) for support on electionsAdvice@nzsta.org.nz.

Triennial school board elections – Ministry of Education

Auckland out-of-zone ballots for 2022 places

A reminder that under the Education and Training Act, the date for pre-enrolment ballots to be held is 30 October.

Any school that will not complete its pre-enrolment ballot by 30 October should contact their local education office for advice.

Enrolment schemes – Ministry of Education

HE PITOPITO KŌRERO

COVID-19 UPDATE - 28 OCTOBER 2021

28 October 2021

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FOREWORD

Ngā mihi o te Rāpare,

A very timely reminder overnight from Christchurch of the need to be vigilant and get tested if you're showing any symptoms at all – even if you've been tested recently.

Today's bulletin provides in-depth information on the vaccination order, which should cover the breadth of questions you've asked since the mandate was announced. Again, I'd like to thank you for your patience waiting for this guidance.

The advice we are providing to you reflects the vaccination order as it currently stands, and we have consulted with the unions representing teachers, principals and support staff when developing it. I expect that this guidance will apply to most situations you encounter with your staff.

However, I appreciate there may be a small number of cases where adjustments may be required. Your feedback on this will be important, as we have the opportunity before 16 November to further update our guidance to address your circumstances. Please contact us at employment.relations@education.govt.nz if you feel this is the case.

There will be some questions that remain regarding those staff members who have an exemption from vaccinations. We're working on health and safety detailed guidance and will provide this in the coming days.

Ngā mihi maioha,
Iona

Information about the COVID-19 Required Vaccinations Order

As at 11.59pm on Monday 25 October the COVID-19 Public Health Response Order for Mandatory Vaccinations for Education came into effect.

COVID-19 Public Health Response (Vaccinations) Amendment Order – NZ Legislation

What the requirements are and who they apply to

Everyone who works for a school or kura who may have contact with children or students or will be present at a time when children and students are also present must have had a first dose of the COVID-19 vaccine by 15 November and be fully vaccinated by 1 January 2022.

From 1 January 2022, schools and kura must only allow those that are fully vaccinated to provide onsite services.

This includes:

- principals
- teachers
- relief teachers and casual staff
- administration staff
- caretakers and cleaners
- contractors and other tradespeople
- service managers
- caregivers and other staff.

It also includes unpaid workers, such as volunteers and any members of the community who are regularly on site during a time when children and students may be present. Throughout this guidance we have used the term staff member to refer to paid staff members, unpaid workers, volunteers, contractors and other workers at your school or kura.

The vaccination requirements apply wherever in person schooling occurs, such as on the school or early learning service site, but also at school camps, swimming pools, museums, or where other education outside the classroom (EOTC) programmes take place. This means that both school staff and volunteers who are involved in EOTC should have had a first vaccination by 15 November and be fully vaccinated by 1 January 2022.

Who the requirements do not apply to

- The vaccination requirements do not apply to those who are performing services remotely, or who are on site only when children and students are not present (such as a contractor who is performing maintenance during the weekend or over a term break).
- The requirements also do not apply to people who are visiting your school or kura, such as for a learning conference or a parent, whānau and community evening.

Employer obligations

Now the order has been made you must:

- support your staff members to be vaccinated, including during working hours. Staff members are encouraged to be vaccinated outside of their normal working hours where possible to minimise further disruption to ākonga. However, where this is not possible, staff members should be allowed time to be vaccinated and we recommend that no absence is recorded, as being vaccinated is now a normal part of a staff member's requirement to undertake their work.
- continue to actively discuss with your staff members the benefits of vaccination and explain the health and safety risks of not being vaccinated, for both the staff member, children and students, and other staff onsite. We have provided a summary of the information that has been provided through earlier bulletins to support this.
- notify (if you have not already done so) all your staff members who are covered by the order (including contractors, tradespeople and unpaid workers) of their duty to be vaccinated. We have prepared a template for this purpose.
- collect and maintain a record of the contact and vaccination information for all staff members. The usual requirements around collecting, recording, using and storing personal information will apply to the above information. Given the sensitivity of the information being collected, careful consideration will need to be given to ensuring unauthorised access to the information is not able to occur. Example privacy statements and vaccination registers are available in our bulletin on 15 October.

Information about COVID-19 vaccinations in education [DOCX, 37 KB]

Template letter for schools and kura to send to staff [DOCX, 14 KB]

Vaccine and testing register – School Bulletin 15 October

If a worker is a staff member of a service contracted to you (such as a PLD provider, cleaning company or tradesperson, canteen staff, cleaner or Ministry staff member), the worker must provide this information to their employer, not your school. Their employer is responsible for ensuring the worker has met the vaccination requirement.

You are not required by the order to record vaccination status of workers employed by another agency, but you may wish to for your own health and safety processes.

Vaccination order process for school and kura employees [PDF, 170 KB]

Staff member obligations

From Tuesday 16 November, the obligation under the legislation rests with the staff member to not carry out certain work unless they are vaccinated. This would only apply if they may come into contact with children or students or if they will be on site at the same time as children or students.

Staff members must also provide or give you access to the information necessary for you to record their vaccination status. They can get this from My Covid Record.

My Covid Record – Ministry of Health

Staff members must also update you on any changes to their vaccination status as soon as practicable. If the staff member does not provide you with evidence of their vaccination, you must assume they are not vaccinated.

It is important to remember that you cannot share a staff member's vaccination status with others without their permission.

Medical exemptions

If a staff member has particular physical or other needs that a suitably qualified health practitioner (in the course of examining the person) determines would make it inappropriate for the person to be vaccinated, that person will be exempt, and they can carry out work without being vaccinated. We expect the number of people who are exempted from the vaccination requirement to be very low as the Pfizer vaccination has proven to be safe for the very large majority of people.

The staff member must provide you with a copy of the exemption on or before Monday 15 November. You should then work with the affected person to determine the duties that they can safely undertake which does not compromise their safety, or the safety of ākonga or the greater schooling community.

We will provide more information about which health practitioners are able to provide a medical exemption in a future bulletin.

Unvaccinated staff members after 15 November

We expect most education workers will be vaccinated. Staff members who refuse to meet vaccination requirements cannot return to work onsite from Tuesday 16 November and they will be committing an infringement offence if they do so.

In this instance you should consult with the staff member to establish why they are not vaccinated, continue to support them to be vaccinated and accommodate alternative working arrangements to the extent that this is practicable.

If you have provided reasonable notice of the instruction to be tested (such as advising them of the vaccination requirements in advance), then discretionary leave without pay may apply. If on leave without pay, the staff member cannot be expected to do any school-related work while on leave.

You may also provide discretionary paid leave at the school's cost if the school board considers this is appropriate. Your obligations under the Employment Relations Act (2000) and your staff member's employment agreement continue to apply.

Please contact NZSTA or your alternate employment adviser for support and advice.

We're aware that some of you are anxious that the number of unvaccinated staff may mean that on 16 November that you will not be able to provide a safe environment for students. We will provide further advice on how these situations may be managed in future bulletins, and we will work alongside you as necessary.

Questions and answers about the COVID-19 Required Vaccinations Order

How do we decide which roles don't require someone to be vaccinated?

You will need to determine which roles being carried out are covered by the order.

Remember that all roles that require the staff member to be present at a time when children or students are also present are covered, including education outside the classroom activities.

If a staff member's role means they may have contact with children or students in the course of carrying out their work, then they are also covered.

If a staff member disagrees that their work is covered by the order, you should consider their reasons with an open mind before making a decision.

Do all teachers, principals, support and specialist staff and volunteers whose work is covered by the Public Health Order (referred to as staff members) need to be fully vaccinated?

Yes, unless they are medically exempt, they need to have received a first vaccination by 15 November and be fully vaccinated by 1 January 2022.

Do the vaccination requirements apply when we are providing education outside the classroom or education in similar settings?

Yes, your staff members (as well as volunteers and contractors) who are providing education outside the classroom (EOTC) and may have contact with children or students in the course of carrying out their work are required to be vaccinated.

Can a staff member choose not to be vaccinated, but to undergo regular testing instead?

No. All staff members who do work covered by the Public Health Order must have received their first dose of the COVID-19 vaccine by 15 November 2021 and in regions at Alert Level 3 undergo regular testing until they are fully vaccinated (no later than 1 January 2022).

Am I legally allowed to ask staff members for their vaccination status? What about privacy requirements?

Yes. The Public Health Order requires you to maintain a register that includes the date(s) your staff members were vaccinated. It also requires staff members to tell you this information. If they do not provide you with this information you should assume they are not vaccinated.

However, privacy must be maintained. The usual requirements around collecting, recording, using and storing personal information will apply. Given the sensitivity of the information being collected, careful consideration will need to be given to ensure no unauthorised access to the information can occur.

Can I tell our parent and whānau community about the testing and vaccination status of our staff?

Staff are welcome to share their own vaccination status at any time, however, employers cannot do so without the individual's permission.

This includes not sharing the vaccination status of groups of staff members if the vaccination status of individuals within that group is to be able to identified.

What proof of vaccination is required?

You may accept any proof which assures you that the staff member is fully vaccinated. This may be an email, immunisation card, or SMS that the staff member has received from their vaccinator or medical provider, the Book My Vaccine website, or the My Covid Record website.

One easy way to provide proof of vaccination is for people to get a vaccination statement from My Covid Record.

My Covid Record – Ministry of Health

What if a staff member refuses to be vaccinated or refuses to share the necessary information?

All staff members are required to be vaccinated, as above. If a staff member refuses to share information their vaccination status should be recorded as unvaccinated.

What if a staff member initially refused to get vaccinated, but changes their mind before 1 January 2022?

A staff member who gets their first vaccination after 15 November can return to work on site. They must still receive their second vaccination on or before 1 January 2022.

Remember that there needs to be at least three weeks between vaccinations.

If I'm not going to be working on site do I have to be vaccinated?

No. This order only applies to those who are physically on site or for EOTC and may have contact with children or students in the course of carrying out their work.

It does not apply to those who are performing services fully remotely. If services are partially on site and partially remote, then the vaccination requirements do apply.

What does fully vaccinated mean?

Fully vaccinated means the person has received two doses of the Pfizer vaccine. See more in our bulletin on 15 October.

The Public Health Order also allows for some alternative vaccinations to reflect that some people may have been vaccinated overseas (see Schedule 3).

Being fully vaccinated – School Bulletin 15 October

COVID-19 Public Health Response (Vaccinations) Order – NZ Legislation

What if a staff member undertaking work or providing a service on site is unable to be vaccinated?

The person must provide you with written confirmation from a suitably qualified health practitioner that they have been examined and the health practitioner has determined that vaccination would be inappropriate for the person due to physical or medical reasons.

The employer must honour this and should work with the affected person to determine the duties that they can safely undertake onsite which does not compromise the safety of ākonga or the greater schooling community.

Can a staff member take leave rather than be vaccinated?

This order applies to those who are physically on site. A staff member who is on leave will become subject to the order when they return to work. The usual policies and funding settings around leave apply.

Clarification: Face coverings in school

Apologies for any confusion caused by yesterday's bulletin. We can confirm that there has been no change to the requirements under the Public Health Order.

We first notified that face coverings were required to be worn when indoors for students and staff for Years 9-13 in our bulletin on 20 September. This advice was reiterated in our bulletin on 11 October.

New requirements for face coverings – School Bulletin 20 September

Alert Level 3 requirements – School Bulletin 11 October

Further, in our bulletin on 20 October, a bullet pointed list of existing mitigations at Alert Level 3 did not make it clear that the requirement to wear face coverings only applied indoors.

To clarify:

- under the COVID-19 Public Health Response (Alert Level Requirements) Health Order, it's a legal requirement that all students in Years 9 to 13 wear a face covering in an Alert Level 3 area when they are inside at school unless they have an exemption
- face coverings are not required to be worn when outside. However, as is the case for all New Zealanders, face coverings continue to be strongly recommended, especially when not able to physically distance from people you don't know.

Existing Alert Level 3 requirements that will continue – School Bulletin 20 October

Promoting respect for all ākonga regardless of vaccination status

We're aware of concerns that some ākonga may be subjected to hurtful negative comments by others due to their vaccination status.

The impacts of COVID-19 are far reaching for ākonga and their whānau. Promoting and facilitating kindness and safe and respectful connections, regardless of vaccination status is essential to support ākonga wellbeing.

For more information on promoting kindness and respect regardless of vaccination status, see our [website](#).

Wellbeing guidance for teachers – Ministry of Education

Prime Minister's Education Excellence Awards winners announced

Frimley Primary School in Hawke's Bay have taken out the top prize in the 2021 Prime Minister's Education Excellence Awards.

Frimley School also won the Excellence in Teaching and Learning Award.

The other category winners are:

- Excellence in Engaging – Te Kura Taumata O Panguru, Northland
- Excellence in Leading – Hastings Girls' High School, Hawke's Bay
- Excellence in Wellbeing Education – Henry Hill School, Hawke's Bay
- 2021 Focus Prize: Excellence in Environmental and Sustainability Education – Oruaiti School, Northland.

You can find out more about the award winners how they've worked together with their tamariki and communities to achieve positive learning outcomes on the PM Awards website.

Celebrating educational excellence – PM Awards

HE PITOPITO KŌRERO

COVID-19 UPDATE - 1 NOVEMBER 2021

01 November 2021

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FOREWORD

Ngā mihi o te ahiahi,

Thank you for all feedback sent through about last week's bulletins – it was good to hear that the information about responding to employment matters was clear.

If you didn't get the chance to look at it, you may find the process diagram supplied in Thursday's bulletin helpful. We've included it again today.

There are two key priorities for guidance this week: a table of information that outlines the nuances of who needs a vaccination and who doesn't, and a definition for medical exemptions and what to do with staff who have one. The Ministry of Health is publishing guidance on exemptions shortly, and we'll then prepare our own and have it ready for you later this week.

There has been quite a lot of media coverage about 'bogus' medical exemptions. I strongly advise not to accept any medical exemptions until information from both the Ministry of Health and us is published.

For those of you who have been asking about saliva testing in Alert Level 3, you'll be pleased to know it's now available. Find details below.

For those of you in Auckland, you may have heard the Government announce over the weekend a funding package to re-engage children and young people to get them on track with learning for the rest of the year and into 2022 by providing funds to schools, your community, and whānau who can help them. Details on that funding also below.

Nāku iti noa, nā,
Iona

Required Vaccinations Order process diagram

The COVID-19 Public Health Response Order for Mandatory Vaccinations for Education came into effect from 11.59pm Monday 25 October.

As in our bulletin on Thursday, we have prepared a process for you and your staff.

The diagram in the link below outlines how the COVID-19 Public Health Response (Vaccinations) Amendment Order (No 3) 2021 may be applied by schools and kura. It should be used for those covered by the order.

Process for school and kura employees [PDF, 170 KB]

Information about the COVID-19 Required Vaccinations Order – School Bulletin 28 October

COVID-19 Public Health Response (Vaccinations) Amendment Order 2021 – NZ Legislation

Vaccinations Order template letter

If you've not already done so, you must notify all your staff members who are covered by the order (including contractors, tradespeople and unpaid workers) of their duty to be vaccinated.

Vaccination template letters for schools and kura [DOCX, 14 KB]

Saliva testing available in Alert Level 3

As you're aware, in Alert Level 3 staff must have returned a negative COVID-19 test before returning on site and must undertake weekly tests if they are not fully vaccinated.

Information about the COVID-19 Required Testing Order – School Bulletin 19 October

When being tested, please remember to ask that the health professional doing the test notes down your education SURV code:

- secondary school faculty: SURV-SEC
- primary school faculty: SURV-PRIM
- education providers who work outside these categories: SURV-EDU.

Testing locations – Healthpoint

Testing options

Staff will need to have a received negative COVID-19 test no more than five days prior to returning on site. This can be either a nasal swab (nasopharyngeal) or throat swab (oropharyngeal anterior nares).

They then need to be tested weekly until they are fully vaccinated. The testing options are:

- a nasal or throat swab once a week
- a saliva test twice a week, with at least two days between tests.

Saliva testing

Saliva testing is self-administered and allows flexibility on when tests are completed. There is no charge for the saliva testing tubes, app or sampling.

Staff can collect tubes beforehand and drop their sample at multiple collection points. When starting out with saliva testing, staff need to register online and download and install the saliva testing app.

Saliva testing programme – COVID-19 Saliva Testing

Drop-off and pick-up locations – COVID-19 Saliva Testing

Saliva testing FAQs – COVID-19 Saliva Testing

Saliva testing in five easy steps poster [PDF, 827 KB]

Alert Level 3: Other students attending exams at your school

We've had a number of questions about whether students from other schools, including Te Kura, are permitted to attend exams on your school site when in Alert Level 3.

The short answer is yes. They are permitted to do so under the Health Order but must meet all health requirements on site.

Our guidance about not having other students and staff come on site at Alert Level 3 is in the context of technology centres/schools and music programmes (such as out-of-hours music and art), where large numbers of students from another school or schools and congregate together in classroom settings or similar.

Given the strict requirements needed to undertake exams (including face coverings, physical distancing and staying away if unwell) means that exams are a lower risk environment.

Let's Talanoa: Helping our Pacific youth navigate COVID-19 conversations

Ministry for Pacific Peoples have started a video series that aims to help young people to navigate COVID-19 conversations with their parents, family and peers.

Let's Talanoa – Ministry for Pacific Peoples

The series 'Let's Talanoa', featuring Dr Lesina Nakhid-Schuster and Rokalani (Rocky) Lavea, is aimed at Pacific people under 30 and promotes having open conversations about the COVID-19 vaccine and why it is safe and important for us to get vaccinated.

This week's episode is 'Know your Vax', which you can view on Facebook, Instagram and YouTube.

Know your vax – Facebook

Support for Auckland students to re-engage in learning

On Saturday 30 October, Ministers Hipkins and Tinetti announced a package of supports for children and young people in Auckland to get back on track with their learning.

Components of the re-engagement package for 2021/22 include:

- \$6 million in targeted support through providers to meet the immediate needs of Māori and Pacific students within their whānau so they can re-engage in learning, either back at school, online or with another education provider
- a \$3 million Rapid Resurgence Fund to provide immediate and flexible support to schools – allocation to focus on Māori and Pacific students and weighted for equity
- \$2.2 million to deploy the Te Kura 300 programme to support at-risk students in Auckland to stay engaged, or re-engage, in learning
- \$1.5 million additional counselling support to improve the wellbeing of students, focusing on Years 6 to 9
- \$1 million for students with identified learning support needs, including those with disabilities
- \$630,000 to scale up Check & Connect in Auckland to provide additional mentors for at-risk students referred to the service by schools and kura
- \$600,000 increase for the Attendance Service capacity – to rapidly connect with and actively support learners to re-engage with school.

We will be in touch with you as the package rolls out.

Financial support for struggling families

It's been a tough year for many: we know that as a result of alert level restrictions, many families have had either no work or reduced work and have therefore had a significant drop in income.

If you know any families needing help with putting food or kai on the table or paying an overdue bill, support may be available from the Ministry of Social Development.

Understanding this is an expensive time of year for families, income limits for hardship assistance have been increased from 1 November 2021 until 28 February 2022.

If you know of any families finding things tough financially, Work and Income have an online check what you might get guide, which will have the new limits updated from today Monday 1 November.

Check what you might get – Work and Income

You'll need to answer some simple questions about your situation, then Work and Income will let you know if there are any payments you can get. It only takes about five minutes to check what you might get, and you don't need to be getting a benefit to be eligible.

Your answers are completely confidential, and they won't be saved or used in any way. Alternatively, call 0800 559 009.

Extraordinary roll growth applications

Information and criteria to apply for extraordinary roll growth funding for 2021 is now on our website.

Extraordinary roll growth funding – Ministry of Education

Applications will be accepted from today Monday 1 November and must be sent to the Resourcing Group by Friday 19 November.

If you have any questions about the application processes, please contact resourcing@education.govt.nz.

Renewal of Microsoft software agreement

We have renewed our Microsoft software agreement for another three years.

This continues to provide state and state-integrated schools with Microsoft 365 A3 licences, including Windows 10 OS, Microsoft Office 365, M365 Apps, Enterprise Mobility and Security, Minecraft Education Edition, and limited access to Microsoft Windows Server software.

The agreement takes effect from 1 January 2022 and runs until 31 December 2024.

The agreement also includes M365 A5 licences and Defender for Endpoint for all school-owned devices.

Microsoft software – Ministry of Education

Microsoft and Google information sessions for school IT administrators

With Google and Microsoft, we are holding an online information session for school IT administrators and leaders with details of the new agreements.

The session will be happening this Wednesday 3 November from 3.30pm-4.30pm and you can register for it here:

Microsoft and Google information sessions – Microsoft forms

These sessions will provide schools with an opportunity to ask questions, find out the benefits of these tools and what support is provided for these agreements.

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HE PITOPITO KŌRERO

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02 November 2021

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Ngā mihi o te Rātū,

Although there's no bulletin today, I want to acknowledge the range of issues being faced in relation to parents and others who may come on site unvaccinated.

As indicated yesterday, one of our priorities this week is providing a table that outlines the nuances of who needs a vaccination and who doesn't – you can expect to see this information included.

I will quickly say, however, that the COVID-19 Required Vaccinations Order covers those who work (paid or unpaid) in the education sector and who will be on site when children or students are present. The Order doesn't require parents to be vaccinated where they are on site for the purposes of "being a parent" (as it were).

Further information about what steps you may choose to take to manage the health and safety risk of unvaccinated people on the school site will be in tomorrow's bulletin.

Heoi anō tāku mō nāianeī,

Iona

 Covid bulletin banner

Released under the Official Information Act 1982

HE PITOPITO KŌRERO

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FOREWORD

Ngā mihi o te ahiahi,

Kia kaha to those of you in upper Tai Tokerau – thrown straight back into Alert Level 3 restrictions implemented from midnight last night. On a wider scale, as the country moves to 90% vaccination, it will likely require us to be even more agile and respond quickly to shifts in “traffic light status”.

On this note, we are working on operational plans for the new response framework. We'll have more information for you in the coming weeks.

In this afternoon's COVID-19 update, you may have heard Director-General of Health Dr Ashley Bloomfield outline the medical exemption process for receiving vaccinations. Although a number of people have received an 'exemption' from a medical practitioner, the process is going to be centralised,

and they will need to apply for an exemption through the Ministry of Health. I look forward to sharing more information on this when it is put into effect next week.

In today's bulletin, we've included a table to help you understand the types of roles in the education sector that will be covered by the Vaccine Order, some further information about managing parents coming on site (with particular regard for vaccinations), and more.

Aku mihi,
Iona

Application of mandatory vaccination requirements for various roles

We have developed a table to help you understand the types of roles in the education sector that will be covered by the Public Health Order requirement to get vaccinated.

General principles for the application of the order are:

- all workers who carry out work at or for a registered school or hostel fall under the requirements of the order if:
 - they may have contact with children or students when carrying out their work, or
 - they are present at the registered school or hostel where children or students are also present
- the worker has a duty under the order to ensure they meet the vaccination requirements.

Where the worker is a staff member of a service contracted to the registered school or hostel, the service provider is responsible for ensuring the worker meets the requirements of the Order.

Type of role	Are they required to be vaccinated under the order?
Teachers, teacher aides, principals, administration staff, caretakers, cooks	Yes. These staff are required to be vaccinated as they may have contact with children or students and/or will be present at

a time when children and students are also present.

Learning support staff and other education agency staff
(for example, Ministry of Education and ERO staff, NZQA exam invigilators)

Yes. These staff are required to be vaccinated if they are visiting early learning services or schools to deliver a service that means they may have contact with children and students and/or will be present at a time when children and students are also present.

School board members

The board member is required to be vaccinated if they may have contact with children or students or will be present at a time when children and students are also present.

Otherwise, they are not required to be vaccinated.

The board may want to consider a working arrangement that enables an unvaccinated board member to conduct business online and/or at a time that students will not be present (such as evening board meetings).

Hostel workers (whether paid or unpaid)

Yes. These workers are required to be vaccinated as they may have contact with children or students and/or will be present at a time when children and students are also present.

Individuals living on hostel or school grounds who are not workers

No. These individuals are not required to be vaccinated under the Order as they are not working or providing a service for the school/hostel.

(Note: For those non-workers living in hostel accommodation, the owner of a hostel under the Education (Hostels) Regulations 2005 has a responsibility to ensure that boarders do not come into contact with another person on the premises who is suffering from a disease or condition capable of being passed on to boarders and that is likely to cause them serious harm if passed on. This requirement should already be reflected in the hostel policies.)

Ministry-funded school transport drivers

Yes. Drivers of Ministry-funded school services are required to be vaccinated because these people are carrying out work for an education service and they will have contact with children or students.

Bus drivers (general)

No. General transport workers such as public bus drivers (including dedicated school services funded by regional councils) or train conductors are not required to be vaccinated as they are not employed or engaged by a school or hostel.

Employees/volunteers of a contracted service attending on site during times children or students are also present, including planned events and activities that may take place before or after normal hours (for example, cleaners, tradespeople, nurses and health workers, staff engaged to deliver a programme or for a school event)

Yes. Employees of a contracted service physically attending a school or hostel site when children or students are also present are required to be vaccinated.

This is because these people are carrying out work at or for a school or hostel and they may have contact with children or students or will be present at a time when children and students are also present.

Employees/volunteers of organisations who provide a service on an education site (for example, the Life Education caravans, dental care, PLD providers, external Ka Ora, Ka Ako programme providers, social workers in schools)

Yes. Employees of a contracted service physically attending a school or hostel site when children or students are also present are required to be vaccinated.

This is because these people are carrying out work at or for a school or hostel and they may have contact with children or students or will be present at a time when children and students are also present.

Employees of a contracted service attending onsite outside of school hours or when children or students are not present (for example, weekend lawn-mowing service, tradespeople outside of school hours/hours of operation)

No. These staff are not required to be vaccinated. The work will not be occurring at a time when children or students are expected to be present.

After-school care services/out-of-hours music contracted by the school

Yes. Employees of a contracted service physically attending a school site when children or students are also present are required to be vaccinated.

After-school care services/out-of-hours music run by a private company on site

No. These workers are not required to be vaccinated as they are not employed or engaged by a school. These after-school care providers may be covered by other requirements.

Parents, caregivers or volunteers at an education outside the classroom (EOTC), learning experiences outside the classroom (LEOTC) programme or excursion

Yes. These people are required to be vaccinated because these people are carrying out work (unpaid) at or for a school or hostel and they may have contact with children or students or will be present at a time when children and students are also present.

Employees or volunteers for providers of EOTC, LEOTC services or excursions which are off site (for example, library, school camp, museum staff)

No. These workers (paid and unpaid) are not required to be vaccinated as they are not working "at" an education service or employed or engaged by the education service.

However, schools and kura are encouraged to check on the vaccination status of offsite activity providers as part of their COVID-19 health and safety assessments.

Parents/caregivers dropping off, picking up or settling children at a school

No. The order only applies to workers and volunteers, not people who are visiting the school.

Parents, caregivers and members of the community who are volunteers at the school or hostel

Yes. These people on site are required to be vaccinated as they may have contact with children or students or will be present at a time when children and students are also present.

If the volunteer is working off site and will not have any contact with children or students as part of their role then they are not required to be vaccinated.

Parents or caregivers attending meetings or events on site (for example, parent-teacher interviews)

No. The order only applies to workers and volunteers, not people who are visiting the school or hostel.

Teachers who only work with students remotely, and never see their students in person

No. These staff are not required to be vaccinated if they will not have contact with children or students.

People who provide an educational service off site at a marae (or another significant cultural site) and are not directly employed/contracted by the school or hostel

No. People who work or volunteer at the marae but are not employed or engaged by the school or hostel are not required to be vaccinated as they are not working "at" or "for" the school or hostel.

Employees/contractors/volunteers of a school who provide an educational service off site (for example, alternative education providers, activity centres, teen parent units)

Yes. These people are required to be vaccinated if they may have contact with children or students or will be present at a time when children and students are also present.

Attendance advisors/kaiāwhina who work with young people to support them back into learning

Yes. These people are required to be vaccinated if they may have contact with children or students in the course of their work.

Employees/volunteers of an organisation that is not connected with the school but shares a building or campus (for example, churches, cafes)

Yes. These people are required to be vaccinated if they may have contact with children or students or will be present at a

time when children and students are also present.

Student volunteers and students on placement

Yes. Those over the age of 12 are required to be vaccinated if they may have contact with children or students or will be present at a time when children and students are also present.

Union representatives

Yes. These people are required to be vaccinated if they may have contact with children or students or will be present at a time when children and students are also present.

General public using school facilities after hours (for example, playground, school pool)

No. The requirement to be vaccinated only applies to workers and volunteers.

Residential therapeutic and respite facilities that deliver onsite education for school aged children (for example, Oranga Tamariki youth justice and care and protection residences, remand homes and community-based homes)

Yes. These people carrying out work at or for an early learning service, school or hostel are required to be vaccinated as they may have contact with children or students or will be present at a time when children and students are also present.

Residential facility operated by Oranga Tamariki, which includes onsite education for school-aged children provided by a registered school (for example, Kingslea, Central Regional Health School)

Yes. These people are required to be vaccinated if they may have contact with children or students or will be present at a time when children and students are also present.

Unvaccinated person responding to an emergency on site (for example, burst water pipe, windows

We encourage schools to proactively engage with their regular tradespeople

blown out)

about their vaccination status to mitigate any possibility of unvaccinated peoples coming on to the school site in the case of an emergency.

Whānau who provide homestay accommodation for international or domestic students

Yes. The people the school contracts to provide the homestay accommodation service or boarding are required to be vaccinated. Otherwise, no.

Parents or caregivers coming into a playgroup that operates on a school site or site otherwise licensed for education and care (while other children are attending school)

Yes. They are required to be vaccinated if they are acting as a volunteer to support the child and they are present at a school site at a time when other children are present.

Parents or caregivers attending specialist early learning services with their children (for example, Champion Centre)

Yes. They are required to be vaccinated if they are acting as a volunteer to support the child and they are present at a school site at a time when other children are present.

Secondary-tertiary partnership providers

Yes. These people are required to be vaccinated if the service is provided on site as they may have contact with children or students or will be present at a time when children and students are also present.

This requirement does not apply if the service is delivered off site from a school or hostel.

Information regarding parents coming on site

We've had a number of queries asking whether it is possible for parents and caregivers to come onsite particularly if they are unvaccinated.

The requirement to be vaccinated is only for those people who are working for the school, which may be unpaid work such as volunteering. In instances where parents or caregivers volunteer for your school and are regularly onsite when children and students may be present, these parents will be required to be vaccinated.

This vaccination requirement does not apply to those who are performing services remotely or who are onsite only when children and students are not present.

In instances where parents and caregivers are not providing work for your school, these parents are still permitted to attend onsite after Monday 15 November whether they are vaccinated or not.

As in the table above, this includes those parents and caregivers who are dropping off, picking up or settling children at your school or kura.

You should treat them as unvaccinated (rather than ask for their vaccine status), and you may want to give consideration to the range of health and safety mitigations that can be put in place to help keep those on site as safe as possible.

For example:

- non-essential visitors should not come on site at Alert Level 3
- we continue to strongly recommend that large events and activities do not take place at Alert Level 2, including those that bring parents and caregivers on site
- ask that they wear a face covering (this is an expectation for all alert levels when people are out and about). Staff may also prefer to wear a face covering (and it is required at Alert Level 3 for Years 9 to 13)
- maintain a physical distance of two metres where practicable
- consider whether engagement with parents and caregivers can be held outside rather than inside
- hold meetings which do need to go ahead via Zoom, Teams or similar
- ensure the room being used is spacious and well ventilated if it is necessary to meet on site
- ensure hand sanitiser is available indoors
- reiterate that anyone who is not feeling well should not come onto the school site and encourage them to seek advice about getting tested.

This advice will be revisited as we move towards a fully vaccinated education workforce.

Vaccine register for students

We initially advised through our privacy statements provided in the bulletin on 15 October, that the COVID-19 Public Health Response (Vaccinations) Order 2021 would require schools to maintain an up-to-date register to capture the vaccination status of eligible students.

Vaccine and testing register – School Bulletin 15 October

However, following publication of the amended order, we can confirm that the requirement to maintain the register is through a direction issued by the Secretary for Education under the Education and Training Act 2020 Schedule 25, Clause 3.

Direction under the Education and Training Act 2020 – NZ Gazette

The direction requires all registered schools who enrol students over the age of 12 years to maintain an up-to-date register with the COVID-19 vaccination status of these (eligible) students beginning Monday 1 November.

The requirement to maintain a register for your workforce is through the COVID-19 Public Health Response (Vaccinations) Order 2021.

The privacy statements (including an updated privacy statement for eligible students), sample registers and some FAQs are sitting on our Education Counts website.

Vaccination register – Education Counts

We have had a number of questions about what evidence might be needed for a student register.

In the event eligible students have been vaccinated, evidence could include:

- a screenshot of their vaccination record on My Covid Record (for those 16 and over)
- a vaccination certificate (which can be requested from the Ministry of Health)
- a letter from their GP.

Alert Level 3: Students exempted from wearing face coverings

Under the COVID-19 Public Health Response (Alert Level Requirements) Health Order, it's a legal requirement that all students in Years 9 to 13 wear a face covering in an Alert Level 3 area when they are inside at school unless they have an exemption.

You will be aware, however, that some people who have a disability or health condition may not be able to wear a face covering.

The Unite Against COVID-19 website gives a complete list of the situations where a face covering does not need to be worn and who does not need to wear one.

Face covering exemptions – Unite Against COVID-19

Exemption cards are available only for those who have a disability or health condition that makes wearing a face covering unsuitable.

Organisations which can provide this card are:

- Disabled Persons Assembly NZ – 04 801 9100 or info@dpa.org.nz
- Blind Citizens NZ – 0800 222 694 or admin@abcnz.org.nz
- Deaf Aotearoa – covid@deaf.org.nz

If you have students who are not wearing face coverings, it's reasonable for you to check whether they are exempt from doing so. It's not always obvious why a face covering is unsuitable for someone, so it's important to be kind, respect people's privacy, and not jump to any conclusions.

While the cards are not a requirement for the individual, guidance on the Ministry of Health website notes it will make it easier to explain why wearing a face covering is unsuitable for them.

Hopefully the student will already have sought an exemption card and will be able to show that to you as evidence of exemption. If they don't have a card, they may be able to provide a letter or medical certificate from a health practitioner or GP.

There are many layers of protection in schools, including people who are unwell staying away, increasing rates of vaccination across the population including mandated vaccinations for staff and volunteers, good ventilation, the majority of other students and staff wearing face coverings, good cough and sneeze etiquette and more.

Therefore, where someone is exempted from wearing a face covering, they should not be prevented from attending school and nor should there be any additional measures imposed on the individual.

COVID-19 Public Health Response Order (Alert Level Requirements) 2021 – NZ Legislation

Webinar tonight: Pregnancy and the vaccine

The Ministry of Health is holding a Facebook live event tonight at 7.30pm to kōrero about pregnancy and the COVID-19 vaccine.

Please find the event on Facebook – be sure to click 'going' or 'interested' to be notified when this event starts.

Pregnancy and the COVID-19 vaccine live chat – Facebook

The event will be facilitated by Kanoa Lloyd from TV3's The Project and speakers include:

- Dr Michelle Wise – Obstetrician & Gynaecologist
- Dr Kara Okesene-Gafa – Obstetrician & Gynaecologist
- Christine Mallon – Chief Midwife
- Bronwyn Robinson – Nurse

Advice to schools on air monitoring and treatment technologies

We're aware that schools are being approached by suppliers offering to sell air monitoring and air treatment technologies.

While international and national advice is that fresh air is the best way to ventilate a space, we are investigating how active technologies like air monitoring and air treatment may be appropriate to supplement the management and ventilation measures already in place in schools. We are working closely with a panel of experts including the Ministry of Health and NIWA on this.

If you have been approached by a supplier, it's important to understand that products on the market vary greatly in how they function, their suitability in a teaching space, quality and accuracy and where they're ideally located.

We will continue to keep you updated on the work we are doing and will provide further advice.

In the meantime, the University of Otago has released information about air purifiers and CO2 monitoring.

Monitoring CO2 indoors for improving ventilation – University of Otago

Reducing COVID-19 transmission through the use of air purifiers – University of Otago

ESOL assessments for funding (Auckland and Waikato schools)

We understand that although school staff are engaging with remote learning with their English language learners during Alert Levels 3, there may be some assessments and tasks that are challenging to administer in this environment.

If this is the case, schools in the Auckland and Waikato regions can send their updated ESOL status lists with the same ELLP scores submitted in August 2021.

It will still be important to remove students who have left and add any new students. If assessment has not been possible for new students, teachers should enter ELLP scores that best reflect what they know about them. Scores can be updated in the next funding round (that is, August 2022).

The due date for ESOL funding applications for Terms 1 and 2 will remain as 1 March 2022. This will enable us to distribute the funding without undue delays.

Queries regarding ESOL funding can be sent to info.esol@education.govt.nz.

Open: Studylt forums for NCEA students

The Studylt forums are open and can support your students in preparing for end-of-year exams in NCEA Levels 1-3 English, maths or science.

NCEA help – Studylt

The online learning platform has moderated forums for students to discuss NCEA achievement standards with other students and facilitators. General study and exam advice, including tips on how to study smart, are also available.

Pay equity claims update

Late last year NZEI Te Riu Roa raised pay equity claims with us for librarians and library assistants, science technicians, therapists (including Ministry employees), teachers, and those doing the same or substantially similar work in state and state-integrated schools.

PPTA Te Wehengarua also raised a claim for teachers (and principals) which has now been combined with the NZEI Te Riu Roa claim.

These claims were agreed or deemed 'arguable' earlier this year. This means that there may be a current or historical undervaluation due to gender-based discrimination including perceptions about the value of "women's work". This doesn't mean it's been agreed that there is a pay equity issue – a thorough investigation needs to be done before conclusions can be drawn.

We've now signed Terms of Reference with NZEI Te Riu Roa which sets out how we will work together to investigate the librarian and library assistants and science technician claims (which are at the same phase in the claims process). The Terms of Reference for the therapist claim has been developed and will be signed soon.

There are three phases to a pay equity claim: raising the claim, assessing the claim, and settling the claim. The signing of the Terms of References marks the end of the raising phase, which means we're now moving into the assessment phase. The first part of the assessment phase involves us conducting interviews with claimants from each of the claims to understand more about the responsibilities, demands, and conditions of their roles.

We have started these interviews in Term 4 and are busy calling schools and kura to set more up. The interview process for each claim is iterative with an initial sample size of randomly selected claimants. Interviews are being conducted by a Ministry representative partnered with an NZEI Te Riu Roa member. We aim to do face-to-face interviews where possible and so are travelling around the country to meet with the claimants.

If you have any queries regarding the therapists claim please email ministry.payequity@education.govt.nz. For any of the other claims email payquity.claims@education.govt.nz.

If you'd like regular pay equity updates, please sign up to our newsletter or visit our website for more information.

Pay equity newsletter – Mailchimp

Pay equity – Ministry of Education

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FOREWORD

Ngā mihi o te Rāmere,

As 15 November draws closer, I know many of you are working hard to support those in your staff and school community who are hesitant to be vaccinated.

The webinars with Dr Michelle Dickinson a few weeks ago were enormously helpful in this regard and a series of videos we have produced with her are now available online. I would encourage you to share these with those who need it, details below.

The Immunisation Advisory Centre have also offered to host an information session next week for those who may still have questions – please let me know if this is something of interest to you or any of your staff members.

In today's bulletin, we've updated our guidance on what to do if there is a case of COVID-19 in your school and outlined vaccination requirements for both Ministry staff and for contractors, tradespeople and consultants on your school site.

Nga mihi,

Iona

What to do if there is a case of COVID-19 in your school or kura

As noted recently by Dr Caroline McElroy, Director of Public Health:

'Our experience in New Zealand and overseas with COVID-19 shows that it does not affect children and teens in the same way it does adults. Children and teens don't become as unwell if they do get infected, and they don't tend to pass the virus on so much as adults when in a classroom setting.

Compared to other places, schools and early learning services are not environments where we have seen significant spread of COVID-19. Household members and work colleagues who are in close contact with people with COVID-19, are the most common sources of transmission.'

Inevitably, however, when there are cases in the community, they will also appear in schools and early learning services.

Notification through public health

When there is a confirmed case in the community, public health officials will undertake a case investigation and work closely with the confirmed case to identify any close contacts, including any connection to a school or early learning service.

Health officials will then contact either your regional Director of Education or the school directly to provide direction on contact tracing and other relevant information.

We will support with communications to the school community based on this public health advice.

As a result of the case investigation, public health may be able to provide the following information:

- infectious period or information that the person was not infectious when at school
- any known activities on site during that infectious period
- isolation end date and testing advice for contacts.

In addition to the case investigation by Health, you will be able to identify those in your school or early learning service who may also be considered contacts, through your:

- timetable (which staff were on site with which classes, groups, bubbles)
- attendance register
- sports, cultural and other extra-curricular group lists
- visitor register.

Again, we will support you to work your way through this process based on public health advice.

Notifications from staff, students, parents or caregivers

What we are often seeing, however, is the staff member, parent or caregiver will first notify the principal or service manager that they or their child are a confirmed case.

In those instances, please contact your regional Director of Education, who will provide advice on some next steps. Their team will connect with public health services to seek advice on next steps for your school.

Closing your school may not be required and should only occur in consultation with direction from Health or in discussion with the Director of Education.

Case investigation can take some time to ensure the risk assessment undertaken by public health is based on good information.

If the case investigation is therefore still underway, as an interim measure to mitigate risk and if advised by the Director of Education to do so, the following actions can be taken.

- The confirmed case and their household should already be self-isolating.

- As a precaution, those who have been in the same classroom/bubble/room as the confirmed case for the previous 48 hours can be asked to stay away until public health advice has been received.
- There is no testing requirement at this time for those individuals unless they are feeling unwell and are advised by Healthline or their GP to get tested.
- You will, however, be provided with specific guidance based on the public health risk assessment as soon as possible. This is likely to require any close contacts to self-isolate and get tested.
- Undertake a clean prior to the other students, children and staff returning on site.

If needed, the Director of Education will provide you with a letter template to support you with your communications and the regional office will continue to provide you with support as needed.

Increased bubble size for Waikato and Auckland

For those parts of Waikato who are now in Alert Level 3 Step 2 (and for Auckland moving to Alert Level 3 Step 2 in principle next week), the shift has meant that more parents and caregivers now need to go to work (for example, to retail stores, libraries and museums).

This has created demand on schools to have more children and young people attend.

We have sought advice from public health and can confirm that if you have reached your limit of staff and spaces available to accommodate all children on site in bubbles of 10, you are able to expand the size of your bubbles to accommodate more children.

In all cases, please keep your bubble numbers as small as possible and with a maximum of 20 children. Once you form a new bubble (for example, increase from 10 to 15 children), please keep it contained with the same teaching staff.

A reminder of the existing layers of protection in place at Alert Level 3 that remain a priority:

- stay away if sick and phone Healthline to find out if you need a test – these remain crucial to keeping potential COVID-19 impacts to a minimum
- get vaccinated (for those who are eligible)
- maintain good ventilation
- maintain physical distancing as much as is practicable
- good cough and sneeze etiquette and regular hand washing.

In addition to this, face coverings are required to be worn inside in Year 9 to 13 settings for students and staff and are supported to be worn for those in any other year level.

Process for working through teacher shortages

We acknowledge the challenges and practical realities the Vaccination Order has presented for schools and kura. Some of you may be needing to urgently deal with teacher shortages as a result of the order.

Please be assured that the Teaching Council has very well-established processes in place to deal with teacher shortages that arise for a range of reasons every year.

If you are expecting the mandate to impact on your school or kura, we encourage you to get in contact with the Council using their priority phone line for professional leaders (04 471 0852 and press 9 for assistance) or by emailing mose.pio@teachingcouncil.nz.

The Council can discuss options with you, as well as giving a priority assessment for individual teacher applications for registration and certification where there is an urgent need to secure teaching staff.

Council staff will need to make an assessment on each individual application before making issue or renewal decisions, but please be assured they are very aware of difficulties some of you will be facing as principals or professional leaders.

The Council is also in discussions with ITE providers to explore whether ITE graduate information will be able to be released earlier this year, so that the new cohort of teacher graduates will be available for employment in the teaching profession.

Vaccination requirements for Ministry staff on your school site

Because a significant number of our staff work closely with you and your students, many Ministry roles fall under the scope of the requirement to be vaccinated under the Vaccination Order.

There is a process underway to ensure those staff are aware of the requirement to be vaccinated. We are working with them to ensure they understand that they should take action as soon as possible and at the very latest have their first vaccination by Monday 15 November.

Please be assured that only staff who comply with the order will be on site at your school.

Vaccination requirements for contractors, tradespeople and consultants

Everyone who works on a school site who may have contact with children or students or will be present at a time when children and students are also present must have had a first dose of the COVID-19 vaccine by Monday 15 November and be fully vaccinated by 1 January 2022.

The term 'works' includes all contractors, tradespeople and consultants (and all their staff and subcontractors).

Obligations of contractors, tradespeople and consultants as PCBU

Contractors, tradespeople and consultants on site are PCBU of their own workforce, and must:

- assess what workers are affected persons under the COVID-19 Public Health Response (Vaccinations) Order
- notify (if they have not already done so) which workers are covered by the order of the requirements of the order and their duty to be vaccinated
- collect and maintain a record of the contact and vaccination information for all workers affected by the order
- ensure their workers are advised that both the Ministry and your school may seek confirmation from them of their compliance with the order and the aggregate vaccination status of their workforce.

You (schools) are not required by the order to record vaccination status of contractors, tradespeople and consultants but you may wish to for your own health and safety processes.

See our advice to Ministry suppliers for further reference.

Advice for Ministry suppliers – Ministry of Education

Worker obligations and when the requirements do not apply

From Tuesday 16 November 2021, workers must not carry out work on a school site unless they have had their first dose of the vaccine.

This will only apply if they are on the school site and may come into contact with children or students or if they will be on site at the same time as children or students.

The vaccination requirements do not apply to those workers who are performing services remotely, or who are on site only when children and students are not present (such as a contractor who is performing maintenance during the weekend or over a term break).

We have updated our checklist for main contractors page to provide additional guidance on these necessary protocols.

Operating school construction projects safely – Ministry of Education

Now online: COVID-19 videos with Dr Michelle ‘Nanogirl’ Dickinson

We have made a series of videos with Dr Michelle ‘Nanogirl’ Dickinson that you can now access online.

Dr Michelle ‘Nanogirl’ Dickinson videos – Ministry of Education

There are 11 videos in the series that cover the ‘big questions’ you or those in your community may have about the COVID-19 vaccine – how they work, what makes them effective against COVID-19, what the side effects are, and why natural immunity is not as effective as getting vaccinated.

Dr Dickinson also discusses the efficacy of face coverings and whether those who are pregnant or breastfeeding should get vaccinated.

Class border exception applications

In July the Minister announced a class border exception to allow up to 300 overseas qualified teachers to come to New Zealand to work in eligible schools and kura.

Online applications opened on 6 October for those eligible schools and kura wanting to recruit overseas teachers. Each successful application by an employer provides a critical purpose visa for one teacher, along with their partner and children.

From midday Monday 8 November we will be accepting up to two applications for each school.

Find more information, including eligibility criteria and the application link, on our website:

Border exceptions for teachers – Ministry of Education

In addition, we’re keen to collect feedback from schools and kura that are currently ineligible or are eligible but haven’t applied yet. If you would like to contribute, we encourage you to answer five short survey questions.

Out-of-zone ballots for Alert Level 3 areas

Last week we shared a reminder that the last date for out-of-zone ballots was 30 October.

Some schools contacted us and noted that due to alert level restrictions they were not able to meet that date, but with schools operational they are now ready to run their processes.

With this in mind, we have gained the Secretary's approval for a change to the latest date for ballots for 2022.

In 2021 only, schools in Tai Tokerau, Auckland and Waikato may use the following dates:

- Wednesday 8 December is the deadline for applications (so advertising for out-of-zone places should take place on or before 8 November)
- Friday 10 December is the deadline for the ballot to take place.

This will give schools and parents of out-of-zone students certainty about their enrolments before the end of the year.

Please contact your local regional office if you have questions about the ballot dates.

RTLБ national satisfaction survey

RTLБ national satisfaction survey has been undertaken annually since 2013 (except for 2020 when the survey was not sent out due to COVID-19).

The survey provides a snapshot of the level of satisfaction of principals and teachers with the support provided by RTLБ.

It provides us and RTLБ with information on which aspects of the service are delivered well and helps them to identify areas where improvement is necessary.

This year the survey will be carried out between Monday 1 November and Friday 12 November closing at 5pm.

If you have not already, you can expect to receive a link to the survey from your local RTLБ cluster manager. For additional information about this survey contact RTLБ.enquiries@education.govt.nz.

Now open: TeachNZ career-changer scholarships

If someone you know is looking to complete a teaching qualification, our TeachNZ career-changer scholarships are open for applications.

Career-changer scholarships: TeachNZ

The scholarships allow study towards a teaching qualification, with paid course fees and an allowance of \$30,000 per year for up to three years.

Applications can be made for any subject or sector, but priority is given to applications for:

- science, hard technology, maths, and te reo Māori
- early learning and Māori-medium
- applicants who are teacher's aides, kaiāwhina, kaiārahi i te reo, or who have a limited authority to teach (LAT).

Applications are open now and close Monday 15 November.

HE PITOPITO KŌRERO

COVID-19 UPDATE - 8 NOVEMBER 2021

08 November 2021

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Ngā mihi o te ahiahi,

Every week in education is eventful – and even more so in a pandemic – but I'm expecting this one to be more so with next Monday being the deadline for all those who work in schools and early learning services to have at least one "dot" (as described in a new campaign, 'Get Ya Dot').

For those of you facing challenges with staff vaccinations and anticipate being short staffed after 15 November, I encourage you to contact your Director of Education.

Those of you in the far north of Tai Tokerau will be pleased to have heard you are returning to Alert Level 2 from 11:59pm on Thursday 11 November. You'll find a reminder of the recommendations for Alert Level 2 below.

In the COVID-19 update on Wednesday, those of you in Alert Level 3 can expect to hear more about schools opening for students.

In the meantime, please find guidance on the process for medical exemptions for the Vaccination Order in the bulletin below.

Kia kaha,
Iona

Upper Northland: Information for Alert Level 2

At Alert Level 2 there is low risk of community transmission and schools are open for all students. A negative COVID-19 test is not required before staff return on site at Alert Level 2.

There are no other significant changes to the Alert Level 2 public health requirements you will already be familiar with and which have been in place previously.

Alert Level 2 public health measures and recommendations – Ministry of Education

Medical exemptions for vaccinations

The COVID-19 Public Health Response (Vaccinations) Order 2021 has been amended to clarify the requirements relating to medical exemptions.

All medical exemptions for the education sector need to be approved by the Director-General of Health.
COVID-19 Public Health Response (Required Testing and Vaccinations) Amendment Order 2021 – NZ
Legislation

What you need to know

- Current medical exemptions from the vaccination requirement are no longer valid.
- Exemptions issued by DPA relating to face coverings continue and are not affected by the new Health Order.
- People who currently have an exemption on medical grounds or consider that they need an exemption need to apply for a new exemption. Exemptions are specific to individuals.
- Only a medical doctor or nurse practitioner can apply for a new exemption. They will assess your employee and, if they consider your employee fits the criteria, apply for an exemption to the Ministry of Health on your employee's behalf.
- The Ministry of Health advises that very few people (in the order of 100 or 200 people nationally) will require a medical exemption as they are unable to physically tolerate the Pfizer vaccine.
- If you have an employee who considers that a medical exemption should apply to them they must provide you with written confirmation from a medical doctor or nurse practitioner that states that the doctor or nurse is applying for an exemption on their behalf. They will not be able to work on site where students may be present after 15 November and you should provide them with alternative duties where possible. If alternative duties are not available, and the employee has provided confirmation from their doctor or nurse that they are seeking an exemption on your employee's behalf, then you should provide discretionary leave with pay while the employee waits for their application to be processed by the Ministry of Health during Term 4.

How the medical exemption process will work

An exemption can only be applied for by a medical doctor or nurse practitioner.

The doctor or nurse practitioner needs to assess if the employee meets clinical criteria that have been specified for an exemption by the Director General of Health.

If the doctor or nurse practitioner considers that there are reasonable grounds for believing that the employee meets the specified criteria for a medical exemption, they can complete a request for an exemption on behalf of the employee and submit this to the Ministry of Health for consideration.

The Ministry of Health will consider exemption requests that are submitted in accordance with these requirements and the Director General of Health will decide:

1. if an exemption is to be granted; and
2. the duration of the exemption.

The Ministry of Health must notify the doctor or nurse practitioner and the individual in writing of the decision.

Exemptions may be issued for a maximum of six months, and if the exempted employee believes a further exemption is required at the end of that period, their doctor or nurse practitioner will need to apply for a new exemption.

Vaccination exemptions – Ministry of Health

This includes a flowchart summarising the process that doctors and nurses will follow, and the clinical criteria for an exemption. The Ministry of Health's published advice is clear that only a small number of cases are expected to meet the exemption criteria.

If your employee is issued an exemption under the new process

Any affected worker (voluntary and paid) who qualifies for an exemption must provide you, as their employer, with a copy of the exemption. You must then record the exemption in your vaccination register.

If you receive written advice that a staff member has an exemption, we recommend you take the steps outlined in the flowchart previously provided.

Process for school and kura employees [PDF, 170 KB]

You should carry out a health and safety risk assessment in consultation with your employee to determine what measures can be put in place to minimise risks to the exempt person, other staff and students and tamariki. We will provide further advice relating to the health and safety risk assessment this week.

If your employee has previously provided a medical exemption but is no longer eligible under the revised order

The only valid medical exemption to the vaccination requirements is one that is issued by the Director General of Health under the Health Order referred here.

From today 8 November, any other exemptions are no longer valid and the employee will need to seek advice from a medical doctor or nurse practitioner.

You should continue to support your employee to be vaccinated. If, however, your employee continues not to be vaccinated after 15 November they cannot attend on site and we recommended you take the steps outlined in the flowchart previously provided.

Process for school and kura employees [PDF, 170 KB]

School-based health programmes and maintaining a student register

We've received queries from a number of schools in the School-based Health Services programme about whether the immunisation register (CIR) can be recognised as the school's student vaccination register (rather than having to create a second one).

We are working to provide advice on this.

Update: Saliva testing in Auckland and Waikato at Alert Level 3

In our bulletin on 1 November we shared details of how to access saliva testing for those in Alert Level 3 (after their initial nasal or throat swab test) who are not yet fully vaccinated.

Saliva testing available in Alert Level 3 – School Bulletin 1 November

For anyone who is required to undergo weekly testing because they are not yet fully vaccinated at Alert Level 3, we encourage you to use saliva testing rather than the nasal swab test. The priority for nasal swabs is for those people who are symptomatic.

The Ministry of Health has offered to meet with schools to provide localised support where needed – email Aileen Carlisle Aileen.Carlisle@health.govt.nz if you would like to arrange support to help encourage staff to move to saliva testing.

Testing for those returning on site

In Alert Level 3, all staff (regardless of their vaccination status) must have returned a negative COVID-19 test before returning on site (please note this did not apply in the far north of Northland when they

moved up an alert level).

This test must be either a nasal swab (nasopharyngeal) or throat swab (oropharyngeal anterior nares).

Information about the COVID-19 Required Testing Order – School Bulletin 19 October

Ongoing testing

Staff then need to be tested weekly until they are fully vaccinated. The testing options are:

- a nasal or throat swab once a week
- a saliva test twice a week with at least two days between tests (preferred for Auckland and Waikato).

Saliva testing

Saliva testing is only an option for those who are required to undertake weekly testing until they are fully vaccinated. It is not an option for those who must have a negative test before returning onsite at Alert Level 3.

Saliva testing is self-administered and allows flexibility on when tests are completed. There is no charge for the saliva testing tubes, app or sampling.

Staff can collect tubes beforehand and drop their sample at multiple collection points. When starting out with saliva testing, staff need to register online and download and install the saliva testing app.

Saliva testing programme – COVID-19 Saliva Testing

Pick-up and drop-off locations – COVID-19 Saliva Testing

Saliva testing FAQs – COVID-19 Saliva Testing

Testing codes

When being tested, please remember to ask that the health professional doing the test notes down your education SURV code:

- Secondary school faculty: SURV-SEC
- Primary school faculty: SURV-PRIM
- Education providers who work outside these categories: SURV-EDU

Immunisation Advisory Centre: Vaccine information session and resources

The Immunisation Advisory Centre (IMAC) has been serving Aotearoa since 1997 as a local source of independent, factual information based on scientific research regarding vaccine-preventable diseases and the benefits and risks of immunisation.

IMAC is contracted by the Ministry of Health to provide COVID-19 immunisation education and training for the healthcare workforce to support Aotearoa's COVID-19 vaccination rollout.

The IMAC website has range of education resources, including an information hub that covers how the vaccine works, safety and side effects, and preparing for vaccination.

COVID-19 vaccination info hub – Immunisation Advisory Centre

COVID-19 vaccines in pregnancy and breastfeeding

Internationally, there are no safety concerns with administering the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine at any stage of pregnancy.

COVID-19 vaccination, pregnancy and lactation fact sheet – Immunisation Advisory Centre

My pregnancy vaccination story – Immunisation Advisory Centre

Information session for education staff

This Thursday 11 November from 4 to 5pm, we are holding an information session with IMAC that will answer any questions your staff have about the vaccine. Please send your questions to bulletin@education.govt.nz.

The session will be held via Zoom and will only be available to a limited number of participants.

Register – Zoom

Please note, this session is specifically about the vaccine: how it is made, the approval process, how it works, and safety. The IMAC team will not be able to answer queries about the vaccination Order and how it affects your staff. For these questions, please email employment.relations@education.govt.nz.

Operational funding notification

The Quarter 1 January 2022 operational funding entitlement and instalment notices will be available via the Secure Data Portal on Wednesday 22 December 2021.

Secure Data Portal – Applications & Online Systems

While schools' funding entitlements are being prepared, the Secure Data Portal will not be updated from 29 November to 22 December 2021. Please note, these notices cannot be made available to schools earlier than this date.

Registrations for Te Kura Summer School now open

Te Kura Summer School is run over the summer break to support students who require up to 12 NCEA credits to progress to further study, training or employment.

A range of subjects are offered including English, maths and science. Subjects are delivered online with support from registered teachers.

State or state-integrated schools can register their students for free on the Te Kura website.

Summer school – Te Kura

Consultation on proposed options for bilingual school traffic signs

Waka Kotahi NZ Transport Agency is consulting on the Land Transport Rule: Traffic Control Devices (Kura/School Signs) Amendment 2021 – a proposal to enable bilingual kura school traffic signs from 2022.

Some bilingual signs are already in use, but this proposal will enable a more consistent and safe approach across local roads and state highways.

The kura-school signs proposal would see school traffic signs feature the word 'kura' in bold or italic font positioned above the word 'school' to differentiate te reo Māori and English.

See more information about the kura-school traffic signs consultation and submit your feedback.

Kura-school traffic signs consultation – Waka Kotahi

You are encouraged to submit feedback on the proposed changes set out in the overview and in the draft of the proposed rule, including whether Waka Kotahi should use italics or bold to differentiate te reo Māori and English and what you think about the:

- design of the new kura-school traffic sign
- benefits or impacts of these signs
- removal of "SCHOOL ZONE" from existing traffic signs
- proposal to align with the changes to the draft speed rule
- new permanent school speed limit sign.

HE PITOPITO KŌRERO

COVID-19 UPDATE - 10 NOVEMBER 2021

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FOREWORD

Ngā mihi o te Rāapa,

The Minister of Education has announced today that for those of you in Alert Level 3, students in Years 0 to 10 will be able to return to school on site from next Wednesday 17 November.

Because every school and community situation is different, the overall approach is that schools – with your unique knowledge of your communities – will determine the best way to approach this.

We have taken on board your feedback that you wanted the flexibility to work out how best to do this in your school, while ensuring you have support from the Ministry and clear guidance where needed.

We have provided health advice and some ideas about how to manage bringing children back, and tomorrow we will provide you with a checklist and risk assessment tool that will help you with this planning. As always, if you want further advice or guidance please contact your Director of Education.

In our bulletin today we have also included some more information about the vaccination requirements, with a particular focus on health and safety assessments.

We have received some further questions about the vaccination order following a news story this morning in which the Minister of Education was asked about staff working on site who are not yet fully vaccinated.

The news item was shortened and what he actually said was, "I haven't changed my mind about anything to do with COVID-19 tests. What I have been really clear about is those who haven't been fully vaccinated between now and the end of year will need to have a weekly test until they are fully vaccinated. And then, of course, from the first of January, they need to be fully vaccinated".

As you'll know, this requirements for testing only apply to those in Alert Level 3 areas, and the Public Health Order is clear: if staff have not had their first vaccination by next Monday 15 November, they cannot be on site. Again, if you have questions about this, I encourage you to get in touch with your Director of Education.

Ngā manaakitanga,
Iona

Opening up to more students at Alert Level 3

This afternoon Minister Hipkins announced that from Wednesday 17 November, schools in Alert Level 3 areas are able to further increase the number of children and students in Years 0 to 10 that can return to face-to-face learning.

This will mean that in addition to those students who are already attending because their parents or caregivers have to leave home to go to work, more children and young people will also be able to learn on site.

For Years 0 to 8, attendance on site will generally be a mix of part time and full time. For Years 9 and 10, students will be able to return for face-to-face learning full time.

While returning to learning kanohi ki te kanohi will be best for most children and young people, this must continue to be done in a way that is safe for children, students and staff.

There are already a very large number of mitigations in place to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in schools at Alert Level 3, but to further support the return of more students to onsite learning, Cabinet has agreed the following measures:

- Year 4 to 8 students and staff will now be required to wear face coverings when indoors, as an added layer of protection (unless they have disability or health condition that makes this unsuitable). You will be aware that this is already a requirement for Years 9 to 13.
- for those in Years 0 to 8, schools should keep children and staff in stable groups and wherever practicable keep physically distanced from other groups, when inside and outside (recognising incidental contact may be impossible to avoid)
- those in Years 9 and 10 (given their access to vaccinations and the requirement to wear face coverings) can follow the same or similar rules as are currently in place for schools with Year 11 to 13 students
- drop offs and pick-ups will make use of staggering start and finish times and/or other measures to reduce the risk of congestion such as different exits and entrances
- schools should undertake teaching outdoors as much as possible.

Specialist schools and other learning support facilities will need to work with students and their parents on a case-by-case basis to plan for students to return safely to school.

See further below for all the public health requirements that will need to be in place at Alert Level 3.

Statement from Director of Public Health Dr Caroline McElroy [DOCX, 18 KB]

Letter template for parents and whānau

We have written a letter template you may wish to send to parents and whānau.

Letter template for parents and whānau [DOCX, 19 KB]

How many students can you support on site?

Years 9 to 13

Because of the additional protection offered through vaccination, there are no specific health requirements that would prevent students in Years 9 and 10 from attending on site.

A range of public health measures must continue to be followed (see 'Public health measures at Alert Level 3 for Years 0 to 13' below).

Years 0 to 8

'Must dos' to support all students to attend on site:

- children without an appropriate care option at home will need to be able to attend every day
- all other children should be given the opportunity to attend at least part-time onsite (some parents will choose to not send their child to school)
- you must form classroom groups that are stable and do not intermingle with other groups, inside or outside (wherever practicable)
- meet all other public health measures as noted in this guidance.

For Year 0 to 8 students, as a result of the need to avoid congestion, and keep groups contained and physically distanced from each other, it is anticipated that most schools will not be able to support all students on site at the same time.

Students who will not have appropriate care at home because of their parents or caregivers going to work may need to be able to attend full time. All other students should also have opportunity to attend on site, acknowledging that a number of parents and caregivers will prefer that their child continues to learn at home while you remain at Alert Level 3.

You have flexibility to determine how you can manage onsite attendance, with your decisions informed by the required health measures, the needs of your community, and any opportunities or constraints through your physical settings and layout. Physical distancing is one metre inside and two metres outside wherever practicable. We are preparing a health and safety risk assessment template to go out in tomorrow's bulletin that will support you to work through these decisions. Boards and principals need to work through these assessments with their staff.

The priority remains that you keep students and staff who are on site in Years 0 to 8 in stable groups that do not intermingle and to avoid any congregation on site (including for pick-ups and drop-offs). In order to reduce the risk of people congregating, consider staggered pick-ups and drop-offs, staggering breaks, assigning outdoor areas to different groups and implementing one-way systems for shared corridors. Schools should undertake teaching outdoors as much as possible.

There are many options for how you form your groups. For example, you can extend existing classroom groupings, or have separate full-time and part-time groups. Alternately whānau groupings may work best for your community.

For the larger modern learning environments, it is suggested that you do not have more than two groups of students in one room, and that they remain physically distanced from each other by a minimum of two metres (and maintain good ventilation).

Where health mitigations cannot be put in place, such as in specialist schools or other learning support facilities, you will need to work with students and their parents on a case-by-case basis to plan for students to return safely to school.

You will also have more staff on site. Adults remain the greater risk for onward transmission to other adults and to children (than children to adults and children to children).

- Please consider how you will avoid adults congregating, including in staff rooms.
- Rostered class times will also support rostered access to the staff room or other shared spaces for staff.
- Keep indoor spaces well ventilated.
- Staff who are fully vaccinated, wearing face coverings, and are one-metre physically distanced are able to participate in meetings indoors (assuming the space is well ventilated), otherwise look to hold meetings outside, continue with online meetings.

Public health measures at Alert Level 3 for Years 0 to 13

In addition to keeping students and staff in Years 0 to 8 who are on site in stable and separate groups (see above), the following public health measures must be applied for all year levels at Alert Level 3.

Public health measures required at all alert levels

If a child or staff member is sick, they should stay home (phone Healthline or their GP and get tested if a doctor or health professional recommends them to do so):

- staff are to observe students/children on arrival checking for symptoms and ask those presenting as unwell to go home or arrange for parents and caregivers to come and pick up. Please note, this does not mean that temperatures are to be taken

- principals at state and state-integrated schools have authority to preclude a student from attending if they believe on reasonable grounds they may have a communicable disease under section 77 of the Education and Training Act 2020. See [Guide to Legal Powers](#)
- private schools can ask someone presenting as ill to not attend
- contact your Director of Education for support, if there are any concerns about someone believed on reasonable grounds to be ill, refusing to stay away.

Communicable diseases: A guide to legal powers – Ministry of Education

Use basic hygiene

- regularly wash and dry hands, cough and sneeze into your elbow, don't touch your face (use hand sanitiser at entrances to classrooms for Alert Levels 2 and 3)
- schools connected to a confirmed or probable case of COVID-19 will be contacted by the Ministry of Education regional office (usually the Director of Education) or local public health unit to agree a plan. If you hear of a case before the Ministry of Health officials get in touch, please contact your regional Director of Education for advice and support
- stringent self-isolation is needed for those who display relevant symptoms of COVID-19, test positive for COVID-19, or have been in close contact with someone who tests positive for COVID-19.

Basic hygiene – Ministry of Health

Schools connected to a confirmed case – Ministry of Education

Isolating from others – Ministry of Health

Other measures

- schools are required to display QR Code posters for the NZ COVID Tracer App (and to have other contact tracing systems in place including an attendance register and visitor register)
- it is recommended to keep classroom temperatures to 18 degrees. 18-20 degrees is a comfortable temperature, below that there is increased risk – from a cold household, workplace or school
- at any alert level, indoor spaces should be well ventilated (for example, by opening windows, doors and any vents). Good practice would include fully opening all windows during breaks and

after school for as long as possible. At Alert Level 3, outdoor learning is encouraged wherever possible.

Ventilation

- We've previously put out advice about the importance of ventilation and encouraging an air flow across spaces
- The easiest way to reduce transmission risks and achieve good ventilation is by opening windows, doors and vents
- Getting as much fresh air in the classroom as you can has been endorsed as the best way to ventilate New Zealand schools by the Ministry of Health and NIWA, and generally as the best approach for schools by the World Health Organization and the Centre for Disease Control
- Given there may only be a partial return of students per day, schools can choose to use the best ventilated classrooms, alternate between classrooms, spread students across multiple classrooms/spaces, or where weather permits, elect to spend some time teaching outside the classroom
- Ventilation is one of many considerations in reducing transmission, however simple actions like opening windows can be all it takes to have this protective layer playing its part
- We have prepared some frequently asked questions and a self-assessment tool to help you determine where your best ventilated spaces are and how you can boost increase fresh air flow as more students return. You can read them on our website.
- If you have any questions or require any support, please contact your property advisor.

Ventilation in schools – Ministry of Education

Managing emergencies

A reminder that fire alarms and other emergencies may require you to either evacuate your buildings or move everyone inside. The priority in these situations is keeping students and staff safe from the threat arising through the emergency event (fire, flood, earthquake and so on).

You will also need to ensure your health and safety plan can respond to other accidents or issues that may be faced in regard to health and safety, particularly if there are smaller numbers of staff on site.

This includes having sufficient staff with first aid experience.

Website content update

All the above public health information and guidance to support a return for all students to onsite learning will be added to our website as soon as possible.

We are also in the process of revising and refreshing all the health and safety content to reflect the current requirements for Alert Level 3 and Alert Level 2, including removing the health and safety information relating to Alert Level 1 and Alert Level 4.

This updated information will be available on our website next week.

Parents and caregivers

Adults continue to provide the greater risk for transmission of COVID-19 and therefore at Alert Level 3 parents and caregivers congregating on the school site should be avoided wherever possible. Staggered pick-ups and drop-offs will support this.

Parents should wear face coverings when dropping off and picking up students from school and remain distanced from the school as much as possible.

As noted in our 3 November bulletin, if parents or caregivers do need to come on site they are not required to be vaccinated unless they are there to provide work or a service, and at a time when children or students may be present.

Information regarding parents coming on site – School Bulletin 3 November

If you are communicating with parents and caregivers in this regard, you may wish to remind them how important it is to continue to observe all Alert Level 3 behaviours. These will help to keep their whānau as safe as possible, including when their children are travelling to and from school. Congregating socially outside the school gates is an example of such a behaviour that should be avoided.

Table of public health measures for Alert Level 3

Measure/risk	Alert Level 3 requirements
Overarching description/ implication for education	There is a medium risk of community transmission and active but managed clusters. Schools and early learning services are open.

The Ministry of Health has advised that the risk of transmission within education services is relatively low if public health measures are followed.

Attendance on site

All students are able to attend on site.

In order to meet all public health requirements for Years 0 to 8, however, not all children will be able to attend on the same day and a mixture of offsite and onsite learning will need to continue.

Anyone who is unwell, self-isolating or who has been advised by health authorities to remain at home while they wait for their COVID-19 test results must stay home.

Method of delivery for learning

A blend of onsite learning and work to take home will be required for children attending face to face.

Distance learning needs to be provided for children who are not able to attend learning on site.

Children at higher risk of severe illness from COVID-19 (for example, those with underlying medical conditions, especially if not well controlled or who are not fully vaccinated)

Children with complex medical needs should seek advice from their health professional about whether it is appropriate to come to school.

Distance learning will continue to be available to those who are advised to remain at home.

People at higher risk of severe illness – Unite Against COVID-19

Staff at higher risk of severe illness from COVID-19 (for example, those with underlying medical conditions, especially if not well controlled or who are not fully vaccinated)

Unless fully vaccinated, staff who have a higher risk of severe illness from COVID-19 should stay at home.

If they want to come to school, you may agree to the request only if it can be assured that it is safe for them to do so.

Staff to work with their GP or specialist if they need help understanding their own level of risk and how best to stay healthy.

People at higher risk of severe illness – Unite Against COVID-19

Physical distancing

There is no specific physical distancing requirement inside or outside when at school, but a one-metre distance is recommended wherever practicable, particularly between adults.

A two-metre distance from people you don't know remains a strong recommendation.

Visitors, including parents and caregivers, should maintain a two-metre distance from those who are not part of their household bubble.

Face coverings

Face coverings are required to be worn inside for registered schools providing education for Years 4 to 13. The requirement will apply to students receiving education in Years 4 and above and any staff member working to provide, or support the provision of, that education.

Face coverings are not required to be worn in schools by staff or students for Years 1 to 3.

A pragmatic approach may be needed for any situation where there are a mixture of year levels where some students are not required to wear face coverings and others are. For example, if students are predominantly Year 3 and below but with some Year 4 to 8 students also, face coverings could be optional.

At all alert levels, students aged 12 and over are required to wear face coverings on school transport to align with the requirement to wear face coverings when on public transport

Nurses in schools and other health professionals will need to follow their own industry guidance for using PPE.

Cleaning

Disinfect and clean all surfaces daily.

Limits to gatherings

Schools, school hostels and workplaces are not classified as gatherings when people are there to provide or receive education services. However, specific health measures (as summarised in this table) must still be applied.

Public health advice is that large groups of students meeting indoors should be avoided including assemblies, prizegiving and performances.

Events should not go ahead at Alert Level 3. If bringing others on site (including parents and caregivers) any rules for gatherings applicable at the time will apply.

Events and gatherings – Unite Against COVID-19

Adult-to-adult transmission remains the greatest risk. Staff should avoid congregating together inside unless they are fully vaccinated, wearing face coverings and are one-metre physically distanced in a well-ventilated space.

Physical and cultural activities/playgrounds

Exercising and singing must be held outdoors.

Physical education classes and break time activities can include access to sports equipment including playgrounds, but hygiene practice should be observed before and after playing with equipment.

Playgrounds can open (consider rostering use for different groups).

Physical distance is not possible in some sporting activities. In these situations, extra emphasis on handwashing and drying (or cleansing with hand sanitiser) before and after activities.

See further below for singing and musical instruments.

Contact tracing

Contact tracing remains a priority through your visitor register, timetable and attendance register. You are required to display QR code posters for the NZ COVID Tracer App.

All schools (state, state-integrated and private) will need to capture in a register the vaccination status for COVID-19 for children, students and staff (fully, partially, exempt or no information provided).

If a case is connected with your school, this information will be used to inform decisions about whether the school might need to close and who may need to self-isolate and get tested.

Visitors

No non-essential visitors on site.

All visitors, including parents and caregivers, should wear face coverings when on school grounds.

You must adhere to the rules for gatherings when others come on site, including parents and caregivers.

There should be no volunteers for classroom activities at Alert Level 3.

Consider how you might monitor entrances to minimise non-essential visitors from coming on site. If staffing on site is limited, one entry point may be the most practical way to manage visitors, coupled with staggered starts.

Teaching across groups/schools	Minimise as much as possible, staff working across groups/classes of students. Unless they are fully immunised (now defined as at least seven days after second dose) and wearing face coverings, staff such as itinerant music teachers will not be able to work across different schools at Alert Level 3.
Food preparation	If you prepare food onsite you must check the Ministry for Primary Industries (MPI) guidance on food safety and ensure your school and any suppliers meet all health and safety requirements before you recommence the supply of food to your students. Food should be eaten outside wherever practicable. COVID-19 and food safety – MPI
Libraries	Libraries can be operated as the virus does not survive for long on surfaces.
External students on site (for example, for music programmes or technology schools)	No external students or staff on site. Students not enrolled at your school but who are undertaking exams at your school, are permitted through the order to attend on site. Exams are considered a low-risk activity with the mitigations that are in place.
Shared supplies	Shared supplies and equipment are able to be used if students and staff are undertaking regular hand washing and staying away if sick.
Music, instruments, singing	Participants must be outside and have two metres' distance from each other for singing. No singing should

take place inside.

Wind instruments should not be shared and limited to home use or outside only.

Drinking fountains

Drinking fountains can now be used at Alert Level 3 (reminding students not to touch their mouths to the nozzle).

Water bottles can be used and appropriate health and safety considerations followed for refilling.

Learning support specialist staff at Alert Level 3

Our learning support specialist staff work across many education settings providing support to children, students and educators across a range of education settings.

With more students able to return to school our specialist staff are still here to support you and your students to meet their learning support needs.

While our specialist staff would usually visit many schools for support kanohi ki te kanohi, at Alert Level 3 we will continue to minimise, as much as possible, staff working across groups/classes of students. To limit the mobility of our staff who are not yet fully vaccinated (now defined as at least seven days after second dose) across education settings the itinerant staff may join a school group within a school but will then not join other groups or schools until fully vaccinated.

While on site, our staff will also follow the health measures that apply for your school or kura.

Telepractice will continue to be available to support whānau and educators as you plan and respond to children and young people returning to learning kanohi ki te kanohi.

We understand that there will be a small number of children and young people with high levels of learning support need that require an urgent response from a specialist when they return to learning kanohi ki te kanohi. This is likely to be (but not limited to) specialists such as physiotherapists or occupational therapists.

Our staff will work with you to determine where there is need for physical support and how best this can be provided, either for some schools and situations on site, or continuing through existing telepractice support.

RTLB and other staff that work across schools

If you employ staff that usually work across schools, please consider how best to support these staff to do their work.

Where they are fully vaccinated and wear face coverings, they can work across schools where necessary.

Engaging with children on return to school

You'll be best placed to judge what is most appropriate for your community and learners and what your teachers are able to support.

The experience of being on site at school will be less familiar than previously experienced and learners might experience some disappointment that learning on site has not returned to normal. Being able to socialise normally with peers is an example.

When working on site, it will be important to:

- provide opportunities for students to connect with each other and socialise in safe ways
- focus on vulnerable students who have suffered greater setbacks and faced greater obstacles in the alert level restriction setting. These students will need to be a priority
- provide opportunities for students to share their anxieties and tell their stories
- acknowledge the fears and concerns of whānau and ākonga and regularly seek feedback
- be prepared for a return to full online learning if the need arises.

In the first instance, our advice to you is to focus on using face-to-face time at school to:

- for teachers to reconnect with learners
- for learners to reconnect with each other
- to check in on the wellbeing of learners
- for interactive discussions and collaborative, hands-on activities that support the remote learning programme
- to provide one-on-one or small group time for vulnerable students
- to engage safely in activities that may not have been so possible during alert level restrictions such as sports and the arts.

These activities can be planned to support and strengthen any remote learning you see appropriate. We recognise that distance learning may need to look a bit different when teachers are supporting more learners on site – for example, staff may be less able to be available for Zoom sessions.

We are continuing to work on how to support you. Further information about what we know about how learning has been to support a safe return to school will be provided on the Learning from Home website.

Distance learning support – Learning from Home

If you need any support, have questions or suggestions, email Dr Lesley Murrihy Lesley.Murrihy@education.govt.nz or contact your regional office.

Further supports will be put in place as needs become clear.

Specialist, residential and sensory schools reopening in Alert Level 3

We know from previous alert level restrictions that some parents with children in specialist, residential and sensory schools will welcome the re-opening, while others will be reluctant to send their children to school.

Schools will need to work with students and their parents on a case-by-case basis supported by our staff. Contact your local office if you need our help.

Welcoming students returning onsite

To assist teachers, parents and caregivers with the transition of more students back to onsite learning, we've updated our wellbeing information for schools.

This information includes practical tips on how to support children and students to return including:

- guidance for teachers and school leaders: supporting student wellbeing when they return to school
- looking after your wellbeing (guidance for teachers)
- getting through together resources (for parents, teachers, young people and children).

School transport

Face coverings on school transport at all alert levels

Students of all ages are encouraged to wear a face covering on all school transport services under all alert levels.

Students aged 12 and over

Everyone 12 years and older legally must wear a face covering on school transport services (both Ministry and regional council-operated) at all alert levels unless they have an exemption.

Please note, while the school transport drivers are not required to enforce the wearing of face coverings, they will report any non-compliance to your school's bus controller (noting that some students may be exempt from face covering requirements for health and safety reasons).

Schools are expected to manage any non-compliance just as they currently manage behavioural issues of school transport users.

SESTA students

SESTA students are included in the above face covering requirements, but we understand that for some SESTA students this will not be possible, and that they will have an exemption.

While we expect SESTA drivers to wear face coverings wherever possible, we also expect that there will be some situations where a SESTA student's caregiver requests that the driver not wear a face covering due to safety considerations.

We have asked our SESTA drivers to contact caregivers about the new face covering requirement for both drivers and students.

Exemptions from wearing face coverings

Information on face covering exemptions can be found on the Unite Against COVID-19 website.

Wear a face covering – Unite Against COVID-19

Vaccine requirements: Completing a health and safety assessment

There have been questions raised around when a school or kura needs to undertake a health and safety assessment in relation to the mandatory vaccination requirements. We have answered these questions below.

Does my school or kura need to undertake a health and safety assessment due to the Mandatory Vaccination Health Order?

No, there is no need for a health and safety assessment to be undertaken in relation to the application of the order to your school or kura, but you do need to undertake an assessment to manage the health and safety issues related to growing the number of students onsite.

Regardless of your specific health and safety policy, the order applies to all workers at your school or kura who may have contact with children and students in the course of carrying out their work, or who will be onsite when children and students are also present.

The validity of the order has been upheld by the courts in any challenges to date. The role of schools and kura is to give effect to the order.

The order supplements, rather than replaces, your own COVID-19 response plan and existing health and safety risk assessments.

If you have received formal correspondence from your employees about the order and how it applies to specific roles in your school or kura, we recommend you contact NZSTA or an alternative employment adviser who will be able to help you respond.

Letter template

We have drafted a letter template you may wish to use to assist you to ascertain what the intentions of staff who have not yet stated their vaccination intentions.

Health and safety letter template [DOCX, 14 KB]

Should I undertake a health and safety assessment if an employee has a medical exemption because they are unable to take the vaccine?

Yes, a health and safety assessment is required for any employees who present a valid medical exemption obtained from Monday 8 November.

A medical exemption needs to have been issued by the Director General of Health in accordance with the process set out in the amended Order that came into force on Sunday 7 November.

More information about medical exemptions is available in our bulletin from 8 November.

Medical exemptions for vaccinations – School Bulletin 8 November

The Ministry of Health has advised that medical exemptions will be rare, should be limited to situations where a suitable alternative COVID-19 vaccine is not readily available for the individual, should be for a specified time, such as to allow the individual to recover from clinical conditions or until alternate vaccines that suit that individual's health needs become available.

The purpose of the health and safety assessment is to determine whether and how the duties of an employee with a medical exemption can be undertaken in a way which does not compromise their safety, or the safety of ākonga, other employees, whānau or the wider schooling community.

Health and safety assessment

We have prepared guidance to help you work through this assessment here:

Health and safety guidance for schools and kura [DOCX, 22 KB]

The health and safety assessment must be carried out with the exempt person's input, having regard to the impact on any other people who may be affected by the presence of an unvaccinated employee in the workplace. The aim should be to have arrangements in place for the exempted employee to be working safely, wherever this is possible, by the beginning of Term 1 2022.

If the health and safety assessment determines the exempt employee is able to perform work safely, with appropriate measures in place, then confirm the arrangements with the employee and update your vaccination record.

If there are no measures which can reasonably be put in place to enable the exempt employee to perform work safely, the exempted employee may be provided with discretionary paid leave, while other options are explored such as modified duties or an alternative role which would allow them to work safely.

If at the end of this period, no options have been found, which we anticipate would be rare, an employment process could be commenced, which may include agreement to provide discretionary paid leave, or unpaid leave for a period of time, or whether termination of employment is appropriate.

We recommend you seek advice from NZSTA or another employment relations advisor.

Can the exempted employee undertake work on site while the health and safety assessment is carried out?

Yes, if that work can be carried out in a way that means they will not have contact with students in the course of carrying out their work and they will not be present at your school or kura when children or students are also present.

If this is not possible, the exempted employee should be provided with paid discretionary leave while the health and safety assessment process is worked through.

How often do I need to do a health and safety risk assessment for an exempted employee?

Your obligations to assess and manage health and safety risks in the usual way under the Health and Safety at Work Act 2015 remain.

We recommended all risk assessments are regularly reviewed, as well as being reviewed if circumstances change. If the exempted employee was to be granted a subsequent exemption, we further recommend the risk assessment be reviewed at that point also.

Who applies for a medical exemption to the vaccine requirements?

Individual employees will need to consult with their medical doctor or nurse practitioner about their health situation. The doctor or nurse is required to assess the individual's application for exemption against a prescribed criterion set by the Director General of Health.

If the doctor or nurse believes that the individual meets the criterion for exemption, they will then make an application to the Ministry of Health on the individual's behalf.

Who applies for a significant disruption exemption to the vaccine requirements?

The revised COVID-19 Public Health Response (Vaccinations) Order 2021 allows the Minister for COVID-19 Response to grant a limited exemption for schools and kura in certain circumstances. If a school or kura considers there may be a significant disruption to learning, they need to discuss this with their regional Director of Education who will work with them to address the disruption.

Individuals cannot make an application for this type of exemption. If you have an employee who makes an application to you under this provision of the order you will need to let them know that the only form of exemption that applies in individual circumstances is a medical exemption as described above.

What is the difference between the medical exemption and significant disruption exemption?

The medical exemption is for individuals only and can only be applied for and lodged by a medical doctor or nurse practitioner on the individual's behalf.

The significant disruption exemption is for schools only and must be applied for and lodged by the school with the regional Director of Education.

What do we do if an unvaccinated staff member requests leave, such as refreshment leave, parental leave, or another form of leave?

Requests for refreshment or other types of leave should be considered in line with the school's usual processes for the type of leave being requested. The COVID-19 vaccination requirement is not a reason to provide this leave, but it also should not be a reason to decline it.

The school should work through their usual process and should either approve or decline the leave based on the usual considerations. If a staff member is on leave then employment processes including decisions regarding their ability to work on site should be deferred until their return to work.

What if a staff member was part of the Valneva vaccine trial? Are they considered to be vaccinated under the Order?

Individuals involved in the Valneva vaccine trial are not considered to be vaccinated under the order.

These individuals must have the medical doctor leading the trial apply for a medical exemption on their behalf. Until the application for medical exemption is confirmed, individuals must be treated as unvaccinated.

Curriculum and assessment programmes timelines reset

The Government has announced the reset of the timelines for the national curriculum and assessment programmes in response to the ongoing impact of COVID-19, particularly in the Auckland region.

This announcement will affect The New Zealand Curriculum refresh, Aotearoa New Zealand's histories, Te Takanga o Te Wā and the NCEA change programme.

These programmes will still work towards the same outcomes, but their activity and timings have been reset and adjusted so you now have more time to engage and participate.

The changes will be different for each programme and we will be following up with more detail in the coming days. In the meantime, find a summary below.

The New Zealand Curriculum refresh

- Testing of the vision for young people and the social sciences learning area draft content will now take place in Term 1 2022.
- The refresh of the English and the mathematics and statistics learning areas will happen in 2022, supporting the upcoming mathematics and literacy strategies.
- The update of the science learning area moves from 2022 to 2023, with the arts and technology learning areas also refreshed in 2023.
- The refreshes of the learning languages and health and physical education learning areas move from 2023 to 2024.
- Changes to other parts of the NZC which underpin it being refreshed as a 'bicultural and inclusive' curriculum will all be progressed in 2022, rather than being spread through to the end of 2023. This includes a refreshed Vision for Young People.
- The phasing of the development of the Record of Learning has been aligned to the refresh of the curriculum, with the first release planned for 2024.

Te Marautanga o Aotearoa redesign

There is no change to the phasing of the redesign of Te Marautanga o Aotearoa, as the phasing of learning areas will be aligned to the redesign process around the Te Tamaiti Hei Raukura conceptual framework.

Key changes to Aotearoa New Zealand's histories and Te Takanga o Te Wā

- The timeline for the public release of the Aotearoa New Zealand's histories (ANZH) and Te Takanga o Te Wā (TToTW) final content will be moved to early 2022. Schools and kura will now

be expected to implement the new content from 2023, rather than from 2022 as originally intended.

- This means that those schools and kura who are well-placed to pick it up and use the content earlier than 2023 will have the option to do so.
- During 2022 schools and kura will be supported to access resources they need to be ready to teach the new content from 2023.
- The adjustment to timing means that schools will be able to use the new ANZH content in the context of the refreshed Social Sciences learning area for the NZC.

NCEA change programme

To ensure the NCEA change programme and the sector readiness are aligned, it has been agreed that as part of the overall programme rephasing, the NCEA planned pilot approach will change.

Although the timeline is changing, it is crucial that we continue to work with the sector in 2022 to test and refine the new Level 1 subjects. The new approach to pilots is the introduction of mini-pilots followed by a full pilot for each NCEA level from Level 1 to Level 3 throughout the NCEA Change Programme.

NZC Review of Achievement Standards (RAS) pilots

The NCEA Level 1 pilot planned for 2022 will be replaced with a Level 1 mini-pilot. The mini-pilots will be scaled down with fewer schools participating. The number will reduce from 15-25 schools per subject to five schools per subject.

- Level 1 (full) pilots will take place in 2023 with full implementation by 2024.
- Level 2 pilots will take place in 2024 with full implementation by 2025.
- Level 3 pilots will take place in 2025 with full implementation by 2026.

Te Reo Māori NZC pilots

Schools and kura that are being asked to run mini-pilots will need to commit to three years because ākonga in mini-pilots would need to have a consistent teaching and learning experience with the new standards, rather than having to revert back to the old achievement standards part-way through. The mini-pilot for Level 1 will take place in 2022, and will be scaled down to 10 school and kura for this subject.

- Level 1 mini-pilot will take place in 2022, followed by a full pilot in 2023 with full implementation by 2024.
- Level 2 mini-pilot will take place in 2023, followed by a full pilot in 2024 with full implementation by 2025.
- Level 3 mini-pilot will take place in 2024, followed by a full pilot in 2025 with full implementation by 2026.

Te Marautanga o Aotearoa (TMOA) wāhanga ako

Schools and kura that are being asked to run mini-pilots will need to commit to three years because ākonga in mini-pilots would need to have a consistent teaching and learning experience with the new standards, rather than having to revert back to the old achievement standards part-way through.

The mini-pilot for Level 1 will go ahead in 2022. The number of places will be scaled down to 40 across wāhanga ako, with an additional 10 for Te Reo Rangatira.

- Level 1 mini-pilot will take place in 2022, followed by a full pilot in 2023 with full implementation by 2024.
- Level 2 mini-pilot will take place in 2023, followed by a full pilot in 2024 with full implementation by 2025.
- Level 3 mini-pilot will take place in 2024, followed by a full pilot in 2025 with full implementation by 2026.

What's not changing in the NCEA change programme

Literacy and Numeracy | Te Reo Matatini me te Pāngarau pilots will continue as planned in 2022. The implementation of the corequisite in 2023 is subject to a sector readiness review in mid-2022.

The Te Ao Haka programme will not change and pilots will commence in 2022.

Where to go for support

If you have any questions about the New Zealand Curriculum Refresh Programme, email NewZealand.CurriculumRefresh@education.govt.nz.

If you have any questions about Aotearoa New Zealand's histories and Te Takanga o Te Wā, email AotearoaNewZealandHistories@education.govt.nz.

We're in the process of contacting all pilot schools to explain how the mini-pilots will be managed in 2022. If you have not been contacted or need more information, email NCEA.Review@education.govt.nz.

Curriculum changes: Indicative timelines – Ministry of Education

Released under the Official Information Act 1982

Home / He Pitopito Kōrero

HE PITOPITO KŌRERO

COVID-19 UPDATE - 11 NOVEMBER 2021

11 November 2021

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FOREWORD

Kia ora koutou,

This week I heard about Te Rito Toi, which helps teachers work with children when they first return to school following life-changing events (thanks to Liam Rutherford at NZEI for the heads up).

COVID-19 alert level restrictions, of course, are among such life-changing events, and I encourage you to take a look at the resources on Te Rito Toi's website (link below), particularly as those of you in Alert Level 3 areas plan how you reopen to all students next week.

In today's bulletin, we have additional information on managing employment processes after next Monday 15 November and the risk assessment checklist we promised yesterday. Although the checklist allows for flexibility, I'd like to reassure you that if you have endeavoured to align your planning with it, you can be confident you are following public health advice and fulfilling your duties under the Health and Safety at Work Act 2015.

The significance of the coming weeks is not lost on me – deadlines for vaccinations, preparing to return to school, NCEA exams and more. I thank you for your continued positivity in these times and the steer you so ably provide your staff, your students, and your parents and whānau.

Kia ora rawa atu,

Iona

Managing employment processes after 15 November

As you know, workers who have not had their first dose of the COVID-19 vaccine by 15 November will not be able to work on site and will be committing an infringement offence if they do so.

Employment steps to be taking now

By now, you should have advised all your employees in writing of the requirement to be vaccinated and encouraged them to get vaccinated. You should also have requested the required contact and vaccination information from all your staff.

You should now have a reasonable understanding of who has already received their first dose of the COVID-19 vaccine and who has yet to do so. You may also understand who intends to receive their first dose by 15 November.

We encourage you to continue to actively discuss with employees the benefits of vaccination and the health and safety, and other risks of not being vaccinated.

Employment steps to take from 16 November

Firstly, ensure that you have received, compiled and securely stored the contact and vaccination information from all employees. If you have not received this information from an employee, you must assume that employee has not had their first dose of the COVID-19 vaccine.

If an employee is either assumed or confirmed to not have received their first dose and does not intend to, you will need to follow a process with them.

While working through this process it is important to ensure that there is no predetermined outcome. Your usual employment obligations still apply, including the duty to act in good faith, consider all reasonable alternatives, consult with the employee and take their feedback into consideration.

The steps below are summarised in the flowchart we have previously provided.

Process for schools and kura [PDF, 170 KB]

1. You should advise the employee that they can no longer be on site which may mean they are unable to perform the work required of them. They will need to leave the worksite.
2. You should ask the employee why they are not vaccinated and if they are now willing to be vaccinated. This process will need to take into account that the employee will not be onsite to do this. If the employee is willing to be vaccinated, you should immediately provide them with time to be vaccinated and no absence should be recorded.

3. If the employee is not willing to be vaccinated, for any reason other than they have a medical exemption from the Ministry of Health or their doctor/nurse practitioner has applied for an exemption for them and the result isn't back yet, alternative duties should be provided where feasible. If necessary, they may be placed on discretionary special leave. Discretionary leave can be provided with or without pay at the discretion of the school board.

You will need to consult with the employee to determine whether going forward they can carry out work in a way that means that they have no contact with children and are not onsite when children are expected to be present for the rest of Term 4 and when school resumes in 2022.

You will also need to discuss alternative working arrangements such as the feasibility of alternative duties, an alternative role, working hours or working from home arrangements.

For many roles it's unlikely that alternative duties can be reasonably accommodated beyond the short term and, as a last resort, the school may need to consider terminating the employee's employment.

We strongly advise consulting NZSTA or an alternative employment adviser for support during this step and in any employment processes.

While working through this process, if you determine that:

1. the employee's work can be reasonably rearranged, to ensure that they do not have contact with children and are not on site when children are expected to be present, you should confirm with the employee their new working arrangements
2. if a longer-term period of leave is involved, you will need to confirm with the employee that they must be fully vaccinated at the end of the leave period in order to return to onsite duties
3. there are no alternatives to dismissal, you should work with NZSTA or an alternative employment advisor and move to give notice to the employee of termination of their employment. The notice period in the employee's employment agreement applies. For example, the Primary Teachers' and Secondary Teachers' Collective Agreements both require the employer to give permanent employees two calendar months' notice of the termination of their employment. This must be paid notice. If staff have been put on unpaid leave then the unpaid leave is not part of the notice period. The employee will not be able to have contact with children or work on site at a time that children are present during this notice period and therefore the employee will either need to continue with alternative working arrangements or they should be on discretionary leave during their period of notice.

Advertising vacancies

It would be contrary to your employment obligations throughout this process, including not having a predetermined outcome, to start advertising the potential vacancies created by unvaccinated staff before their employment status is certain.

It would be appropriate to advertise positions to temporarily backfill the role of the person who is not performing their usual duties.

Positions can start to be advertised after staff have been given notice of termination of employment, however staff should continue to be encouraged to get vaccinated and should be given time and resources to allow them to change their mind during the notice period.

What if an unvaccinated staff member goes on sick leave on or before 15 November, preventing the employment consultation process from taking place?

As per the usual requirements, you cannot contact employees for work related issues while they are on leave such as this. This means that if a staff member is on leave during a time when you were planning to start the consultation process to work through their employment options, you will need to wait until they return from leave.

The usual process concerning requests for a medical certificate for sick leave will still apply.

If a staff member's sick leave ends during a period in the school holidays, you are still able to conduct the employment process during the school holidays if necessary.

What if a staff member is awaiting the result of an application for a medical exemption?

If a staff member has not had their first dose of the COVID-19 vaccine by 15 November and is seeking a medical exemption from the Ministry of Health they cannot be on site.

If the employee's doctor or nurse practitioner has applied for a medical exemption for the employee, they should provide you with a letter from the medical professional confirming that. If so, these staff should be on discretionary paid leave while waiting for the result of their application.

What if an unvaccinated staff member turns up on site after 15 November?

The staff member will be committing an infringement offence if they have not had their first dose of the COVID-19 vaccine and are on site after 15 November. This means they may be liable for a fine.

If staff do turn up on site after this date, we encourage school leaders to deal with this in the usual manner you would if other inappropriate people were to turn up on site.

The staff member should be notified that they are committing an offence under the order. A conversation may be required in the first instance to work through the staff member's concerns. A school leader could also consider contacting the Teaching Council about a teacher if the situation is not resolved.

If you feel your safety or the safety of ākonga or other staff is compromised, you could consider contacting the police.

What if a staff member reports in sick on 16 November?

If an unvaccinated employee reports themselves as unfit for work and on sick leave on 16 November this should be treated as sick leave through your usual process.

This can include requiring a medical certificate demonstrating illness in line with the relevant terms of your staff members' employment agreement.

What if an unvaccinated staff member advises they will be vaccinated with an alternative vaccine when this is available (such as the AstraZeneca vaccine)?

The order requires that a staff member who may have contact with students or will be working at a site where children or students may be present, to have received one dose of a vaccine by 15 November.

An unvaccinated staff member may not work on site without a valid exemption or a letter from a medical professional confirming an exemption request has been submitted on the staff members' behalf and the appropriate health and safety assessment has been undertaken, and measures to ensure safety have been put in place.

We have provided guidance about how to undertake this assessment here:

Completing a health and safety assessment – School Bulletin 10 November

Further information on opening up to more students in Alert Level 3

Auckland and parts of Waikato remain at Alert Level 3, but with the much greater rates of vaccination restrictions have been eased and are now at Alert Level 3, Step 2. This has supported a safe return to learning on site for all students from Wednesday 17 November, whether full-time or part-time.

The reopening information provided yesterday and today is relevant to this current alert level setting. As always, we will continue to update you should anything change in this regard.

Checklist and risk assessment

In order to meet your requirements under the Health and Safety at Work Act 2015 you must manage risks and protect staff, children and young people.

This means that your leaders, staff, students and community need to understand what the risks are and what is needed to manage them. Your plans should then be detailed in your health and safety plan. We have developed a checklist and risk assessment to assist you with this process.

Checklist and risk assessment for bringing all students back on site at Alert Level 3 [DOCX, 69.7 KB]

Prioritising attendance on site

Students whose parents or caregivers need to go to work and don't have an appropriate caregiver at home, should be prioritised for full-time attendance on site.

Similarly, for your staff who have young children, their children should also be able to attend school or early learning at Alert Level 3 so that your staff can go to work. The recent increase in bubble size to 20 in early learning services should support this to occur.

Staff can work across different sites at Alert Level 3 (with conditions)

We recognise that we delivered a lot of information yesterday, and you may not have picked up the confirmation that staff such as relief teachers and itinerant music teachers will be able to work across different schools and groups.

However, teaching across different groups should be minimised as much as possible and in order to do so only those staff who are fully immunised (now defined as at least seven days after the second dose) and wearing face coverings can do so.

Managing drop offs

As noted in yesterday's bulletin, preventing congestion will remain a priority as you bring more students on site.

Staggered pick-ups and drop-offs are most likely not going to appeal to parents and caregivers, however, will be an effective way to limit any risky behaviours that might occur at the school gate.

You may wish to remind your parents and caregivers about the Alert Level 3 settings that continue to apply, in order to keep everyone in the community as safe as possible. In the same vein, encourage them to not drop off their child too early.

Re-forming your existing classroom groupings

This is possible, but we encourage you to avoid chopping and changing groups once they are re-formed.

This will limit risk of spread to households if there was a confirmed case in the group and only those groups with the confirmed case in them would likely be impacted by the requirements placed on contacts (for example self-isolation and testing).

It's important to reiterate here that school settings are considered to be low risk and we have not seen widespread transmission within the school setting, including with the Delta variant.

Limiting numbers in groups

It is suggested that any group would have no more than 30 students and for the larger modern learning environments, that you do not have more than two groups of students in one room, and that they remain physically distanced from each other by a minimum of two metres (and maintain good ventilation).

Limiting numbers in a group will mean that in the event that there is someone who is deemed to be infectious while at school it will be easy to identify who has had contact with them and also to ensure not too many students or staff (and their households) are affected.

After-school care

After-school care cannot operate at this current alert level setting, as it would mean mixing of groups and household bubbles, which would put too many people at risk should someone attending the programme be confirmed with COVID-19.

Face coverings at Alert Level 3

As noted yesterday, Year 4 to 8 students and staff will **now be required** to wear face coverings when indoors as an added layer of protection. This requirement will be included in an updated Public Health Response Order soon.

From 17 November students cannot attend school if they will not wear a face covering when indoors unless they are exempted from doing so (for example some people who have a disability or health condition that would prevent them from wearing a face covering).

A face covering is defined as “a covering of any type that covers the nose and mouth of a person”.

The Unite Against COVID-19 website gives a complete list of the situations where a face covering does not need to be worn and who does not need to wear one.

Who does not need to wear a face covering – Unite Against COVID-19

Exemption cards are available only for those who have a disability or health condition that makes wearing a face covering unsuitable. While the cards are not a requirement for the individual, guidance on the Ministry of Health website notes it will make it easier to explain why wearing a face covering is unsuitable for them.

People who can't wear face coverings – Ministry of Health

Organisations which can provide this card are:

Disabled Persons Assembly – 04 801 9100 or info@dpa.org.nz

Blind Citizens NZ – 0800 222 694 or admin@abcnz.org.nz

Deaf Aotearoa – covid@deaf.org.nz

If you have students who are not wearing face coverings, it's reasonable for you to check with parents and caregivers whether they are exempt from doing so. It's not always obvious why a face covering is unsuitable for someone, so it's important to be kind, respect people's privacy, and not jump to any conclusions.

However, because face coverings have not been a requirement for those under 12 until now, parents and caregivers may not yet have applied for an exemption card for their child.

You will be best placed to make a pragmatic decision about enforcing the face covering requirement for those who you consider would genuinely meet the exemption criteria, while they wait for an exemption card to come through. Otherwise they may be able to provide a letter or medical certificate from a health practitioner or GP to support this.

There are many layers of protection in schools, including people who are unwell staying away, increasing rates of vaccination across the population including mandated vaccinations for staff and volunteers, good ventilation, the majority of other students and staff wearing face coverings, good cough and sneeze etiquette and more.

Therefore, where someone is exempted from wearing a face covering, they should not be prevented from attending school and nor should there be any additional measures imposed on the individual.

And a nice tip from a principal – consider rostering regular breaks outside so face coverings can come off for a while (with appropriate physical distancing in place).

Cases and contact tracing

We've had a number of questions about what will happen if there is a confirmed case in your school. There was some information on this in our bulletin on 5 November, but thought it worth repeating.

COVID-19 in your school or kura – School Bulletin 5 November

When there is a confirmed case in the community, public health officials will undertake a case investigation and work closely with the confirmed case to identify any close contacts, including any connection to a school or early learning service.

Health officials will then contact either your regional Director of Education or the school directly to provide direction on contact tracing and other relevant information.

We will support with communications to the school community based on this public health advice.

If a staff member, parent or caregiver first notifies you that they or their child are a confirmed case, please contact your regional Director of Education, who will provide advice on the next steps. Their team will connect with public health services to seek advice on next steps for your school or early learning service.

In addition to the case investigation, where Health officials work very closely with the confirmed case to determine who they might have been in close contact with and locations of interest, you will be able to identify those in your school or early learning service who may also be considered contacts, through your:

- timetable (which staff were onsite with which classes, groups, bubbles)
- attendance register
- sports, cultural and other extra-curricular group lists
- visitor register.

Letter templates will be provided to you to support communications to your community, including for any person who may need to self-isolate and/or get tested.

We are also currently working with the Ministry of Health to refine the processes around case management and contact tracing for schools and early learning services and will provide detailed information as soon as this has been agreed.

In the meantime, please continue to connect with your Ministry regional office if you need any support.

Travelling across boundaries

We know more children and staff will need to travel across the Alert Level 3 boundaries in order to get to and from school/work and home.

This is under active consideration and we will provide you with any updates as soon as decisions are made.

AstraZeneca vaccine information and availability

Yesterday 10 November, the Director General of Health announced that an alternative to the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine, AstraZeneca, may be available.

It's not intended that the AstraZeneca vaccine be available on the scale of the Pfizer vaccine. The Director General of Health has stated that it is intended for a relative few, and in particular for those who cannot have the Pfizer vaccine for medical reasons. It may also be the case that some may view the AstraZeneca and other possible vaccines as more palatable alternatives than the Pfizer vaccine.

Any staff member who has not had their first dose of an approved vaccine before November 16 is subject to the requirements of the vaccine mandate health order regardless of whether they need the AstraZeneca vaccine for medical reasons or otherwise.

It's possible that a staff member could apply for an exemption from having the Pfizer vaccine while waiting for the Astra Zeneca vaccine to be available. They would need to have this lodged on their behalf by a medical or nurse practitioner.

If an exemption were to be approved, it would likely be time-limited to the release of the AstraZeneca vaccine. If the staff member's exemption is approved, you will need to undertake a health and safety assessment to allow that staff member to work on site where children or students may be present, as they would for any other exempted staff member.

We have provided guidance about how to undertake this assessment in our bulletin on 10 November.

Completing a health and safety assessment – School Bulletin 10 November

The AstraZeneca vaccine is a two-dose vaccine. When it is made available, a person with either two doses of the AstraZeneca vaccine, or one dose of AstraZeneca and one of Pfizer will be considered 'vaccinated' for the purposes of the COVID-19 Public Health Response (Vaccinations) Order 2021.

Vaccination requirements for residential caregivers of international students

Following the information in our bulletin on 3 November, we'd like to clarify the implications of the vaccination order for residential caregivers of international students including in homestay and designated caregivers.

Application of mandatory vaccination requirements for various roles – School Bulletin 3 November

As you're aware, the COVID-19 Public Health Response Order for Mandatory Vaccinations for Education came into effect from 11.59pm Monday 25 October.

This means that the person or people a school contracts to provide the homestay accommodation service or boarding to international students are required to be vaccinated.

If a student is in the care of a contracted residential caregiver who is not vaccinated by the dates specified in the Order, the student will need to be re-homed with a residential caregiver who has met vaccination requirements. All the obligations schools have before approving a residential caregiver apply, including police vetting.

We encourage schools with international students in homestay arrangements organised through the school to ensure residential caregivers are aware of this requirement and of what the consequences of not following the directives are.

Please note, this vaccination requirement does not extend to everyone in the household – only those who are working (including unpaid) for the school.

If a school needs to provide alternative accommodation, they must ensure that it meets all the requirements in the Code of Practice. If an urgent police vetting is needed, schools can enter 'COVID-19' into the 'Agency Reference' field of the online vetting request form.

Note, this code should only be used where alternative arrangements are required urgently as a result of the Order, and schools must enter the code into reference field exactly as "COVID-19".

Managing staff – Ministry of Education

Ka Ora, Ka Ako resumes in Alert Level 3 areas

With schools and kura in Alert Level 3 areas reopening for all students, Ka Ora, Ka Ako will return to usual operations and school lunches should be served as usual.

For schools and kura using an external supplier, we have contacted suppliers to provide an update. Your supplier will contact you to confirm lunch orders and special dietary requirements.

Where not all students will be on site at the same time, it will be especially important to keep in regular contact with your supplier so they can plan ahead and make sure there are enough lunches for students at school. If you do not hear from them, please contact them directly to confirm arrangements.

Schools making their own lunches should check guidance from the Ministry for Primary Industries around food safety and coronavirus at Alert Level 3.

Food safety in Alert Level 3 – MPI

We also recommend you consider how lunches are served and where groups of ākonga will eat their lunch. Here are some examples:

- eat lunch outside if practicable, where there is good ventilation. If this is not possible, ensure your indoor areas are well ventilated
- designate areas for different groups of ākonga
- provide hand sanitiser in dining areas and other common areas
- remind ākonga about the importance of not sharing food or drinks
- serve food and drinks individually rather than having shared platters
- avoid shared utensils or limit the number of people handling and serving food.

Te Rito Toi: Resources for children following life-changing events

Te Rito Toi helps teachers work with children when they first return to school following major traumatic or life changing events. It provides research-informed practical classroom activities and lesson plans to help children make sense of the present and give them tools to imagine a better future.

Circular 2021/02: Attendance dues accounts

Circular 2021/02 has been published on our website and explains how state-integrated schools should prepare their 2021 attendance dues accounts to meet reporting requirements.

Circular 2021/02: Preparation of your 2021 attendance dues accounts – Ministry of Education

Circular 2021/02 replaces Circular 2020/06 issued November 2020.

Revised NCEA Level 1 materials published

Following feedback from the sector and NZQA, pilot-ready materials for both New Zealand Curriculum subjects and Te Marautanga o Aotearoa NCEA Level 1 Wāhanga Ako are now available.

Revised NCEA Level 1 materials – NCEA Education

The NZC materials can be accessed from the 'Subjects' tab on NCEA Education and the TMOA materials from the 'Wāhanga Ako' tab. Materials are available for all subjects except health studies and music. These will be published in the next couple of days – we apologise for any inconvenience this may cause.

Thank you to all Subject Expert and Working Group members who have contributed their time and expertise to the development process, and to those who have contributed via public engagement opportunities, focus groups, and teacher only days.

If you have any questions, please email RAS.review@education.govt.nz.

School bus services from Term 1 2022

New contracts for Ministry-contracted daily and technology school bus services will come into effect from Term 1 2022.

SESTA, direct-resourced, Māori-medium and council-operated services are not affected.

Some schools will have a change of bus operator for some or all of their school bus routes from 2022. A list of the school bus operators from Term 1 2022 has been published on our website.

School bus procurement – Ministry of Education

Current bus operators will continue to operate as usual throughout 2021 under their existing contracts.

Communicating upcoming daily school bus changes to your parents/caregivers

An important part of getting ready for the 2022 school bus changes is letting your parents and caregivers know early about what the arrangements are for next year.

Your 2022 school bus operator should have been in contact with you to discuss your school's daily bus routes, timetables, stop information and expected patronage for services next year.

This includes specifics of the services they will provide and how timetable and stop information will be made available to parents and caregivers. It is essential that this information is conveyed to your parents and caregivers before the end of Term 4. We will be emailing templates out to schools for this purpose.

Finalised school bus route maps

The finalised school bus route maps for services from 2022 are currently available on our website. These maps have been updated from the feedback received from schools and transport service providers.

Bus route maps – Ministry of Education

These maps will be available on our website until Friday 11 February 2022.

Contact your regional transport advisor if you have any questions.

HE PITOPITO KŌRERO

COVID-19 UPDATE - 12 NOVEMBER 2021

12 November 2021

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FOREWORD

Ngā mihi o te Rāmere,

Among the emails I received this week was a 'welcome back' video that the staff at Rangeview Intermediate School in Auckland has prepared for students in advance of their return to school next week.

Kia ora mō tēnā – thanks for that – I know there are more of you who will have done something similar. It was a wonderful illustration of your ongoing flexibility and showed your commitment to ensuring your students' wellbeing.

I'd like to take the opportunity to remind you about testing in Alert Level 3 (and only in Alert Level 3). Those of you that haven't yet been back on site will need to return a negative test before returning to work, and if you've only received one 'dot', you'll be required to undergo weekly testing until you're fully vaccinated. I'd encourage you to go and get a test as soon as possible and use the education codes.

Finally, with 15 November looming, I'd like to acknowledge those of you who have had and will be having to work around a staff shortage. I appreciate that this has not been easy, and I hope you all get the chance to take a break over the weekend.

Ngā mihi maioha,
Iona

Vaccines available under the mandatory vaccination Public Health Order

Thank you for all of the work that you have done in encouraging staff members to be vaccinated.

We know staff members have had concerns regarding vaccination and many of you have had conversations with staff members explaining the benefits of vaccination and the health and safety risks of not being vaccinated for both the staff member, children and students, their whānau and other staff onsite.

As you are aware, without vaccines, we're at risk of serious illness, disability or even death from things like the measles, meningitis, pneumonia, tetanus and polio – and now COVID-19.

Ensuring that all adults working onsite at a school or kura are vaccinated continues to be a key part of ensuring our ākonga can learn safely. Vaccination is a highly effective way of further reducing risk when used together with ventilation measures, staying home if sick (and getting tested), face coverings (where applicable), heightened cleaning measures, and physical distancing.

Vaccines that are permitted under the order

We have had some requests for further information around which vaccines meet the requirements of the COVID-19 Public Health Response (Vaccinations) Order 2021.

The order allows for any of the following vaccines:

- the Pfizer vaccine, also known as Comirnaty or Pfizer/BioNTech. Two doses are required to be fully vaccinated
- AstraZeneca: Two doses are required to be fully vaccinated
- Moderna: two doses are required to be fully vaccinated
- Janssen: one dose is required to be fully vaccinated.

While the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine continues to be the primary vaccine used in New Zealand, work is also well underway to introduce the AstraZeneca vaccine as an alternative option.

This option will be available for people who cannot have the Pfizer for medical reasons (estimated only to be a few hundred people) and people who need to be immunised against COVID-19 because of the nature of their work, such as people working in education services.

AstraZeneca

The AstraZeneca vaccine will be available through a limited number of places and is also likely to be available from late November. Not every vaccinator currently administering Pfizer will also administer AstraZeneca, and the list of those that do will be significantly more limited. Further details of the availability of the AstraZeneca vaccine are expected to be announced next week.

Under the order your staff members will be committing an infringement offence if they work on site and they have not had at least one injection of one of the vaccinations listed above, which for almost all staff members will be Pfizer vaccine, but some employees may have received one of the alternative vaccines, such as when travelling overseas.

You may also have staff members who are one of the very few people in the country who are not able to tolerate the Pfizer vaccine. These staff members are able to consult with a medical or nurse practitioner, who is able to apply to the Ministry of Health for a medical exemption for that individual. If this is granted you will need to undertake a health and safety assessment to identify how, and if, they can safely work on site.

It is possible that a staff member could apply for a temporary medical exemption from having the Pfizer vaccine while waiting for the AstraZeneca vaccine to be available. However, approval would be

dependent on meeting the criteria in the temporary medical exemption and this would need to have been lodged on their behalf by a medical or nurse practitioner as above.

Reminder: What to do after 15 November

On 16 November, if you have a staff member who is not vaccinated, they will not be able to work on site.

You should provide alternative duties where possible, and if this is not possible, provide leave while you work through with them the options that are available in their particular circumstances.

As we have previously advised, you should consult with the staff member to establish why they are not vaccinated, with no predetermined outcome in mind and you should consider their response before taking action.

If the staff member is willing to be vaccinated, you should actively support them to do so. This could include providing immediate time away from their duties to receive a Pfizer vaccine. It could also include providing alternative duties or discretionary special leave to enable the employee to receive AstraZeneca vaccine to them when it becomes available from late November. This leave may be unpaid, or your school board may consider that paid leave should apply.

If the staff member continues to advise they will not be vaccinated then you should follow the process we have previously provided, including seeking support from NZSTA or an alternative employment adviser.

Managing employment processes – School Bulletin 11 November

Travel across regional boundaries

The COVID-19 Public Health Response (Alert Level Requirements) Order has now been amended so that all students and staff can travel across the Alert Level 3 boundaries in order to get to school and work and home again.

COVID-19 Public Health Response (Alert Level Requirements) Order – NZ Legislation

This applies to travel into both Alert Level 3 and Alert Level 2 areas.

Testing requirements will apply to staff travelling back and forth across the Auckland boundary (for example, evidence of having had a COVID-19 test no more than seven days before their journey, for those travelling back and forth across the Auckland boundary on a regular basis).

The Unite Against COVID-19 website has more information for staff about what evidence is needed, and the testing requirements (and will be updated soon to reflect the amended order).

However, day students who are travelling back and forth across the Auckland alert level boundary are not required to undertake regular testing. They will however need to carry evidence for the purpose of their travel. Again, the Unite Against COVID-19 website has information for students which will be updated to reflect the latest amendment to the health order.

You do not need a test if you are moving between Alert Level 3 and 2 areas within the Waikato region.

Permitted travel at different alert levels – Unite Against COVID-19

Update for school hostels

With this week's announcements that from Wednesday 17 November all students are returning to school for Years 0 to 10, you may be preparing to receive more boarders into your hostel.

We have tidied up the COVID-19 guidance for hostels for Alert Levels 2 and 3 but can confirm there are no changes of any significance from when we last provided guidance for hostels in Auckland and Waikato at Alert Level 3.

There are no bubbles required at Alert Level 3 in hostels now and you will be able to run operations 'relatively' normally.

However, avoiding congestion through rostering use of spaces, being hyper-vigilant about symptoms and testing, keeping spaces well-ventilated and whenever you can, keeping a distance of at least one metre from each other indoors and outdoors (wherever practicable) will continue to be your main priorities in regard to health measures.

Adults continue to be the higher risk for spread of COVID-19, and staff are required to wear face coverings when providing a service.

Health and safety guidance for school hostels – Ministry of Education

Can we use bunk beds at Alert Level 3 now?

Yes, you can – but please use sensible practice whenever possible and ensure that there is good ventilation in the room.

Vaccinations for school transport services

The COVID-19 Public Health Response (Vaccinations) Amendment Order (No 3) 2021 mandated COVID-19 vaccinations for all drivers of school transport services funded by the Ministry of Education.

COVID-19 Public Health Response (Vaccinations) Amendment Order – NZ Legislation

Under this order, all drivers of Ministry-funded school transport (daily, technology, SESTA, direct-resourced and Māori-medium) must have had their first dose of the vaccination by 11.59pm 15 November 2021 (unless they have an exemption).

If they are not vaccinated by this date, they are not legally allowed to drive school transport.

We are working closely with our daily, technology and SESTA transport providers to understand the impact this vaccine mandate will have on our school transport services. At this stage, we anticipate that only a small number of schools or kura will be impacted.

If your kura or school's Ministry-contracted service is likely to be affected, we have will contacted you no later than today Friday 12 November.

If you are unsure if your school transport services are impacted, your bus controller should contact your transport provider directly.

Direct-resource and Māori-medium schools and kura

Schools and kura who received direct-resourcing and Māori-medium school funding are responsible for ensuring compliance with the order.

Please contact your transport provider directly to work through any issues that may result from the mandatory vaccination requirement.

ERO staff on your school site

Education Review Office Chief Executive Nicholas Pole has given his assurance that only staff who comply with the COVID-19 Public Health Response (Vaccinations) Order will be permitted to visit schools and early learning services from Monday 15 November.

Decile review extensions for Auckland schools

In September we advised that a further extension for schools in the Auckland region to complete family surveys would be possible.

We are now asking for any schools in the Auckland region still considering completing a decile review to email decile.reviews@education.govt.nz by Friday 19 November for advice and assistance.

Planning and reporting for 2022

We've experienced significant disruption this year and your focus on responding to COVID-19 has meant that for some turning your attention to charters and analysis of variance has not been a priority, while for others this work has continued as you plan for next year and beyond.

If you're among the former, one suggestion is to just focus on your action plan for next year, rather than a full charter review. We are also relaxing due dates, if you are not able to provide your charter by 1 March 2022, just do so when you are able.

Information about how to submit your documents can be found on our website.

Planning and reporting – Ministry of Education

Reporting to parents and school communities on student performance

We're conscious that the COVID-19 disruptions may have impacted your board's normal reporting cycles. Your board should consider what is reasonable and pragmatic in light of alert level restrictions and communicate with your school community, so their expectations are in line with the practice.

As learners have been in very different learning circumstances, your school may need to consider different ways to report on progress from the traditional approach (including mathematics and literacy, and/or te reo matatini and pāngarau) to ensure reporting is meaningful to parents and students.

When reporting it will be important to share aspects of the distance learning programme that the learner has engaged with, this could include how they have grown in key competencies.

Parents are still likely to want to understand how their children are progressing in curriculum areas and there is an opportunity to share your anecdotal observations from online forums, conversations and work completed of the growth and success learners have experienced this half year.

If you have further questions on reporting to parents and the school community on student progress and achievement, please contact your local office.

Annual report

Just a reminder you will need to be working towards submitting your school's annual report and audited financial statements to us by 31 March 2022.

We're here to help with this statutory Crown Entity requirement, the best place to start is with your regional school financial adviser.

Contact details for managing school finances – Ministry of Education

Released under the Official Information Act 1982