

CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19) MANAGEMENT POLICY

COVID-19 is a new strain of coronavirus that was originally identified in Wuhan, Hubei Province, China in December 2019. The World Health Organization (WHO), has declared that COVID-19 outbreak as a 'pandemic'- a Public Health Emergency of International Concern (effective 11 March 2020). This is mainly due to the speed and scale of transmission of the virus in countries around the world, including Australia.

COVID-19 is transmitted from someone who is infected with the virus to others in close contact through contaminated droplets spread by coughing or sneezing or by contact with contaminated hands or surfaces. According to Department of Health, the time of exposure to the virus and when symptoms first occur is anywhere from 2-14 days.

Symptoms can range from a mild illness, similar to a cold or flu, to pneumonia. People with COVID-19 may experience:

- fever
- flu-like symptoms such as coughing, sore throat and fatigue
- shortness of breath

The [Australian Government](#) is constantly updating the current status of COVID-19 including health recommendations, travel restrictions, and a vast collection of resources and information to help people make informed decisions.

As this information is changing rapidly, we are monitoring health alerts and implementing measures suggested by key health experts to minimise the transmission of COVID-19.

Highland Grove Preschool has a range of comprehensive policies in place to guide best practice in relation to health and safety, dealing with infectious diseases and maintaining a child safe environment. Our duty of care and responsibilities to children, parents, families and all staff to provide a safe environment is of utmost importance.

The evolving nature of COVID-19 and the unprecedented steps required to protect our community as recommended by the Australian Government, has resulted in the development of a specific policy to assist our Service manage this pandemic.

This policy will change as required to ensure the protective measures against COVID-19 as advised by our Government are implemented by our Service.

NATIONAL QUALITY STANDARD (NQS)

QUALITY AREA 2: CHILDREN'S HEALTH AND SAFETY		
2.1.1	Wellbeing and comfort	Each child's wellbeing and comfort is provided for, including appropriate opportunities to meet each child's needs for sleep, rest and relaxation.
2.1.2	Health practices and procedures	Effective illness and injury management and hygiene practices are promoted and implemented.
2.2	Safety	Each child is protected.

EDUCATION AND CARE SERVICES NATIONAL REGULATIONS	
77	Health, hygiene and safe food practices
85	Incident, injury, trauma and illness policies and procedures
86	Notification to parents of incident, injury, trauma and illness
87	Incident, injury, trauma and illness record
88	Infectious diseases
90	Medical conditions policy
93	Administration of medication
162	Health information to be kept in enrolment record
168	Education and care service must have policies and procedures

PURPOSE

Highland Grove will minimise our staff and children's exposure to COVID-19 by adhering to all recommended guidelines from the Australian Government- Department of Health and local Public Health Units to slow the spread of the virus. We will implement practices that help to reduce the transmission of the virus including the exclusion of any person (child, educator, staff, parent, visitor or volunteer) that is suspected or has tested positive to having COVID-19. Our Service will implement effective hygiene practices as per our existing policies and procedures and increase the frequency of cleaning and disinfecting high touch areas as per SafeWork Australia recommendations.

Our Service will provide up-to-date information and advice to parents, families and educators sourced from the Australian Government, Department of Health and state Ministry of Health about COVID-19 as it becomes available. Recommendations and health measures mandated by the Federal Government Department of Health will be strictly adhered to at all times.

SCOPE

This policy applies to children, families, staff, management, and visitors of the Service.

IMPLEMENTATION

This policy is guided by recommendations and health measures by the Australian Government, local Public Health Units and the Regulatory Authority in NSW to promote evidence-based COVID-safe behaviours to help minimise the community transmission of COVID-19. The *National Guiding Principles for Managing COVID-19 in Schools and Early Education and Care Services* state that ECEC services are essential and should remain open wherever possible in outbreak situations. ECEC workers are designated as ‘essential workers’ in all jurisdictions. [National Return to School Framework \(PDF, 498KB\)](#).

Our Service has a *COVID-19 Safe Plan* in place and a copy is available on our premises at all times.



This policy must be read in conjunction with our other Service policies:

- Sick Children Policy
- Incident, Illness, Accident and Trauma Policy and
- Medical Conditions Policy
- Handwashing Policy
- Health and Safety Policy
- Interactions with Children, Families and staff Policy
- Payment of Fees Policy

Minimising the transmission of COVID-19

Risk Management

Our Service has effective and systematic risk management processes in place to identify any possible risks and hazards to our learning environment and practices related to COVID-19. Where possible, we have eliminated or minimised these risks as are reasonably practicable. Control measures are reviewed in consultation with staff members and effectively communicated with families and visitors. Due to the constant changes in managing our Service during the pandemic, our approach to risk management is ongoing and fluid.

Our Service implements health and safety procedures as stated in the *Staying healthy: Preventing infectious diseases in early childhood education and care services* (Fifth Edition) developed by the Australian Government National Health and Medical Research Council as part of our day-to-day operation of the Service. During the pandemic, we have increased our health and safety procedures by implementing a combination of COVID-safe practices including:

- adhering to mandated COVID-19 vaccinations for all ECEC staff and visitors (**including booster vaccinations**)

- maintaining an accurate workplace attendance register for all staff, parents, visitors at all times (including contact phone numbers) as per National Regulations
- wearing of face masks and other PPE (as required)
- reducing mixing of children by separating cohorts wherever possible
- ensuring staff maintain physical distancing of 1.5m from each other, especially in tea rooms (where possible)
- enhanced personal hand and respiratory hygiene for children, staff and parents
- improving ventilation in indoor spaces
- utilising the outdoors to reduce transmission between groups
- managing/limiting situations where children are required to queue- waiting their turn
- full adherence to the NHMRC childcare cleaning guidelines and cleaning and disinfecting high touch surfaces at least twice daily, washing and laundering play items and toys
- restricting the number of visitors to our service:
 - use of QR codes for all visitors to our Service
 - ensuring face masks are worn by all adults (staff and visitors) at all times in indoor settings (subject to exemptions)
 - ensuring face masks are worn by staff when engaging with other adults, such as during pick up and drop offs
 - communicating with parents of children who have chronic medical conditions or immunosuppression as they may be at an increased risk of disease and require additional ongoing support/care
 - conducting COVID-safe risk assessments for any large group celebrations and adhering to NSW restrictions for groups size, square metre allowance and other measures

Our staff are committed to assist in infection prevention controls and have completed COVID-19 infection control training.

Mandatory Vaccinations for COVID-19 in ECEC settings

As children aged 0-4 years are not currently eligible for COVID-19 vaccination, reinforcing prevention strategies in ECEC settings is a priority. Vaccination is the leading public health prevention strategy to ending the COVID-19 pandemic. Under the NSW [Public Health Order](#), all early childhood education and care educators and staff must have received two doses of the COVID-19 vaccination and must have the booster vaccination when eligible. This includes all staff working on site, volunteers, contractors, maintenance staff, cleaners and all other workers who are on site. (Staff members who are unable to obtain a medical contraindication certificate from their doctor are not able to attend early childhood educational settings)

The Approved Provider must keep accurate and up to date records of COVID-19 vaccination for all staff visiting the premises.

Handwashing/personal hygiene measures

Effective handwashing remains a vital strategy to help reduce the spread of the COVID-19 virus.

Our Service will ensure:

- all employees, parents, children and visitors must wash their hands with soap and water or use the alcohol-based hand sanitiser provided upon arrival to the Service
- educators and staff must adhere to our *Handwashing Policy* at all times
- children are supervised when washing hands
- educators and staff must adhere to effective food preparation and food handling procedures
- educators will wash their hands or use alcohol-based sanitiser, before wearing gloves and wash their hands after wearing gloves
- hands must be washed thoroughly using soap and water after using the toilet
- cough and sneeze etiquette must be used- cover your cough and sneeze with your hand or elbow

Managing a positive case of COVID-19

Testing and isolation are no longer mandatory in ECEC settings as per the updated health advice and National Protocols. [[COVID-19 Test and Isolate National Protocols](#)]. Mandatory requirements now only apply for 'household contacts'.

To assist our service, manage the risk of transmission of COVID-19 (especially the Omicron variant) management will:

- remind families that any person (employee, enrolled child, parent, caregiver, visitor or contractor) who is displaying symptoms such as: fever, coughing, sore throat, fatigue and shortness of breath, should have a PCR or Rapid Antigen Test and not attend our Service under any circumstance until they receive a negative test result

In the event of a positive case (staff or child), management will:

- ensure daily attendance records for staff, children and visitors are up to date
- determine who is a COVID-19 contact in the service
- send all contacts (parents, staff, visitors) a notification of a positive case (letter, email)
- provide Health Fact Sheets to families ([NSW Health fact sheet for families](#))
- provide information about [getting tested for COVID-19](#)
- conduct a thorough clean of the service

National Protocols require:

- any person who tests positive to COVID-19 to inform their workplace/employer, school and early childcare facility and any other social contact they have spent time with from the 2 days they started having symptoms or 2 days before they tested positive. COVID-19 can be confirmed by a positive Rapid Antigen Test (RAT) or a polymerase chain reaction (PCR) test.
- register positive test results (refer to each [State/territory Health Department](#))

- anyone who tests positive to COVID-19 to self-isolate for at least 7 days from the day they test positive. Close contacts must also stay home for 7 days and take a RAT self-test or PCR test. If they test negative, they must continue to stay isolated and retest on Day 6. If this test is negative, they can return to work/school/ECEC service after completing 7 days of home isolation.
- NSW STATE SPECIFIC INFORMATION [Managing COVID cases](#)

What happens if our Service is forced to close?

The current health advice is that ECEC services should continue to remain open unless otherwise directed with risk mitigation measures in place. (DESE, 2022). Any decision to temporarily close our Service will be made in collaboration with our Regulatory Authority and all families will be notified immediately via email and/or phone.

The Approved Provider must notify the [Regulatory Authority](#) within 24 hours of any closure via the [NQA IT System](#) and the Department of Education, Skills and Employment (DESE) via the [Provider Entry Point \(PEP\)](#) or your third-party software provider.

Allowable Absences from childcare

For the 2021-22 financial year, all Australian families can access 10 extra allowable absence days per child in this current financial year (i.e., 52 days).

This is in addition to the 10 extra allowable absences provided for families in NSW, Victoria and the ACT during extended lockdowns in 2021. These extra absences are to help services and families affected by COVID-19 but can be used for any reason. They will be applied automatically.

Caring for a family member or emergency

If an employee cannot attend work due to caring for a family member due to COVID-19, they are entitled to take paid carer's leave. Casual employees are eligible to have 2 days unpaid carer's leave per occasion. See [Fair Work Act](#) for entitlements for casual, part time and full-time employees. Reasonable evidence is required to justify the absence.

Pandemic Leave Disaster Payment

This lump sum payment is available for people who can't work and earn an income due to:

- Self-isolation or quarantine due to COVID-19
- You are caring for someone who has to self-isolate or quarantine due to COVID-19.

From 10 January 2022 Services Australia will accept both Rapid Antigen Test (RAT) and Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR) results. See: [pandemic leave](#) for further information.

Waivers

The Approved Provider may apply to the Regulatory Authority for waivers for staff qualifications to minimise disruptions to our provision of care. Waivers for ratios will only be considered in exceptional circumstances. Waivers will be considered on a case-by-case basis. see: [NGA ITS Portal Emergency Management Help Guide](#)

Talking to children about COVID-19

As per our *Interactions with Children, Families and Staff Policy*, our Service is committed to maintaining positive interactions and relationships with children and their families.

Information provided to children about COVID-19 will be age appropriate and sensitive to their emotional wellbeing. Educators will both acknowledge children's concerns and be open to discussions about COVID-19.

Communicating with families

Our Service will continue to provide regular communication with families and share information about COVID-19 as required. Due to the fluid nature of COVID-19 and the necessity of self-isolation for some staff members, our Service will endeavour to inform parents and families of any staff changes on a daily basis.

Caring for our community

Our Service is committed to continue to provide quality education and care to all children and support families responsibly during these unprecedented challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic. Knowing how to look after yourself, and others is very important during this crisis.

We will promote a safe and supportive environment by:

- reassuring children they are safe
- acknowledging and listening to children's questions
- promoting and implementing hygiene routines for handwashing and cough and sneezing
- keeping regular and familiar routines within our Service
- ensuring children eat well throughout the day
- engaging children in play, games and other physical activities
- being alert to children's level of anxiety and provide quiet and relaxing activities
- ensuring children are provided with rest and sleep when needed
- providing information to families and support services as required

Information and resources

National Coronavirus (COVID-19) Health Information Line	1800 020 080 Call 131 450 for translating and interpreting service
Health Direct	1800 022 222
Public Health Unit- Local state and territory health departments	

[Australian Government Department of Education Skills and Employment- absences from child care due to local emergency](#)
[Beyond Blue Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) Supporting educators, children and young people](#)
CCS Helpdesk 1300 667 276
[Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) resources Australian Government](#)
[COVID-19 Infection control training](#)
[Emerging Minds Community Trauma Toolkit](#)
[Fairwork Australia- Coronavirus and Australian workplace laws](#)
[Healthdirect Coronavirus hub](#)
[Information on Social distancing](#)
[Local state and territory health departments](#)
NSW Department of Education. (October 2021). [COVID safety in early childhood education and care services: Guidance.](#)
NSW Department of Education [COVID-19 Management of confirmed case in early childhood education and care services](#) NSW Department of Education
Queensland Department of Education. [COVID-19 Confirmed case management process- early childhood education and care services.](#) QLD Department of Education
[Raising Children](#)
[Safe Work Australia](#)

State and Territory specific information [NSW Health alert COVID 19](#)

Source

Australian Council of trade unions Coronavirus (COVID-19) Privacy at work <https://www.actu.org.au/coronavirus>
Australian Children's Education & Care Quality Authority. (2014).
Australian Government Department of Health *Health Topics*
Australian Government Department of Health Coronavirus (COVID-19)
Australian Government Department of Health. (2022). COVID-19 Test & Isolate National Protocols
Australian Government Department of Health. Australian Health Protection Principal Committee (AHPPC) statement on COVID-19, schools and early childhood education and care ([15 November 2021](#)).
Australian Government Fair Work Ombudsman *Coronavirus and Australian workplace laws* (updated 13 March 2020) <https://www.fairwork.gov.au/about-us/news-and-media-releases/website-news/coronavirus-and-australian-workplace-laws>
Australian Government Department of Education, Skills and Employment
Australian Government Department of Health
[Education and Care Services National Regulations](#). (2011).
Fair Work Ombudsman Coronavirus and Australian workplace laws (2020)
<https://coronavirus.fairwork.gov.au/coronavirus-and-australian-workplace-laws>
National Health and Medical Research Council. (2012). *Staying healthy: Preventing infectious diseases in early childhood education and care services*.
NSW Government. Department of Education. (2021). COVID safety in early childhood education and care services: Guidance.
Public Health Act 2010
Public Health Amendment Act 2017
Public Health and Wellbeing Regulations 2019 Victoria
The Australian Parenting website Raisingchildren <https://raisingchildren.net.au/guides/a-z-health-reference/coronavirus-and-children-in-australia>
Revised National Quality Standard. (2018).
Safe Work Australia (2020)
REVIEWED: 24/3/22