



Thursday, January 27, 2022.

## COVID-Smart Operations 2022

Dear Parents, Grandparents and Caregivers,

Welcome to a new school year, an exciting time as our students start or return to their school journey. I want to share how we are building on our experiences of the last 2 years and continuing to safeguard our school community while keeping our school open, where we know the best learning happens.

We will start 2022 with a layered approach to COVID-smart measures that have been developed in partnership with NSW Health to help to minimise transmissions at school. The health and wellbeing of our students and staff remain our priority, and these measures are designed to help to keep our school open and our students learning in the classroom.

### These key measures include:

- Rapid antigen test (RAT) kits will be provided to all students to help monitor your child's health and minimise transmission of COVID-19 across our school.
- Wearing of surgical masks indoors is required for all staff and students in Year 7 and above and is strongly recommended for all primary students. Masks will be provided by our school if required. *These masks will be provided at the gate each morning, when students sanitise (as per 2021), should they be requested by students. Parents/caregivers may also request that their child is provided with a mask in class, by emailing the school at: [merimbula-p.school@det.nsw.edu.au](mailto:merimbula-p.school@det.nsw.edu.au)*
- Only fully vaccinated visitors essential to delivering and supporting learning or wellbeing can come on a school site.
- Up to two parents or carers are allowed to accompany their child into school on their first day of Kindergarten or Year 7, or students starting at a new school. *To support physical distancing, new/Kindy students being accompanied by their parent/caregiver (Tuesday, February 1 ONLY) should come to school at the following times (via the front office gate on Randolph Street):*
  - **Bellbirds House Group** Students: 9.00am – 9.30am
  - **Kookaburras House Group** Students: 9.30am – 10.00am
  - **Pelicans House Group** Students: 10.00am – 10.30am
  - **Swans House Group** Students: 10.30am – 11.00am

*Students catching the bus or being dropped at the gate can arrive from 8.25am.*



- Students will be kept in their year groups on school grounds, with separate playground and canteen access to minimise the spread of COVID-19 across cohorts.
- We will continue to use good hygiene, enhanced cleaning, good air flow and ventilation in learning spaces, as well as physical distancing practices.

While this is not going to be a normal start to the school year, we know that being together in the classroom is the most effective way for students to learn and grow. Your child's relationship with their teacher is important, but as we manage potential disruptions to staffing due to COVID-19, they may get to meet more teachers than usual.

## Rapid Antigen Testing

We will distribute packs of Rapid Antigen Test (RAT) kits for all students and staff at the start of Term 1.

The use of RAT kits is an important step to support the health and wellbeing of our students and staff. They are a quick and easy screening tool to help detect COVID-19. It is a simple process of placing a nose or throat swab in a chemical solution, which is put onto a scanning device. Results can be ready within 15 minutes. **Use of RAT kits is highly recommended but not mandatory.**

Instructions are included in the kits detailing how to use the tests, check the results and dispose of the tests safely. You can also download the instructions through the [Therapeutic Goods Administration \(TGA\)](#) website. The user guides will also contain a contact number for the suppliers if you need additional support.

## How and when do I pick up the RAT kits?

- Packs of RAT kits will be distributed to parents/carers (*as identified in enrolment details*) before the start of Term 1 to ensure students have the opportunity to be tested before Day 1.

## Location for Picking Up Tests:

- Please enter our Bus Bay and stay in your car (similar to when picking up Learning from Home Packs). A staff member will come to your car window.



- The staff member will ask for your child's name and year group. Please bring ID to share with the staff member. This may be required as many of our casual and part-time staff are distributing the tests and would like to make sure that the correct amount of tests are being provided to the right families. Thank you in advance for your understanding. Thank you to our casual and part-time staff for distributing the tests, while our teachers and support staff plan and prepare for the term ahead. Thank you to these staff for also working after hours, to support our working parents and caregivers.
- When collecting your child's RATs, please enter the Bus Bay on Randolph Street via Munn Street. The easiest way to do this is to turn up Cameron Street and follow the route the buses take to the school.
- RATS for the first two weeks will be provided prior to school commencing, with 4 RATs being provided for mainstream students (so that they can test on a Monday and Wednesday) and 10 RATs being provided for students who attend support classes (to support daily testing).

## Times for Picking Up Tests:

**Friday, January 28** – Collection will take place **between 1pm and 6pm.**

**Monday, January 31** – Collection will take place **between 8.30am and 6pm.**

- As shared, please stay in your car. The car/s closest to the office will be served in the "drive thru" first.
- Please safely leave the pick-up location immediately after picking up your packs, so that other cars can move forward in the queue.

***School uniforms that have been ordered via the website can be collected at this time too.***

## Additional Information:

- School staff will not be administering the rapid antigen tests to students.
- RAT kits should be collected from school by a parent or carer and the tests completed at home in the morning before attending school.
- Each student will receive an initial supply of 4 RATs to be used twice a week in the morning before attending school.



- If a student or staff member receives a **positive** RAT result, they need to:
  - (a) record the positive RAT result through the [Service NSW website](#) or [Service NSW app](#);
  - (b) notify the school of the positive RAT or PCR result as soon as possible;
  - (c) follow [NSW Health advice](#) to isolate for 7 days.
- It is recommended that staff and students that return to school after recovering from COVID-19 do not participate in rapid antigen test surveillance for 28 days (four weeks after recovery) following release from self-isolation. This is due to NSW Health advice that people who have recovered from COVID-19 have a low risk of contracting it again in the following 28 days. After 28 days (from week five after recovery) staff and students may resume participation in RAT surveillance.

Negative results **do not** need to be reported to Service NSW or to the school.

## Additional Information for Families of Students in Support Classes:

All students and staff at schools for specific purposes (SSPs), including schools with Support Classes, *will* be provided with a kit containing 10 days' worth of RATs to be used every school day for an initial 2-week period.

## Unwell at School:

Any student or staff member who is unwell and/or displays symptoms of COVID-19 will be asked to go home and stay at home until they can complete a RAT or PCR test.

- If symptoms continue, they should stay at home and take another RAT in 24 hours or have a PCR test.
- If the second RAT or initial PCR test result is negative *and they are displaying no symptoms* OR *they are diagnosed as another condition such as hayfever*, the student or staff member can return to school.
- In NSW, positive COVID-19 cases are provided a Medical Clearance Notice after 7 days and allowed to leave self-isolation as long as they do not have COVID-19 symptoms.

## What Happens When a Student or Staff Member Tests Positive for COVID-19?

Under the new close contact rules, schools are no longer included in contact tracing. I will inform the school community when there is a positive case in our school and advise families on public health advice, including monitoring for symptoms.



Parents and caregivers will be informed of positive cases within Merimbula Public School via the School Stream app and via Class Dojo. **New Class Dojo invites will be shared before Wednesday, February 2. If your child is new to the school, they will receive an Information Note/Invite re: Class Dojo on Tuesday, February 1.**

## Use of Surgical Masks:

All primary and secondary school staff will be required to wear masks indoors.

No vented or cloth masks should be worn, this includes by Parents/Carers and Allied Health Professionals attending the school site (eg: Paediatricians, Speech Pathologists, Reading Group Helpers, Canteen Volunteers).

Masks are also strongly encouraged in outdoor settings where staff/site visitors cannot physically distance.

Primary school students are strongly recommended to wear well-fitted masks indoors.

Masks are also strongly encouraged in outdoor settings where you cannot physically distance. Your child can remove their mask when eating, exercising or playing a musical instrument.

For more information, refer to [Face masks in NSW](#)

## Visitors on School Sites and Vaccinations

No parents, carers or visitors will be allowed on school site until further notice with the following exceptions:

- Up to two parents or carers are allowed to accompany their child into school on their first day of Kindergarten or Year 7 or students starting at a new school.
- Volunteers or staff operating uniform shops and canteens must be fully vaccinated.
- Visitors supporting school operations and curriculum delivery must be fully vaccinated.
- Allied health partners for the wellbeing of students must be fully vaccinated.

All staff on school sites are required to be fully vaccinated, including having their booster when eligible.

We strongly encourage our students and their families to consider vaccination when eligible. [Find a vaccination clinic](#) to book an appointment near you.



## Other Key Measures

**Ventilation:** We will continue to follow NSW Health ventilation guidelines that natural ventilation is the most effective measure so we will maximise fresh air flow in learning spaces through opening doors and windows. This approach is strongly supported by expert advice. Where natural ventilation is not sufficient, mechanical ventilation and/or air purification will be used and we will continue to use outdoor settings where possible.

Air purifiers have been provided to schools as a supplementary measure to support common areas in schools and can be deployed at the principal's discretion. These purifiers could be located in areas where high levels of student and staff mixing occurs, such as staffrooms, internal canteens, student centres and music rooms.

**Cleaning:** We continue to have enhanced cleaning focusing on high-touch and high-traffic areas.

**Physical Distancing:** We will continue to follow physical distancing guidelines and maintain 1.5 metres distance wherever possible.

**Invitation to a Virtual School Assembly:** To welcome you and our students back to school and to share more detailed guidance about the settings for Term 1, we will soon be holding a virtual school assembly. The date, time and a Zoom link will be shared via School Stream and Class Dojo early next week.

During the assembly we will outline our school's plan and cover many of the things you will need to know for the return of school in Term 1 2022, including testing, masks, vaccinations, ventilation, visitor protocols and potential learning from home arrangements.

If you can't make the assembly, we will share an outline of our return to school plan in a newsletter next week.

We look forward to connecting with you at the virtual assembly. Please send any questions you would like answered to our school email address: [merimbula-p.school@det.nsw.edu.au](mailto:merimbula-p.school@det.nsw.edu.au) in advance and we will make sure we cover as many as possible.

Thank you again for your continued support during this school term.

Regards,  
Michelle Hulme  
Principal