



## New COVID Settings

Dear Parents, Caregivers and School Community,

Please be advised that there are new COVID settings in place in the coming weeks.

### From February 28:

- Masks not mandatory in secondary schools.
- Cohorting is no longer required.
- Visitors/parents are welcome on site for pick up/drop off (regardless of vaccination status).

### From March 7:

- Masks are not mandatory in primary schools.
- Parent/P&C volunteers are welcome but must be fully vaccinated.

Workers/staff/allied health professionals working in support classes or with students who have a disability are still required to wear masks.

**Cohorting:** From Monday 28 February, schools will no longer need to keep students in their class or year cohort groups. This means schools can reintroduce cross-year group activities and events such as assemblies. Our school will continue to apply the layered COVID-smart advice for minimising risk when planning activities and events that involve mixing and mingling cohorts.

From Monday, students in K-6 can *access all playground areas*. Climbing play equipment should not be accessed before or after school. Students should only use the playground climbing equipment if a teacher is on duty, and has given permission.

**Visitors On School Sites:** From Monday 28 February, schools and early childhood education (ECE) can invite visitors to their sites regardless of their vaccination status, in line with settings in the broader community. Workers and volunteers must meet double vaccination requirements including:

- Volunteers or staff operating uniform shops and canteens;
- Visitors supporting school operations and curriculum delivery (P&C Members, classroom volunteers, carers helping at events, Scripture/SRE staff);
- Allied health partners for the wellbeing of students;
- University and TAFE students coming on school sites to complete their practicum or teacher training.

**FROM NEXT WEEK:** Parents/caregivers can therefore **come onsite to drop students off at school** (8.25am-8.55am) and pick students up from school (2.55pm-3.05pm). WELCOME BACK!! Parents/carers will still need to use the school's QR Code at their gate of entry, for attendance record keeping purposes, and sanitise.

Our school **uniform shop** will re-open its doors to parents and caregivers. The uniform shop will be open each Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday from 7.45am to 8.15am. It will also open on Thursday and Friday mornings via appointment. *Access will be via the canteen gate.* Online orders will still be processed, and given to students/parents via the school office.



**Masks are not required to be worn outdoors** by parents/caregivers. Parents/caregivers attending our **front office or uniform shop are still required to wear a mask** while indoors, until Monday, March 7.

All visitors/volunteers/staff must comply with the Department's **Code of Conduct** and **School Community Charter**. To read our Code of Conduct or for more information, go to: <https://education.nsw.gov.au/about-us/rights-and-accountability/department-of-education-code-of-conduct> *This link is available via our School Stream app.*

**Rapid Antigen Testing:** As part of the NSW Government's focus on prioritising face-to-face learning, the Department of Education is extending the supply of rapid antigen tests (RATs). This will continue to help minimise transmission and support staff and community confidence until the end of Term 1. Regular surveillance testing will continue until Friday 25 February (this week).

Students at Merimbula Public School have already received (provided by the Department) two tests per student and staff (for Week 2, 3, 4 and 5) and five tests per student and staff in schools for specific purposes (SSPs) and support classes (all of our School Learning Support Officers and Support Class staff and students, as well as, students in mainstream classes who have a disability).

From Monday 28 February, schools will align with community settings of 'symptomatic testing' and the Department will provide 8 tests per student and staff in schools and 20 tests per student and staff in SSPs or support classes (and mainstream students with a disability). These RATs are for the remainder of Term 1.

**If your child has even mild COVID-19 symptoms:**

- Get them tested with a RAT or PCR (nose and throat swab) test.
- They must isolate until they receive a negative test result, in line with health protocols.
- 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, or another diagnosis is confirmed (in writing by a doctor) such as hay fever, they can return to school.

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 (4 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 5 after recovery), staff and students may resume participation in RAT surveillance.

**These RATs have been PROVIDED TO STUDENTS TODAY**, if they brought in permission notes to take them home. **Students and staff can use this allocation of RATs at their discretion, such as if they are experiencing COVID-19 symptoms.** Beyond that, symptomatic students and staff should continue to access PCR tests and store-purchased RATs.

If your child did not receive permission to take their RATs home in the past, you can collect their RATs between **10am and 2pm this Thursday or Friday**. Alternately, you can email through your child's permission to take their RATs home via: [merimbula-p.school@det.nsw.edu.au](mailto:merimbula-p.school@det.nsw.edu.au)

Thank you for your support. We cannot wait to see you all at school again! Keep up to date with future changes via the Department's web site under 'Advice for Families' <https://education.nsw.gov.au/covid-19/advice-for-families>

Yours sincerely,

**Michelle Hulme**  
**Principal**

Wednesday, February 23, 2022