



Procedure

Management of contagious conditions procedure

Version: 7.0 | **Version effective:** 24/01/2022

Audience

All state schools

Purpose

This procedure outlines the responsibilities for the management of contagious conditions in schools, as prescribed in the [Public Health Act 2005 \(Qld\)](#) (the Act) and the [Public Health Regulation 2018 \(Qld\)](#) (the Regulation).

The Department of Education (the department) has a general duty under the [Work Health and Safety Act 2011 \(Qld\)](#) to minimise the risk of exposure of staff, students and others to infectious diseases (including contagious conditions) in the workplace. Practical advice on the development and implementation of an infection control program is provided in the [Infection control procedure](#) and [guideline](#).

Overview

Under Chapter 5 of the Act, the department is committed to protecting and promoting the health of children by helping to control the spread of contagious conditions in schools.

The responsibilities and processes outlined in this procedure apply to the following contagious conditions referred to in the [Act](#):

- coronavirus (COVID-19)
- diphtheria
- enterovirus 71 neurological disease
- gastroenteritis
- haemophilus influenza type b (invasive)
- hepatitis A
- human influenza with pandemic potential
- measles
- meningococcal infection (invasive)

- paratyphoid and typhoid,
- pertussis (whooping cough)
- poliomyelitis infection
- rubella
- tuberculosis
- varicella – zoster virus infection (chickenpox).

If a student is suspected of having, or has, a contagious condition, it is vital that the principal and school staff take steps to protect the health of the school community in a timely manner.

There are additional actions for schools to follow when there is a suspected or confirmed case of measles (See Section 8).

This list of contagious conditions (Schedule 4, Part 2 of the Regulation) can change and it is important to consult with a Public Health Medical Officer (PHMO) of the closest Queensland Health [Public Health Unit](#) (PHU) to seek expert advice.

This procedure outlines the responsibilities and processes (both during and outside school hours) related to:

- a student suspected of having a contagious condition
- a student confirmed with a contagious condition
- managing risks for an unvaccinated student
- the removal from and return to school of a student
- medical examinations of a student at school
- temporary closure of a school.

The Act allows for certain information to be shared between a school and a PHMO (Chapter 5, Part 2, Division 2, s174). School staff involved in the administration of this procedure must not, whether directly or indirectly, disclose confidential information that becomes known to them in the course of performing their duties and functions under this procedure, unless required to do so under this Act or another Act (Chapter 5, Part 2, Division 3 of the Act). The [Education \(General Provisions\) Act 2006 \(Qld\)](#) (the EGPA) allows students' personal information to be disclosed with another party (e.g. Queensland Health), as permitted or required under another Act.

In the event of a declared public health emergency (e.g. pandemic), schools will follow advice provided by the department in alignment with [Queensland Health Directives](#).

Schools can refer to Queensland Health's [Time Out poster](#) for general advice regarding infectious conditions, including prescribed contagious conditions and periods of exclusion from school.

Responsibilities

Regional Directors

- facilitate contact between the PHU and principals for the management of a contagious condition incident which occur outside of school/office hours or during school holidays.

- assist the PHMO and principals of affected schools in response to the management of a contagious condition incident.

Principal

- implement a local infection control program that minimises the risk of exposure of staff, students and others to infectious disease agents as outlined in the [Infection control procedure](#).
- facilitate the management of contagious conditions within a school.
- consult with, and follow directions given by the PHMO, including those regarding student attendance, information sharing and other actions to control contagious conditions (e.g. cleaning and disinfecting advice, and the temporary closure of a school).
- consider the language needs of parents/carers and students when providing information to ensure effective engagement, and implement reasonable adjustments and/or tailored support (e.g. translated materials and/or literacy support, a telephone call to accompany written communication).
- maintain all documentation regarding the management of a contagious condition.

Staff

- communicate, promote and follow [infection control](#) procedures.
- do not attend the workplace, and seek own medical advice, if aware or reasonably suspect that they may have a contagious condition.
- advise the principal if it is known, or reasonably suspected, that a student or staff member may have a contagious condition.
- preserve the privacy and confidentiality of information and documentation about a staff member or student and their family regarding suspected/confirmed contagious conditions.
- take reasonable steps to allow a student (who is subject to a direction to not attend school) to access an educational program for their period of removal.

Public Health Medical Officer (or representative)

- provide public health advice to the principal.
- may instruct the principal to provide directions to parents/carers about keeping children home from school.
- direct the principal to minimise the risk of the contagious condition spreading.
- may notify the principal of a vaccine-preventable contagious condition.
- when necessary, may arrange for medical examinations of students attending the school.

Parent/carer

- seek and follow medical advice if their child has, or is suspected of having, a contagious condition.
- must not send their child to school if they know, or suspect, their child has a contagious condition.
- must not send their child to school during the prescribed period of the contagious condition.
- must not send their child to school if they have been given a direction by the principal not to send their child to school.

Process



Image 1: Process for management of contagious conditions in schools

1. Implement local infection control program

Principal:

- implements an infection control program (refer to the [Infection control procedure](#) and the [Infection control guideline](#))
- follows processes for [health, safety and wellbeing incident management](#)
- advises staff to safely isolate students who are ill (e.g. in the sick bay/sick room) until collected by the parent/carer
- advises staff to implement strategies to assist students vulnerable with pre-existing health conditions and/or disability (where required) to understand and comply with the isolation process (e.g. arrange for trusted staff member to support the student while they are in the sick bay).

2. Response to public health incidents outside school hours

PHMO (or representative):

- contacts the [Regional Director](#) to advise of a public health incident affecting a school in their region
- requests school staff and student personal information to fulfil public health obligations under the Act.

Regional Director:

- provides emergency contact information for principals to the PHMO
- provides school staff and student [personal information](#) requested by the PHMO, only where the principal is unable to fulfil this obligation and where reasonably satisfied that the disclosure is necessary to assist in averting a serious risk to the life, health or safety of a person, including the person to whom the information relates ([delegated under s426\(4\)\(e\)\(i\) under the EGPA](#))
- communicates requirements as requested by the PHMO to the principal of the school where a student/staff member has or may have a contagious condition
- records all actions taken and all student information disclosed to the PHMO in OneSchool.

3. Response to public health incidents during school hours

PHMO (or representative):

- contacts the [principal](#) and provides and/or seeks relevant personal information if satisfied that:

- a student attending that school has or may have a contagious condition; and
- other students and staff may be at risk of contracting the contagious condition.

Principal:

- ensures staff are familiar with the processes necessary to manage contagious conditions, and the Queensland Health fact sheets on [contagious conditions](#) and the [Act](#) for further information about the legal framework for managing contagious conditions
- notifies senior executives via a [school alert](#) about public health incidents at the school
- advises staff not to attend the workplace if they are unwell, and/or reasonably suspect or know, they have a contagious condition, and to follow advice as per the [Infection control guideline](#), which includes:
 - school staff are aware of infectious diseases for which personal immunity has been established (e.g. via previous exposure and/or vaccination)
 - school staff are asked to seek medical advice from their medical practitioner regarding infection control and the impact of exposure to the contagious condition.
- directs school staff not to return to work until cleared of a contagious condition by their doctor or by the PHMO (e.g. a medical clearance certificate may be required as evidence)
- advises parents/carers not to send their child to school if they are unwell, or have or are suspected of having a contagious condition, or with pre-existing medical conditions for whom exposure may be serious
- sends out Queensland Health information to parents/carers about preventing contagious conditions when requested (e.g. advice in the parent newsletter).

4. Actions if a student is suspected of having a contagious condition**Staff**

- advise the principal if it is known, or reasonably suspected, that a student may have a contagious condition. Refer to [communicable disease control guidance](#) for symptoms of contagious conditions
- preserve privacy and confidentiality of information about a student and their family.

Principal (or nominated officer)

- ensures the parent/carer is contacted to collect the student
- ensures the student is safely isolated as much as possible from other students and staff (e.g. in the sick bay/sick room) until collected by their parent/carer
- advises the parent/carer of the student with the suspected contagious condition to seek medical advice to either confirm the contagious condition or provide medical certification that the student does not have the contagious condition
- notifies the parent/carer of their legal obligation to observe the prescribed period of removal from school if the condition is medically confirmed (refer to Queensland Health's [Time Out poster](#) for minimum exclusion periods)
- ensures this advice to the parent/carer is noted as a record of contact in OneSchool

- contacts the local PHU for general advice on the contagious condition and strategies to manage the condition (e.g. communication to school community, if additional infection control measures are required)
- when requested, provides the PHMO with personal information about the contact the student has had with other students attending the school. This information would include their names, dates of birth, addresses, parent/carer contact details, as well as their places of birth if available (NOTE: this can be done by generating the [OneSchool Student and Parent and Contact Details for Queensland Health report](#) (for departmental employees only))
- keeps a record of all student information disclosed to the PHMO as a record of contact in OneSchool.

Principal and staff:

- communicate, promote and follow standard [infection control practices](#), including additional infection control measures as directed by the PHMO.

5. Actions if a student is medically confirmed to have a contagious condition**Principal:**

- contacts the local PHU for specific advice to manage the condition (e.g. communication to school community, infection control measures, actions for unvaccinated students)
- follows any direction from the PHMO which minimises the risk of students and staff at the school contracting the contagious condition, including [temporary closure](#) of the school.

PHMO:

- may give a written direction to the principal on ways to minimise the risk of students and staff contracting the contagious condition (e.g. limiting the sharing of eating utensils, disinfection measures, cleaning procedures, provision of health information to treat and prevent its spread).

6. Actions to remove a student from school

If a student suspected or confirmed as having a contagious condition continues to attend the school, or the parent/carer advises that they intend to send the student to school:

Principal:

- seeks advice from the PHMO to determine if the parent/carer should be directed to remove the student from school and not send them to school during the prescribed period
- directs the parent/carer to remove the student from school and not to send the student to school during the prescribed period:
 - when advised by the PHMO, by using the [Direction to parent/carer not to send child to school letter](#)
 - when advised by the PHMO following their medical examination of students, by using the [Direction to parent/carer not to send child to school – PHMO medical examination letter](#)
- keeps written records of all advice given and received regarding the contagious condition and the prescribed period of removal from school using OneSchool's record of contact
- communicates to staff members assigned to roll marking data entry that, during the period of removal, the student will be marked on the school roll as 'absent' with the reason code 'B' – Attendance not

required (NOTE: this absence does not count towards school absence data. Refer to [Table 2](#) in the [Roll marking in state schools](#) procedure)

- notes that an [exemption](#) from the legal requirement to attend school is not required as the direction relieves the parent of their legal obligation to ensure school attendance
- takes reasonable steps to allow the student who is subject to a direction to not attend school to access an educational program for the period of removal.

7. Actions for a student to return to school before the prescribed period ends

Principal:

- allows a student suspected of, or confirmed as having, a contagious condition to return to school if the student has a medical practitioner's certificate stating that:
 - the student does not have the condition; or
 - the prescribed period for the condition has ended.

8. Manage risks for unvaccinated students

Principal:

- seeks advice from the PHMO about students who have not been vaccinated for a vaccine-preventable condition and may be at-risk of contracting the condition if they continue to attend school
- if requested, provides the PHMO with a list of students who have been in contact with the student suspected of having the vaccine-preventable condition, to assist them identify which students are suspected of not being vaccinated (NOTE: this can be done by generating the [OneSchool Student and Parent and Contact Details for Queensland Health report](#) (DoE employees only))
- advises parents/carers of unvaccinated students of the risk to their child contracting the condition if they continue to attend school
- advises parents of the prescribed period for non-attendance
- takes reasonable steps to allow the unvaccinated student to access an educational program for the period of non-attendance
- ensures this advice to the parent/carer is noted as a record of contact in OneSchool
- follows the advice of the PHMO to manage the risks associated with the vaccine-preventable condition.

Additional actions for measles only

Principal:

- seeks advice from the PHMO if an unvaccinated student continues to attend the school or the parent/carer advises that they still intend to send the student to school, to determine if the unvaccinated student needs to be removed from the school setting for their own health and safety
- if advised by the PHMO, uses the [Direction to parent/carer of unvaccinated child letter](#) to direct the parent/carer to remove the unvaccinated student from school and not to send the student to school during the prescribed period

- takes reasonable steps to allow the unvaccinated student subject to a direction to not attend school to access an educational program for the period of removal
- keeps a record of all student information disclosed to the PHMO as a record of contact in OneSchool
- communicates to staff members assigned to roll marking data entry that, during the period of removal, the student will be marked on the school roll as 'absent' with the reason code 'B' – Attendance not required (NOTE: this absence does not count towards school absence data)
- notes that an [exemption](#) from the legal requirement to attend school is not required as the direction relieves the parent of their legal obligation to ensure school attendance
- allows a student suspected of not being vaccinated to return to school when satisfied:
 - that the student is no longer at risk of contracting the condition; or
 - the student has met the prescribed period for the contagious condition; or
 - at the direction of the PHMO.

9. Manage medical examinations and temporary school closures (when required)

Medical examinations - if the PHMO reasonably suspects some or all students attending the school have, or may have, a contagious condition

PHMO:

- consults the principal to arrange for a medical practitioner to examine some or all the students attending the school
- provides notice to the principal of:
 - the date and time of the examination/s
 - the contagious condition for which examinations are to be conducted
 - the student/s, or class of students, to be examined
 - the name and contact details of the medical practitioner who is to conduct the examination/s.
- advises the parent/carer of the student/s:
 - of the date and time of the examination
 - of the contagious condition for which the examination is to be conducted
 - of the name and contact details of the medical practitioner who is to conduct the examination
 - that the student's parent/carer may be present
 - that the examination cannot take place without the consent of the parent/carer
 - that, as an alternative, a parent/carer can have a student examined by another medical practitioner and provide a medical certificate to the principal stating whether the student has the contagious condition and if so, whether the recommended period of removal from school has ended
- may direct that the principal direct a parent/carer to remove their child from school, and not send them to school if:
 - their child has not been vaccinated and may be at risk of contracting the condition; or

- the student suspected of having the contagious condition has not been examined by a medical practitioner, or the examination reveals that the student has, or may have, a contagious condition.

Principal:

- allows the PHMO to conduct medical examinations at the school when:
 - appropriate details have been provided by the PHMO to the school and to the parents/carers
 - parent/carer consent has been obtained by the PHMO
- follows relevant actions at section 5, 6 or 7 based on the PHMO advice following medical examinations.

Temporary school closures**The Minister for Health, in consultation with the Minister for Education:**

- orders the closure of a school for a period of not more than one month if satisfied that:
 - there is an outbreak of a contagious condition at a school or in the immediate community that puts the staff and students at significant risk of contracting the condition; and
 - methods of controlling the outbreak will not be effective without temporarily closing the school.

Principal:

- complies with all written notices made by the Minister for Health to close the school in the interest of public health.

10. Review location infection control measures**Principal:**

- regularly reviews infection control measures to ensure they are providing an adequate level of safety as per [Infection control procedure](#) and the [Infection control guideline](#), including post-management of a contagious condition incident.

Definitions

Term	Definition
Contagious condition	A medical condition that has been prescribed under the Public Health Regulation 2018 (Qld) , Schedule 4, Part 2 because it is considered to be a serious condition that may put the community at some risk. The contagious conditions within the Regulation are – coronavirus (COVID-19), diphtheria, enterovirus 71 neurological disease, gastroenteritis, haemophilus influenza type b (invasive), hepatitis A, human influenza with pandemic potential, measles, meningococcal infection (invasive), paratyphoid, pertussis (whooping cough), poliomyelitis infection, rubella, tuberculosis, typhoid, varicella – zoster virus infection (chickenpox).

Term	Definition
Direction	A written or verbal instruction given by a person who is recognised under the Public Health Act 2005 (Qld) as a person with authority to provide the direction (e.g. a Queensland Health Public Health Medical Officer). Directions are given in writing unless it is not practicable to do so.
Health information	Health information is information about a person's health or the provision of a health service to a person.
Measles	Measles is an acute, highly infectious illness caused by the measles virus. It can cause serious complications such as pneumonia (lung infection) and encephalitis (inflammation of the brain). Due to its highly infectious nature, measles is the only vaccine-preventable contagious condition that has a prescribed period of removal from school for both a student suspected of having the condition and a student suspected of not being vaccinated (under Schedule 4, Part 2 and Part 3 of the Public Health Regulation 2005 (Qld)).
Medical practitioner	A doctor registered with the Medical Board of Australia through the Register of Practitioners, Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA) .
Period of removal	See 'prescribed period'.
Personal information	Personal information means information or an opinion, whether true or not, about an individual whose identity is apparent, or can be reasonably ascertained, from the information or opinion.
Prescribed period	For the purposes of this procedure, a prescribed period is the period of removal from school prescribed under Schedule 4, Part 2 of the Regulation for students suspected of having a contagious condition or under Schedule 4, Part 3 of the Regulation for unvaccinated students at risk because they may be in contact with a student with a vaccine-preventable condition. Schools can refer to Queensland Health's Time Out poster . This poster specifies the minimum period of removal from school for some medical conditions including, but not limited to, contagious conditions defined in this procedure.
Public health emergency	As per Chapter 8, Part 1 of the Public Health Act 2005 (Qld) , a public health emergency is an event or a series of events that has contributed to, or may contribute to, serious adverse effects on the health of persons in Queensland.
Public Health Medical Officer (PHMO)	For the purpose of this procedure, a PHMO is a medical practitioner working in a Public Health Unit or the Communicable Diseases Branch who has delegated authority from the chief executive (Director-General or their delegate, Queensland Health), to discharge duties of the Public Health Act 2005 (Qld) related to this procedure. This includes Public Health Physicians, Public Health Registrars and other registered medical practitioners holding delegated authority from the chief executive.

Term	Definition
Public Health Units (PHUs)	PHUs within Queensland Health focus on protecting health; preventing disease, outbreaks, illness and injury; and promoting health and wellbeing at a population or whole of community level. They are located within various Hospital and Health Services across Queensland. Key activities for PHU's include: disease control, environmental health, public health programs, administering immunisation and vaccination programs.
School hours	Usual hours of school operation, during school term time . Does not include public or school holidays.
Student	A person enrolled at a state school.
Unvaccinated student	For the purposes of this procedure, an unvaccinated student is one who has not been vaccinated against vaccine-preventable conditions. To determine which students at the school are unvaccinated or have no record of being vaccinated, the PHU can access vaccination records held on the Australian Immunisation Register . This is a national register that records all vaccines given to people in Australia. Queensland state schools are not required to collect or maintain records of a student's immunisation status.
Vaccine-preventable condition	A condition identified in Schedule 5 of the Public Health Regulation 2005 (Qld) . The vaccine-preventable conditions within the Regulation are – diphtheria, haemophilus influenza type b (invasive) disease, hepatitis B, measles, meningococcal C, mumps, pertussis (whooping cough), poliomyelitis infection, pneumococcal disease (invasive), rotavirus infection, rubella, tetanus, varicella-zoster virus infection (chickenpox). Measles (under Schedule 4, Part 2 and Part 3 of the Regulation) is the only vaccine-preventable contagious condition that has a prescribed period of removal from school for both a student suspected of having the condition and a student suspected of not being vaccinated.

Legislation

- [Education \(General Provisions\) Act 2006 \(Qld\)](#)
- [Disability Standards for Education 2005 \(Cwth\)](#)
- [Human Rights Act 2019 \(Qld\)](#)
- [Information Privacy Act 2009 \(Qld\)](#) Schedule 3 Information Privacy Principle 11
- [Public Health Act 2005 \(Qld\)](#) Chapter 5, Parts 1 and Part 2
- [Public Health Regulation 2018 \(Qld\)](#) Part 6, Schedule 4 and Schedule 5
- [Work Health and Safety Act 2011 \(Qld\)](#)

Delegations/Authorisations

- [Delegation of Director-General's Power under Education \(General Provisions\) Act 2006 \(Qld\)](#)

Policies and procedures in this group

- Nil

Supporting information for this procedure

- [Letter template - Direction to parent/carer not to send child to school](#)
- [Letter template - Direction to parent/carer of unvaccinated child](#)
- [Letter template - Direction to parent/carer not to send child to school - PHMO advice](#)

Other resources

- [Exemptions for compulsory schooling and compulsory participation procedure](#)
- [Health, safety and wellbeing incident management procedure](#)
- [Inclusive Education policy](#)
- [Infection control procedure](#)
- [Infection control guideline](#)
- [Information asset and record keeping procedure](#)
- [Roll marking in state schools procedure](#)
- [School alerts procedure](#)
- [Public Health Units](#)
- [Generating a OneSchool Student and Parent Contact Details for Queensland Health report](#) (DoE employees only)

Queensland Health Factsheets

- [Public Health Act 2005 \(Qld\) Contagious Conditions Factsheet for Schools and Education and Care Services](#)
- [Information for Schools, Education and Care Services and Child Care Services Contagious Conditions – Public Health Act 2005 \(Qld\), Chapter 5, Part 2](#)
- [Communicable disease factsheets](#)
- [Time out poster](#)
- [Time Out brochure – Information for parents about infectious diseases and exclusion periods in Queensland early childhood education centres and schools](#)

Contact

For further information, please contact your closest [regional office](#).

Review date

24/01/2025

Superseded versions

Previous seven years shown. Minor version updates not included.

4.0 Management of Prescribed Contagious Conditions

5.0 Management of Prescribed Contagious Conditions

6.0 Management of contagious conditions

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