

Public Health Requirements for Early Learning Services and Schools at Alert Level 2 as at 5 May 2020

Overarching message: Leave home but in a safe way

Early learning services and schools are open for all children and students to attend and it is safe to do so.

There is further opening up of activity during Alert Level 2, particularly in terms of travel, education, sport and recreational activity, retail and hospitality, and personal movement. But it is not business as usual. Public health and border measures remain largely unchanged from Level 3, to ensure our approach to contact tracing, testing, isolation and quarantine is maintained.

The most important things you can do are keep washing your hands, cough safely, and keep surfaces clean, just as you have been at Levels 3 and 4.

The significant changes for schools and early learning services are:

- Physical Distancing – Physical distancing is a good precaution to prevent the spread of disease. In an Alert level 2 school environment, this means children, young people, and staff maintaining a physical distance so that they are not breathing on or touching each other, coupled with good hygiene practices (coughing into your elbow, handwashing and drying) and regular cleaning of commonly touched surfaces. There are situations where physical distancing is not possible, such as some sporting activities. In these situations extra emphasis on handwashing and drying (or cleansing with hand sanitiser) before and after activities and regular cleaning of equipment is very important.

In an early learning environment, it is not really possible to have a physical distance between children and staff. Young children require a lot of physical support and it is not possible to explain or maintain a physical distance between young children given the age of the children and set up of centres. This means good hygiene practices (coughing into your elbow, regular handwashing, and drying) are even more important.

- Mass gatherings – educational facilities, and school transport are not considered mass gatherings because they are managed environments. This means there are no restrictions on numbers of people indoors or outside at schools and early learning services other than what other public health or health and safety measures require.

The exception is where people from outside the school may be attending, eg for a school production or school ball. In these examples and if a school is hiring out their hall or allowing community groups to use school facilities, the mass gathering rules will apply.

- Sports and playgrounds – school playgrounds, sports equipment use and activities can resume. Contact sports can resume. This relies on being able to contact trace who is on site during school hours and at school team training and competitions. Any inter school events that recommence will need to have a contact tracing register in place to record those playing for and against teams.
- There are no restrictions on groups of children and students mixing with others on site. Where practicable where groups/classes do mix – attendance should be

recorded as it should if the composition of groups and classes change during the day.

- Teachers/staff are not restricted to one group.

High Level

Schools and early learning services will open.

Tertiary Institutions, schools and early learning services will open.

- Tertiary Institutions, early learning services and schools are all physically open. Distance learning is available for those unable to attend school (e.g. where the school does not have capacity to receive all students on site, where there are people self-isolating). Tertiary institutions will maintain the core capability to deliver comprehensive distance learning to students. Schools will also need to maintain distance learning capability in the event it is needed for future potential alert level changes.

Upon advice from the local medical officer or health, any educational facilities connected to a confirmed or probable case of COVID-19 must close on an individual or group basis for 72 hours to allow contact tracing, and then potentially for a further 14 days.

Early Learning Services

Early learning centres able to operate with their full roll but must ensure they meet all public health requirements.

All other forms of early learning services will be able to open on-site including play centres and play groups. Home-based services will be able to operate. In all cases public health requirements about hygiene, and cleanliness must be met.

Staff at higher-risk of severe illness from COVID-19 (eg those with underlying medical conditions, especially if not well-controlled) are encouraged to take additional precautions when leaving home. They may work, if they agree with their employer that they can do so safely.

Specific public health measures to be taken in early learning centres are:

- Indoor temperature which is currently a minimum of 16 degrees Celsius needs to be increased to 18 degrees Celsius. This minimum must be met
- Young children require a lot of physical support and it is not possible to explain or maintain a physical distance between young children given the age of the children and set up of centres. This means good hygiene practices are even more important. There does not need to be a measurable physical distance between children or children and staff. However adults should where practicable use 1m as a guide between themselves and other adults.
- The minimum licensed indoor space for children will revert back to the license requirements of 2.5m per child. Outdoor requirement of 5m is also as per the license criteria.

- Parents are asked to keep any sick children at home. If a sick child comes to the centre, send them home.
- Ensure all children regularly wash and dry their hands.
- Ensure hand sanitiser is available but teachers/staff supervise its location and use in order to avoid a child accidentally drinking it.
- Ensure that children have their own food containers and do not give and take food to and from each other. Food can be supplied in accordance with public health guidance (including shared fruit¹).
- Toys that had been put away under Alert Level 3 because they cannot be easily wiped down or cleaned frequently can be used again if all children are regularly washing their hands and are staying home if unwell.
- Outdoor play areas and equipment including sandpits can be used but children must wash their hands after use.
- Disinfect and clean all surfaces daily.
- Contact tracing registers must be in place to record who is on site each day, who visits eg parents.

PPE is not required or recommended as necessary in any educational facility by the Public Health Service.

Schools

All schools are open on site for all year levels but distance learning will still need to be available if a school has staffing issues and for students that are not able to attend.

Residential Specialist Schools and Day Specialist Schools including satellite units will be open for children to attend.

School hostels fully return to occupation.

Ministry staff supplemented by resource teachers and school staff continue to support children with learning support needs by phone and Skype where their health status requires them to stay isolated.

School transport able to increase as the number of students increases.

The Food in Schools Programmes will be able to be fully operational provided the rules are observed.

OSCAR programmes can open as can other before and after school programmes. An increased number of school redevelopment and construction projects may be able to resume if the requirements of Alert Level 2 can be met.

People at higher-risk of severe illness from COVID-19 (eg those with underlying medical conditions, especially if not well-controlled) are encouraged to take additional

¹ Shared fruit should be washed under the tap, and cut up. Those preparing the fruit should wash and dry their hands before preparing.

precautions when leaving home. They may work, if they agree with their employer that they can do so safely.

Specific public health measures to be taken in schools:

- Parents are asked to keep any sick children at home. If a sick child comes to school, send them home.
- Children, young people and staff should be far enough away from each other so that they are not breathing on or touching each other, coupled with good hygiene practices and regular cleaning of commonly touched surfaces. There does not need to be a specific measurement but where practicable 1m should be used as a guide, particularly between adults.
- Hand sanitiser at entry to class rooms and in shared spaces. Soap, water and the ability to dry hands must be provided in bathrooms.
- Where practicable ensure that children and young people regularly wash and dry hands, cough and sneeze into their elbow, and try to avoid touching their face.
- Physical education classes and break time activities can include access to sports equipment including playgrounds but hygiene practice should be observed after playing with equipment.
- Disinfect and clean all surfaces daily.
- Contact tracing registers must be set up and identify which children and adults are on site, in each teaching space, including recording if there is a different composition of children and adults during the day. This includes recording visitors to the site, including parents.
- All external providers/contractors are required to sign in at the front reception and follow these guidelines.
- Appointments are encouraged to be made prior to coming onto school site
- Consider whether students should be allowed off the premises at lunchtime.

PPE is not required or recommended as necessary in any educational facility by the Public Health Service.