# School Council – Employee FAQs

# Coronavirus (COVID-19)

The following questions and answers are provided to assist in managing school council employee issues related to coronavirus COVID-19. The situation is evolving, and advice will be updated as required.

1. **With the return of all students to school from Tuesday 9 June 2020 are school council employees** **expected to resume duty at their school?**

Yes. The expectation is that all school council employees, except those employees in the categories listed below, will attend for duty at their school in accordance with normal arrangements.

Guidance on vulnerable employees has been updated. In line with other members of the community, teachers and other school council employees may be at greater risk of more serious illness if they are infected with coronavirus (COVID-19) if they are:

* + aged 70 years and older
	+ aged 65 years and older and with chronic medical conditions.
	+ of any age and have a compromised immune system
	+ Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and are aged over 50 years and with one or more chronic medical conditions.

While the risk of transmission of the virus in the Victorian school community is very low, teaching service employees in the above categories, should individually assess appropriateness for onsite attendance at this time.

Consistent with existing employment arrangements school council employees in the above categories, except for those aged over 70, are required to provide a medical certificate if they are seeking to work from home.

In line with the advice of the Victorian Chief Health Officer, employees with caring responsibilities for more vulnerable members of the community will be able to safely resume work on-site. Like all staff, these employees should be encouraged to maintain a distance of 1.5 metres from other adults and practice good hand hygiene throughout the day by taking the following actions:

* Wash hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after being in a public place, or after blowing their nose, coughing, sneezing, or using the toilet. If soap and water are not readily available, they should use a hand sanitiser that contains at least 60 percent alcohol.
* They should avoid touching their eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands and cover their nose and mouth with a tissue when they cough or sneeze.
* If they don’t have a tissue, they should cough or sneeze into their upper sleeve or elbow.

See FAQ 18 in relation to employees who are pregnant.

1. **Will normal attendance arrangements apply when school council employees return to working at school?**

Yes normal attendance requirements will apply. It is possible that within these requirements staggered starting times may be implemented to ensure appropriate physical distancing requirements are maintained during student drop-off and pick-up times.

# 3. When are school council employees required to self-quarantine or self-isolate?

School council employees are required to self-quarantine or self-isolate in accordance with the directions of Victoria’s Chief Health Officer. Information on self-quarantine or self-isolation can be found on Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) website: <https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/self-quarantine-coronavirus-covid-19#who-is-required-to-isolate>

If an employee is unwell – with coronavirus (COVID-19) or another illness – or is required to self-quarantine or self-isolate while caring for a member of their immediate family or a household member who is unwell, they may access accrued paid personal or carer’s leave.

# 4. What arrangements apply to school council employees who are awaiting the results of a coronavirus (COVID-19) test?

School Council employees who are unwell and waiting for the results of a coronavirus (COVID-19) test should not return to school. They can access personal leave, or some other form of leave, as appropriate.

School Council employees who are feeling well and waiting for the results of a coronavirus (COVID-19) test should not return to school and may work remotely when it is reasonable, practicable and appropriate to do so.

Where working remotely is not an option for school council employees while awaiting coronavirus (COVID-19) test results, the employee may access personal leave, or some other form of leave, as appropriate.

# 5. Is a school council employee required to isolate if they live with someone who is required to isolate?

A school council employee who lives with someone who has tested positive to coronavirus (COVID-19) within the past 14 days is required to self-quarantine in accordance with the direction of the Chief Health Officer.

# 6. What arrangements apply should a school council employee contract coronavirus (COVID-19)?

If an employee contracts coronavirus (COVID-19) during the course of their duties, they may be granted up to three months of leave with full pay.

If a school council employee contracts coronavirus (COVID-19) in other circumstances, they may access personal leave.

Where a principal has a school council employee who has tested positive for coronavirus (COVID-19), they should contact the Policy and Employee Relations Branch at employee.relations@education.vic.gov.au for advice to determine if the employee is eligible for infectious diseases leave.

# 7. What arrangements apply to school council employees who are living with someone whose circumstances make them more vulnerable to contracting coronavirus (COVID-19)?

In line with the advice of the Victorian Chief Health Officer, school council employees with caring responsibilities for more vulnerable members of the community will be able to safely resume work onsite. Like all staff, these employees should be encouraged to maintain a distance of 1.5 metres from other adults and practice good hand hygiene throughout the day by taking the following actions:

* Wash hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after being in a public place, or after blowing their nose, coughing, sneezing, or using the toilet. If soap and water are not readily available, they should use a hand sanitiser that contains at least 60 percent alcohol.
* They should avoid touching their eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands and cover their nose and mouth with a tissue when they cough or sneeze.
* If they don’t have a tissue, they should cough or sneeze into their upper sleeve or elbow.

Where in these circumstances the employee forms the view that they are not in a position to perform their duties they may access personal leave or some other form of leave.

# 8. What arrangements apply to older school council employees who are at greater risk of serious illness from coronavirus (COVID-19)?

Guidance on vulnerable staff has been updated. In line with other members of the community, school council employees may be at greater risk of more serious illness if they have coronavirus (COVID-19) and are:

* aged 70 years and older
* aged 65 years and older and with chronic medical conditions
* of any age and have a compromised immune system
* Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and are aged over 50 years and with one or more chronic medical conditions.

School council employees in the above categories, except for those aged over 70, will be expected to provide a medical certificate, if seeking to work remotely.

Where the employee forms the view that they are not in a position to perform their duties remotely they may access personal leave, or some other form of leave.

# 9. If someone in the workplace is being tested for coronavirus (COVID-19), should other employees be informed?

Normal privacy considerations should be applied where a school council employee is unwell. It may however be appropriate to inform employees that a person in the workplace is being tested for coronavirus (COVID-19). However, this must be done in a way that does not breach an individual’s privacy.

# 10. What arrangements apply to school council employees who are not permitted to attend the workplace?

The expectation is that school council employees who are not permitted to attend the workplace will continue to work remotely.

Principals are responsible for maintaining communication with staff, including providing guidance in relation to the work performed by staff working remotely.

Normal employment arrangements will continue and existing tenure of employment (fixed-term and ongoing) will not be altered.

# 11. What happens if a school council employee’s carer responsibilities prevent them from performing duties?

Where a school council employee’s carer responsibilities prevent them from performing duties at school, consideration should be given to permitting that employee to continue working remotely.

Where working remotely is not an option or if a school council employee is not in a position to perform their duties because they are required to care for an affected family or household member, they may access carer’s leave or some other form of leave.

# 12. Can a school council employee access leave during any period the employee is required to work remotely?

School council employees may make normal leave applications during any period the employee is required to work remotely. Leave is subject to the normal approval process.

# 13. What happens if a school council employee is on leave during any period the employee is required to work remotely?

The general expectation is that pre-existing leave would continue. When that leave expires the school council employee will be expected to resume duty including working remotely.

# 14. Will the arrangements that apply during the school vacation period be affected?

No. Normal arrangements apply during the school vacation period as school staff are not expected to attend. Where a school council employee would otherwise attend for duty during the school vacation period, that employee will be expected to work on-site except where that employee is working remotely for one of the reasons set out above.

# 15. Can staff still access their school if it has been closed on the advice of the Victorian Chief Health Officer?

The expectation is that where a school is closed on the advice of the Victorian Chief Health Officer, school council employees are not permitted to access the site during this period. Employees will either work remotely for the period of the closure or perform their duties at an alternate school site if the impacted students are relocated to an alternate school site.

When an employee is not in a position to perform their duties remotely or at an alternate school site, they may access personal leave, or some other form of leave.

# 16. What happens if a school council employee is prevented from re-entering Australia?

A school council employee will be expected to apply for leave in the event they are unable to re-enter Australia for reasons such as the current exclusion of cruise ships entering Australian ports. In the event the employee has no leave entitlements available, please contact the Policy and Employee Relations Branch at employee.relations@education.vic.gov.au for advice.

# 17. What arrangements apply if a school council employee seeks to cancel or defer leave already approved?

A school council employee will need to seek approval from their principal to cancel or defer any leave that has already been approved. Accordingly, if approved the leave will either be cancelled or deferred.

# 18. What arrangements apply to school council employees who are pregnant?

Where a school council employee is pregnant and, in the opinion of a registered medical practitioner, illness or risks arising out of the pregnancy or hazards connected with the work assigned to the employee make it inadvisable for the employee to perform their duties on-site, the employee is to be provided with suitable duties that can be performed remotely for such period as is certified necessary by a registered medical practitioner.

If the provision of suitable duties that can be performed remotely is not practicable the employee may elect, or the school council may require the employee, to be absent on leave (without deduction from any other leave credits) for such period as is certified necessary by a registered medical practitioner. Where this occurs schools should advise the Policy and Employee Relations Branch at employee.relations@education.vic.gov.au who will arrange for the leave to be processed centrally.

# 19. Can the school council engage a casual employee in a different role such as assisting with the supervision of students who are on-site?

Yes, subject to the agreement of the employee and the employee having the skills required to undertake the role.

# 20. How will recruitment proceed if a panel member or an applicant is unable to be physically present?

Normal recruitment policy will continue to apply. However, consideration should be given to using alternative means for managing the recruitment process, including using online communication tools to facilitate the process.

# 21. Are school council employees who work remotely eligible to be reimbursed for out of pocket expenses?

Ministerial Order 1039 provides that school council employees are to be reimbursed their reasonable out-of-pocket expenses actually and necessarily incurred in the course of their duties.

On this basis school council employees who work remotely are eligible to claim reasonable out-of-pocket expenses incurred as a direct result of working from home. Alternatively, a school council may elect to pay a working from home allowance similar to the allowance payable to teaching service employees who work remotely to reduce the administrative burden of processing individual reimbursement claims.

# 22. Will casual school council employees continue to be paid?

Casual relief teachers (CRTs) and other employees engaged by school councils will continue to be employed in the usual way, as required. The expectation is that schools will continue to engage CRTs and other school council employees, including education support casual employees, within existing budgets including when a school is operating remotely.

Schools are encouraged to work closely with their regular CRTs to ensure they are available as per usual arrangements.

Where eligible employees can demonstrate that in any four-week period there was a variation of 15 per cent or more between what they were paid last year and what they were paid this year, the employee will be compensated for the difference from within existing budgets. Claims will be managed at the school level.

In this context, eligible employees are:

* CRTs and other employees employed by school councils who in any year within the last three years worked 40 days or more
* or a graduate teacher in their first year of registration who has worked at least 10 days in Term 1 of 2020.

A CRT or other employee of a school council who does not meet the definition of “eligible employee” may seek to be deemed an eligible employee where that employee can demonstrate compelling and/or compassionate circumstances.

A CRT employed by a CRT agency should contact that agency for advice regarding the arrangements applying in that agency.

These arrangements continue to apply until otherwise advised.

# 23. Where can I get further information regarding my rights and responsibilities at work during the impact of coronavirus (COVID-19)?

Further information regarding your rights and responsibilities at work during the impact of coronavirus (COVID-19) is available at <https://coronavirus.fairwork.gov.au/>

# 24. Where can I get further assistance if I am feeling increased stress or anxiety as a result of coronavirus (COVID-19)?

The Victorian Government has a range of resources to help you look after your mental health: <https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/mental-health-resources-coronavirus-covid-19>.

Vic Health has a range resources focused on maintaining good health: <https://www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/media-and-resources/publications/coronavirus-information>.

Orygen has helpful information on self-care during coronavirus (COVID-19): <https://www.orygen.org.au/About/Responding-to-the-COVID-19-outbreak/For-young-people-and-families/Self-care-during-the-COVID-19-outbreak>.