# Teaching Service

# Coronavirus (COVID-19)

The following questions and answers are provided to assist in managing employee issues in the teaching service 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 employees expected to resume duty at their school?**

Yes. The expectation is that all school-based 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 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 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 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 24 in relation to employees who are pregnant.

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

Yes. The normal attendance requirements as set out in the *Victorian Government Schools Agreement 2017* 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.

For full-time teachers this means attendance for a minimum of seven hours daily commencing no less than 10 minutes before the morning pupil instructional session unless otherwise agreed between the principal and a teacher. In addition, teachers may be required to undertake other duties for up to three hours per week.

For full-time education support class employees, this means 7.6 hours daily attendance between 8am and 6pm from Monday to Friday.

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

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.

Up to 10 days of special paid leave may be available in circumstances where an employee is feeling well but has received a direction to self-quarantine from the Chief Health Officer or relevant authority.

An employee who is in self-quarantine and on special leave may become unwell, or it may become necessary for them to care for a member of their immediate family or a household member. If this happens, special paid leave will cease and the employee may access accrued paid personal or carer’s leave.

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

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.

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.

If working remotely is not an option for employees who are waiting for coronavirus (COVID-19) test results, the employee may access personal leave, or some other form of leave, as appropriate.

# 5. What arrangements apply to employees who choose not to attend for duty at the workplace?

Employees who choose not to attend the workplace in circumstances other than where they are required to quarantine or isolate under a direction of the Chief Health Officer are not eligible for the 10 days’ special paid leave. These employees will need to apply for another form of leave.

Employees who continue to work remotely in accordance with the advice of the Chief Health Officer do not need to apply for leave unless the employee forms a view they are not able to continue doing their work from home. In this instance, the employee would need to apply for another form of leave, as special paid leave is not available for this purpose.

# 6. Is an employee required to isolate if they live with someone who is required to isolate?

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

# 7. Must the special paid leave to be taken in a single period?

Yes, the 10 days’ special paid leave is only available where an employee is requiredto self-quarantine and therefore must be taken in one unbroken period.

# 8. Can an employee access the 10 days’ special paid leave whilst absent on another form of leave?

No, the general expectation is that pre-existing leave would continue. The special paid leave is designed to provide employees, who would otherwise be on duty and are required to self-quarantine with access to paid leave.

# 9. Does the 10 days’ special paid leave apply during a school vacation period?

No, normal arrangements apply during the school vacation period as school staff are not expected to attend. Where an employee would otherwise attend for duty during the school vacation that employee may access the 10 days’ special paid leave.

# 10. What is required for an employee to be granted the 10 days’ special paid leave?

Where working remotely is not an option, an employee who is required to quarantine may apply for up to 10 days’ special paid leave by forwarding an application for special paid leave through their principal to the Policy and Employee Relations Branch at employee.relations@education.vic.gov.au

The following information should be provided:

* Employee ID
* Employee Name
* School Name
* 14 day isolation dates (up to 10 working days for special paid leave pro rata)
* Evidence (i.e. the direction to quarantine as issued by the Chief Health Officer or relevant authority).

# 11. What arrangements apply if an employee contracts coronavirus (COVID-19)?

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

If an employee contracts coronavirus (COVID-19) in other circumstances they may access personal leave.

Where a principal has an 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.

# 12. What arrangements apply to 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, 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.

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.

# 13. What arrangements apply to older 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, employees may be at greater risk of more serious illness from 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.

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.

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

Normal privacy considerations should be applied where an 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.

# 15. What arrangements apply to employees who are not permitted to attend the workplace?

The expectation is that 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.

# 16. What happens if an employee’s carer responsibilities prevent them from performing duties?

Where an 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 an employee forms the view that they are 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.

# 17. Can an employee access leave during any period the employee is required to work remotely?

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

# 18. What happens if an 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 employee will be expected to resume duty including working remotely.

# 19. 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 an employee would otherwise attend for duty during the school vacation that employee will be expected to work on-site except where that employee is working remotely for one of the reasons set out above.

# 20. Can employees 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 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.

Where in these circumstances the employee forms the view that they are 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.

# 21. What happens if an employee is prevented from re-entering Australia?

An 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.

# 22. What arrangements apply should an employee seek to cancel or defer leave already approved?

An employee will need to seek approval from their principal to cancel or defer any leave that has already been approved. If approved, the leave will either be cancelled or deferred.

# 23. What arrangements apply to a teaching service employee in a non-school location?

The same arrangements applying to teaching service employees in a school location apply to teaching service employees in a non-school location.

# 24. What arrangements apply to employees who are pregnant?

Where an 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 employer 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.

# 25. 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.

# 26. With students back at school will the working from home allowance cease?

Yes. The working from home allowance will cease for all employees who return to duty at the school.

Employees who continue to work remotely will continue to be eligible to receive the working from home allowance.

The allowance is comprised of a one-off $100 payment for home office expenses as well as $20 per week for home office consumables and utilities. This $20 per week will be paid on a pro-rata basis based on an employee’s time fraction.

Employees on any type of leave (paid or unpaid) will not qualify for the payment, until their leave ends and they commence or resume working remotely.

# 27. Will working remotely affect Professional Practice Days?

No. Existing arrangements for professional practice days will continue. The expectation is that teachers would continue to access their professional practice days with schools making the scheduling arrangements as necessary and replacing teachers taking their professional practice days consistent with the school’s usual practice which would predominately involve the engagement of a casual relief teacher for the day.

# 28. 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/>

# 29. 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>.